



Village festival's Kerouac tribute

As the Centenary celebration of the On the Road author continues, the bohemian neighbourhood of New York City commemorates that major anniversary in a number of musical events



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THE VILLAGE Trip, an arts festival centred on the famed artistic quarter of Manhattan, chalks up its fifth such event in 2022. But the jamboree has a particular Jack Kerouac focus this time as a year commemorating the 100th anniversary of his birth continues to roll out.

Kerouac lived in, wrote in and generally celebrated the excitements of New York City life – the Village specifically – and it seems highly appropriate that the acclaimed writer should have a particular place in this year's programme of events.

And it is principally through music, an enduring dedication for that author, that his life is recalled and revered. At the heart of this birthday bash is a man who knew Kerouac well, befriended him, partied with him and appeared with him on stage when he pursued his early live spoken word experiments in the same city in 1957.

David Amram, now a ripe and unreformed roisterer of 91, has had a life that goes well beyond the Beat streets of the 1950s, though he looks back on those interactions in the years just after the war with immense pride and not a little nostalgia. But his stellar career as a composer has spanned jazz suites, orchestral music and film soundtracks and for him the rhythm simply goes on.



Pictured above: David Amram, a key contributor to the ‘Kerouac at 100’ thread in this year’s Village Trip festival

The grand old man of the Beat Generation, one of the very few survivors of the original literary crowd, will be an integral part of the Kerouac sections of the Village Trip. Not only will he be digging into a glorious past, bringing to life memories of legendary figures such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, he will also contribute new work of his own to the occasion.

In fact, one of the glowing highlights of the programme, which unfolds from September 10th-25th, takes place on the festival’s opening night when Amram unveils an unheard work, the appropriately named *Ah, Let’s Go Back to the Village*, a piece based on Kerouac’s words in his marvellous 1960 travelogue *Lonesome Traveller*.

There are further significant dates besides to note: the following evening Kerouac’s interest in chamber music sees a collection of major composers from Bach and Debussy to Satie performed with Amram himself also on the bill; an eclectic mix of jazz and Latin sounds is presented on September 16th; and the celebrated output of a string of bebop heroes taking centre stage on September 20th.

But this Greenwich Village event, which has an international vibe but a strong community core, is about more than just music, more than just Kerouac. Its two-week run is a space for talks and conversation, exhibitions and guided tours, focusing on the history and the present of this unique criss-crossing of those storied urban streets around and about Washington Square.

As artistic director of this vibrant get-together Brit Liz Thomson states: ‘The main goal of the festival is to honour the Village as a place where creativity still happens, music is played, actors trained, good trouble made, and *everyone* is inspired. The overlap of art and protest, hi-jinks and high ideals, is what marks Greenwich Village as such a vital place.’



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Marc Zegans Sep 3, 2022 ❤️ Liked by Simon Warner

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A fine thing that David Amram will be part of the festivities. Really enjoyed reading that bit in

your article. Such an inspiration to know that he's still going strong at 91. Reading this makes me nostalgic for the village. My grandparents lived their for decades, so much a different place then.

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