





Smithsonian Folkways

Dave Van Ronk: Down in Washington Square The Smithsonian Folkways Collection Compiled and annotated by Jeff Place SFW 40213 ⊕ © 2013 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

DAVE VAN RONK

DOWN IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

** Previously unreleased

DISC 1

- Duncan and Brady 3:02
 River Come Down (Bamboo) 3:47
- (Van Ronk-Weissman / Pepamar Music, ASCAP)
- 3. Spike Driver Blues 3:17
 (John Hurt / American League Music, BMI)
- 4. John Henry 2:28
- Backwater Blues 3:04
 (Bessie Smith / Frank Music Corp., ASCAP)
- K.C. Moan 3:04

 (arr. & adpt. Dave Van Ronk /
 Folklore Music, ASCAP)
- 7. Haul on the Bowline 1:21
- 8. Just a Closer Walk with Thee 3:04
- Gambler's Blues 2:30

 (arr. & adpt. Dave Van Ronk /
 Folklore Music. ASCAP)

- Sweet Substitute 2:36
 (Ferdinand J. Morton / Edwin H. Morris and Co.. ASCAP)
- 11. Bed Bug Blues 2:46 (Joseph M. Davis, ASCAP)
- 12. Winin' Boy 2:38 (Ferdinand J. Morton / Edwin H. Morris and Co.. ASCAP)
- 13. Georgie and the IRT 3:35 (Lawrence Block)
- 14. Betty and Dupree 3:37
 (Brownie McGhee /
 Preston Stevens Music Co. BMI)
- 15. Come Back, Baby 3:55
- 16. My Baby's So Sweet 2:35
- 17. Black Mountain Blues 4:02 (J.C. Johnson)
- 18. Yas-Yas-Yas 2:09

DISC 2

- 1. Willie the Weeper 3:01 (Ernest Rodgers)
- Dink's Song 3:46
 (John A. Lomax, Sr.-Bess Lomax / Ludlow Music, BMI)
- 3. Santy Anno 1:45
- 4. Leave Her, Johnny 1:30
- 5. Tell Old Bill 4:24
- 6. Careless Love 2:59
- 7. Standing by My Window 5:00
 (Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Music, ASCAP)
- 8. Please See My Grave Is Kept Clean 2:56
- 9. Had More Money 2:57**
 (Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Music, ASCAP)
- 10. If You Leave Me, Pretty Mama 3:09 (Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Music, ASCAP)

- Hesitation Blues 2:36

 (arr. & adpt. Gary Davis / Chandos Music, ASCAP)
- 12. In the Pines 3:08
- Oh, What a Beautiful City 3:15

 (arr. & adpt Gary Davis / Chandos Music, ASCAP)
- 14. Mean Old Frisco 3:16** (Arthur Crudup)
- 15. Stackalee 2:34**
 (Furry Lewis / Yam Hill Music, BMI)
- 16. How Long 3:56 (Leroy Carr / Trio Music Company, BMI)
- 17. Ain't No Grave Can Hold My Body Down 4:54**
- 18. House of the Rising Sun 6:03**
 (arr. Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Music, ASCAP)

DISC 3

1. Hootchie Kootchie Man 3:16
(Willie Dixon / Hoochie Coochie Music. BMI)

2. Reckless Blues 2:30** (Fred Longshaw-Jack Gee)

3. Trouble in Mind 3:48** (Richard Jones)

Oh Lord, Search My Heart 1:32**
 (Garv Davis / Chandos Music. ASCAP)

God Bless the Child 3:18**
 (Arthur Herzog-Billie Holiday / Edward B. Marks Music Company, BMI)

6. Losers 3:18

(Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Productions, ASCAP)

7. Another Time and Place 4:31
(Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Productions, ASCAP)

Garden State Stomp 3:00
 (Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Productions, ASCAP)

9. Motherless Children 3:12

10. Don't You Leave Me Here (I'm Alabama Bound) 4:35** (Ferdinand J. Morton / Edwin H. Morris and Co., ASCAP) Spike Driver Blues 6:56
 (John Hurt / Wynwood Music Co. Inc., BMI)

12. Down South Blues 5:03**
(Scrapper Blackwell)

13. St. James Infirmary (Gambler's Blues) 4:41** (arr. & adpt. Dave Van Ronk / Folklore Music, ASCAP)

14. Ace in the Hole 3:27**
(George Mitchell-James E. Dempsey,
additional verses Dave Van Ronk /
Folklore Music. ASCAP)

15. Going Down Slow**
(James Oden / ARC Music, BMI)

16. Buckets of Rain 3:52**
(Bob Dylan / Rams Horn Music, SESAC)

Jelly Jelly 2:58**

 (Billy Eckstine-Earl Hines / Advanced Music. ASCAP)

Sometime (Whatcha Gonna Do) 2:38**
 (Josh White / Folk-Blues Music, ASCAP)

DOWN IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

Sunday when the clock strikes noon
Just drop whatever else you're doin'
Motivate 'cross town and soon
You're there
Bring your axe and wear your shades
It's a proletarian masquerade
They're jamming on the barricades
In Washington Square

Beatnik poets with conga drums
Uptown virgins and Bowery bums
Bluegrass picking and flamenco strums
We'll all be singing "Tzena Tzena" when the wagon comes
If you bought that banjo yesterday
It doesn't matter if you can't play
Nobody else can anyway
Down in Washington Square

If your head is pounding and you're still a little tight
From that vino cheapo that you drank last night
You can scream until you feel all right
It's laissez faire
You can dance the hora, you can do a soft shoe
You can sing "Greensleeves" till your face turns blue
Believe me, there ain't much you can't do
In Washington Square

Wear your big hoop earrings and your leotard
'Cause we're gonna rub elbows with the avant-garde
I've got some Panama Red and my Yipsel card
And we'll do-see-do with the Riot Squad
Last night I had the strangest dream
Joe Hill was singing "Goodnight Irene"
O nobody knows the troubles I've seen
Down in Washington Square

—Words and music © by Dave Van Ronk © Folklore Music (ASCAP)

"I STARTED WRITING THAT SONG 30 YEARS AGO, BUT I ONLY FINISHED IT RECENTLY. I GUESS I NEEDED TO GET A LITTLE ... DISTANCE."

