

The Scarlet & Black



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Springsteen grabs limelight

by John Buckwalter

When the lights dim in Darby Gymnasium on Saturday night, September 20, Bruce Springsteen will bring the sweat and daze of congested New Jersey jungleground to Grinnell College. Aiding Springsteen in the projection of this atmosphere will be the E Street Band, consisting of: Clarence Clemons on saxophones, Steve Van Zandt on guitars, Max Weinburg on drums, Garry Tallent on bass, Roy Bittan on piano, and Danny Federici on organ. The show, which begins at 9:30 P.M., will re-enact Jersey teenage life in the 1960's: beat-up cars, '60's gangfights, cheap thrills, and warm beer.

Bruce Springsteen's background is a chart similar to that of any young struggling musician. He was born in Freehold, New Jersey. At the age of nine, he was jolted by the rock'n'roll craze which swept America. At this time, Springsteen attempted to teach himself guitar, but he didn't begin to play seriously until 1963.

When his parents moved west, Springsteen stayed in his home town, traveling from rock bands to rock bands, from delectations to delectations. He formed Jersey bands with names like "Steel Mill" and "Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom," but Springsteen himself questions the quality of these bands, saying, "Someone would take a lead and we'd all fall down laughing."

Bruce journeyed westward in search of fame in 1972, and soon found himself playing at the legendary Fillmore West. After many unsuccessful attempts at attracting attention and followers, Bruce returned east.

In 1972, he was discovered while playing with his band in a New York nightclub. It was at his time that he signed with Columbia Records.

Springsteen has released three albums since his discovery: *Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.* (January, 1973), *The Wild, The Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle* (November, 1973), and *Born to*

Run (September, 1975). Through each record, Springsteen has received increasingly higher esteem in the eyes of the public.

It has been said that he portrays life in a vivid and realistic fashion, with unusual, novel and original interpretations. Springsteen once said to a reporter, "The stuff I write is what I live with, the stories are all around me. I just put them down."

As a songwriter, Springsteen is hailed for creating music that is fresh and diversified, never stagnant. His roots revert to his childhood idols of the '50's and '60's: Bo-Diddley, Phil Spector, Chuck Berry, Motown, and, of course, Elvis.

Springsteen was once quoted as saying, "Anybody who sees Elvis Presley and doesn't want to be like Elvis Presley has got to have something wrong with him." However, Springsteen's own music, which at times acknowledges these roots, actually copies no other artist.

Bruce Springsteen pays further tribute to these older artists in his repertoire of songs. Besides playing his own songs, he occasionally plays "oldies" written by his idols: Manfred Mann's "Sha La La," Elvis' "Wear My Ring Around Your Neck," the Crystals' "Then She Kissed Me," and Gary U.S. Bonds' "Quarter To Three."

Springsteen's music has been described in a variety of ways, from rock to jazz to soul. He has in recent months been frequently associated with performers like Dylan and Jagger because of his unusual voice, his basic musical progressions, and his never-ending stream of poetic lyrics.

As a musical philosopher, Springsteen has been complemented by critics for his eerie and ominous, yet exhilarating lyrics. Bruce Springsteen explains his intentions behind the lyrics, "Songs have to have possibilities. You have to let the audience search it out for themselves. You can't say, 'Here it is. This is exactly what I mean,' and give it to them. You have to let them search."

Security tightened

Due to Bruce Springsteen's increased popularity and because of concert cancellations in Omaha and Dallas, coordinators for Saturday night's Springsteen concert are expecting perhaps several hundred strangers to arrive in Grinnell, hoping to see Springsteen.

After a highly successful summer, with rave reviews in *Rolling Stone*, *Newsweek*, and *Stereo Review* magazines, Springsteen's popularity has skyrocketed since Grinnell signed him on last spring. As a result, people from all over the Midwest and even New York have been calling for tickets. However, there are only 200 tickets for outside sale and they are expected to be gone by Saturday night. Therefore, college personnel fear excess crowds.

"There could be a lot of angry people around. People from all over the Midwest driving six hours and not being able to get in," according to Briann Mann, social coordinator. Consequently, several security precautions have been taken by the college.

Six Pinkerton guards have been hired to work with the student security patrol, which will be expanded for the night. Four Pinkertons will guard Darby doors and windows. The other two will patrol north and south campus loggias.

Mann said that the college did not want to resort to such measures. However, he explained that KUNI radio in Cedar Falls mistakenly reported recently that there were still plenty of tickets, but later retracted the statement. "But who knows how many heard the retraction," Mann commented.

The Pinkerton guards will also help with parking problems and other extra demands that may arise. "In some cases, somebody in blue, they're not going to cause a hassle," Mann said.

As another added precaution, students have been urged to take all security measures possible. This includes carrying I.D.s and dorm keys, and keeping doors locked and windows closed, especially when leaving rooms.

Flashy punk in "Born to Run"

by Carlson Smith

Considering the recent tremendous surge in Bruce Springsteen's popularity, one must view skeptically a new release by an artist who is being hailed as a great by such commercially-oriented magazines as *Billboard*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Record World*, et. al. Past experience seems to indicate that when such a thing occurs, the quality of the artist's recordings generally begins to decline.

Perhaps this is partially because increasing commercialism often results from a greater accessibility, and such elements as catchy tunes, more obvious lyrics, and an unwillingness to depart

from a proven musical formula are so often central to an artist's wide appeal. Certainly there are exceptions to this generalization, as in the case of the Beatles, Dylan, and Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*.

Born to Run, Springsteen's latest release on Columbia Records, proves not to be an exception. The album is flawed by grandiose production and arrangements, as well as by the classically influenced overembellishments of new keyboard man Roy Bittan. While these techniques may be readily applicable to works by other artists, they do not blend well with Springsteen's gutsy, Jersey, street-punk style.

Things often become too overstated, particularly on such cuts as "Jungleland," "Night," and "Backstreets." However, a redeeming quality of all three of these songs is Springsteen's powerful rock vocals, which when applied to more understated material such as "Thunder Road" and "Born to Run," result in rock songs comparable in quality to the greatness of Springsteen's first two albums.

Springsteen still seems to possess the tremendous ability he demonstrated on his earlier work, and one hopes that his future releases will show *Born to Run* to be transitional, rather than prototypical.