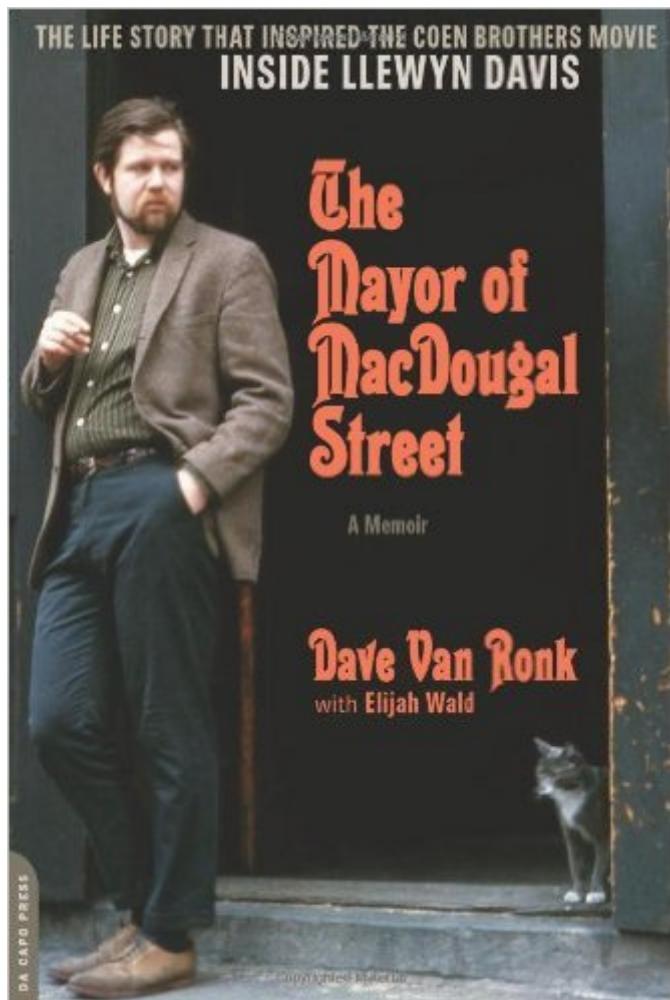


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The Mayor Of MacDougal Street [2013 Edition]: A Memoir



Synopsis

Dave van ronk (1936-2002) was not only one of the founding figures of the 1960s folk music revival; he was a pioneer of modern acoustic blues, a fine songwriter and arranger, a powerful singer, and one of the most influential guitarists of his era. He was also a marvelous storyteller, a peerless musical historian, and one of the most quotable figures in The Village. The Mayor of MacDougal Street is a unique firsthand account of the sixties folk scene that includes encounters with young stars-to-be like Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell and older luminaries like Woody Guthrie and Odetta. Colorful, hilarious, and engaging, The Mayor of MacDougal Street will appeal not only to folk and blues fans but also to anyone interested in the music, politics, and spirit of a revolutionary period in American culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I knew that I would be interested in Van Ronk's memoir just because of its subject matter: the folk music revival and the Greenwich Village scene that produced Bob Dylan and other famous musicians. What I didn't expect was that Dave Van Ronk and his co-author would write a book that is both witty and deep in its analysis of both musical and social trends of the 1950s and 1960s. Van Ronk's views on the folk music scene and American society deserve serious attention, and some of his escapades such as going to California in a drive-away car had me laughing out loud. Van Ronk did not become a star like the people who he wrote about but, in the end, he was more than satisfied with having been able to live his life as a professional musician, and I was more than satisfied with reading his entertaining account.

Van Ronk's "autobiography" is everything that "Inside Llewyn Davis" isn't. It's an affectionate look back at the music scene, primarily folk, in Greenwich Village in the '50s and '60s. Not much score-settling here. Instead, his love for the music is what comes through most strongly, as it did not in the Coen brothers' film. Much as I enjoyed the film, I'm enjoying the book more for different reasons.

For my money, you can forget Dylan's 'Chronicles' and simply dive into this wonderful portrait of a musician and the scene that grew up in the Village in the late 50s and through the 60s. Van Ronk's laconic and intelligent voice ring through Elijah Wald's wonderful telling of the stories of that time. Anyone who is the slightest bit interested in what they missed by not being in the Village in the midst of the Great Folk Scare of the 1960s will enjoy this work, as will those of us blessed enough to hear and remember Van Ronk's remarkable career singing and playing for us. It is a great book. Scott in Vermont

Dave Van Ronk was one of the main musicians behind the emergence of the Folk explosion in Greenwich village in the early 1960's. However, this book brings you back to his childhood and his first entrance into the music scene as a jazz player. His movement from blues and then onto folk music is an interesting and educational story, giving deep insight into the movers and shakers who ran the various coffee shops and concert halls during that period. There are some wonderful anecdotes on the young Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Tom Paxton and other musicians who went on to become household names. Dave comes through as a likeable character who is that little bit off the mark when it comes to hitting the big time. Due to Dave's untimely death whilst researching and writing this book, the reader is left with a longing to find out more about the era from one who was at its very centre. A must read for anyone interested in the ending of the beat era and the emergence of the Folk movement in New York.

I was tangentially connected to that scene and knew Dave Van Ronk, as well as getting to pick with him a few times. I have to say that in my humble opinion, Elijah's book is an unqualified success - not only does he paint an accurate picture of the vibe and the various characters, but Dave's unique personality and spirit comes roaring through on every page. If you didn't experience that scene or weren't lucky enough to have the chance to trade a few words, a tune, a drink, or a smoke with Dave, this is absolutely the next best thing. A great read about one of the treasures of our times.

This is a must read for anybody who listens to and loves the American music scene of the 50s, 60s, and on! Here is a chance to hear from Dave Van Ronk. Do not miss this opportunity. If you knew him alive, then you already know how important this book is. If you never knew or saw him alive, then you do not know what you are missing. Fill in your gaps, and hear about it all from Dave himself. Enjoyable and transformative. Music lovers: do yourself a favor and read this book.

DAve Van Ronk was a seminal guitarist of the the NYC folk scene of the very early 1960s. But, that is such an insufficient statement. He was the MAyor of MacDougal Street! Dave was a storyteller of the highest (and lowest) order, a font of information on jazz, a raconteur, a hipster, one of the best fingerstyle guitarists of his or any other generation. Elijah Wald brings us into the smoky, folky, dens of the Village, and brings us face to face with its most ubiquitous, gregarious, hilarious, serious, delirious, hippest hipster of them all, Dave Van Ronk. Mr. Wald successfully brings us into the cheap living of NYC village apartments of the '50 and '60s, bringing us right up close to Van Ronk and all the denizens of that little musical world that would, eventually, cause a sea change in the course of the nation. If you want to be in the world of Van Ronk, along with all the characters that inhabited this incredibly important musical and social time period, you can do no better than to buy The Mayor of MacDougal Street. It brought me right back to those streets, those haunts, that music, and that incredible character, Dave Van Ronk. The man was a national treasure, and Elijah Wald has written his introduction to us all....

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