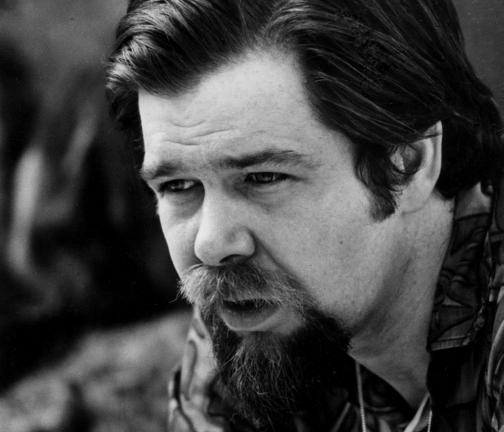
—DAVE VAN RONK

o, there you have it: the last song Dave ever wrote. Not that he planned it that way, but neat and appropriate, somehow, to end at the beginning. And despite his irreverent streak—which obviously remained healthy until the end—he was always grateful to have been in the right place at the right time, out there on the cutting edge in Greenwich Village in the late 1950s. Dave loved to describe his first visit to the Village in about 1951, the object being to check out the music scene in the park. Apparently, he envisioned half-timbered Tudor cottages with thatched roofs, and was horrified to see a neighborhood that looked to his 15-year-old self a lot like Brooklyn. He obviously got over his disappointment fairly quickly, because within a few years he was living in the Village, and he continued to make it his home for pretty much the rest of his life. And by about 1956, he was a regular in Washington Square Park—serving his "apprenticeship," in a sense—developing a repertory of songs, guitar techniques, and performing skills that would carry him through a career that lasted more than forty years. And hanging out with an assortment of interesting and talented people, sowing the seeds of a number of lifelong, cherished friendships.

It all sounds so romantic and exotic, especially to those of us who weren't there. And as much as I would love to be able to give a firsthand account of Dave's first glimpse of Washington Square Park, it just isn't an option. His final visit, though \dots that one I know all too well.

Fast forward to March 1, 2002. St. David's Day. The day I had selected for gathering with a few close friends at a church just a few blocks north of Washington Square. We'd have a brief, informal ceremony—pretty improvisational, really—prior to placing Dave's ashes in the columbarium. Then off to a more secular location for a less sedate send-off.

Accompanied by Dave's longtime friend Sylvia—to whom I shall forever be grateful—I made my way to the funeral home on Bleecker Street, where I was handed a large, white shopping bag which contained a marble urn. As we walked north on MacDougal, Sylvia pointed out Dave's first apartment in the neighborhood, and reminisced a bit about various long-gone clubs and hangouts. We cut into Washington Square Park. That marble urn was beginning to feel mighty heavy. We sat down on a bench in the middle of the park, not too far from the fountain. Didn't say much. Just rested for five or ten minutes, then got up and headed toward the arch and up Fifth. Nothing elaborate: no brass band, no second line; but, thinking back on it, I'd have to say it was neat and appropriate. (Yes, Dave, we all benefit from a certain amount of . . . distance.) Just a quiet farewell in the place where it all began. A homecoming, in a way. A logical conclusion to Dave's 50-year love affair with the Village.



These days I walk through the park on a fairly regular basis. And there is pretty much always music going on. The east and west transepts seem to attract small jazz combos, or the occasional lone horn player. There's a pianist who wheels in his baby grand, taking advantage of the natural acoustics beneath the arch. And walking past the fountain still entails dodging innumerable folkies and bluegrassers, flailing away on guitars and banjos and mandolins while belting out all those songs you'd forgotten you ever knew. And I can picture Dave so clearly, rolling his eyes heavenward and muttering, « Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. »

I giggle to myself, and give his blessing to one and all. —Andrea Vuocolo

■ DAVE VAN RONK (1936–2002) ■

"I never really thought of myself as a 'folksinger' at all. Still don't. What I did was combine traditional fingerpicking guitar with a repertory of old jazz tunes, many of which I'd been singing for years. These recordings from '59 and '61, I regard as a journeyman's progress report" (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041).

This quote shows Dave Van Ronk, as his usual self-deprecating self. Called the "Mayor of MacDougal Street," Van Ronk was for decades a fixture in the Greenwich Village music scene. He was a raconteur who was extremely well read and always ready to provide a quick quip on a subject at hand. More important, although he never acheived pop icon status, Van Ronk was the "guru on the mountain," teaching and advising many other musicians who went on to greater fame.

e was already an established figure in New York when a young Bob Dylan hit town in 1961. Dylan, who resided on Van Ronk's couch for a while, would learn how to finger-pick the guitar from the master. Twenty years later, when a newer group of young songwriters were gathering in a local Greenwich Village club called The SpeakEasy to share their new compositions and hone their writing skills, Van Ronk was the "grand old man" on the scene and an obvious mentor. Writers such as Jack Hardy, Suzanne Vega, Christine Lavin, Frank Christian, and others would benefit from Van Ronk's experience.

