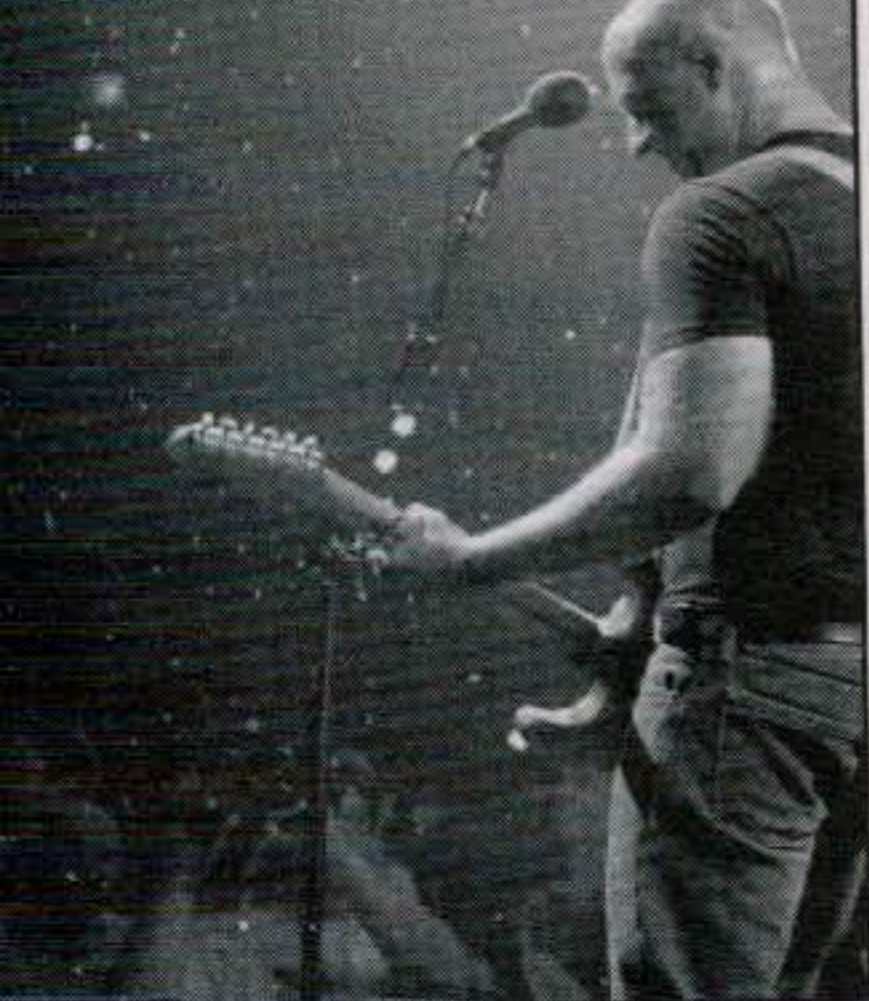


Bob Mould
Circle Of Friends



years of fan favorites, from Husker Du to his own solo output.

recorded at the 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C. in 2005, Mould is joined onstage by an all-star band featuring Brendan Canty of R.E.M., Jason Mraz (who also produced the film), Jason Isbell, and the duo of Verbow and Richard Morel.

The 23-song set list never lets up, contains a killer and many of the older songs have new life breathed into them because of the contributions of the backing musicians. As Mould, his trademark guitar sound is still at the center, and his relaxed (and dare I say happy) stage demeanor is a nice change from the often overly serious persona he carried with him throughout the better part of his musical career.

Although many fans will no doubt be drawn to this release for the Husker Du songs featured on it, it was the chance to finally see material from Sugar's incredible Copper Blue album performed live that was the real selling point for me. And while a lot of Mould's solo releases since that period could certainly be considered hit or miss, the song selection from those records is concise and enjoyable. Shot with multiple camera angles and maintaining great sound, Circle of Friends is a must-see concert film for any fan, and serves as the only true collection of songs covering Mould's entire impressive body of work.

• **Todd Harkness**

Pink Floyd The Pink Floyd And Syd Barrett Story

You'd be hard pressed to tell from the drug-diddled, vegetative state he spent the last 30 years of his life wallowing in, but Syd Barrett was once an innovative musical genius.

On Pink Floyd's debut *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, his eccentricities and unique songwriting abilities on classic psych-pop songs like "Lucifer Sam", "Take Up Thy Rethoscope And Walk" and especially "Bike" show where followers like Robyn Hitchcock, Ariel Pink and Wooden Wand got their shtick. However, it's Syd's droning space-



the epic "Insterstellar Overdrive" that truly defined the tune in, drop out spirit of the 60s.

Unfortunately, Barrett got too caught up in the counter-culture himself, and after experimenting with an indiscriminate amount of LSD (his first trip was captured in a short film, briefly shown here) simply lost his spark. This unfortunate tale is told through a decent collection of footage from Barrett's time with the band (both candid and live), a rudimentary run-through of his Floyd songs and later solo efforts, and modern interviews with the surviving Floyd members, friends of Syd and others.

From the first clip of Roger Waters describing the song "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" (which he wrote mind you), as powerful and "very good", these first-person accounts are much more interesting than the usual commentary of critics and assorted "experts" in other documentary films such as the Under Review series. Graham Coxon of Blur also pops up here, although he doesn't offer much other than his appreciation of an "insane goose" sound effect that Syd used.

