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**Review of “Walk on the Wild
Side: The Folk Scene, Before and**

After Bob Dylan”

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A TOUR GUIDE SHOWING PICTURES of Village folk artists on his iPad in front of guests at the home of the Almanac Singers on 13 West 10th Street. Photo by Anthony Paradiso.

By Anthony Paradiso

On Saturday, September 18th, I went on a walking tour organized by the “Village Trip Festival.” The tour took me on a journey through the former homes of key members of the folk music revival that took place in the Village 50 years ago.

Our tour guide, Jesse Rifkin, explained why the tour was called Walk on the Wild Side: The Folk Scene, Before and After Bob Dylan: “The history of the folk scene mostly gets written about Bob Dylan, and that excludes a lot of people who were important to that era, [such as] Dave Van Ronk and Jean Ritchie, who don’t get a lot of credit but were really important.”

The tour began at the Abingdon Square Veterinary Clinic, located at 130 West 10th Street. This was where American folk singers Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger formed a band called the Almanac Singers. The name came from Guthrie's southern roots. He'd lived in Arkansas, where his parents had a bible to teach them about what to do in the afterlife and an almanac to teach them about what to do right now. In an interview for a documentary, actor Tim Robbins asked Seeger in 2006 about the group's formation. Seeger explained that they started meeting at 130 West 10th in the early 1940s, and raised \$300 for their band that was donated by friends. The building was home base for the Almanac Singers, and the beginning of the folk music revival.

Dave Van Ronk may not be nearly as well-known as Guthrie and Seeger, but he was composing original jazz and blues in the 1960s. He even helped remix House of the Rising Sun for the Animals' 1964 album. A memoir written about Van Ronk was titled *The Mayor of MacDougal Street*, so regardless of the connotation of mayor and politicians less than well-liked, this meant to say he was a popular person.

The next stop on the tour after the Veterinary Clinic was Dave Van Ronk's apartment at 199 Sheridan Square, where he lived for many years. Van Ronk was a very important figure in the Village folk scene due to his versatility as a record producer and singer/songwriter who specialized in blues and jazz. (He also participated in the Stonewall Riots.)

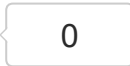
While Van Ronk was given a handsome tribute by our tour guide, it was noted that there were also women who were part of the Village folk scene. One of them, who Rifkin said didn't get a lot of credit but was very important to that scene, was Jean Ritchie.

During the mid-1940s, Ritchie worked as a social worker at the Henry Street Settlement where she taught folk music to local school children. Eventually, Woody Guthrie and the Almanac Singers would befriend her and add her skills to performances with Guthrie and the popular folk band the Weavers.

The tour was full of nuggets of information that really filled in the blanks for me.

It achieved its goal to provide the participants with a knowledge of the Village folk scene in its entirety.

One day I can walk by a small brick building just a few blocks east of WestView Publisher George's house on Charles Street and tell someone, "That's where American folk music established its revival roots, and then took hold of a generation of Americans that wanted to listen to the genre of music that was popularized again by musicians who lived and worked in the heart of the Village."



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