Dave Van Ronk was born in Brooklyn, New York, on June 30, 1936. He came from an Irish and Dutch background. He acquired a ukulele at 12 years old and a guitar a year later (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041), and then he learned the banjo. His initial love was jazz, singers like Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Jelly Roll Morton, and Louis Armstrong.

"Trad jazz" or traditional jazz is a style of jazz harkening back to the sound of the early jazz (pre-Swing) bands of the 1920s and '30s. It underwent a revival in the 1940s and '50s, in both the United States and England. Many of the later British rockers of the 1960s got their start in groups such as Chris Barber's trad jazz band. Van Ronk was taken with this music and began to perform it on banjo, where he clanged away, "occasionally hitting the right chord, and tolerated by my confreres mainly because I didn't mind doing vocals and I sang real loud" (notes to SFW 40041). His first guitar teacher was Jack Norton, who had been "an associate" of Bix Beiderbecke and jazz guitarist Eddie Lang. Norton taught Van Ronk how to really listen carefully to the music (Wald 1996, 60).

Van Ronk hung out a lot at places like the Jazz Record Center, acquiring old records from the 1920s and '30s. From these records he began to learn about some of the great blues singers like King Solomon Hill, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and Furry Lewis (Kip Lornell, notes to SFW 40041). For a time he played with the Brute Force Jazz Band. Unfortunately, though, Van Ronk got involved with the trad jazz revival just as it was at its end. Musicians were having a hard time finding gigs and putting food on the table.

He met the great folksinger Odetta in 1957, and she encouraged him to perform folk songs in concert. He had also started to spend time at the jam sessions around the fountain in the middle of Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. These had been going on since the 1940s, but by the time Van Ronk heard about them they were a big deal. On a given day one might find banjo player Roger Sprung, members of The New Lost City Ramblers (John Cohen, Mike Seeger, and Tom Paley), and even Pete Seeger, Jack Elliot, or Woody Guthrie there. He encountered guitarists like Paley, Dick Rosmini, and Fred Gerlach (a fine 12-string player influenced by Lead Belly). Some of the players were doing a style called finger-picking. Van Ronk remembered, "They were playing music cognate with early jazz, with a subtlety and directness that blew me away. The right thumb keeps time—not unlike the left hand in stride piano playing—while the index and middle fingers pick out melodies and harmonies.... [I]f you can do this you don't need a band" (notes to SFW 40041). The sessions at the park provided a musical education to all who attended, and Van Ronk undoubtedly brought his own knowledge of jazz to the mix.

rad jazz and folk music intersected in the jug band, a real do-it-yourself kind of music (skiffle music in England was like that too). Many of the later stars of folk music and even rock started out in jug bands (the Jim Kweskin Jug Band; Even Dozen Jug Band; Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions). It was only natural that Dave would enjoy this kind of music.

Van Ronk recorded jug band music for Sam Charters, a blues and jazz scholar who wrote the first book on country blues, *The Country Blues*, in 1959. On his travels, Charters recorded many artists, including Lightnin' Hopkins and Gus Cannon. Van Ronk, Charters' future wife Ann Danberg, Len Kunstadt, and Russell Glynn recorded an album of jug band music for the Lyrichord label as the Orange Blossom Jug Five. Later Van Ronk felt embarrassed by the recording quality of this album. He would record for Charters' Gazell label towards the end of his life.

Another important influence on Dave during the 1950s was Harry's Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Released in 1952 by Folkways Records, the *Anthology* featured reissues of 78s from Smith's personal collection of folk, string band, Cajun, blues, and jug band music, dating from the period 1926–1934. It reintroduced the world to musicians like Mississippi John Hurt, Clarence Ashley, and Dock Boggs. Musicians who had been exposed to more polished folk performers—for example Burl Ives, Marais and Miranda, or Richard Dyer-Bennet—now got to hear the raw stuff. One of the early devotees was Van Ronk, who first heard the record in 1954.

During the "folk song revival" of the late 1950s and '60s, a credit you were likely to see on collections of American folk songs by any of the folk song interpreters was "Edited by



Kenneth S. Goldstein." He produced and wrote liner notes, providing the historical background on the songs, for over a hundred albums for Folkways, Elektra, Riverside, Stinson, and other labels. He would later become a distinguished professor of folklore at the University of Pennsylvania. It was Kenny Goldstein who brought Dave Van Ronk to the attention of Folkways.

Folkways Records and Service Corporation was a record label run by Moses Asch and Marian Distler in New York. Asch used the term "Service Corporation" to argue

that his label existed not only for profit but as an entity to provide important sounds to the public. Asch thought of the label as an encyclopedia of sound and produced 2,168 albums over an almost forty-year period. He released recordings of ethnic music, blues, jazz, children's music, spoken word, and sounds, as well as folk music. Folkways was already an established folk label when the folk song revival came into full bloom, and Asch certainly published New York folksingers. He ran the label until 1986; in 1987 it was acquired by the Smithsonian Institution.

Goldstein produced the first Van Ronk Folkways album, *Ballads, Blues and a Spiritual* (1959). It was a mix of Dave's arrangements of folk tunes, jazz, and blues tunes. In October 1960, Van Ronk recorded a follow-up album, *Dave Van Ronk Sings*. Both were later reissued by the Verve/Folkways label with different covers and titles. (Verve/Folkways was a licensing deal Asch had with MGM Records for a brief period in the 1960s.)

ne unusual Van Ronk project from this period was an album of sea shanties recorded by Paul Clayton and the Foc'sle Singers, a group that consisted of Van Ronk, his singer friend Clayton, Bob Brill, and Roger Abrahams (also later a professor of folklore at Penn). The seeds of the project were planted at some boisterous afternoon sing-alongs accompanied by pitchers of beer at Art D'Lugoff's Village Gate. Eventually enough songs were worked up to make an album for Folkways (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041). In actuality, it is a very good set of sea shanties, well annotated by—who else—Kenneth Goldstein.

