

Moon Martin

One of the more curious characters of the new wave movement, singer/guitarist/songwriter Moon Martin issued several critically acclaimed yet commercially underappreciated releases from the late 1970s through the early '80s before reappearing in the mid-'90s.

Born John Martin in Oklahoma in 1945, he played in local bands, including a rockabilly group, the Disciples, while attending the University of Oklahoma. Martin relocated to Los Angeles in the late '60s and paid the rent as a session musician, playing on albums by **Del Shannon** and **Jackie DeShannon**. Soon, however, his former Disciples bandmates followed him to the land of surf and sun, changing their name to **Southwind** and issuing a total of three underappreciated country-rock albums on the Blue Thumb label between 1969 and 1973: a self-titled debut, **Ready to Ride**, and **What a Place to Land**. Upon the group's split, Martin returned to session work, contributing to **Jesse Ed Davis' Ululu**, **Linda Ronstadt's Silk Purse**, and a few **Gram Parsons** songs. Martin also began to focus on a solo career at this time, adopting the nickname "Moon" from friends after it became an inside joke because of the songwriter's penchant for mentioning the word in his compositions.

Initial plans to record a solo album in 1974 with noted producer/arranger **Jack Nitzsche** failed to pan out, but several of Martin's original compositions were used by other recording artists, including the **Nitzsche**-produced **Mink DeVille** (the track "Cadillac Walk" subsequently became a moderate hit), as well as **Michelle Phillips** and **Lisa Burns**. By 1978, Martin (who by this time was known simply as Moon Martin) was finally ready to launch his solo career, with his look and music often compared to such new wave hitmakers as **Elvis Costello** and **Nick Lowe**. A total of five albums in a five-year span followed, including such titles as 1978's **Victim of Romance** EP (whose track "Bad Case of Lovin' You" would become a hit when covered by **Robert Palmer**), 1979's **Shots from a Cold Nightmare/Escape from Domination** (which scored Martin his sole hit single, "Rolene"), 1980's **Street Fever**, and 1982's **Mystery Ticket**, all of which were issued on the Capitol label.

Martin then dropped out of the music scene for the rest of the '80s and the early part of the '90s, before resurfacing in 1995 with a pair of releases, **Cement Monkey** and **Lunar Samples**. The same year, the British label Edsel reissued Martin's first four full-length releases as two-for-one CDs (**Shots from a Cold Nightmare** was paired with **Escape from Domination**, while **Street Fever** was combined with **Mystery Ticket**). Producer **Craig Leon**, who had worked with Moon Martin, confirmed that the rocker died on May 11, 2020.