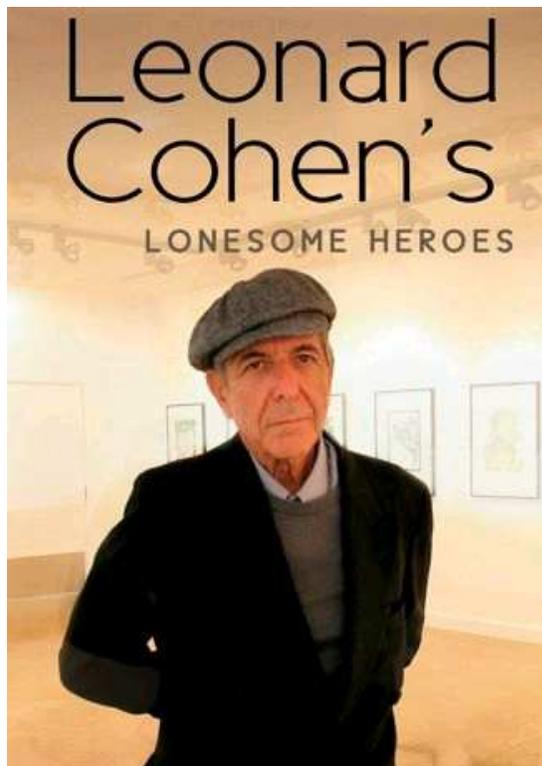


FAME Review: Leonard Cohen - Lonesome Heroes (DVD)



Lonesome Heroes

[Leonard Cohen](#)

Chrome Dreams - PGDVD132 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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Lonesome Heroes is an interesting follow-on, unintentionally, to the recently re-released lost treasure *Bird on a Wire* ([here](#)), the latter a documentary of the legendary Leonard Cohen on tour in the early 70s, a parable of the underside of the music business and of a man in the process of breaking down. *Lonesome Heroes* revisits the esteemed poet-musician from those days up to the present by way of literary antecedents and influence, and even finally gets a bit into his mysterious zen escape, something that has formed an enigma in the music community.

"He was in the folk scene, if you like, but he certainly wasn't of it."

That's a quote from Nigel Williamson, and it pretty much encapsulates Cohen, top to bottom: a man not of it, whatever 'it' was, no matter what it was. This has remained so throughout his life. Few in America, a country which took so readily to Leonard, even now know that he was a celebrated figure in his native Canada before ever stepping foot across the border. Four tomes of poetry and two novels were well established on the northland landscape, but their true importance, had we but known it beforehand, was that they signaled a man who understood how powerful the written, spoken, and sung word was, what language really signified: life. For Cohen, this started with Federico Garcia Lorca.

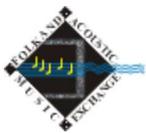
Unlike the increasingly satisfying gout of documentary analyses of rock music, *Lonesome Heroes* is far more studious, much less sonic; in terms, a research of slices of the whole. The film deeply explores how and why Cohen became what he was and is, not as an artist but as an exploration of himself. This was why Leonard identified first with the tragic Lorca, then with the blustery egomaniacal Irving Layton, then with Ginsberg, Kerouac, and the San Fran Beat scene. Those desirous of a monograph on the man will want to think a little more far-reachingly, as the experts here range far afield from Cohen in order to understand his psyche more comprehensively. We are, after all, the collection of our influences...and then a little of ourselves. Thus, Cohen is placed in context.

The influences of Brel, Dylan, Hank Williams, and Ray Charles are sharply defined here, though oft barely detectable in Cohen's oeuvre, and then it's time for the zen aspect...but this is a music venue, so I'll leave that alone, the mystery element to tantalize and beckon. I will, however, mention that the too brief inclusion of James Ishmael Ford provides a rather stunningly humane and insightful analysis regarding similarities and differences in religions, Buddhism (whence the poet-composer in question migrated) emerging uniquely. By the time this entire DVD overview winds down, you'll understand Leonard Cohen far better than has ever been presented before. Inside almost two hours, you'll have the key to unlock a treasure chest that has long been passed over, and you'll listen to his music differently from that point forward.

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