Van Ronk was only with Folkways for three years before moving on. He and Asch had an interesting relationship. They got along fine, but there was always the question of royalties. Some of Van Ronk's stories about this are legend. He once enlisted the help of a lawyer acquaintance to write a letter to Asch on the lawyer's letterhead. He got paid. He happened to encounter Asch a few days later, and Asch said, "Dave, you're gettin' smart."

Van Ronk left Folkways in 1963, recording his album *Folksinger* for Prestige, a New Jersey label. A collection of jazz tunes *In the Tradition* followed in 1964, and then *Inside Dave Van Ronk*. He switched to Mercury for two albums, one with the Ragtime Jug Stompers. His 1968 album for Verve, *Dave Van Ronk and the Hudson Dusters*, was a major departure stylistically, heading as it did in the direction of psychedelic rock. It included versions of "Alley Oop," an early arrangement of Joni Mitchell's "Clouds" ("Both Sides, Now"), and a rock version of "Dink's Song" (disc 2, track 2). There were even 45 rpm singles from the album released for radio.

Dave also recorded a jug band version of *Peter and the Wolf*, a collection of Bertolt Brecht–Kurt Weill songs with Frankie Armstrong, and two albums of jazz standards.

In 1997, Smithsonian Folkways reissued the Anthology of American Folk Music to great fanfare. In collaboration with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and others, the Smithsonian presented two concerts at the Barns of Wolf Trap celebrating the Anthology. We looked to feature traditional musicians representing the genres of music included on the set. In addition, we invited musicians who had been influenced by the Anthology or the collection's compiler, Harry Smith, such as John Sebastian, Peter Stampfel, The Fugs, The New Lost City Ramblers, and Dave Van Ronk. A compact disc collection came out of the concert with one Van Ronk performance, "Spike Driver Blues," but here on Down inWashington Square is the rest of Van Ronk's set for the first time.

His final concert in October 2001 for the Maryland-based Institute for Musical Traditions was recorded by David Eisner. After Dave's death in 2002, his family and friends were anxious for the recording to be released. In 2004 Smithsonian Folkways published it as ...and the tin pan bended and the story ended. In 2005, Da Capo Press published Dave's memoir (written with Elijah Wald), The Mayor of MacDougal Street. A wonderful compact disc of the same name was also released, including outtakes and rarities from the years 1957 to 1969.

Looking back at Van Ronk's music, one thing that set him apart was his unique arrangements of others' songs. He was one of the first interpreters of Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell.



He considered the music as an accompaniment to his singing and brought many elements from jazz, blues, and even classical music into his arrangements of songs. Writer, biographer, and longtime Van Ronk guitar pupil Elijah Wald points out that his "definitive setting for Joni Mitchell's 'Urge for Going' harkens back to Domenico Scarlatti, while his version of 'Both Sides, Now' (according to Van Ronk)

is a 'pared down version of the first two measures of the chorus of the Rolling Stones' 'Ruby Tuesday" (Wald 1996). His attention to detail in his arrangements created music that is a lovely complement to his vocals.

The last five tracks on disc 3 were made available for inclusion on this album by Dave's widow, Andrea Vuocolo, and were recorded by Dave during the last few years of his life. The same songs appear as concert performances on the recording ...and the tin pan bended and the story ended.

In late 2013, the Coen Brothers will release a major motion picture loosely based on Dave Van Ronk's memories of his life and times in the Village in the early 1960s. Hopefully, publicity for the man himself will follow, and many more music fans will discover the joy of Dave's music.

SONGS: DISC 1

1. DUNCANAND BRADY

(from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

In the notes to Van Ronk's Folkways album, *Ballads, Blues and a Spiritual*, Kenneth Goldstein states that Van Ronk's version of the standard "Duncan and Brady" was collected by Paul Clayton in Appalachia. Clayton was a friend of Van Ronk's in Greenwich Village and also a folksinger and recording artist. The song deals with a "true-life crime," the barroom shooting of a policeman, Brady, by the bartender, Duncan, in St. Louis in 1890.

2. RIVER COME DOWN (BAMBOO)

(from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

Now better known as "Bamboo," this is a song Dave Van Ronk and Dick Weissman composed with a Caribbean feel. It became well known when it was covered by Peter, Paul and Mary on their best-selling debut album.

An interesting footnote: When the group Peter, Paul and Mary was first being put together by Albert Grossman, Van Ronk was considered as a possible member.

3. SPIKE DRIVER BLUES

(a.k.a. "Spike Driver Moan"; from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

One of Van Ronk's musical heroes was Mississippi John Hurt. In 1928 Hurt had recorded some classic sides on 78 rpm disc including this song, which was reissued on Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* in 1952. Hurt was rediscovered during the folk song revival by blues enthusiast Tom Hoskins, and he began to perform at folk festivals and coffeehouses, allowing a new generation to learn from him.

This is another song from the John Henry legend. Apparently Hurt learned this song from a railroad worker named Walter Jackson in 1916, while Hurt was working as a rail hand (Jeff Place, notes to SFW 40090).

