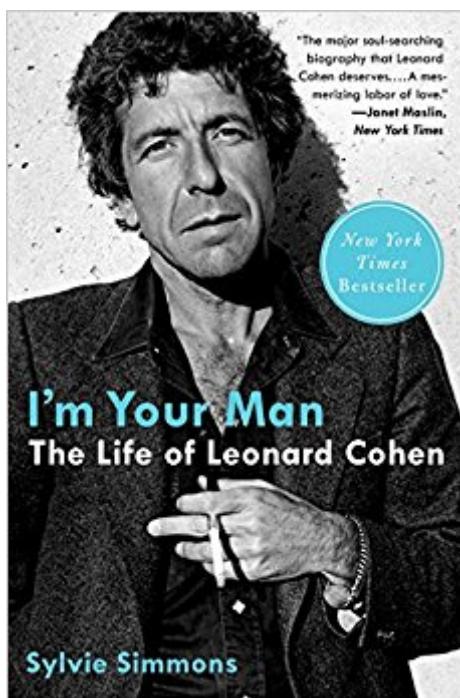


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# I'm Your Man: The Life Of Leonard Cohen



## Synopsis

The *New York Times*-bestselling, a definitive biography of legendary artist Leonard Cohen. Singer/songwriter Leonard Cohen is one of the most important and influential musical artists of the past fifty years—and one of the most elusive. In *Your Man*, journalist Sylvie Simmons, one of the foremost chroniclers of the world of rock and roll and popular music, explores the extraordinary life and creative genius of Leonard Cohen. *Your Man* is an intimate and insightful appreciation of the man responsible for “Suzanne,” “Bird on a Wire,” “Hallelujah,” and so many other unforgettable, oft-covered ballads and songs. Based on Simmons’s unparalleled access to Cohen—and written with her hallmark blend of intelligence, integrity, and style—*Your Man* is the definitive biography of a major musical artist widely considered in a league with the great Bob Dylan. Readers of *Life by Rolling Stone* Keith Richards, and Patti Smith’s phenomenal *Just Kids* will be riveted by this fascinating portrait of a singular musical icon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*Starred Review\* As a teenager in Montreal, Leonard Cohen learned six chords on a guitar from a young Spanish teacher that would form the foundation for all of his songs. In this compelling biography, Simmons chronicles the career of the courtly, elegant—“I was born in a suit”—singer-songwriter, poet, and novelist, from his first band in Montreal (a country-and-western trio, no less) to his early days in New York, where he lived at the famous

Chelsea Hotel, to his most recent world tour, during which the seventysomething Cohen literally skipped onstage. Simmons includes fascinating anecdotes—Cohen meeting Judy Collins, who would later record one of his signature songs, “Suzanne”; encountering fellow Canadian Joni Mitchell in Greenwich Village (Mitchell’s “A Case of You” was inspired by Cohen); scary recording sessions with the gun-toting record producer Phil Spector, and spending time at a Zen monastery. Simmons also discusses at length Cohen’s impressive body of work, including poetry and prose as well as songs (his iconic “Hallelujah” has been covered by more than 300 artists), mentions his numerous bouts of depression, and recounts his unfortunate financial difficulties when his former manager stole funds from his retirement account. A must for anyone interested in one of the most influential songwriters of our time. --June Sawyers --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“I’m Your Man is the major, soul-searching biography that Leonard Cohen deserves... a mesmerizing labor of love.” (Janet Maslin, *New York Times*) “A thoughtful celebration of the artist’s life...Simmons has deftly narrated Cohen’s evolution... In the end, this biography has the oddest effect: as soon as you finish reading it you feel an overwhelming impulse to go back and begin again, revisiting the story with what you’ve learned along the way.” (A.M. Homes, *New York Times Book Review*) “A new gold standard of Cohen bios.” (Los Angeles Times) “This is the bio Cohen has long deserved, and it makes every prior Cohen book practically unnecessary.” (Rolling Stone, 4 1/2 Stars) “The book is a seductive tribute to a master seducer.” (The Onion A.V. Club) “A deep, enlightening book. . . Simmons, a music journalist and short-story writer, knows how to research and write and keep a critical distance from Cohen, who opens up some but uses his usual weapons, politeness and self-deprecation, to maintain an air of mystery.” (The Oregonian (Portland)) “Leonard fought darkness through his work and... the light ultimately prevailed when he triumphantly toured the world for three years beginning in 2008... You could hear the hairs stand up on people’s arms,” writes Simmons of the hushed reverence of his audience. This book demands a similar reaction. (MOJO Magazine, 5 Stars) “This is a revelatory biography that investigates not just an artist’s life, but the life of his art.” (Shelf Awareness) “In I’m Your Man, we see not only the life of one man who was transformed by words, but how we ourselves may be transformed by them.” (New York Jewish Week) “Simmons is rich,

