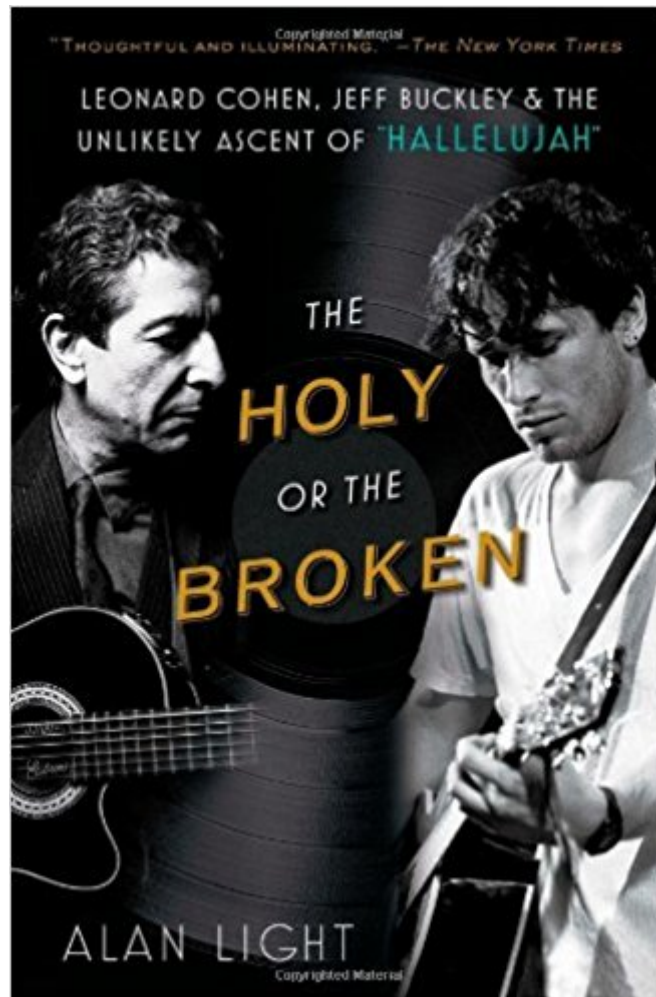


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The Holy Or The Broken: Leonard Cohen, Jeff Buckley, And The Unlikely Ascent Of "Hallelujah"



Synopsis

Praised as "a brilliantly revelatory" [a masterful work of critical journalism] • (Kirkus Reviews, starred review), *The Holy or the Broken* is the fascinating account of one of the most-performed rock songs in history: "Leonard Cohen's heartrending 'Hallelujah.' How did one obscure song become an international anthem for human triumph and tragedy, a song each successive generation seems to feel they have discovered and claimed as uniquely their own? Celebrated music journalist Alan Light follows the improbable journey of 'Hallelujah' straight to the heart of popular culture.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (132 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

In *THE HOLY OR THE BROKEN*, Alan Light almost insists that the reader know more than one version of Leonard Cohen's song, "Hallelujah." He conducts a wide-ranging study of first the song itself, including many, many verses and their Biblical and secular origins, and then the story of Jeff Buckley, whose recording was hugely instrumental in the eventual mega-success of the song. The accounts of the more than 200 recordings, artists and uses of the song follow in fascinating stories. Leonard Cohen has been a figure on the international music scene for decades, and his gravelly voice and sometimes suggestive, always evocative lyrics are his trademark. Light's introduction shows Cohen accepting an award for "Song Lyrics of Literary Excellence" earlier this year in Boston. Bob Dylan sends a congratulatory email addressing him as the "Kafka of the Blues," and the fun begins of sorting out how "Hallelujah" went from being on the single album that was refused by Cohen's record company to winning this prestigious honor from PEN New England. The

opening verse of "Hallelujah" (musicians have been known to rearrange the order, to omit verses, or even stop in the middle) starts with an image of King David's "secret chord" with its special spiritual power. It was his noted musicianship that first earned David a spot in the royal court, the first step toward his rise to power and uniting the Jewish people. David's longing for Bathsheba "overthrew" him. The greatness of Samson ("She tied you to a kitchen chair / she broke your throne, she cut your hair" in the second verse) and the power of David are no longer viable; these Old Testament icons are helpless in lust and despair. "They find themselves in a stark and barren place" with only a broken or a holy "Hallelujah."

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