

Midnight Special

Diligently transcribed by Van-L member Jill Mallow
From the book **The Midnight Special, 1972-1981**
Late Night's Original Rock & Roll Show
by B.R. Hunter,

Episode 214, aired April 22, 1977

Host: George Benson

Featuring: Van Morrison, Etta James, Dr. John, Carlos Santana, Tom Scott

This show epitomized everything that was great about **The Midnight Special** : spontaneity, virtuosity, soul, and an unpretentious love for great music. It was also a milestone for the program because it was the first showing by two legends : Van Morrison and Etta James. The show also boasted one of the finest aggregations of talent the program had ever seen. But the story goes that Morrison's appearance on the show was either thanks to -- or in spite of -- a little help from the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir.

It was a tribute to **The Midnight Special's** good reputation to have Van Morrison on the show, and before an expectant audience, host George Benson announced, "Over the 20-year history of rock music, only a small group of writer/performers have left a permanent stamp on the contemporary scene. Now as the history of rock is being written by various experts, my next guest is being universally recognized as one of those personalities. Please welcome, making a very rare television appearance, Van Morrison."

Morrison performed three tunes from his 1977 LP **A Period of Transition**. Co-produced by Dr. John, the album was Morrison's first release in three years, and was celebrated as a comeback for the heralded songwriter. Everyone in attendance was glad he returned to the public eye.

Benson would introduce R&B pioneer Etta James with even more deference, calling her "a legendary performer and a strong influence on us all." James would perform the explosive, organ and electric guitar-spiked "Tell Mama", then sang a duet with Dr. John on a song of reconciliation called "I'd Rather Go Blind". Other highlights included two Benson/Santana duets on the Benson instrumentals "Breezin' " and "Valdez in the Country." Santana was not wholly familiar with the