



ON  
TOUR  
WITH  
LEONARD  
COHEN

photographs  
*by*  
Sharon Robinson

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# On Tour with Leonard Cohen

By Sharon Robinson

Published by



To be released: **December 2014**

This PDF of *On Tour with Leonard Cohen*  
is only a preview and an **uncorrected** proof.  
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photographs  
*by*  
Sharon Robinson

essay  
*by*  
Larry "Ratso" Sloman

**pH** powerHouse Books  
Brooklyn, NY



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**ON THE  
ROAD  
WITH  
LEONARD**

by  
Larry "Ratso" Sloman

The first time I met Leonard he was in his hotel room in midtown Manhattan, moaning. It was late November 1974 and he was in New York to perform at the Bottom Line. Performing in New York always made him anxious but he was particularly stressed by his record label's decision to censor the cover of his new album, *New Skin for the Old Ceremony*. I was a cub reporter from *Rolling Stone* magazine witnessing his dismay.

"Look at this," he said, handing me a mock-up of the cover of the U.S. release. In Europe, the album had already sold mucho copies with a beautiful image of two naked but crowned figures in a sexual embrace taken from the alchemical text *Rosarium philosophorum*, an image popularized by Carl Jung. Thinking the image was too racy for U.S. record outlets, Columbia Records had substituted a photo of Leonard that looked like a cross between William Burroughs and Soupy Sales. To make matters worse, Columbia hadn't even responded to Cohen's telegram of protest.

"Every critic attacks me for being so depressing and Columbia highlights that in an ad. Wonderful!" he said. It was true. In the ad copy for the album, Leonard was called a "chronicler of despair."

Now he started pacing the room more frantically.

"Is this the style of American business practices today? Is there any honor left? I'm appalled at the whole feminization of the scene. There's just a collapse of manly virtue and we're going to pay for it. As soon as America is weak, there'll be others to carve it up, both from the interior and the exterior."

I'd never met Leonard before but I wanted to give him a hug, tell him it was all going to be okay. But all I could manage was, "Isn't it good that men are becoming more in touch with their feminine side, their emotions?"

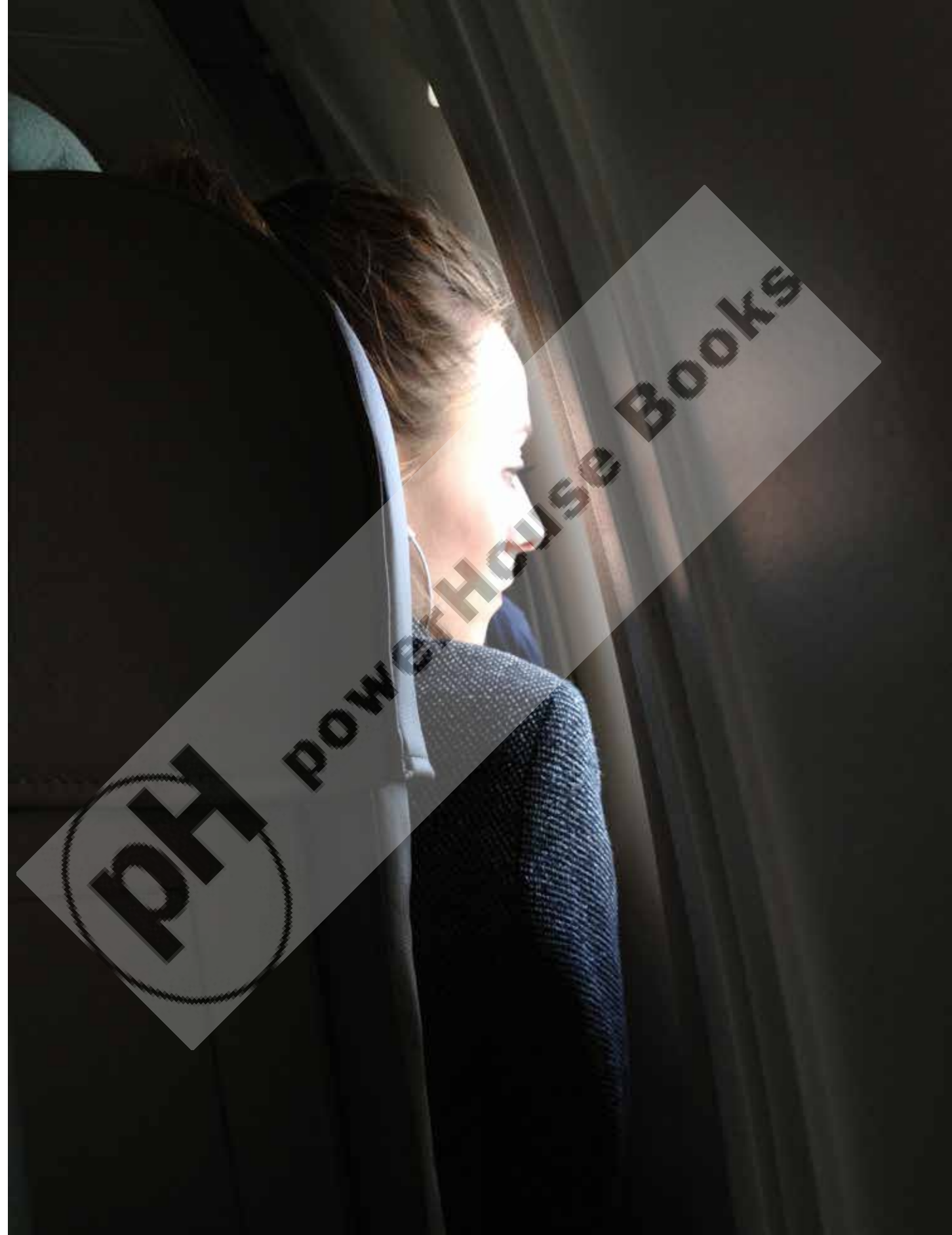
Leonard stopped pacing and plopped wearily on the sofa. He gazed out the window. The view was of another high-rise building.

