

Courtesy of RCA Records

# Bongos play 'carefree' rock

By Jonathan Taylor  
Staff Reporter

The Bongos are back. It has been about a year since they brought their New Jersey pop/rock to the Drumstick, 547 N. 48th St. This time they're wearing makeup and seem to be giving the "tortured artist" image a try.



Although their looks have changed, the band's characteristic guitar and percussion-filled sound is a little less raw, but still the same.

The Bongos' new album *Beat Hotel* proves that the band still plays its own form of pop music. But it is not purist

pop; there is no garage sound here. The Bongos have mellowed a bit, but at least they haven't gone overboard with the electronic musical gadgetry that I think is threatening the energy bands of the '80s, such as U2 and the Alarm.

Fortunately, the Bongos have retained some of the brashness from their first album, *Drums Along the Hudson*. They have learned some lessons from their overproduced but popular 1983 mini-LP *Numbers With Wings* and created *Beat Hotel* a pleasantly listenable, energetic mix of old and new Bongos.

Singer and lead guitarist Richard Barone, drummer/singer Frank Giannini and background vocalist/bassist Rob Norris have been the core of the band since its first album in 1982.

James Mastro, who helped with guitars and vocals on *Hudson*, now is listed as an official Bongo. He wrote

one song on *Beat Hotel* and helped on five others.

The music on the album, in true pop fashion, is fun to listen to. It has lots of plain guitar and, of course, generous helpings of percussion that move the songs along at a fairly brisk pace. Songs such as "Splinter," "Space Jungle," "Come Back to Me" and "Totem Pole" have engaging, catchy melodies that stay in your head for some time after the stereo has been turned off.

While the music may be mildly memorable Barone's lyrics don't carry much spunk, and because he sings all of the songs, the album has an obvious lack of vocal variety.

Overall, the Bongos have not sold out to get more radio play by changing their unique sound. *Beat Hotel* is an honest and true representation of what the Bongos have always been about — carefree, fun pop rock.

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# Flip sides hide Springsteen gems

By Kyle Foster  
Staff Reporter

The current trend in the marketing of American popular music is to release several singles on popular performers' albums. The singles are released separately over a period of time to keep radio airplay high and album sales in the chartbuster category.

Michael Jackson, Prince and Huey Lewis have succeeded in selling millions of records using this marketing strategy.

The latest musician to follow this trend is Bruce Springsteen.



Springsteen currently has four singles released from his *Born In the USA* album. They are, in order of release; "Dancing In the Dark/Pink Cadillac," "Cover Me/Jersey Girl," "Born In the USA/Shut Out The Light" and "I'm On Fire/Johnny Bye Bye."

Each single has a previously unreleased "B" side which may, at least for the Springsteen fanatic, be worth spending the outlandish \$2 charge for each single.

"Dancing In The Dark/Pink Cadillac," was released in June 1984, before the *Born In The USA* album was released. "Dancing In The Dark" was the song that catapulted Springsteen to long-awaited ultra-super stardom.

"Pink Cadillac" became almost as popular as "Dancing In The Dark" and justifiably so because it is one of the best of Springsteen's new batch of songs. The rockabilly style combined with Springsteen's drawl and monotone voice create a song that is unmistakably Bruce but, at the same time, a departure from any of his previous songs.

"Cover Me/Jersey Girl," was released in September '84. "Cover Me" is the worst song on *Born In The USA* and possibly the worst song Springsteen ever has recorded.

"Jersey Girl," on the other hand, redeems the single's value. The song was recorded live in New Jersey during "The River" tour. Springsteen displays a bit of vocal range in this slow song and Clarence Clemons' soaring sax solo at the end will bring a smile to any Springsteen fan's face.

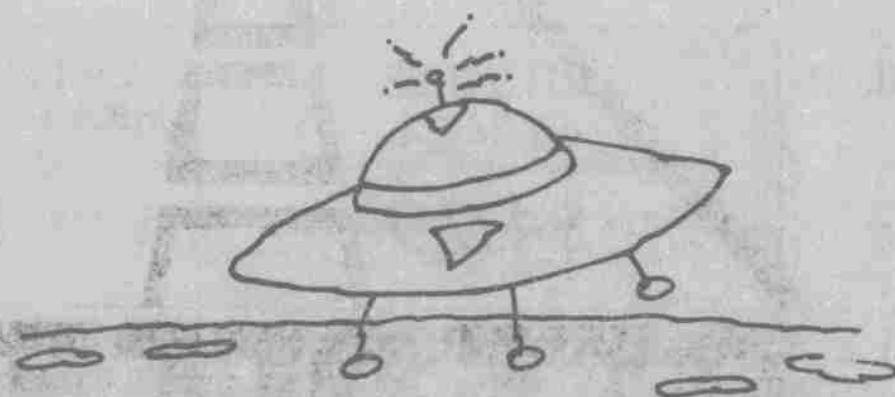
"Born In The USA/Shut Out The Light" was released in December 1984. This single, dedicated to Vietnam Veterans, is easily the best of all the singles released from *Born In The USA* because it is a theme-oriented release. Both songs combine effectively to reveal some of the emotions felt by Vietnam veterans.

"Born In The USA" is a song about a Vietnam veteran who has been away from 'Nam for 10 years. The veteran struggles with society and finally concludes that he has "got nowhere to run and nowhere to go." The stark, monotonous keyboards and the violent drumming on this song convey feelings of anger and helplessness.

"Shut Out The Light" is a good song, but more importantly it contains some of Springsteen's best lyrics. This song is about a Vietnam veteran recently returned from the war. Springsteen effectively switches people, from wife to battle-fatigued husband. In doing so, he explores the effects of the war from the husband's point of view, the wife's and from its affect on American families in general. This song creates a total scene of despair and is one of the saddest songs Springsteen has written.

"I'm On Fire/Johnny Bye Bye," was released in February 1985. "I'm On Fire" is not a song deserving of single status. However the "B" side song, "Johnny Bye Bye," is. The song, co-written with Chuck Berry, is a catchy farewell bid to Elvis Presley, Springsteen's boyhood hero. The only problem with the song is that it is too short and listeners will undoubtedly find themselves playing it over two or three times.

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