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Leonard Cohen's Lonesome Heroes

Score: **90%**
Rating: **Not Rated**
Publisher: **Chrome Dreams**
Region: **A**
Media: **DVD/1**
Running Time: **110 Mins.**
Genre: **Live Performance/Documentary/Independent**
Audio: **Stereo Sound**

Features:

Extras: "Collins on Cohen" - Judy Collins Speaks About her Love for the Music of Leonard Cohen
Contributor Biographies

I'm not ashamed to admit that I was first introduced to **Leonard Cohen** through the 1994 film *Natural Born Killers*, when his song "Waiting for the Miracle" was selected for the opening credits. Cohen's song perfectly evokes the searching, desperate quality of Oliver Stone's film, or perhaps it's more appropriate to say that Stone channeled the emotional timbre of Cohen's material (and other great music) to create his vision. **Leonard Cohen's Lonesome Heroes** walks us through Cohen's career to highlight the artists that influenced him. It's a fascinating look at the formation of a body of work that is unparalleled in popular music. Cohen has inspired many followers but almost no imitators, rare for a musical artist. It's more than just his distinctive vocal style, but that's part of it. You can listen to artists like Tom Waits, Nick Cave, and Henry Rollins and hear a bit of Cohen, but these artists were just as likely fueled by some of the other movements swirling around Cohen in his middle career and following his emergence. Where Cohen remains distinct from his Beat contemporaries like Allen Ginsberg or Jack Kerouac is explored here, beginning at the beginning, as it were.



The first point made is that Cohen came to music as a secondary form of expression. He had established a name for himself as a young, published author, albeit mostly in his Canadian homeland. By the time audiences heard Cohen sing in the '60s, he had published books of poetry and gained life experience that placed him in a different sphere than other young, emerging artists of that time. Compared to the explosive entry of a poet like Allen Ginsberg, Cohen seems to creep slowly into relief as a major artist. Similar to the way Ginsberg built his work on classic poetry from the likes of William Blake, Cohen's adopted muse was Federico Garcia Lorca. **Lonesome Heroes** explores the fascination that Cohen had with Lorca, going deeply into several poems with recitation and some dramatic video. If there's a soft spot to this otherwise awesome documentary, it's the need for an editor's hand. At 110 minutes, **Lonesome Heroes** could have shaved a few tidbits from the main feature, leaving them in as extras. I would have taken it on faith that Cohen and Lorca are connected, much as I would have taken on faith that Cohen's teacher and mentor, Irving Layton, had a profound impact on the young man.

The film includes a great deal of footage and interviews with Cohen talking about his work, which is the best part for younger fans like me that didn't get the benefit of being around in Cohen's heyday. There are also some great interviews with Judy Collins, both in the main feature and included as extras. It was Collins that really brought Cohen into the mainstream, by singing his songs and appearing with him at the height of her popularity. Several bright minds comment on the later evolution of Cohen, professionally and personally. His ability to navigate through the tumult of the '60s without becoming overtly political is a wonder, as was his ability to remain relevant through subsequent decades. The personal journey taken by Cohen included exposing himself to Buddhism, far removed from his Jewish upbringing, but very apropos to his creative style and persona. It's like the man behind the music is becoming more obscure as his artistic stature increases, but not in a Howard Hughes way. Possibly the most impressive quality that one perceives in the archival interviews with



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Cohen, and the impressions that others hold of him, is the complete lack of ego and entitlement. The reflective, searching quality of Cohen's art appears to be entirely genuine, which may explain why **Leonard Cohen's Lonesome Heroes** will likely be as relevant in 3010 as it is in 2010.

-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA Matt Paddock

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