"Look, I don't want to make a big point of this honor business because it puts you in a certain camp," he began. "Every fascist that comes along makes a point of these virtues and uses them as an opportunity to inflict his power and vision on susceptible people. But you also get tired of getting kicked around by the latest guru and the latest revolutionary hero. You're trying to get out of pain and there are various invitations all around. One says meditate. One says shoot heroin. One says sleep with a lot of girls. One says sleep with a lot of boys. There are a host of invitations, but because of the way the world is constituted, at least 99 percent of them are hustles. Maybe I'm a little tougher. I'm in training now and the rigors of the road dictate a certain lifestyle. I've had my share of being taken."

The next night, the Bottom Line was filled with kindred spirits, survivors of those hustles. Leonard, in a grey suit and an open-collared black shirt, fought off a hoarse voice and regaled the crowd with his songs of love and hate. And they loved it. As soon as the set was over, Leonard retreated to the small dressing room and collapsed on the couch.

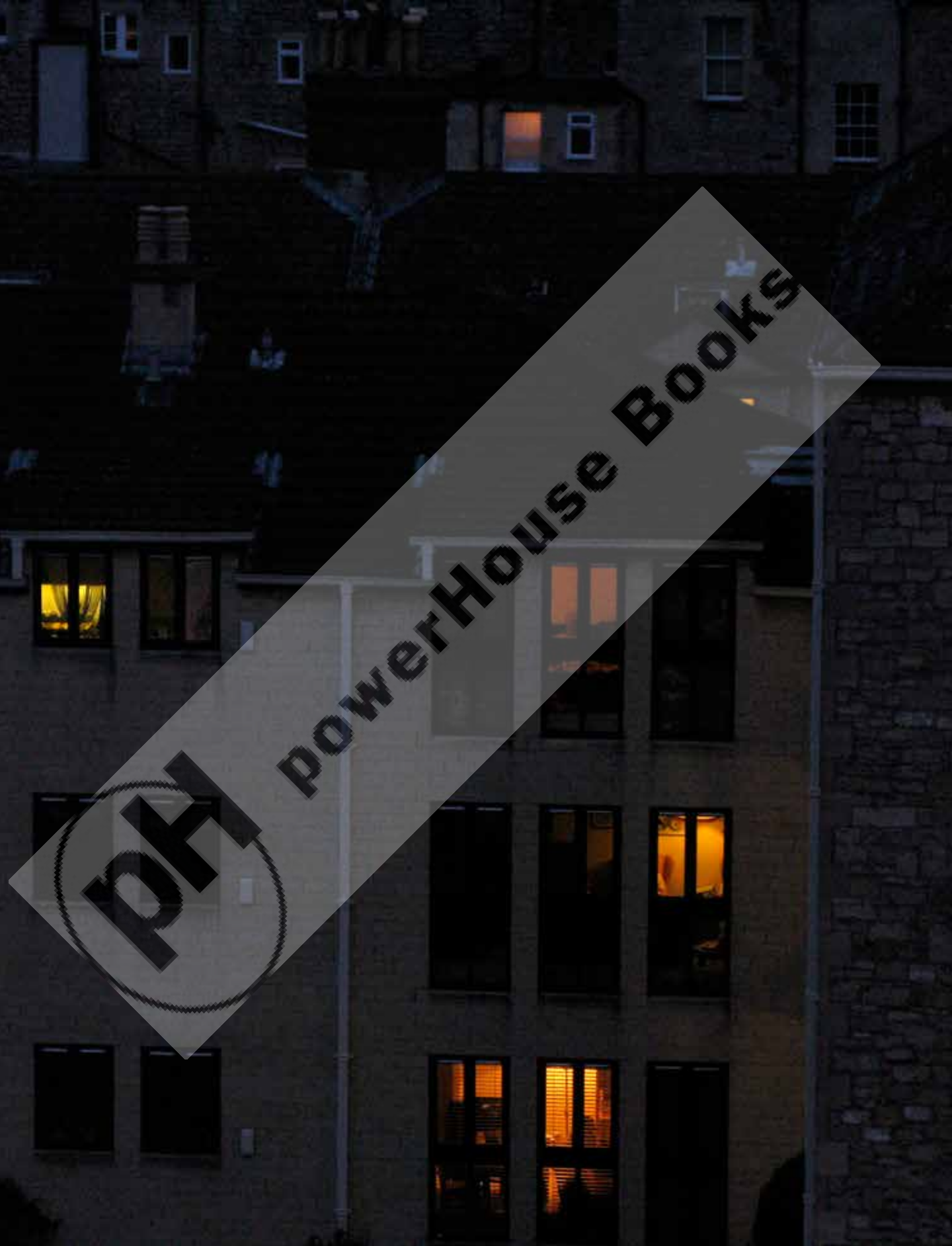
"My knees were shaking," he confessed to his manager. "But this is a good place to be nervous at."

I remarked on the amazing reverence that the audience had shown him.





