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## Road Trip: 40 Years Of The Boss Bruce Springsteen



Can you encapsulate Bruce Springsteen's career in two DVDs? Not even his entire career, just up to his seminal monster hit **Born In The USA**? I think not...but **Road Trip: 40 Years Of The Boss** tries real hard, and offers up some interesting moments along the way. This set comprises two two-hour DVDs. The first tells the tale of Bruce's humble south New Jersey beginnings, and includes interviews with friends, authors, critics like Robert Christgau, Steel Mill's manager Carl Tinker West (Steel Mill was the band Springsteen played in before becoming going solo) and various former band mates, notably drummer Vinny 'Mad Dog' Lopez.

I enjoyed the Steel Mill stories the most — the meat-and-taters trials of a working rocking band on the road in the late 60s, told through Lopez's eyes. In fact, on this first DVD, I feel Lopez's story is just as engaging as Springsteen's, and not just because Lopez was playing behind the Boss, but because he has something to say and pulls no punches, especially about Bruce's first manager Mike Appel.

It's interesting to note that this first DVD has no Springsteen music on it (there is a disclaimer at the beginning that says no Springsteen music was used). It is certainly to the detriment of what unfolds when, during the chapter breaks or moments when there is music, it sounds so much like Springsteen, but when you start to tap your foot to what you think is the beginning to "Born To Run" or another class ditty and suddenly realize it isn't Bruce at all!

The second DVD is another story altogether. Centering on Springsteen's career from 1978 through 1982, this looks like a cleaned-up version of its companion. Here we have Lopez again, and the Bruce scribes from the first disc, but critic Anthony De Curtis joins us now and there is not only Bruce music being played but also live performance footage (although, to be fair, there are snippets of a BBC interview with Bruce sprinkled over both DVDs).

This DVD concerns specific critical analysis of the **Darkness On The Edge Of Town** and **The River** albums with some Nebraska thrown in for good measure. All interesting and well-informed stuff by critics Christgau and De Curtis (though De Curtis does recite some lyrics incorrectly at one point) — It's all kind of dull compared to the pieces of live footage we are given or the all-too-infrequent use of Lopez on this disc.

Taken as a whole this set is informative and entertaining, but I found myself aching to fast forward past the critics and authors, and listen to guys like Lopez and Tinker West — guys who actually knew and worked with Springsteen. Far from gossip, what these guys have to say (especially Lopez) is the most insightful part of **Road Trip: 40 Years Of The Boss**.

~ Ralph Greco, Jr.