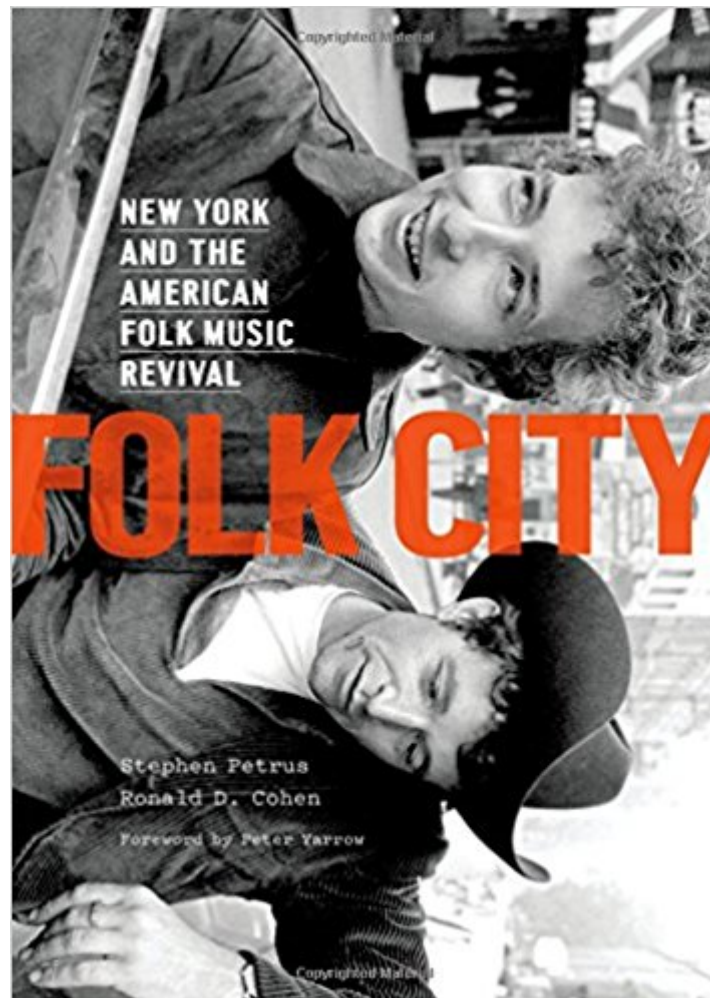




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# Folk City: New York And The American Folk Music Revival



## Synopsis

From Washington Square Park and the Gaslight Caf   to WNYC Radio and Folkways Records, New York City's cultural, artistic, and commercial assets helped to shape a distinctively urban breeding ground for the folk music revival of the 1950s and 60s. *Folk City* explores New York's central role in fueling the nationwide craze for folk music in postwar America. It involves the efforts of record company producers and executives, club owners, concert promoters, festival organizers, musicologists, agents and managers, editors and writers - and, of course, musicians and audiences. In *Folk City*, authors Stephen Petrus and Ron Cohen capture the exuberance of the times and introduce readers to a host of characters who brought a new style to the biggest audience in the history of popular music. Among the savvy New York entrepreneurs committed to promoting folk music were Izzy Young of the Folklore Center, Mike Porco of Gerde's Folk City, and John Hammond of Columbia Records. While these and other businessmen developed commercial networks for musicians, the performance venues provided the artists space to test their mettle. The authors portray Village coffee houses not simply as lively venues but as incubators of a burgeoning counterculture, where artists from diverse backgrounds honed their performance techniques and challenged social conventions. Accessible and engaging, fresh and provocative, rich in anecdotes and primary sources, *Folk City* is lavishly illustrated with images collected for the accompanying major exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York in 2015.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lomax--Authority on American folk-lore . . . Archivist to the Library of Congress . . . Commentator and artist on "Columbia's School of the Air" (1940-1945) Bill Tatnall, sitting, playing guitar, Frederica, Georgia. He was recorded by folklorists Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle on a field collecting expedition to the South and the Bahamas in 1935 for the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. (June 1935) Woody Guthrie & Burl Ives rest before radio appearance. Woody Guthrie and Burl Ives lying down, with a guitar and a bicycle, in Central Park, New York. (1940) Different version of Woody Guthrie playing guitar with sticker: This Machine Kills Fascists (Mar. 8, 1943)

Bob Dylan, half-length portrait, standing, facing front, his back to audience, at Newport Folk Festival, Newport, Rhode Island / Gilbert-Look (Jul. 28, 1964) Harry Belafonte speaking at an equal rights rally marking the sixth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, in the garment district of New York City (1960) Musicians in Washington Square (Apr. 22, 1962) Village Voice and Cedar Tavern (ca. 1975)

Bearded guitarist singing with other musicians, Washington Square Park (ca. 1955-1965) Black man with brimmed hat sitting with musicians on fountain steps, Washington Square Park (ca. 1956) Girl playing the guitar, 2 girls in foreground, Washington Square Park (ca. 1956) White Horse Tavern, 567 Hudson Street. (ca. 1975)

