



Bruce Springsteen with E Street Band guitarists Nils Lofgren and Steve Van Zandt in Barcelona, Spain. Among fresh twists stateside fans should expect are a rocked-up version of "Youngstown" and a Delta blues-like "Born in the U.S.A."

THE BOSS

almighty

Bruce Springsteen
brings his magical ministry tour home

ON TELEVISION



"Legends: Bruce Springsteen"
7:30 tonight, VH1
VH1 will break into this repeat airing of the documentary to show the first two songs from tonight's show live.

By **BOB IVRY**
Staff Writer

Do you believe in rock-and-roll? Can music save your mortal soul? And can you teach me how to dance... in the dark?

For many Bruce Springsteen fans, half-crazed with electric anticipation, the answers to Don McLean's musical questions are yes, yes, and yes.

Springsteen, New Jersey's poet laureate, returns tonight to the Continental Arena in East Rutherford for the first of 15 performances — his first appearance at the Meadowlands with the E Street Band since a Giants Stadium run in August 1985.

Judging from reports of his recently completed 36-show European tour, Bruce and the band have attacked their reunion with an evangelical fervor, spreading the gospel of soul-saving rock-and-roll with a mix of hard-driving favorites and somber folk-tinged blues. Their three-hour European sets featured a wide range of songs from Springsteen's 27-year catalog, offering plenty of oldies but goodies plus enough new interpretations of his standards to keep things fresh and interesting.

In fact, you could argue that these shows will be an artistic culmination for the Hall of Fame boy of summer, now a mature, 49-year-old family man. Springsteen has undergone a half-dozen professional and personal

U.S. TOUR DATES



Continental Arena, East Rutherford
Tonight, Sunday, Tuesday, July 24,
26, 27, 29, Aug. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12.
The Palace, Auburn Hills, Mich.
Aug. 16, 17.
Fleet Center, Boston
Aug. 21, 22, 24, 26, 27.
MCI Center, Washington, D.C.
Aug. 31, Sept. 1, 3.
First Union Center, Philadelphia
Sept. 13, 15, 16, 20, 21, 25.
United Center, Chicago
Sept. 27, 28, 30.
Staples Center, Los Angeles
Oct. 17.

More dates are expected to be announced later this summer.

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PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST AS AN EVOLVING MAN

1967



"I was invisible in school," says Springsteen, pictured in his Freehold High School yearbook.

1974



The Boss started out as a word-drunk singer-songwriter, his tunes populated with curious characters from the Jersey shore.

1984



"Born in the U.S.A." sold more than 15 million copies. Its success would plunge Springsteen into a period of introspection.

1992



Springsteen began the Nineties with a new son, a new wife, and a new home (in California) — and without the E Street Band.

1995



On the 1995-96 tour in support of "The Ghost of Tom Joad," it was just Springsteen, his guitar, and a harmonica.

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metamorphoses over the years, all of them watched closely by his New Jersey fans. After starting out a shy, word-drunk singer-songwriter, the Freehold native became, by turns, the hardest working club-band leader in the business, an overhyped neo-Dylan, a Top 40 staple, boy toy to a foxy actress-model wife, an introspective folk howler, a standard-bearer for left-wing political causes, a (gasp) Californian, an Oscar-winning balladeer, and a purveyor of Woody Guthrie-esque song-stories that stick up for the immigrant and the working stiff.

Now, married to a Jersey girl, with three children, a home near his beloved Jersey shore, and his longtime buddies backing him onstage, Springsteen is poised to prove, once again, that he can deliver the goods.

Ticketless aficionados will still be able to enjoy the kickoff of the U.S. leg of the tour — which includes six cities and will most likely be expanded — by tuning into VH1. The cable channel will broadcast the first two songs of tonight's concert, sandwiched by a broadcast of "Legends: Bruce Springsteen," starting at 7:30.