4. JOHN HENRY

(from Folkways 3818, 1959)

"John Henry" is probably the most famous and frequently performed American folk song. As of this writing there were almost 200 different renditions of the song in the Smithsonian's folklife archive. The song deals with the legendary John Henry and the digging of the Big Bend Tunnel in West Virginia. It has been interpreted many ways, and some of the variants include West Virginia's Williamson Brothers & Curry's, "Gonna Die with a Hammer in My Hand," "The Death of John Henry" by Uncle Dave Macon (1870–1952), "New John Henry Blues" by Bill Monroe (1911-1996), and "Spikedriver Blues" by Mississippi John Hurt (1893-1966). Folksinger Josh White devoted an entire side of one of his LPs to versions of the song.

5. BACKWATER BLUES

(from Folkways 3818, 1959)

Dozens of singers of over the years have performed this classic song by Bessie Smith about the great 1927 flood that affected most of the American southcentral states. It killed 246 people, and in some places water was 30 feet deep.

6. K.C. MOAN

(from Folkways 3818, 1959)

This is a blues put together by Van Ronk. Although it shares the title with the Memphis Jug Band's tune, it is a different song.

7. HAUL ON THE BOWLINE

(from Folkways 2429, 1959)

This is felt to be one of the oldest of the short drag shanties (used for quick motion tasks); John Masefield believes it dates back to the reign of Henry VIII (Colcord 1964, 137). William Doerflinger has also pointed out that the term "bowline" has not been used since the 16th or early 17th centuries (Doerflinger 1951, 9). Doerflinger learned the song from Captain Richard Maitland of Snug Harbor, New York, a former sea captain and an authority on maritime music.

8. JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE

(from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

This New Orleans jazz standard is played by almost all the local jazz bands. It is frequently used in funeral processions. Dick Rosmini is on second guitar.

9. GAMBLER'S BLUES

(from Folkways 3805, 1960/ SFW 40041, 1991)

"Gambler's Blues" comes from a group of songs based on the old Irish ballad "The Unfortunate Rake," in which the rake is dying from the effects of syphilis. In the United States the song was recast in different forms, including "Streets of Laredo," "Tom Sherman's Barroom," and the jazz pieces "St. James Infirmary/Hospital." This is Van Ronk's take on the song. Folk song scholar Kenneth Goldstein produced an entire album (FW 3805) for Folkways of versions of "The Unfortunate Rake," and this version comes from that album.

10. SWEET SUBSTITUTE

(from Folkways 2383, 1961; recorded October 1960)

Jelly Roll Morton wrote this song in the late 1930s (Eric Von Schmidt, notes to FW 2383). At that point Morton was living and performing in Washington, D.C. Morton was one of Van Ronk's favorite sources for good songs.

11. BED BUG BLUES

(a.k.a. "Mean Old Bed Bug Blues"; from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

This comes from a 1927 recording of Bessie Smith singing "Mean Old Bed Bug Blues." Eddie Green wrote the song in 1918, but the rights to it were acquired by Joe Davis, who had it in mind for Bessie Smith to sing (Bastin and Lornell 2012, 43).

12. WININ' BOY

(from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

This song is credited to Jelly Roll Morton, who recorded a blatantly obscene version for the Library of Congress. A "winin' boy" is a ladies man with a shady reputation, and "Stavin' Chain" was one of the worst of them (Kenneth Goldstein, notes to FW 3818).

13. GEORGIE AND THE IRT

(from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

In this song A.P. Carter's "Engine 143" is updated to become a parody about the New York transit system. Carter's original was one of a number of songs based on the crash of the Fast Flying Vestibule train (the FFV) in 1890. "Georgie and the IRT" was written by Lawrence Block, who later became an accomplished mystery writer.

14. BETTYAND DUPREE

(from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

This is the classic ballad about South Carolinian Frank Dupree, who robbed an Atlanta jewelry store, killing a policeman in the process. He was later caught, convicted, and executed (Kenneth Goldstein, notes to Folkways 3818). Van Ronk learned it from fellow New Yorker Jerry Levine (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041).

15. COME BACK, BABY

(from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

In his notes to the *Folkways Years* disc, Van Ronk reminisced about backroom jams in a Greenwich Village coffeehouse called the Caricature. One of those he knew from there was a jazz guitarist named Dave Woods, who is the source of this arrangement.

16. MYBABY'S SO SWEET

(from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

Blind Boy Fuller (Fulton Allen, 1907–1941) sang this song and was Van Ronk's source. Fuller was from North Carolina and very influential in the Piedmont blues style. Upon the singer's death Brownie McGhee penned "The Death of Blind Boy Fuller" and recorded it for the Okeh label. Elijah Wald points out that Fuller's tune is almost an exact cover of Josh White's song "So Sweet, So Sweet" (Elijah Wald, person communication).

17. BLACKMOUNTAINBLUES

(from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

This is another song that was originally recorded by Bessie Smith (Columbia 14554, 1930). It was composed by J.C. Johnson (1896–1981) and was one of a few of his songs she performed, including also the tune "Empty Bed Blues."

18. YAS-YAS-YAS

(from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

Originally known as "The Duck's Yas-Yas-Yas," the song was first recorded by James "Stump" Johnson. Van Ronk learned it from a record by the Spirits of Rhythm. He left out some of the dirtier verses from the original version (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041).

SONGS: DISC 2

1. WILLIE THE WEEPER

(from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

Dave Van Ronk learned this song from Shep Ginandes, a fellow guitarist in the New York folk scene (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041). The version here is closely related to a song recorded by Ernest Rodgers in 1925 called "Willie the Chimney Sweeper" (Elijah Wald, personal communication).

2. DINK'S SONG

(a.k.a. "Fare Thee Well"; from Folkways 2383, 1961; recorded October 1960)

In 1908, John Lomax collected this song from a woman named Dink, as she washed clothes near the Bravos River in Texas. When he went back a few years later to look for her, she had passed away. It is a beautiful song that has been recorded by numerous folksingers over the years.