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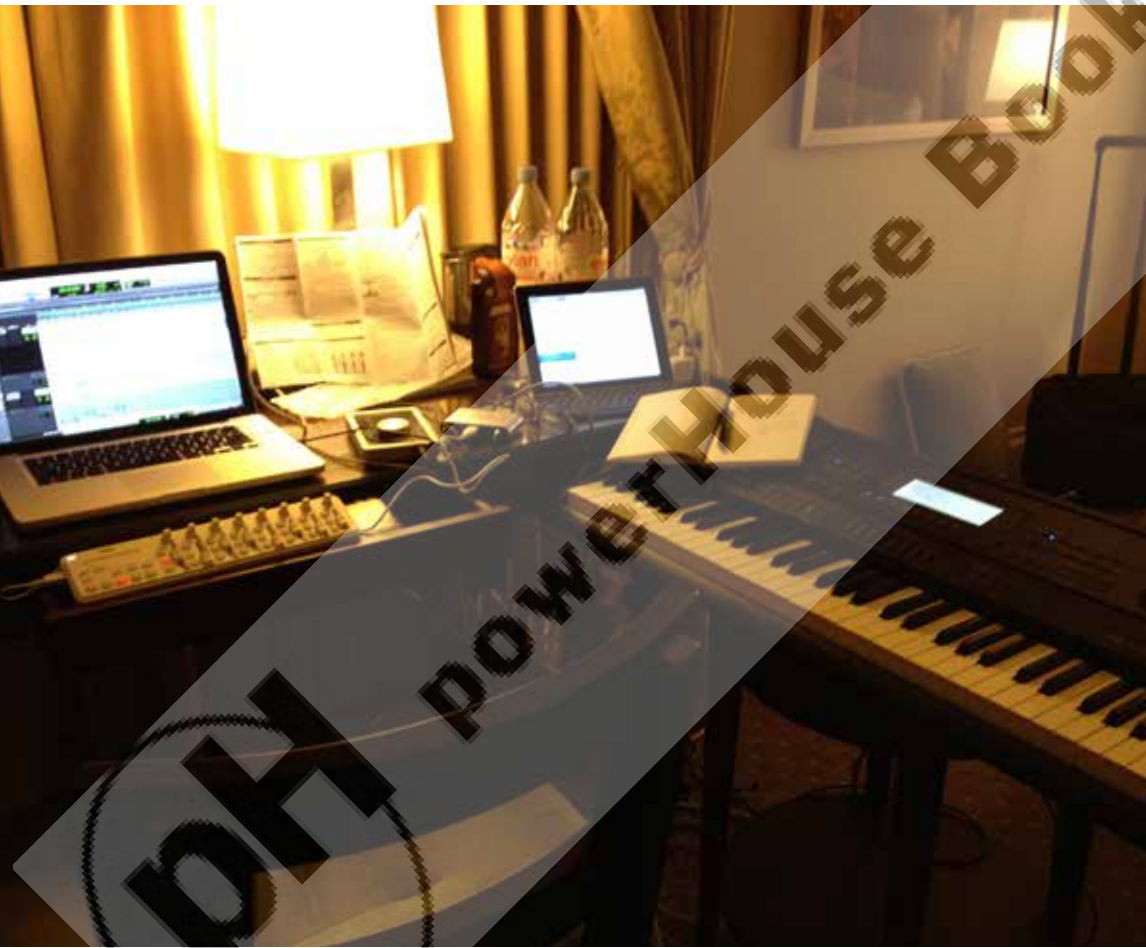