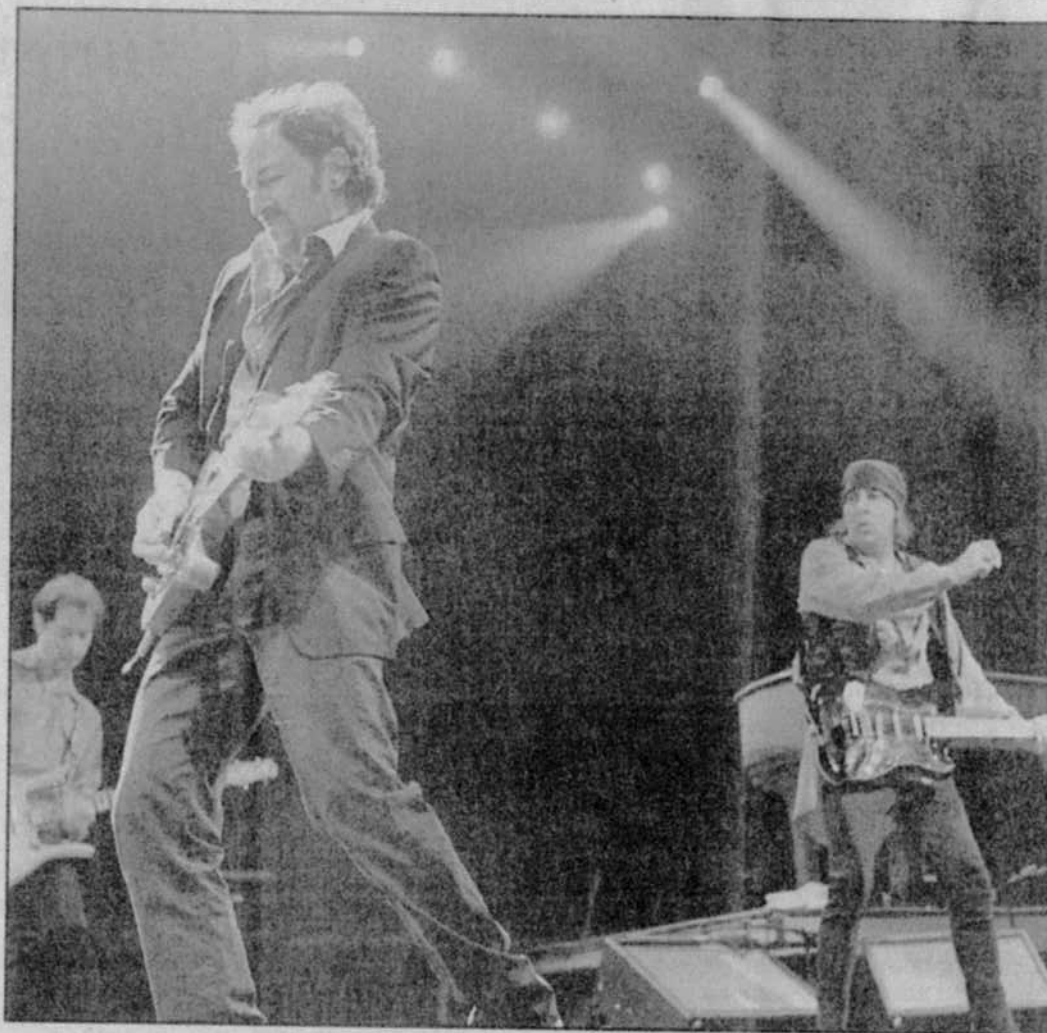
Even before Springsteen burst onto the national music scene in the 1970s, his shows were the talk of the Jersey music world, renowned for their energy and charm. These Continental Arena gigs — with a new album of outtakes and demos, "Tracks," but no new music, to support — renew Springsteen's almost old-fashioned connection with his hometown fans.

That special rapport with his fans characterized his European shows, too, according to published reports.

The day before the tour's April 9 tip-off at the Palau Sant Jordi in Barcelona, Spain, Springsteen waded into an adoring crowd that had gathered outside the soccer stadium to hear an open rehearsal.

At a May 1 show in Manchester, England, Springsteen made an onstage reference to the "ministry of rock-and-roll," whose purpose, he said, was to raise the souls of the "downhearted, downcast, and downsized." He, of course, cast himself in the role of the boss of his church. Why? Because, he said, it was his job.

An observer commented, after a May 16 performance in Birmingham, England, that "If I Should Fall Behind" had a mournful,



In Barcelona, Spain, Bruce Springsteen waded into a crowd of adoring fans.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

communal feel to it. And a May 25 show in Dublin featured a gospelized version of "Light of Day."

Among the fresh twists stateside Springsteen fans should expect are a rocked-up rendition of the somber working-class ballad, "Youngstown," from "The Ghost of Tom Joad" album, and a Delta blues version of "Born in the U.S.A." featuring a slide guitar. A new song, "Land of Hopes and Dreams," was unveiled overseas.

A rocking "Youngstown" will go a long way toward filling the void left by the dearth of political songs on today's rock set lists. It tells the story of a Rust Belt town fading under the pressure of vanishing industry and jobs. And the acoustic "Born in the U.S.A." returns the tune to its roots as an outtake from the

"Nebraska" album, before it was shamelessly co-opted by then-President Ronald Reagan and misinterpreted as a paean to nationalistic values. In its slower, scaled-down version, it's a touching blues lament about the perversion of the American dream and a generation's disillusionment after the Vietnam War.

If all this sounds a bit heavy for a *fin de siècle* rock-and-roll show, rest assured that danceable rockers like "Glory Days," "Hungry Heart," "Two Hearts," "Darlington County," "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out," "Promised Land," and, of course, "Born to Run" were all staples of Springsteen's European shows.

New Jersey has always stood behind Springsteen. That's because Springsteen has always stood up for New Jersey. The love affair continues tonight.