3. SANTYANNO

(from Folkways 2429, 1959)

The capstan shanty "Santiano" was written around the time of the 1850 war between the United States and Mexico. The two commanding generals were the Mexican Don Antonio López de Santa Anna and Zachary Taylor. Historically the outcome of the war was just the opposite of what was related in the lyrics. The song lyrics have Santa Anna winning, but Taylor actually was the victor. Shanty scholar Stan Hugill believed that the song

reflected the point of view of the many British soldiers who fought on the side of Santa Anna (Hugill 1977, 34).

4. LEAVE HER, JOHNNY

(from Folkways 2429, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

This is a "farewell" shanty sung at the end of a voyage.

5. TELL OLD BILL

(a.k.a. "This Morning, This Evening (So Soon/Right Now)"; from Folkways 2383, 1961; recorded October 1960)

This song was collected by Carl Sandburg and has African American origins.

6. CARELESS LOVE

(from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

"Careless Love" is an American folk

standard played in both white and black tradition. It is also performed as a jazz song, as "Loveless Love."

7. STANDING BY MY WINDOW

(a.k.a. "219 Blues"; from Folkways 2383, 1961; recorded October 1960)

This song has roots in the song "Mamie's Blues" recorded by New Orleans singer Mamie Desdume, a local musician and neighbor of Jelly Roll Morton. In his liner notes, Eric Von Schmidt points out that although it is reminiscent of "Mamie's Blues," this song has a quality of its own (notes to FW 2383). Van Ronk wrote most of the lyrics.

8. PLEASE SEE MY GRAVE IS KEPT CLEAN

(a.k.a. "One Kind Favor"; from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960) Van Ronk learned this from a recording by Blind Lemon Jefferson that had appeared on the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a set Van Ronk credited as very influential for the folksingers of his day.

9. HAD MORE MONEY

(recorded at Yale University, 1961; previously unreleased)

This Van Ronk blues draws lyrics from various older blues songs, the chorus is from Robert Johnson's "If I Had Possession over Judgment Day." As a composite, it is a Van Ronk original.

10. IF YOU LEAVE ME, PRETTY MAMA

(from Folkways 3818, 1959)

A Van Ronk original.

11. HESITATION BLUES

(from Folkways 2383, 1961/SFW 40041, 1991; recorded October 1960)

"Hesitation Blues" is a song that in recent years has been closely associated with Rev. Gary Davis' arrangement, but it is an old melody. In 1915, Billy Smythe and Scott Middleton published it as "Hesitation Blues" with the lyrics that are frequently performed when it is sung. W.C. Handy published a different version in 1915. The song has become widespread and been recorded in blues, country, and western swing styles. Van Ronk learned the song from Davis in 1956 but he remembered playing something very much like it with the Brute Force Jazz Band years earlier (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041).

12. IN THE PINES

(from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

This is an old folk song which is found in both Anglo and African American tradition and is amazingly widespread. Versions have been recorded by artists as diverse as Roscoe Holcomb, Cisco Houston, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Bill Monroe, Pete Seeger, Ralph Stanley, Rod Stewart and John Baldry, Doc Walsh, and the rock group Nirvana. Van Ronk learned it from the Kossoy Sisters.

13. OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CITY

(a.k.a. "Twelve Gates to the City"; from Folkways 3818, 1959/ SFW 40041, 1991)

Van Ronk learned this spiritual from Rev. Gary Davis (Van Ronk, notes to SFW 40041).

14. MEAN OLD FRISCO

(recorded at Yale University, 1961; previously unreleased)

This song comes from the singing of Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup (1905–1974), a Mississippi bluesman. In addition to the popularity of this song he is known for being the writer of "That's All Right" and "My Baby Left Me." These two made a lot of money when they were covered by rock singers, with none of it making its way to Crudup.

15. STACKALEE

(recorded at Yale University, 1961; previously unreleased)

Dave Van Ronk's version of "Stagger Lee" is one of many. It was recorded as a successful pop song by Lloyd Price in 1959, reaching #1 on the charts. That was the version everyone knew. Instead Dave went back to the 1927 version, "Billy Lyons and Stack o'Lee," by Memphis bluesman Furry Lewis (1893–1981), with its chorus "if you lose your money, learn to lose." After Lewis recorded the song, he was inactive in the music business until he was rediscovered during the folk song revival. He opened on rock tours and appeared in movies in the last few years of his life. Joni Mitchell's song "Furry Sings the Blues" is about him.

Many books and articles have been written about the crime this song is based on. A St. Louis pimp named Lee Shelton (Stagger Lee) shot another local underworld character, Billy Lyons, in 1895. Convicted of murder in 1897, Stagger Lee became a figure in American folklore; the story of Stagger Lee (Stackalee) and Billy Lyons has been told and retold in many forms.

16. HOWLONG

(from Folkways 3818, 1959)

One of the best-selling blues artists of his day, Leroy Carr (1905–1935) wrote his most popular composition, "How Long," in 1928. He is also responsible for the song "In the Evening When the Sun Goes Down." He died young of the effects of alcoholism. He and Scrapper Blackwell made a popular piano-guitar duo in the 1920s, which started a trend for such combos.

17. AIN'T NO GRAVE CAN HOLD MY BODY DOWN

(from a concert at the American Youth Hostels, New York, Nov. 14, 1958; previously unreleased)

This is an old African American spiritual. Alan Lomax of the Library of Congress recorded Bozie Sturdevant at the Silent Grove Baptist Church in Clarksdale, Mississippi, singing it in 1942. The Sturdevant recording was released on a series of LPs by the Library. Van Ronk's lyrics are almost identical to the Sturdevant version; it is possible he learned them from that recording.

18. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

(recorded at Yale University, 1961; previously unreleased)

This is Dave's own arrangement of the well-known old folk ballad. With roots in the British Isles, the song is a lament of a young woman who imagines that she will spend her life working at a "house of ill repute." In England the name "Rising Sun" was often applied to houses of prostitution (Guy Logsdon, notes to SFW 40151). This song is found among singers of Van Ronk's two favorite types of music, New Orleans jazz and folk ballads.

Van Ronk recalled that after Bob Dylan had learned Dave's version of "House of the Rising Sun," Dylan approached him and asked if he could record it for his first album. Van Ronk replied, "I'd rather you not, I'm planning on recording it soon myself." Dylan said "uh oh." Van Ronk had to stop performing it because everyone accused him of getting it from Dylan. However, Dylan himself had to stop playing it when the Animals made a top hit out of it, and people accused him of getting it from them (from the film No Direction Home). Dave learned "House of the Rising Sun" from a recording by Hally Wood (Elijah Wald, personal communication).

SONGS: DISC 3

1. HOOTCHIE KOOTCHIE MAN

(from Folkways 2383, 1961; recorded October 1960)

This song was written by the fine Chicago blues musician, Willie Dixon. It's one of a number of songs Dixon wrote as the chief songwriter for Chess Records. Muddy Waters recorded and popularized it. Dick Rosmini plays second guitar on this track.

2. RECKLESS BLUES

(recorded at a concert sponsored by the Folk-singer's Guild, 1958; previously unreleased)

"Reckless Blues" was recorded by two of Dave's heroes, Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong, in New York in January 1925. The verse "Mama says I'm reckless" also pops up in Blind Willie McTell's "Statesboro Blues."

3. TROUBLE INMIND

(recorded at a concert sponsored by the Folk-singer's Guild, 1958; previously unreleased)

"Trouble in Mind" is a song so widespread that many believe it to be traditional, but it was written by jazz pianist Richard Jones (1892–1945). Jones came out of Storyville, the red-light district in New Orleans, and was playing there in the early years of the century. Van Ronk learned the song from the 1926 recording of Bertha "Chippie" Hill.

4. OHLORD, SEARCHMYHEART

(recorded at a concert sponsored by the Folksinger's Guild, 1958; previously unreleased)

Rev. Gary Davis (1896–1972) was a blind guitar evangelist who began to record in

the 1930s. In the 1940s he moved from the Carolinas to New York and was a well-known street musician for years. He taught many of the young folk guitarists in the city, some of whom went on to successful careers in rock music. Davis was a friend and mentor to Van Ronk.

5. GOD BLESS THE CHILD

(Smithsonian reel Asch-RR-1503; recorded at Club 47, May 1963; previoously unreleased)

This tape was included in Moe Asch's Folkways Collection that was transferred to the Smithsonian. Van Ronk loved jazz, and Billie Holiday was a favorite of his. It was recorded at the Cambridge, Massachusetts, Club 47 in May 1963; others on the bill that night were Mark Spoelstra and the Jim Kweskin Jug Band. "God Bless the Child" (co-written with Arthur Herzog in 1939) is one of Holiday's most poignant songs.

6. LOSERS

(from Fast Folk FF 405, 1988)

A Dave Van Ronk original, this song was included in the 6th Anniversary Issue of Fast Folk Musical Magazine in 1988. Fast Folk was a collective of singer-songwriters in Greenwich Village organized by Jack Hardy. Van Ronk was a mentor to the entire cooperative, appearing at their gatherings in The SpeakEasy and sharing his knowledge of songwriting and the "scene" with those just starting out.

7. ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE

(from Fast Folk SE 108, 1982/SFW 40135, 2002; recorded 1982)

This is another Dave Van Ronk original recorded in 1982 for *Fast Folk Musical Magazine*.

8. GARDEN STATE STOMP

(sometimes mistitled "Jersey State Stomp"; from Fast Folk FF 603, 1992)

A Van Ronk original. This performance comes from the 10th Anniversary Fast Folk concert at the Bottom Line in 1992.

9. MOTHERLESS CHILDREN

(from Fast Folk FF 106, 1984)

Van Ronk recorded this standard American folk song for *Fast Folk Musical Magazine* in 1984.

10. DON'T YOU LEAVE ME HERE (I'M ALABAMA BOUND)

(recorded live at the Barns of Wolf Trap, October 24, 1997; previously unreleased)

This song comes from Jelly Roll Morton. It has been performed by many artists and is also known as "I'm Alabama Bound."

11. SPIKE DRIVER BLUES

(from SFW 40085, 1998; recorded live at the Barns of Wolf Trap, October 24, 1997)

See disc 1, track 3 for more information.

12. DOWN SOUTH BLUES

(recorded live at the Barns of Wolf Trap, October 24, 1997; previously unreleased)

This song was written by Scrapper Blackwell (1903–1962), an important blues guitarist, who had recorded with pianist Leroy Carr (see disc 2, track 16). Blackwell lived long enough to record in 1961 during the folk song revival for Prestige Records. Van Ronk frequently performed this song (Elijah Wald, notes to SFW 40156).

13. ST. JAMES INFIRMARY (GAMBLER'S BLUES)

(recorded live at the Barns of Wolf Trap, October 24, 1997; previously unreleased)

For information on the song see disc 1, track 9.