"Folk City is a magical token back to a clattering, incandescent New York, where Popular Front hootenannies gave way to the fretted hip of Gerde's, the Gaslight, and the Folklore Center. Stephen Petrus and Ronald Cohen have written the best history yet of the city's influential folk music culture, packed with astonishing photos that finally see the light of day." --Sean Wilentz, author of *Bob Dylan in America* "Yes, dear readers, there was a time not so long ago when urban troubadours sang of flowers more powerful than guns; a time when ideals put to song helped transform a culture. With compelling artistry, Stephen Petrus and Ronald Cohen capture the history behind that special moment and how New York's diverse creative class made it happen." --Thomas Kessner, Distinguished Professor of History, City University of New York Graduate School "Folk City is beautifully written and illustrated, a mesmerizing history of one of the great moments in New York cultural history. The prose fairly sings off the page, and the photos and old poster and song sheets are fascinating. This will make you wish you were there." --Kevin Baker, author of *The Big*

Crowd" This handsome book, which includes rarely seen photographs, reminiscences of participants and a lively narrative . . . The authors do a fine job of presenting the various facets of the folk revival, including its impact on the city and its role in changing the larger culture." --The New York Times

"Fourteen years ago, author David Hajdu crafted a superb, perhaps definitive, portrait of Greenwich Village at the height of the folk-music revival . . . yet in [FOLK CITY'S] winningly plain-spoken way, provides a far more comprehensive appreciation of one of the most colourful chapters in American music." -- Maclean's

"[A] fresh, colorful, thoroughly illustrated portrait of the scene, from its origins to today . . . [FOLK CITY] is particularly compelling in chronicling, from original documents and firsthand testimony, how the critical mass for the folk revival congregated in the city." --Wall Street Journal

Petrus (curatorial fellow, Museum of the City of New York) and Cohen (emer., history, Indiana Univ. Northwest) have produced a wonderful overview of the influential folk music scene that revolved around New York City's Greenwich Village and Washington Square during the 1950s and 1960s." --Choice

"Reading Folk City is almost like watching a film documentary (of which there have been a few) of that time. But in its balanced yet passionate story it helps one recreate memories, re-think thoughts, laugh at some of the foolishness, and weep for some of the tragedies...[it] will bring you as close as you can get to a very wonderful time that is still re-creating itself in the guitar strummers of today." --The Bridge

"Straightforward and engaging, breezily fresh and poignant, rich in reminiscences and primary as well as secondary sources, Folk City: New York and the American Folk Music Revival is the inviting companion publication to the Museum of the City of New York's similarly titled exhibit." --Sing Out!

"Folk City began life as a companion essay to a recent exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York. It comes close to being a complete social history of a vital, but ultimately tragic moment." --The Times Literary Supplement

"Folk City...is a striking mix...an impressive job of research readably and sometimes eloquently presented." --Journal of Folklore Research

"No pair was better placed to mount the exhibition or to write the accompanying, beautiful book..." --Journal of Popular Music Studies

Petrus and Cohen's Folk City offers a fascinating and highly readable account of the American folk music revival, which they effectively argue came about as an extension of New York City's unique cultural scenery." --The Gotham Center for New York City History

"[An] impressive volume, impeccably presented and lucidly written..." --Popular Music

Petrus and Cohen know the story that they want to tell, and they tell it well. They are at their best when tracing the connections between underground performance venues, music magazine publishers, and moments of social activism, and they lead their audience fluently through the networks of music and politics that made up the New York folk music scene. Readers who are interested in New York City will find new layers to the city's cultural life to

appreciate, and readers who are folk music lovers will discover the extent of that music's impact on American society."--Notes

Stephen Petrus is an Andrew W. Mellon Research Fellow at the New-York Historical Society, where he is working on his second book, a political and cultural history of Greenwich Village in the 1950s and 60s. At the Museum of the City of New York, he curated the exhibition Folk City, on view until January 10th, 2016, and was co-author of the show's accompanying book, with historian Ronald D. Cohen. Petrus has published essays on twentieth-century U.S. urban and cultural history. He received his Ph.D. in history from the City University Graduate Center and taught at Lehman College in the Bronx. He currently lives in Brooklyn. Ronald D. Cohen is Emeritus Professor of History at Indiana University Northwest in Gary, Indiana. He is the author of numerous books on the history of folk music including The Pete Seeger Reader (OUP, 2014) and was the co-producer/writer of the 10-CD boxed set Songs for Political Action: Folk Music, Topical Songs and the American Left, 1926-1954 (1996).

This is an excellent, full bodied view of a lot of "FOLK STUFF" that came together over many years. It may be more than some want to know, but you come away feeling that you have at least a small handle on a huge episode in American Music and Culture. Taken along with "Greenwich Village: Music that Defined a Generation" (narrated by Susan Sarandon), and "The legends of Laurel Canyon", you cannot help but be transported.

As someone who lived and played thru this time and place, I still found new information and was delightfully reminded of good times. Well written and enjoyable. Thanks, Mike

Fantastic photos, very comprehensive

Good book,great photos!

Great book. Read it and bought this as a gift for my brother.

oh the memories!! was there when it all went down. great book. arrived perfect condition and on time. great!

Great book!

GREAT BOOK!!!!

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