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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Springsteen at the Garden

I had a great time at the Garden last night (Wednesday, October 17) with my friend Kitty (of "Kitty's Back" fame) and HER friends. How could I not have a great time? It was Bruce and the E Street Band, after all. Still, his last tour -- the Seeger Sessions tour with a mostly different bunch of musicians -- was such a blast, such a hoedown, such a triumph (as good as I've EVER seen him) I knew this wouldn't measure up. I was right.

The show was worth every penny. It always is with Bruce. But problem number one is his new album "Magic," which Rolling Stone absurdly gave five stars, the "instant classic" rating reserved for masterpieces like "Pet Sounds" and "The Joshua Tree." (Not that those got five stars of course, for various reasons.) First, I really dislike the way producer Brendan O'Brien records Bruce's voice. That voice hasn't aged in the least, as his ferocious live vocals proved last night. But on the album, it all sounds glossed over, airbrushed...lazy, even. There's no urgency in them and I wasn't surprised to hear the vocals were recorded without the band and that people were brought in to overdub their parts. And of course it's not a great batch of songs. His last really good album was "Tunnel Of Love," when you're talking about original songs. His last great album was "Seeger Sessions" (covers) and before that really "Born In The USA." But he can still deliver a tune. "Radio Nowhere" grows on you and both "Long Walk Home" and "Girls In Their Summer Clothes" can enter the canon with heads held high.

But if any proof were needed that many of the other songs don't cut it, last night's show was the evidence. He included eight songs in the show and most every time they brought a quick halt to any momentum. Not "Long Walk Home" or "Girls" -- people shouted out the choruses as soon as they began. But the rest couldn't hold up.

The show began with "Radio Nowhere" of course and Bruce launched

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