14. ACE INTHE HOLE

(recorded by Matthew Fritz, Washington Square Studio, in 2001; previously unreleased)

"Ace in the Hole" was written in 1909 by George Mitchell and James Dempsey. It was popular among trad jazz and Dixieland revival bands, recorded numerous times in the 1920s and again in 1944 by the Yerba Buena Jazz Band with Bunk Johnson (Elijah Wald, notes to SFW 40156). It was featured in the 1948 film, *Lulu Belle*, with Dorothy Lamour. Van Ronk wrote additional lyrics.

15. GOING DOWN SLOW

(recorded by Matthew Fritz, Washington Square Studio, in 2001; previously unreleased)

This is an American blues standard written by "St. Louis Jimmy" Oden (1903–1977), a piano player based out of Chicago, who recorded it in 1941. It has been recorded by any number of people since then.

16. BUCKETS OF RAIN

(recorded by Matthew Fritz, Washington Square Studio, in 2001; previously unreleased)

Bob Dylan's "Buckets of Rain" came out in 1975 on his *Blood on the Tracks* album. It is one of the most covered of Dylan's 1970s compositions, by everyone from Bette Midler to Neko Case. This is Van Ronk's guitar arrangement.



17. JELLY JELLY

(recorded by Matthew Fritz, Washington Square Studio, in 2001; previously unreleased)
"Jelly Jelly" is a jazz piece from singer Billy Eckstine (1914–1993), who recorded it with the Earl Hines Orchestra in 1940 (notes to SFW 40156). Folksinger Josh White (1914–1969) also performed a "Jelly Jelly" with similar lyrics; his versions were double-entendre as well, and varied from risqué to almost outright obscene.

18. SOMETIME (WHATCHA GONNA DO)

(recorded by Matthew Fritz, Washington Square Studio, in 2001; previously unreleased)

"Sometime" comes from Josh White, who performed folk songs in the style of a cabaret singer. It is a variant on the old song "Crawdad Hole" (Elijah Wald, notes to SFW 40156).

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Credits

Compiled and annotated by Jeff Place

Disc 2: tracks 9, 14, 15, and 18 were recorded in 1961 at Yale University; from the private collection of Dave Van Ronk and Andrea Vuocolo.

Disc 2: track 17 was recorded Nov. 14, 1958 at the American Youth Hostels, New York City by Joel Katz for Photo-Sound Associates, reel 1B-0047-L;

Disc 3: tracks 2-4 recorded June 27, 1958 by Joel Katz for Photo-Sound Associates, reel 2A-0026L; Photo-Sound Associates materials are archived in the Southern Folklife Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Disc 3: tracks 10-13 recorded in Oct. 1997 by Pete Reiniger and Ronnie Freeland with Kevin Wait, in Big Moe's Little Truck.

Disc 3: tracks 14-18 recorded in 2001 by Matthew Fritz, Washington Square Studio, New York City, from the private collection of Dave Van Ronk and Andrea Vuocolo.

Compilation mastered by Pete Reiniger Cover photo and interior package panels by Craig Meirop, courtesy of Andrea Vuocolo private collection; photos on pp 2, 4, 15, 18, 35, and two exterior package panels by Aaron Rennert and Ray Sullivan for Photo-Sound Associates, in the Southern Folklife Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; photo on p. 10 by Diana Davies, courtesy of Rinzler Folklife Archives, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution

Executive producers: Daniel E. Sheehy and D. A. Sonneborn

Production manager: Mary Monseur

Photo research by Cecilia Peterson and Andy Cavacco

Editorial assistance: Carla Borden and Elijah Wald

Art direction, design and layout: Jackson Foster,

The ID Entity, www.theID-entity.com

Estate of Dave Van Ronk represented by Folklore Productions International www.folkloreproductions.com

Additional Smithsonian Folkways staff:

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Special thanks to Andrea Vuocolo, Elijah Wald, Aaron Smithers, Steve Weiss, Dan Charette, Ronnie Simpkins, Jack Manischewitz, Will Leisek, Ricky Gomez, Steve Lorenz, Elizabeth Hambleton, Max Smith, Katie Ortiz

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WEAR YOUR BIG HOOP EARRINGS AND YOUR LECTARD 'CAUSE WE'RE GONNA RUB ELBOWS WITH THE AVANT-GARDE I'VE GOT SOME PANAMA RED AND MY YIPSEL CARD AND WE'LL DO-SEE-DO WITH THE RIOT SQUAD LAST NIGHT I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM JOE HILL WAS SINGING "GOODNIGHT IRENE" O NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLES I'VE SEEN DOWN IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

(words and music by Dave Van Ronk/Folklore Music, ASCAP)



DOWN IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

THE SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS COLLECTION

alled "The Mayor of MacDougal Street," Dave Van Ronk (1936-2002) was a leading figure in the Greenwich Village music scene for more than four decades. He epitomized the urban "folksinger"—apprenticing through immersion in the music revival's New York City epicenter of Washington Square Park. Drawing from and developing a wide repertoire of songs, guitar techniques, and performing skills, he mentored younger musicians and songwriters such as Bob Dylan, Jack Hardy, Suzanne Vega, Christine Lavin, and many others. Down in Washington Square includes 16 never-before-released recordings coupled with tracks from the Smithsonian Folkways archive, spanning early live recordings made in 1958 (one year before his first Folkways album) to his final studio recordings in 2001, just months before his death. It paints a musical mosaic of Van Ronk's artistry and expands his legacy, keeping alive the genius of a legendary performer who inspired audiences, musicians, and a major motion picture—Inside Llewyn Davis, written and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. 3 CDs, 54 tracks, nearly three hours of music, 40-page booklet with extensive notes.