

A black and white, close-up portrait of Leonard Cohen. He is shown from the nose up, wearing dark sunglasses. His face is the central focus, with his eyes obscured by the lenses. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his skin and the contours of his face. The background is dark and out of focus.

HERE IT IS

LETTERS TO LEONARD COHEN

Dear Leonard:

We invited some of your friends to share the many ways in which your life has touched theirs... And they did. As this book makes so clear, you are a cherished part of us and we all have this desire to honor you in some small way. To give back just a little of what you have so generously given to us.

On behalf of all contributors, Weeva is honored to present this book of offerings to you. They describe in rich detail the many ways in which you have inspired us, so that we in our turn can inspire others.

Kim Gorsuch

Founder of Weeva.com

DISCOVERY

FROM:

TYLER GUTHRIE

I remember it very clearly. My mother would be driving me to school or horseback riding lessons and we would be listening to my favorite station K Earth 101. It was all the "oldies but goodies." For me to love The Mamas and the Papas, Beach Boys, Ray Charles etc., more than popular radio at my age made my mother proud. One day, she decided to put in a CD of her all time favorite, Leonard Cohen, of whom I had not heard before. I was already upset she was changing my tunes, but she went on and on that she has loved Leonard since she was a teenager...so alas, I listened.

Being 8 or 9 years old, I really did not know what to make of Leonard's music or words. Since I had dreams of being a singer, I liked music I could sing to. I can tell you right now, an 8 year old trying to sound good singing Cohen songs was not going to happen. I immediately asked for her to change it... which she did not... so we listened until I was dropped off at my destination. She tried many a time to get me

into the music, but it wasn't happening...

Years later, I was following my own dreams of writing music. I had started working with a producer in Austin who gave me advice about how to write lyrics, and where to grasp inspiration. He mentioned Leonard Cohen... I remembered my mother's love for him and remembered how I felt as a child about him. With mixed feelings, I purchased his *Book of Longing* and read. I read his words and highlighted the ones that moved me. I had never read such moving words, such visual poems in my life. I quickly listened again to the music I once did not understand, and was so moved by it. It was Leonard who changed who I was as a songwriter. What a difference 18 years had made!

To top it off, my parents and I were able to go together to my first Leonard Cohen concert. His spirit and love of the music and the words moved me to tears. The class of the performance he put on was something I had never seen in my time. The way he dressed, the way he moved on stage,

TYLER GUTHRIE

the way he interacted with the backup singers and band. Leonard had (although years late) become an inspiration and my favorite performer. I was able to see him two more times... making sure I caught him whenever I could. I was able to bring my boyfriend – who I was unsure would understand the genius of this man and his music. I was so wrong... Leonard put on a 3 hour show, he didn't lose the attention of a single soul that evening... eyes locked, faces smiling ear to ear... and even bringing my boyfriend to tears with the melodic harmonies of his backup singers.

Leonard Cohen is one of a kind. I didn't understand him when I was young, but as I matured, and learned to understand music and lyrics, I was able to see what a poet, performer, musician this man truly was and still is today. I am thankful my mother introduced her love of Leonard to me at such a young age, and I am grateful I was able to see what an incredible genius he is.

FROM:
KIM GORSUCH

NEVER TOO YOUNG FOR COHEN

When my children were little, I wanted to sing to them but somehow I had never learned any lullabies. So I learned two Cohen songs – “Dance Me To The End Of Love,” and “The Captain's Song” – and we sang them nearly everyday for about five years. Unfortunately in year five, my younger son announced that my singing wasn't quite up to scratch, and he would prefer to listen to the man himself. I couldn't have agreed more. And since Various Positions is pretty much always near the top of the pile, it wasn't long before we were listening and singing to the album together.

Well, I count that as a major parenting win. My boys are now aged 17 and 13, and largely because of Cohen, they appreciate great lyrics when they hear them. One of them is inspired to write his own songs, and Cohen is one of his muses. Two years ago they were given the choice – Halloween or Cohen Concert? Even for the then eleven year-old, it was no contest and our friends who were certain they had just scored two free tickets were left to secure their own.



