

July 31, 2008

Hi guys, here's the goods on Leonard Cohen.
Hope yr all feeling swell, be good, talk soon, Big P

Leonard Cohen
Terravibe Park, Malakasa
July 30, 2008

Perri Pagonis
perripagonis@yahoo.com

Undoubtedly, and I mean undoubtedly, the crowd of people gathered at the Leonard Cohen concert on Wednesday, July 30, at Terravibe Park were the most non-hostile, non-threatening, non-aggressive group of human beings I've ever seen collected in one place at one time. The audience was, almost to a person, an amalgam of middle-aged; over-educated; clear-eyed; cafe-society oriented, audiophiles who appeared to be having a pretty great time doing the mellow-groove, cerebral-connection thing with Canadian poet/prose writer/musician Leonard Cohen.

Cohen is considered by many art critics and social historians to be an icon of both the musical and language art forms. With his 9-piece band behind him, he took the stage like a mildly-dark and groovy phantom. All the males in the group, including the evening's lead singer, were dressed in Tarantino-esque cheap black suits and short-brimmed Boraslino hats. Then, for the next three hours, they played songs with soul-searching and confessional themes which seemed to joyfully mesmerize the show's attendees. He graciously greeted the crowd in the Greek language and proceeded to play the standard, "Dance me to the end of Love." His voice has a sandy tenor tone which recalls that of a very experienced university professor addressing an adoring grad-school class. And indeed, the show was like spending time with an old, experienced friend who tells good stories.

Cohen is a smart guy who know his mass-communication human physiological and psychological traits quite well. Like Lou Reed and John Cale, He has a singing/speaking style of presenting his songs which almost take on a conversational tone and cadence. A great deal of his material is played at around a relaxing, 2:4 notational, heartrate-centric speed. This musical time signature tends to have a hypnotizing effect on listeners. Combine this metrical scheme to conversational lyrics, a droning Hammond B-3 organ, and wailing female background vocals and you have some pretty powerful stuff going for you. He manipulated these elements of subconscious and preconscious mental activity like a master, and the crowd gobbled-up every minute of it.

Guitarist Bob Metzger played perfectly reverberated, F-hole Telecaster electric guitar phrases while the Webb sisters (Hattie and Charlie) provided ethereal yet rock-solid backing vocals which perfectly complimented Cohen's seasoned vocal-styling. All songs had a tough sincerity to them, mixed with a smattering of dark humor and toxic irony. He was a true gentleman during the evening and introduced his band members several times during the performance when they played instrumental breaks or solos. His vocals always seemed genuine and heartfelt in every delivery he gave to us this evening.

The quality of sound mixing was first-class and acoustically clear in every area of the park. Minimalist lighting effects worked nicely with all pieces during the presentation. He played his standards, "Hallelujah," "If it be Your Will," "Back on Boogie Street," and "Everybody Knows," with simultaneously bold, yet phantasmal presence. His wizened, world-weary elegance was inspiring to behold. No one left Terravibe Park disappointed this evening, and on the way to the exits, many people were quietly humming one of Cohen's tunes to themselves.