compelling and provocative book... is a star-studded but also frank account of how the music industry really works and, at the same time, a discerning portrait of one especially important musician. (Jewish Journal Los Angeles) "Simmons is a wonderful writer... the book informs like carefully researched non-fiction, but engages like enchanting fiction... Like listening to one of Cohen's songs, this complex, beautiful biography requires you to think about it. This book will stay with you. It will change the way you hear Leonard Cohen." (Paste Magazine) "[A] vibrant and enthusiastic chronicle... Carefully weaving the threads of all of his songs and albums through the patterns of his life, Simmons craftily explores the themes that regularly mark Cohen's work: desire, regret, suffering, love, hope, and hammering it up." (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) "In this elegantly crafted biography, Simmons captures the artist who, in spite of all his highs and lows, is still sharp at the edges, a wise old monk, a trouper offering up himself and his songs." (BookPage) "Exquisitely researched and elegantly written." (Dallas Morning News) "The success of Simmons' book is the way it deftly integrates each facet in a unified portrait." (San Jose Mercury News) "Cohen is a complex man and Sylvie Simmons has captured every essence of it in her remarkable book. This is a deeply insightful portrait that is guaranteed to haunt the reader much like his "Suzanne" and "Bird on the Wire." (The Tuscon Citizen) "Compelling biography. . . A must for anyone interested in one of the most influential songwriters of our time." (Booklist (starred review))

It is perhaps the best written biography I have ever read. Sylvie brings many of those who she uses for her information into the biography by interviewing them and getting their direct input, not her interpretation. It is detail, it is without bias, it is compelling to read and answers so many questions I had about Leonard's life, even though I had been familiar with him since 1971. It also dispels so many of the erroneous comments present to the world by the media. It is a highly recommended book for anyone who appreciates The Man, Leonard Cohen....

This book as well as Mr. Cohen's earthly time have ended. I don't usually read biographies, especially ones that read like "hagiography." This one--at the subject's request--did not. The biographer covered her subject in intimate and thorough detail. Reading it felt like living his life with him--from birth to late life with every woman, every drug, every writer's experience and life event in between. So many memories I share with someone I only knew through his words and music, yet intersect and parallel as members of roughly the same generation. All the names and places I recall

from my own youth. Some may feel the author repeats information yet to me these parts felt as if I were remembering, reminiscing Leonard's memories along with him. Did I want the mysterious songs explained? Probably not, but they are still beautiful and calming, serene as a meditative moment. And it was worth it to get inside the workings of a mind of a great poet. So long, Leonard Cohen. There will never be another artist like you.

While I have always enjoyed the music of Leonard Cohen I must admit I knew very little about him. Now that has changed. I never knew that he had been a Scientologist, a Buddhist Monk along with his Jewish heritage. Leonard has lived a very interesting life along with being swindled out of his life savings and then going on the road touring again at over 70 years of age. While I have always had respect for him it has now increased very much. I strongly recommend this book if you have an interest in Leonard Cohen. I think you will be very impressed after the read.

last week I took Ms. Simmons "I'm your man" out on the road with me for a second read. Here are my thoughts after that pass. This book reads like literature, and to me, that is everything. The authors idiosyncratic voice and style shine through just enough to light the many rooms her subject (Mr. Cohens life) inhabits. This is a working journalist, writer and songwriter doing what she does best, working. I honestly did not know about her vast body of work before reading this book and so have had the luxury of going back through years of the top music publications that are rich with her prose. I suggest you do the same, you will be better for it. "I'm your man" is excellent and I want to Thank Ms. Simmons for writing this gem of a biography. Now on to "A fistfull of Gitanes." Sincerely, John Reynolds

This is a long, thorough, and altogether engrossing biography. The author has more than done her homework, interviewing a vast array of people who have known Leonard Cohen during his Jewish upbringing in Montreal, years as a young genius of Canadian poetry, as an expatriate novelist in England and Greece, and during countless incarnations as a songwriter, performer, lover, celebrity, depressive, and spiritual seeker. All aspects of his many-faceted life are covered with an honesty, empathy, and humor worthy of its subject. While there is a massive amount of information the book is in no way tedious. If you are at all a fan of Leonard Cohen's work, you may want to read this book straight through without stopping, which could take a couple of days, so be warned. I would think this is destined to remain the definitive biography of Leonard Cohen for a long time.

