

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW – My Leonard Cohen

✖ Few bodies of musical work rouse, seduce and are of such solace as that of the great Leonard Cohen. Stewart D'Arrietta's musical interpretations are gutsy and arresting, and the stories he tells add an intimate insight into Cohen's life and motivations. 'A glowing tribute to this legendary artist' (PopCulture-Y.com). The six-piece band perform 15 songs including the heart-rending Suzanne, the iconic Tower of Song, the desperately seductive I'm Your Man, the rousing Hallelujah, plus more.

I've liked Leonard Cohen's music for a long time. I've never had the chance to see him, sadly, but I am a fan. (Geddit!?) In fact, to quote John Wesley Harding, "Uncle Lenny used to make me laugh. Took away my nightmares, tore my daydreams in half, Showed them to me reflected upside down." After this performance though, I'm definitely a fan of [Stewart D'Arrietta](#) and his band.

Stewart D'Arrietta, an Australian with a poor sense of geography, is a talented singer and piano player. He even has a keytar and, despite how it looks, he produces sweet sounds from it. He also includes the best keytar joke I've yet to hear but I won't spoil that for you. His show is both a biography and a homage to Cohen. While he doesn't try sounding like the great man, D'Arrietta's voice suits Cohen's music and lyrics. There's a touch of William S. Burroughs about the way he looks, which again lends itself well to the material.

The show charts Cohen's life, from growing up in Quebec to the court case with her ex-manager in 2005, featuring key moments

and songs in his life. You could quibble that your favourite is not featured but this is not a tribute band going through the greatest hits of an artist but a loving tribute to somebody who has obviously had a big influence on Stewart D'Arrietta. Bird on the Wire is here, as is Famous Blue Raincoat and, of course, Hallelujah.

I was a little surprised that First we Take Manhattan wasn't featured, which is a song I love, but also how much I enjoyed his version of Dance Me to The End of Love. Given I didn't really care for the song before, D'Arrietta shows what a talented musician he is and I thank him for it. I had the song in my head for the rest of the night.

Stewart D'Arrietta is accompanied by a very fine band, including a Scottish backline. The drummer is subtle and muted, something I never thought I'd write, while I felt sorry for the bass player as she was clearly skilled but didn't have the opportunity to shine given the material.

The guitarist plays with style, talent and throws in a few flourishes throughout the performance; the piano accordionist psychiatrist shows that shrinks do actually have their uses.

[Sunny Amoreena](#) provides wonderful backing vocals and I must admit I fell in love with her voice, which I told her after the show. While she doesn't have much to sing in certain songs, she does manage to look engaged and dance suitably along to the songs.

Dancing to Leonard Cohen, who thought that was possible? Sunny's a breath of fresh air having seen far too many surly looking backing singers who stand on stage looking as if they are waiting for a late-running bus. I apologise to the other musicians but I couldn't find their names online.

This is a show for lovers of Leonard Cohen young and old. There were two teenage lassies and their parents in front of us and it was lovely to see them all enjoying it and swaying

along with the music. The biographical sections between the songs work well and D'Arrietta knows how to engage with his audience. I learned a few things as he whisked through Cohen's past, although there was one thing I wish I hadn't.

SPOILER ALERT – Marianne Ihlen died last month, which I was sad to learn.

I'm having a very good Fringe this year as this is another show I heartily recommend you see before it ends on the 28th. However, I would warn anybody with breathing difficulties that the venue is a fair climb.

Both Lenny and Stewart D'Arrietta are still doing their tricks today. Only goes to show that growing up might pay.

If you want to hear John Wesley Harding's Bastard Son, here's [the studio version](#) but I much prefer the live acoustic one.

Written and performed by **Stewart D'Arrietta**

Produced by **Sandy Bruns**

Guest Vocalist **Sunny Amoreena**

Musical Director, Guitar and Vocals Don Miller Robinson

Piano and Accordion Michael Kluger

Bass Guitar David 'Demus' O'Donaldson

Drummer Willy Molleison