

The Boss thrills Liberty Town

By Don Strausburger

It's a seemingly normal Wednesday evening in Philadelphia. Normal, that is, except for the Spectrum.

At 8:30 the lights in the sports arena go out and 20,000 spectators begin a deafening scream.

"BRUUUUUUUCE!"

The stage lights go on and each person shouts his own form of approval. Bruce Springsteen, along with the E Street Band, is once again playing to a packed house in Philadelphia.

On this night, the second of six sold-out shows at the Spectrum. Springsteen takes the crowd on a musical journey from the early days

of "Rosalita" to the current success of "Dancing In The Dark" and "Cover Me." Not only does the music span over an eleven year period, it appeals to an audience ranging from teens to middle age.

From the concert's opening, "Born In The USA," the high-energy title cut of the new album, to its final encore, featuring "Twist And Shout" by the Beatles and his rendition of the "Devil with a Blue Dress On" medley, the crowd cheers, sings, dances and occasionally reminisces.

For artists who have survived over many years, the music selection for a tour promoting a new album is very interesting. The spectator wonders how many of

the old standards will be heard as opposed to the new hits. The Springsteen concert handles the problem by simply making the show long enough to satisfy everyone; in this case, a four-hour show broken into two sets.

The first set takes you up and down an emotional rollercoaster with blazing themes like "Out In The Streets" and haunting tales like "Atlantic City." The first set ends with an inspiring version of "Thunder Road," leaving the audience hungry for more of what they have already seen.

And more is exactly what they get! Springsteen returns after a short intermission to do "Hungry Heart" in which the crowd sings the entire first verse and chorus

before he joins in on the vocals. From this the show continues upward in emotion with "Dancing In The Dark." As in the video, Springsteen pulls a young girl from the audience to be his onstage dancing partner.

The highlight of the second set, however, is the performance of the latest single, "Cover Me." The song takes on an entirely new identity in concert through the use of reverb and voice delay systems. After hearing this version, listening to the studio cut is difficult and boring.

In reviewing the basic technical aspects of the concert performance, it is hard to find even minor faults. Among the many strengths of the concert are the lighting and actual performance. Lighting for concerts often is planned according to the elaborate or simple messages contained within the songs. The lighting design for the show does not overwhelm the music but is still very effective in creating mood.

The performance from beginning to end is an absolute pleasure from a musician's view. The band is very tight, a term defining how well the musicians work together, and is working with good arrangements. The live versions of most songs are close to the studio cuts; however, they are filled with many interesting twists.

Also interesting from a musical standpoint is the transition from one song to another. Springsteen uses some of the slower, more obscure cuts to entertain the crowd but also to let them rest. Most of the obscure

cuts come from his next-to-last album, Nebraska, a critically acclaimed but commercially unsuccessful album. The songs do serve their purpose and are even enjoyable.

Among his many talents, Bruce Springsteen has the capability to make an arena as large as the Spectrum very intimate. He frequently and comfortably talks with the crowd about past experiences and occasionally discusses the derivation of his music.

The E Street Band continues, after eleven years, to be the staple behind Springsteen's charismatic stagework. With one exception, the backup band remains the same with the key figures being Roy Bittan on keyboards and Clarence Clemons on saxophone. The one major change is the departure of Miami Steve Van Zandt. Miami Steve has been replaced by Nils Lofgren who gives Springsteen a chance to spend more time away from his guitar. Springsteen now has more freedom to dance around and interplay with the crowd than in past tours. Lofgren also adds flair and freshness to the solos in songs like "Jungleland."

With Bittan, Clemons and Lofgren, "Jungleland" continues to be one of the best live cuts done. Between the haunting lyrics and outstanding solo work, the song affects every person who hears it in one way or another.

If you have not been able to see the Springsteen tour, you still have one chance. The tour moves to Pittsburgh this month so if at all possible, don't miss this concert.

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