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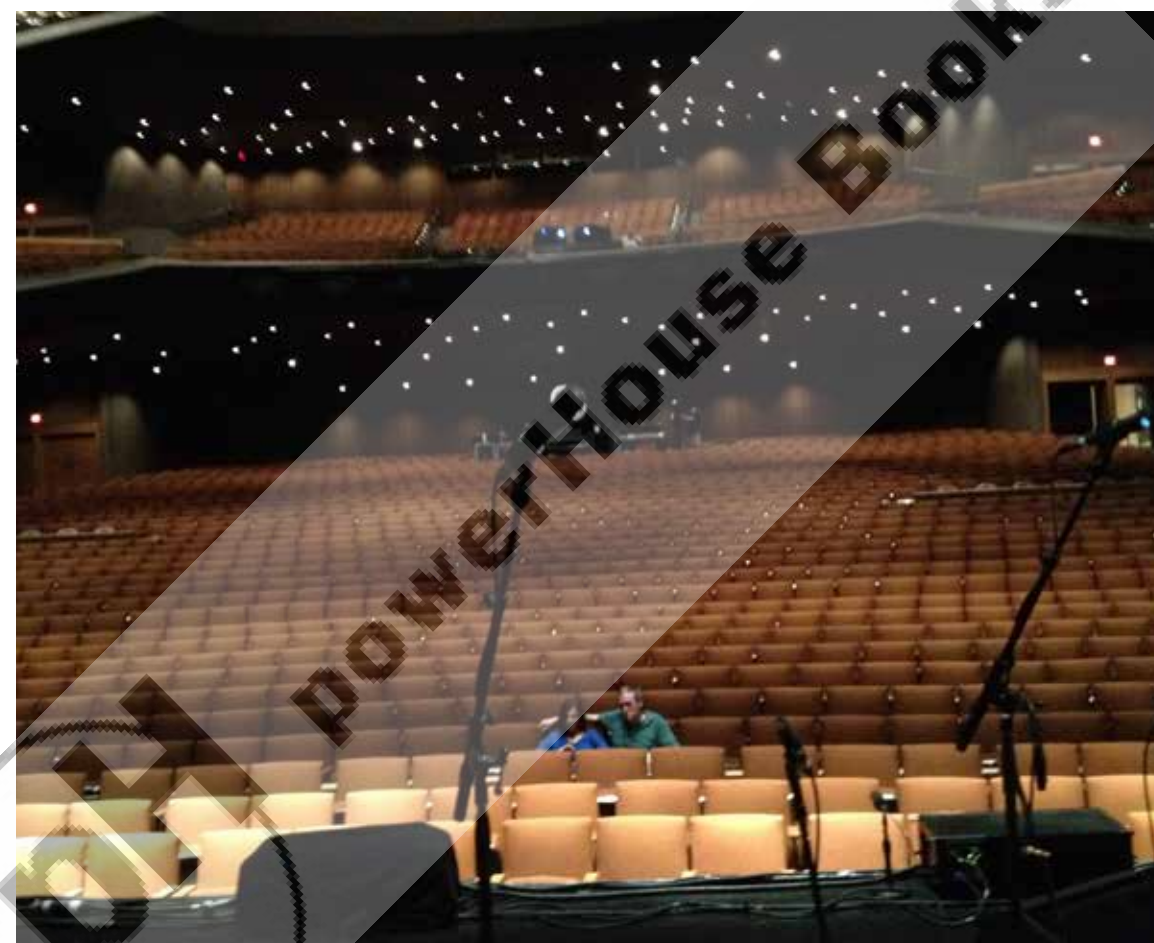
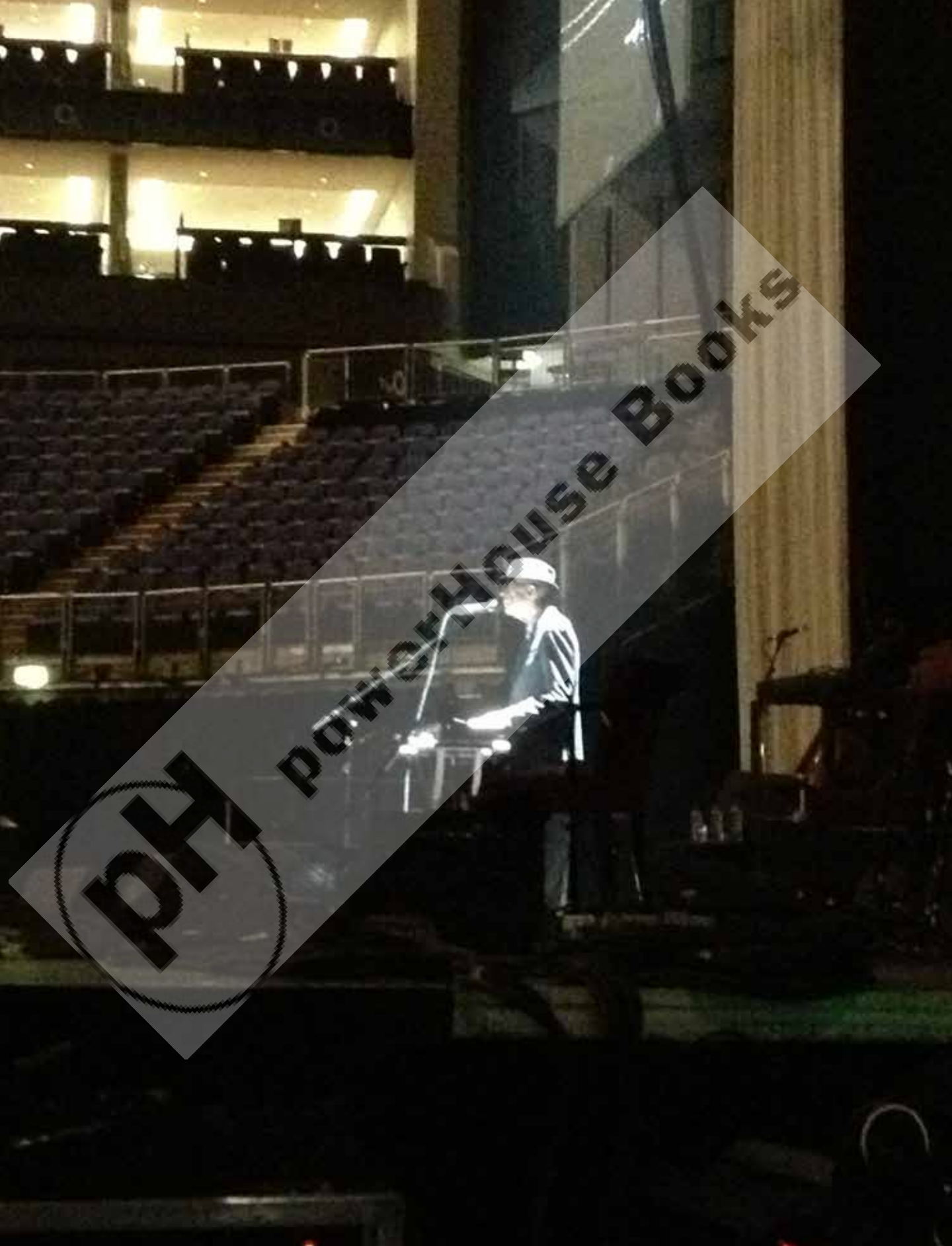