FROM:

NAOMI BUSHWOMAN

MY FATHER, LEONARD COHEN AND ME

I discovered Leonard Cohen in Saskatchewan, while listening to a CBC programme. and I was instantly caught by the chords and melody of "Closing Time." I must admit, I did not remember a word of the lyrics because my ears were feasting on what seemed a unique arrangement.

I found out the name, Leonard Cohen, and noted it in my journal. I was soon to depart for Northern Canada where I would not hear music for some time because of the remote location, which could only be accessed by floatplane.

When 2009 rolled in, five years had passed. I had returned to Pennsylvania, the Internet, and searched this Leonard fellow on YouTube. I must admit, I was instantly smitten, and more so with each song!

I had listened to and cried through "Hallelujah" numerous times

as I licked my emotional wounds following a failed marriage. As I pondered how I would ever have a life again, this song began to comfort me. How could this man get inside MY head and MY heart??? Words shall fail me as I say that I was forever changed, and in a sense, healed! Now "Hallelujah" is a celebration for me.

My father came to spend the night after a laser treatment on his eye. I gave Dad my bed, and began working on the computer, with Leonard playing on the computer speakers. My father called out my name and asked me to turn up the volume! I was thrilled he was enjoying the music. Dad told me of watching Austin City Limits years before, even relating the songs in great detail. Father said in a melancholy voice that he looked for decades, and never saw or heard him again. For me that meant a lot, as I know, I KNOW, my father had been touched in a manner that he rarely allowed.

We listened for several hours as I played the songs that he remembered.

We had something in common and finally a connection. That was a special and poignant time for me, as Dad was not going to live another two years.

Father inevitably came to a time and a state of health that required a nursing home. Mother was extremely upset to put him there....it was a hard decision. As Dad began to have sundowners, and began having flashbacks to Korea, he had to be sedated. Even so, when I came in and played music from my phone for him, he would move his hands to the beat of whatever song I played to him. Leonard Cohen, of course.

As he began to fail, and we were summoned for his last time with us, I played "Anthem." The line, "forget your perfect offering... The Holy Dove will be bought and sold and bought again," seemed to bring comfort to him. He passed away January, 2012.

Soon after, I booked passage and arranged to see Leonard in Dublin

NAOMI BUSHWOMAN

at Kilmainham. I met many wonderful Cohen-ites there... kindred spirits. Attending the first two concerts were breathtaking, an emotional pilgrimage had taken place for me. As "Anthem" played that first night, I had a good cry, and comfort from a good friend in this family where we belong.

I did meet Leonard, and felt a fool, but he did look me deep in the eyes, and that brief moment in time is etched in my mind's eye. Leonard has made friends and family of many of us. I never dreamed before that year that I would walk down Upper O'Connell Street, in Dublin, with so many wonderful friends giving me well wishes and invitations to visit them. I truly felt like I belonged to the best part of the human condition that day.

Thank you, Leonard, for all of the tangible and not so tangible gifts bestowed upon me. I can never repay the debt. Merci beaucoup!

FROM:

LISA JOHNSTON-CAMPBELL

The first time I heard you was the Winter of 1972. I grew up in the Redwoods where the fog hangs in the trees. While I listened, I looked out the window and the fog was in the tree tops and the smell of the ocean strong in the air. Your beautiful voice joined the moment and I fell in love. You have traveled with me through the time of aging and I thank you. There are no words to describe the impact you have had on my soul.

Happy Birthday, my dear unseen companion.





FROM:
JUNE PONTE

FINDING LEONARD IN THE SALVATION ARMY

Back in the mid 1970s, I regularly visited the local Salvation Army for clothes, bicycles (they kept getting stolen, no matter how old they were...) and furniture. I was way in the back, checking out the table loaded with old albums. I saw this almost handsome, passionately haunted face...some guy named Leonard Cohen. I wondered, "What kind of music IS this?" That expressive face compelled me to place my 25 cents on the Salvation Army counter...and I was hooked forever.