It was in the winter of 1969, June to be precise, and it was refreshingly cool for a change. An interlude. Seven days away from the war, and I am not speaking of the one between the sexes. As would happen so often in subsequent years, the lyrics rolled around in my brain, as I stood on the shore of Sydney harbor: "...and the sun poured down like honey, on our lady of the harbor." The sun indeed felt like honey in the coolness... and there was so much more, just in that one song: that eternal aspiration for someone who liked his physics: "...and she gets you on her wavelength, and makes the river answer, that you have always been her lover..." 'Lo these many years later, and thanks to the truly excellent biography by Sylvie Simmons that I finally learned that the harbor was Montreal, and the China that had been (relatively) so near to me, for the past ten months, the origin of those famous teas and oranges that Suzanne so graciously provided, had a local market run by some folks equally far from home, in that most beautiful of Canadian cities. Sure, the version that I loved was sung by Judy Collins, but I had tucked away in one of those cranial recesses, that the man who had provided a bit of peace, tranquility, inspiration, and even a bit of hope was Leonard Cohen. Cohen actively collaborated with Simmons in this impressive work. Typical of the ever so self-deprecating Cohen, he just wanted to make sure it was not a "hagiography," and it is not, and is all the stronger for it. It is a fitting tribute to him, and proved to be an essential read. There were so many missing pieces between the lyrics, and so much background for them, and Simmons provides much, but is content to leave some ambiguity on the table, just as Leonard would have. Leonard Cohen's ancestors, Lithuanian-Russian Jews arrived in Canada in 1860. When Leonard came around, in 1934, the family was prosperous upper middle class clothiers, and hence his tastes for suits, which is referenced in the title to the first chapter. He explored the docks and bars of Montreal in his youth, attended McGill University, wrote some good poetry, but as most folks know, you can't make a living that way, which forced him into music. Off to NYC, a couple of the right intros, and he was off to continued obscurity in the United States, but developed a strong following in Europe. He lived on the Greek Island of Hydra, where he met the Norwegian model, Marianne. He is a "Lady's Man," but not the type that would "notch a bedpost"... with the right chemistry, things just seem to happen. He lived with fellow Canadian Joni Mitchell for a year, and told the world once about a tribute from Janis Joplin in the Chelsea Hotel. "You can't tell the players without a scorecard," as they once upon a time cried at the stadium entrance. But Leonard seemed to be scorecard-less, summed up with his classic line: "I can't keep track of each fallen robin." Like Sir Richard Francis Burton before him, he tried on a few religions, reflecting the spirituality of his lyrics. He found a guru, of sorts, but mainly a friend, in Roshi, Joshu Sasaki, who is still alive at 107, and is famous for saying "Excuse me for not dying." (The most recent controversies concerning Roshi, surfacing in

2013, did not make this bio, published in '12). Cohen became an "ordained" Buddhist monk under Roshi's guidance... but then went off to India, in search of a Hindu guru. While being a monk, he was betrayed by his long-time financial manager, Kelley Lynch, and lost all his retirement money. The world, and perhaps Leonard, is better off for it. He "dusted himself off" and at the age of 73, skipped back out on the world stage, performing concert after concert to sell-out crowds, recouping his losses and more. And it was no "farewell tour," some of his best work may have been produced in conjunction with it, complementing the subject "Hallelujah". On tour, his wit was always with him, and he'd tell the audiences that the last time he was on tour he was "sixty years old, just a kid with a crazy dream." His most fervent fan-base will appreciate his comments on aging: "Everything changes as you get older; I never met a woman until I was sixty-five. Instead, I saw all kinds of miracles in front of me." And there is so much else in this very excellent biography, in which Simmons weaves his lyrics, for the "au courant," and presents balanced assessments, just as you might imagine Leonard doing. Europe and the United States. I thought Simmons nailed the qualities of Cohen's music perfectly: "dark humor, old-world romance, existential gloom and poetry." Why is this so much more popular in Europe than in the United States? A question to discuss, but never to answer, so cherie, just "Dance Me to the End of Love." 6-stars.

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