

Michael's Rock and Roll Posse: Bruuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuce and Paint it Black

In my life, as most of you know, I have developed certain musical tastes and preferences, which are constantly in a state of flux with some well-considered and grounded constants: Aretha, The Beatles, Cat Stevens/Yusuf Islam, Stones, Van, Dylan, Neil Young, Lou Rawls, and others. While I love these artists and also like many more, I did not realize until last night's Bruce Springsteen concert at the Woodlands, north of Houston, just how much I have loved his music over the years. I have seen him play 5 times now, including a 1974-era Cincinnati gig before he hit it huge with the Time Magazine cover and the Jon Landau quote that he "had seen the future of rock and roll and it was Springsteen." While my admiration for him has grown with each new album and social project, I just had not truly drunk the koolaid until last night, when he treated us to one of the most exciting concerts I have ever attended.

His music catalog is broad and deep, and virtually no one, including my favorites above, have spanned as much time with productive music rolling out. (I admire the sheer prodigious hard work of touring, but almost no one has produced fresh new material over 40 years, as he has done.) He included a number of songs from "Wrecking Ball" (2012) and "High Hopes" (2014), and blew away my favorite Bruce song, Because the Night. Many people do not realize he wrote this magnificent song, in part because Patti Smith's cover is so good, and because, quite incredibly, he never released the song in any of his original albums. He had planned to use it on "Darkness on the Edge of Town," but she heard it and released it herself, and then he never did. He did later include it on two of his greatest hits collections: in the great "Live/1975–85"—the 1986 boxed set—and the collected hits "The Promise" (2010). He is an incredibly-generous man, and gave Smith co-writing credit. Prior to last night's hard rocking version, my favorite had been the two of them singing it together with U2, a particularly fruitful version, partly because The Edge plays such a fantastic guitar on this (and all his work) and partly because Bono admirably says, "this is a song we wish we had written." You can hear it for yourself:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=be8YuyneES4> .

Indeed, he reinterpreted so many songs, that it just completely caught me by surprise. And mind you—my Windows Media Player index shows I have 181 of his songs on my computer, and almost no week goes by that I do not play and listen to his work. He slowed some songs up, slowed some down, and with the accomplished E Street Band, he has never been so tight. And he seems to enjoy it, and has never, ever, phoned in a performance. They are at the tail end of a yearlong tour, and so are nuanced and all at the top of their collective game. Stevie Van Zandt was absent, conspicuously so, as he is so well known, but Tom Morello, Max Weinberg, and Nils Lofgren and all of them were showcased and fully engaged. (I could not help but think of Courtney Love's putdown of horns in rock and roll, as the four horns in the group, including Clarence's nephew on the family sax, were so great. I think she had not taken her meds when she said what she did.)

Here is my final take away—in all today's rock and roll, across all genres, no one—no one—connects better to his audience and at just a powerful level. All night, he was engaged and attentive. He motioned for two brothers to come up to the stage, and they both high fived, pranced around, and sang every word in unison. Then he reached over and kissed that little kid (about 14-15 years old) on the head, and I could not believe how paternal and tender it was. My only complaint is that everyone stood the whole time, so it was hard to see, and I think the placards his fans wave are a distraction, but he also seems to like them, and actually alters the set list for them. And no one else lets the fans touch the guitar when they are playing, like he does. We hate driving all the way to the Woodlands (and got a damned flat tire that took AAA over two hours to come fix, which they did at about 12:30 this morning), but it is a great acoustic venue, and in my two dozen concerts there over the years in various incarnations of the outdoor theater, I have never seen it completely filled, both the fixed seats and the lawn area (over 16,000 total attendance). It was filled last night, and everyone went home happy, especially the two kids he brought up to the stage and this old rocker law professor fan. I also thought of several new topics for my Law of Rock and Roll, including the topic of disabilities and rock seating issues. Tune in.

Bruce is a man of the people, and the people from Bruce Nation came out in droves and all loved him, as befits the Boss. Eat your heart out, Chris Christie.

I am adding a special gift here to celebrate the end of the semester. My NM high school friend and classmate Michael Goodroe, who was the bass player for The Motels, lives in Albuquerque and continues to make music in a home studio. He recently sent me the attached mpg of the Jagger-Richards classic, Paint it Black, one of my two or three favorite Stones songs. Listen to it and enjoy it, as I did, a generous gift of music from a Posse member and friend of 50 years. He gave me permission to share it, and asked as I do that it not be passed on. Thanks, Michael, from all my Posse.

Michael
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