



Live 1975-1985
*Bruce Springsteen &
The E Street Band*

It's so easy to be turned off by the hype. After selling 11 million copies and producing seven Top 10 hits, *Born in the U.S.A.* became the monster Bruce Springsteen couldn't control. Even his most ardent fans began to think they could last a week or so without hearing about The Boss.

But media overkill has dogged Springsteen throughout his career and, not surprisingly, it's resurfaced again with the release of *Live/1975-1985*. The press has breathlessly covered the album's release as if it were the Second Coming and, based on initial sales alone, this five-record set has already sold substantially more copies than any other boxed set in history.

So, in a way, it would be a relief to write a mediocre review; something that wasn't simply a variation on "God bless Bruce Springsteen." But you don't really expect me to do that, do you? Of course not. Because *that* would be lying.

First, let me say that *Live/1975-1985* is a great buy. It costs \$25, but that works out to only \$5 an album, a bargain by any standard. And just listing all the songs that appear on it would take up a good part of this review.

Taken as a whole, the music clearly delineates Springsteen's growth as a songwriter, showing his development from a master of Spectorian teen anthems into a mature social observer. This change is best seen on the cassette and compact disc versions of the album, both of which break the music up into three distinct parts.

The first section deals with the usual teen-age concerns of cars, girls and growing up. It begins with a beautiful acoustic version of "Thunder Road," and then the E Street band never lets up as it charges through such classics as "Adam Raised a Cain" and a rousing, 10-minute version of "Rosalita."

The second section begins with a raucous "Cadillac Ranch" in which Springsteen sings, "Cadillac Cadillac/Long and dark shiny and black/Open up your engines let 'em roar/Tearing up the high-

way like a big old dinosaur." In other words, it's the usual stuff rock 'n' roll is made of.

But beginning with an acoustic "This Land is Your Land," Springsteen's songs start to focus on the underbelly of society and the forgotten people who live there. This section contains three songs from *Nebraska*, his chilling collection of first-person narratives. With the full backing of the band and Springsteen's impassioned vocals (especially on "Johnny 99"), they gain a new power and conviction.

The third section ends with the one-two punch of "Born in the U.S.A.," a song about a bitter Vietnam vet, and "Seeds," a previously unreleased track. "Seeds" is one of the best songs — and certainly the angriest — Springsteen has ever written. In it, the shiny and black status symbol from "Cadillac Ranch" makes a startling reappearance; only this time the singer is an unemployed man who can't support his wife and kid.

I haven't even begun to cover the breadth and complexity of this album. But those of you who've seen him in concert don't need any convincing.

But for the rest of you — the people whose knowledge of his music begins and ends with *Born in the U.S.A.* — let me just say that this is the musical equivalent of having read *The Merchant of Venice* only to have someone hand you a collection of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Ignore the hype and buy this album. It's terrific. And God bless Bruce Springsteen.

by Michael Giltz