

Arts



Linda Puiatti, Al Selvin, Julie Holland, Molly Wolff, Jeremy Wolff, James Leonard, Jay Erickson. | PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEREMY WOLFF

Front Street Gallery Dylan Night

by Frank Matheis

Before “Folk Music” became a marketing term it simply meant regular folks playing music together among friends and family at their homes, or locally in the community, for no other reason than to have fun and entertain each other. In the old days, this was commonplace; but, it is today a joyous rarity. On Friday, Oct. 14, a dreary, wet Autumn night, about 20 people filled the Front Street Gallery across from the railway station in Patterson to celebrate the 70th birthday of iconoclastic musician and songwriter Bob Dylan. In a throwback to better days, the Gallery put on a real folk music event for the community to enjoy. It was the first “Positively Front Street” jam session, free and open to the public. Nobody really cared that Dylan’s birthday had long passed and that the event had once been postponed. Locals gathered to have a good time, to share food and libations and to listen to amateur local musicians play music purely for the fun of it. The word “amateur” should not be mistaken to mean as undeveloped or inept. It literally means “for the love of it” and the love did flow.

The Front Street Gallery is a unique local exhibition space featur-

ing the work of a group of area artists who operate the gallery cooperatively. The artists are a stylistically diverse group showing a disparate set of art, ranging from documentary photography to abstract art, from realistic and impressionistic landscapes to expressionistic swirls of color. The interesting and captivating amalgam of art seems united by just one important thing: a sense of community among the local artists. If you have not found your way over there, you are missing out on a great set of artwork. The newest exhibit is by Brazilian born artist Lillian Washburn. She and Linda Puiatti are showing captivating abstract paintings. Jeremy Wolff’s documentary photography of New York before and after 9-11 stands in stark contrast to the beautiful traditional paintings of Mary Smoot Soother and Gene Cadore. Jeanette Rodriguez shows jewelry.

On this night they opened the gallery and merged art with music to celebrate Dylan, but being a Dylan aficionado was not required.

The jam session had only one rule: only Dylan music was to be performed on this evening devoted to the noble bard, the poet songwriter of his generation who hardly requires an introduction. Like any real folk music event, this wasn’t about showing off or putting on a tight, well rehearsed show. The musicians gathered and loosely



Joseph Wolff, harmonica, vocals, roadie.

went through the night singing and performing Dylan songs and a good time was had by all.

The core of the ensemble was the family of photographer Jeremy Wolff and his wife Julie Holland, MD. Jeremy and Julie both play guitar and Julie also sings quite well. They were joined by their gallery mate, painter Linda Puiatti who came out squeezing her accordion to the delight of all. There is nothing better than a family that plays and sings together, and they often perform around Pawling with their equally talented Wolff children, Molly on guitar and flute and Joseph on harmonica. A host of musicians joined them to have some true-hearted fun. Al Selvin played keyboard and James Leonard kept time

on bass. Alton Brine, age 15, played guitar and Chris Kelsey blew soprano sax. You didn’t have to be anyone, or prove anything or try to impress with virtuosity. It was all for the sake of togetherness to celebrate and pay tribute to old boy Dylan. Jeremy Wolff aptly described it as “a real family music night.”

People brought food and wine to share in a potluck dinner and the audience was treated to a deep repertoire of Dylan songs. The sweet and gentle singing of Julie Holland was soon drowned out by an organ and all that sound, but nobody cared.

Among the many talented amateur local musicians was Jay Erickson, a Pawling resident and a remarkable, world-class professional musician, songwriter and virtuoso instrumentalist. Erickson, a heavy hitter, is clearly a musician who still plays music because he simply loves to play. He added tasteful eloquence to the evening, rounding out the sound but never overstepping his fellow musicians. His girlfriend Katie Rose said, “Jay loves the community aspect of music. When people get together to play locally, he just wants to be part of it.” It showed.

Maybe next year it will be the “2nd Annual Positively Front Street Dylan Night.” Somebody hold me a seat.



The audience.

Pawling writer **FRANK MATHEIS** is an award winning radio producer and himself a serious Dylan fan.