



Judy Collins **"Sings Leonard Cohen: Democracy"** Elektra/Rhino Records

As Collins reveals at the outset of the liner notes that accompany this release, she met Cohen in 1966. Back then, *"He was young, handsome, darkly mysterious, and shy as a new beau."* Collins was instantly spellbound by the Canadian's plaintive brand of folk music, and over the ensuing decades recorded eleven of his compositions – they're all included on **"Democracy,"** along with a trio of *new* recordings. Of those cover songs, Cohen has never officially released a recording of "Priests," and it originally appeared on Judy's **"Wildflowers"** [1967]. The same can be said of "Song Of Bernadette." Co-written in the eighties by Cohen and his sometime *seventies* backing vocalist, Jennifer Warnes, it premiered on Jenny's **"Famous Blue Raincoat"** [1986]. A live recording of this tale of a religious visitation and more appeared on **"Judy Collins Live At Wolf Trap 1999."**

From the Canadian's classic debut **"Songs Of Leonard Cohen"** [1967], Judy performs the familiar and much covered "Suzanne," "Dress Rehearsal Rag," "Hey, That's No Way To Say Goodbye" and "Sisters Of Mercy." The former pair appeared on Collins' **"In My Life"** [1966], a collection that witnessed her transition from [mainly being] an interpreter of traditional material to becoming an astute judge of contemporary [folk/country/pop] songwriters. The latter pair turned up on **"Wildflowers."** Collins' **"Who Knows Where The Time Goes"** [1968] was, and remains, in my opinion, one of the finest folk rock recordings to appear in the closing half of the twentieth century, and "Story Of Isaac" and "Bird On The Wire" are drawn from that eponymous collection. Moving into the early seventies, Collin's *in concert* disc **"Living"** included the aforementioned "Famous Blue Raincoat" and "Joan Of Arc." **"Bread & Roses"** [1976] featured the angst filled "Take This Longing."

As for the trio of *new* recordings - "Democracy" appeared on Cohen's **"The Future"** [1992], and Collins reading opens with the martial beat of drums, while the repeated chorus line reveals *"Democracy is coming to the U.S.A., Sail on, sail on, oh mighty ship of state, To the shores of need past the reefs of greed, Through the squalls of hate."* Later, in this *ridicule drenched* number the narrator adds *"I'm sentimental, if you know what I mean, I love the country but I can't stand the scene, And I'm neither left or right, I'm just staying home tonight, Getting lost in that hopeless little screen."* Twelve years on from creating this portrait of America, things have not improved.....if only.....well, never mind. Having spent much of the nineties sequestered in Mount Baldy Buddhist monastery located a few hours east of Hollywood, Cohen resurfaced as a recording artist in 2001 with **"Ten New Songs."** His lyrics were supported by Sharon Robinson composed melodies, and "A Thousand Kisses Deep" was one of the tracks. Collins', backed by strings, gives a sensitive reading of this *"It's late, but I'm back in the game"* treatise on lust and love. The third new recording "Night Comes On" appeared on Cohen's album **"Various Positions"** [1984].

With only three new recordings, I guess this one's for those *already converted* fans.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 11/04