

# THE COLLECTOR

GORDON FRASER: HE'S YOUR FAN

**R**esiding in Buntingford, Warwickshire, Gordon Fraser fast-tracked towards his 60th birthday and a retirement spent in residential social work.

Collecting has always been in his blood, but it reached new levels of obsession upon his discovery of Leonard Cohen. He still recalls that pivotal moment in the early 70s when he traded a copy of Alice Cooper's *Billion Dollar Babies* for Cohen's *Songs Of Love And Hate*. From that point on he was smitten.

## What do you collect?

Collecting Leonard Cohen has become my compulsion. I go for anything Cohen-related.

Like so many like-minded collectors, I'm hooked on the dring of finding that next item. There's just something about Cohen's music that strikes a chord with me and, somehow, collecting provides a means of bringing the fan closer to the artist.

## How big is your collection?

It's pretty comprehensive, including, at last count, 134 singles from around the world and more than 60 non-standard issue albums with different formats and sleeve designs. I particularly like to collect concert tickets and have over 100 of these. Then there are the tour posters and merchandise, press kits, books, artworks...

## What do you think it's worth?

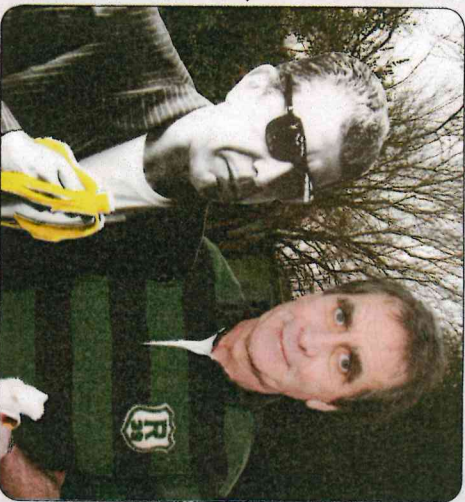
From a personal view it's priceless. In the real world, however, buyers would probably offer me enough money to have a caravan by the sea for a week!

## How and where do you store it?

It's kept all over the house, anywhere there's a space, with a few larger items up in the loft.

## What are the most unusual and valuable items you have?

The most unusual item is a meat life-size



cardboard cut-out of Leonard used to promote his tour for the *I'm Your Man* album. Most valuable is the fine art portfolio published in Denmark in 1988, which boasts three signed prints of his artwork.

## Any elusive gems you're still looking for?

It would be really happy days if I could find a copy of Cohen's Amnesty International 7" picture disc. Only 10 of these are said to have been pressed and then gifted to the organisation's directors. If one does come up for sale, I know there'll be a frenzy of bidding and that I'll need a bank loan to pay for it.

## What's given you the biggest thrill?

Meeting with the great man himself and getting him to sign a copy of his first book, *Let Us Compare Mythologies*. Leonard had previously signed this edition in 1956 and to get a second signature dedicated to my wife on the same page was something special.

## How do you track stuff down?

For years I've trawled the ads in *RC*. Whenever I'm abroad I like to visit the independent record shops in the hope of uncovering some gem. While I acknowledge that the internet is the global supermarket, I get concerned that those items, such as pieces of signed memorabilia, are far from being the genuine article.

## What's your favourite record shop?

Sadly, it's no longer with us: Plastic Factory in Birmingham, which was a prime source for the unusual.

## Is there a visual side to collecting for you?

Oh, without doubt. For instance, when collecting singles, it's far more aesthetically pleasing to have those with picture sleeves than versions in plain company ones.

## How will you eventually dispose of your collection?

It would be wishful thinking to expect the Canadian Arts Council to come calling, so I guess my daughter will sell it off to the highest bidder.

## What's your all-time favourite record, regardless of value or rarity?

At my funeral they would have to play Joan Of Arc, my favourite track from the first Cohen album. Then, with the service over and people starting to filter out, I'd hit them with Don't Go Home With Your Hand-On from *Dziah Of A Ladies' Man*.

