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Bruce Springsteen Road Trip, 40 Years Of The Boss (review)

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their statements. And while the opining and anecdotes by the critics gives the story its context, it's the Mothers' reminiscences that add value. It's a pleasure to hear the band members' stories and to savor the in-

redients that each tossed into the musical stew.

MICHAEL ASHENFELDER
Library of Congress

Bruce Springsteen Road Trip, 40 Years Of The Boss. DVD. [Surrey, UK]: Pride, 2009. PGDVD117. \$26.95.

This 2009 DVD set from the British company Pride contains two discs; the first is a biography concentrating on Springsteen's early days and the second an overview of his early recordings. The disclaimer at the beginning of the first disc states that the documentary was not done with the cooperation of the Bruce Springsteen conglomerate and that it contains no original music by him.

The first DVD is a compelling documentary of Springsteen's beginning years as a musician in Freehold, New Jersey through his first great successes in the early 1980s. Skillfully weaving commentary and interviews with numerous formative musical associates like Richard Blackwell, Frank Marziotti, Vini Lopez, Robbin Thompson, and Albee Tellone, this documentary examines many of Springsteen's first musical influences while giving very little information about his family or private life. None of his family was interviewed, nor were some other early band mates such as George Thies or Danny Federici. The only words spoken by the artist himself come from an interview done apparently in the early 1980s.

Aside from those mentioned above, the best of the interviewees are *Village Voice* reviewer Robert Christgau, Carl "Tinker" West (manager of Springsteen's early group Steel Mill), and former drummer Lopez. Each of these give interesting commentary from some very different perspectives. No interviews with managers Mike Appel, Jon Landau, or perennial E Street Band members such as Clarence Clemmons, Max Weinberg, or Steve Van Zandt are included, suggesting perhaps that current Springsteen employees were off limits during making of this film (Appel and Springsteen had a rancorous parting in the early 1980s).

The strength of this film is in its explication of the music scene that surrounded Springsteen during his apprenticeship

years and how it introduced him to styles as varied as folk, heavy metal, art rock and an array of classic performers such as Elvis Presley, Van Morrison, and the Beatles. John Hammond's stewardship of his career at CBS is glossed over to some degree, but the focus here is clearly on the evolution of the artist, not the businessman. The weakness of the product is in its distance from its subject—not only are there no direct words from Springsteen, there is no music at all other than some occasional background sounds which have nothing to do with the music being discussed.

The second DVD is a survey of Springsteen's major recordings from *Born to Run* (1975) through *Nebraska* (1982). Springsteen's growth as an artist is explored through the examination of the increasing conceptual integration (musical, lyrical, and photographic) of each album. *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (1978) is presented as a jumping off point in this move towards concept—a technique pioneered by Frank Sinatra in the 1950s on his Reprise album series. The close attention to lyrics and lyrical progression throughout *Darkness* demonstrates Springsteen's commitment to the art of storytelling. *The River* (1980) is seen as the next step—a double album exploring several different directions, while offering conflicting opinions on its ultimate success. *Nebraska* (1982) represents a step back—not to his roots, but to the perceptions of what his roots might have been: a Bob Dylan disciple. This album put the whole focus on Springsteen as a singer/songwriter accompanied by nothing but his own guitar and displays the results of his voluntary withdrawal from the business of popular music, driven to some degree by his depression over the state of society during the early Reagan years.

The weakness of the first DVD is somewhat corrected in the second by the inclusion of at least a small dose of music,

although never more than about fifteen seconds at a time, presumably because of copyright issues. Some spoken interludes from various performances (a 2005 VH1 concert for example) are included, providing some welcome insight into Springsteen's compositional motivation. The 1980s interview with Springsteen is again used, with large parts recycled from the first disc. In fact, much of the information in the second DVD is just an amplification of what is in the first, with some more detail

presented as well as music and some short segments of concert videos (including some apparent bootlegs). The concert material seems to span several decades of Springsteen's career and is used to illustrate the points the documentary is attempting to make regarding his artistic development, but they are unfortunately not dated or located.

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Nine Inch Nails and the Industrial Uprising, Metal Machine Music. DVD. Surrey, UK: Sexy Intellectual, 2009. SIDVD546. \$19.95.

This bio-documentary film examines the emergence and popularization of the genre of "industrial" music, focusing on the band Nine Inch Nails (NIN) and its founder and principle musician/composer, Trent Reznor. Commentary and context are provided by two former members of NIN, a handful of other musicians (most notably Genesis P-Orridge, founding member of seminal industrial band Throbbing Gristle), and a selection of rock journalists and biographers. The film includes many musical examples, historical photos, and concert footage of a wide range of industrial and proto-industrial bands.

Metal Machine Music argues that industrial music evolved out of a fusion of punk and electronic music in Britain in the 1970s, grew in influence in the United States through the late 1980s and early 1990s, and effectively culminated with Reznor and NIN, who commercialized it in the 1990s. NIN is credited with tempering the genre's aggression and harsh, dehumanized sounds with more accessible timbres, danceable beats and more emotional and poetic lyrics. The film begins in the 1970s, seeking the origins of industrial music in both punk rock—citing the Sex Pistols and punk's DIY ethos—and in experimental European bands like Cabaret Voltaire, Kraftwerk, and Throbbing Gristle, who included electronic sounds, often reminiscent of factory noises, in their music. The film's historical narrative jumps from the U.K. to the U.S., examining a small collection of groups that shaped the American industrial music scene, including the industrial-metal band Ministry and its offshoots, and NIN. The latter part of the DVD focuses on Reznor's life and music,

placing him among the key creative figures in the development of a contemporary industrial music aesthetic and offering criticism and interpretation of individual albums and songs.

While *Metal Machine Music* offers a much-needed portrait of an often-overlooked musical genre, it falls short on several counts. The historical context provided is deceptively narrow, and either entirely omits or gives only cursory mention to a number of bands—for example, Killing Joke, Joy Division, Bauhaus, Kraftwerk, and Skinny Puppy—that were essential to the development of industrial rock and that directly influenced NIN. The socio-cultural analysis offered in the film—suggesting that industrial music arose as a response to "pop," is driven by "rage," and reflects the ennui and hopelessness felt by young musicians living in America's "rust belt" in the 1990s—is rather shallow and facile. *Metal Machine Music's* gravest oversight is that it focuses on pop biography and so never really gets to the most interesting aspect of its subject, namely industrial music itself: how it is made, and how its evolution is symbiotically linked to the evolution of the drum machine, synthesizer, sequencer, sampler and other the other digital technologies so central to the compositional ethos and aesthetic of bands like NIN.

This DVD will likely be of use as a resource for introductory popular music courses, but lacks the depth and analysis that might attract musicologists and cultural historians/theorists interested in popular music.

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