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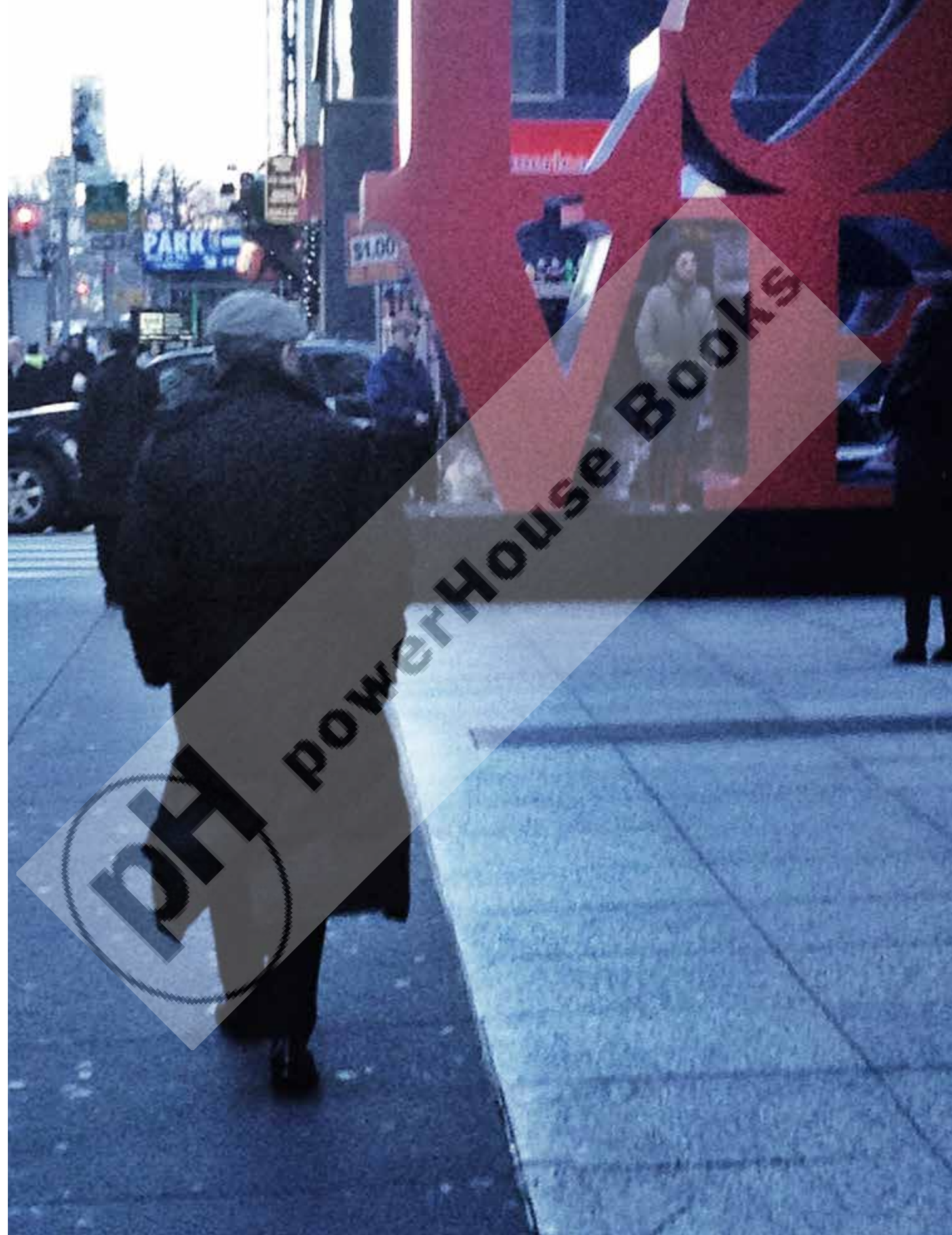


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