

The Boss dances into videos

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

With the release of "Dancing in the Dark," Bruce Springsteen finally has entered the world of music videos.

Directed by Brian DePalma (*Carrie, Scarface*), "Dancing in the Dark" is a simple and very standard video as Springsteen is shown singing his No. 2 smash hit in front of a live audience. At the end of the song, he chooses an excited and attractive young woman from the front row to dance with him on stage as Clarence Clemons finishes off the tune with a saxophone solo.

Though acted out for the video, the final scene is not entirely fabricated. On each stop of his current tour, Springsteen really does pick a woman out of the audience to dance with him.

"Dancing in the Dark" is a very good song and certainly Springsteen's most commercial. Lyrics such as "I want to change my clothes, my hair, my face . . ." and "I'm just tired and bored with myself . . ." effectively capture the feelings of the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Obviously, the song has a lot to do with the success of the video.

However, the true saving grace is Springsteen himself. This staged video purports to show Springsteen as he is in concert, thereby totally relying on his magnetism.

Bruce Springsteen live is a force to be reckoned with. His legendary three-and-a-half-hour concerts are considered by fans and critics alike to be one of the best in rock 'n' roll history. Springsteen has the unique ability to play large auditoriums, yet create the electric atmosphere of a small bar. When he performs, the audience is under his complete control and one gets the feeling that if Springsteen had to choose, he would rather tour than record.

Fortunately, Brian DePalma recognized and utilized the Boss' natural stage presence. The director concentrates on close-up shots of Springsteen and the E Street Band, rather than opting for the boring, overlong shots of the audience that have been a major flaw of most live videos, especially those by Journey.

DePalma's crisp, fluid camera work shows Springsteen up close. The rest of the band members have their moments in the spotlight, but Springsteen is constantly center stage. As always, he is having fun performing, and the energy and excitement that the Boss generates is infectious.

With the notable exception of U-2, most bands would do well to stay away from live videos, staged or otherwise. Still, "Dancing in the Dark" is quite good, though by no means great. Its concept is hardly creative, but it succeeds despite itself.

9/17/84

Springsteen seems comfortable in front of the camera and easily projects a fun-loving personality. The video enhances his image as a hard-working musician who loves to perform.

A main drawback is the contrived atmosphere that pervades the whole affair. A clip from his 1978 tour stands in sharp contrast to "Dancing in the Dark." "Rosalita," from *The Wild, The Innocent And The E Street Shuffle*, reveals Springsteen as he



really is on stage. Because he is performing without having to worry about taping a video, he is completely uninhibited. Thus, "Rosalita" has the added power and authenticity that "Dancing in the Dark" lacks.

Springsteen soon will begin filming a video to support his second single, "Cover Me," and DePalma will be directing again. One previous video was made of a Springsteen song ("Atlantic City" from the *Nebraska* album), but he refused to appear in it. Thankfully, after performing a cameo role in Clemons' video, Springsteen seems to have changed his attitude about making videos and plans to make several to support his current album, *Born in the U.S.A.*

Bruce Springsteen obviously felt comfortable making a live video the first time around. But he has overcome the hurdle of the "first video" and should not hesitate to forge ahead into conceptual videos. When the fertile and imaginative mind that created such classics as "Born to Run" and "Hungry Heart" really begins to experiment in music videos, the results are sure to be fresh and worth looking for.