

Arts and Entertainment



Bruce Springsteen and Nils Lofgren — they came out and they played.

David Creamer/Daily Nebraskan

The Boss gave his best — again and again

Review by Ward W. Triplett III
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Andy Travis: "Oh, Mr. Carlson. Whatever happened to the good old days, with guys like Crosby Stills and Nash? They just came out and played, it was great."

True, they don't just come out and play anymore. Everybody has got a gimmick, got a look or is plugged

into a trend. They make money with these trendy sounds, but they just don't prove anything. No beef, you might say. They then all fade away when the next trend comes in.

That's why Bruce Springsteen, who just comes out and does his job has survived 11 years. The man avoided the quick buck and waited until the public caught up with him.

His music and his love for it are the only things he's selling, and it is real and strong enough to make you forget the man doesn't look or act like a "star." As he proved Sunday night to 13,734 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, he is the Boss. His performance showed why so many waited so long for tickets. Bruce Springsteen always has, and probably always will, give his all for a show. He did again Sunday night.

The concert started late as most do. Although cars were backed up to Vine Street around 6:30 p.m., Springsteen's stagehands hadn't even begun their sound check by the scheduled 7:30 p.m. start.

Around 7:40 p.m., the soundmen took to the stage and tinkered with the guitars. The crowd cheered wildly, but to no avail. Around 7:50 p.m., somebody started a wave that eventually swept the whole arena (Springsteen would later start his own, and note that "you guys must have been practicing").

Finally, at 8:12 p.m., the lights went out. There was no introduction. A voice in the darkness yelled 1-2, 1-2-3-4. Drummer Max Weinberg struck up the first beats of "Born in the U.S.A." The lights blasted on and there he was, center stage.

He was dressed in his typical blue collar American look. Faded blue jeans, green muscle shirt, biker boots and oh, yes, a blue bandana. It was the first song of the night, but Springsteen stood at the mike with his guitar poised like a rifle, leaning back and screaming the lyrics to the title song from his latest album like it would be the last song he ever sang.

From there, he and the famed E Street Band ripped through three more songs without a break for band or

audience, with "Out in the Street," "Darlington County" and "Atlantic City." As it would be the entire show, the music was loud, very loud, but strong and infectious. The crowd was up and clapping from the first song, so Springsteen never even had to yell something boring like "everybody get up." The music took care of that itself.

Meanwhile, the band got into the act too. Guitarist Nils Lofgren, a former headliner himself, was distinctive enough in his black attire and pirouettes from one end of the stage to the other. And when he wasn't in on some anything-but-slapdash coordination with the Boss, sax man Clarence Clemmons was.

Clemmons, who released his own solo record last year, still sported the flat top haircut he wore for the "Dancing in the Dark" video. He kept mostly to Springsteen's left, leading the crowd there in clap-alongs and showing a pseudo-moonwalk on several occasions. Whenever he stepped forward with his horn, the crowd released another cheer above the din Springsteen received. All the while, Springsteen and Lofgren boogied along, while Weinberg, keyboardists Roy Bittan and Danny Federici, bassist Garry Tallent and vocalist Patti Scialfa kept a steady backup beat and harmonized. "It's going to be a long show," he warned at the end of "Atlantic City." You might as well sit down over there because we're going to be here a while."

The way Springsteen talked was typical of why the singer is a hero and the show such a fun thing to be a part of. Unlike other performers who try to set themselves apart with a shroud of mystery or sparkling clothes, Springsteen acts like the kind of sensitive guy you'd meet . . . anywhere. He comes off as one of the crowd, who just happened to be given this talent and had the guts to show it off.

He spoke and played like he was in front of a small room of friends. The audience treated him like someone they had known personally for a long, long time.

Springsteen's other calling card is his penchant for storytelling to song set ups.

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Clarence Clemmons blows his horn during the almost four-hour show at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Sunday.