So whether you already know the story and these songs or not - and despite its hideous menu-screen graphics - this DVD is definitely worth a watch.

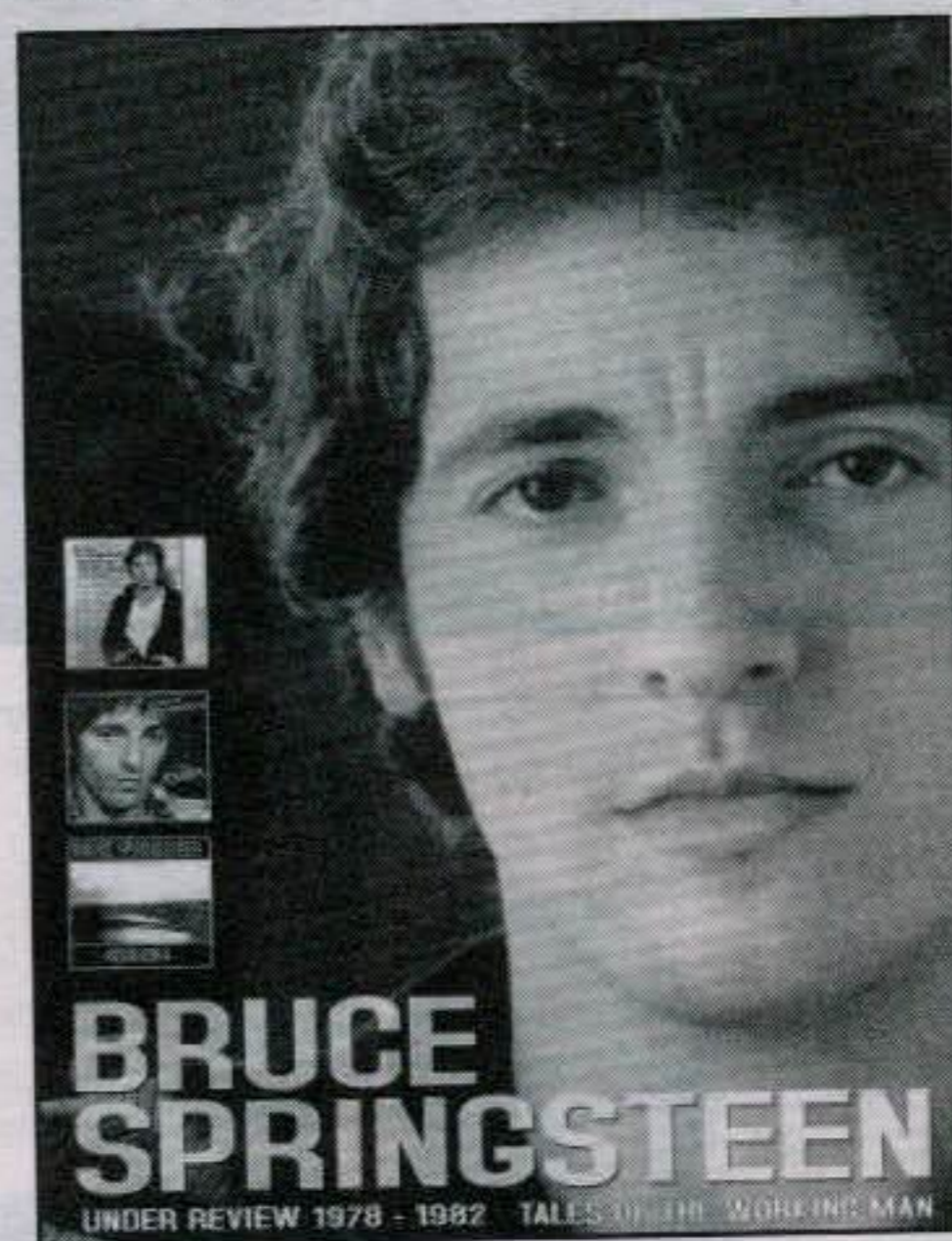
• **Jesse Locke**

Bruce Springsteen Tales of the Working Man: Under Review 1978-82

MVD

Between '78 and '82, Bruce Springsteen released a series of brooding and intensely introspective albums that verged on disturbing: *Darkness On The Edge of Town*, *The River* and *Nebraska*. Reviewed by a "panel" of biographers, rock critics, historians, cultural commentators, an ex-band mate and a full-blown fanzine (Backstreets) operator, *Tales of the Working Man* engages largely in the kind of literary-psychoanalysis for which Springsteen himself often criticized both his critics and loyalists—over-intellectualizing.

While there's certainly a great deal in



over, the analysis gets bogged down with cinematic themes, song characters and speculation about Springsteen's headspace, instead of recognizing the direct influences and context within which the music was produced.

Darkness, probably Springsteen's toughest rock record, is overlooked as his answer to punk, which was just beginning to boil in NYC during 1976-77. The commentators also neglect that *Darkness* tapped into a despondent America that followed Watergate, Vietnam and the Arab oil-embargo, reflecting the relatively glum lives of ordinary working stiffs in the Northeast States who didn't partake in Manhattan's Studio 54 disco bash (hence the title, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*).

The "existential crises" and "bleak landscapes" that Springsteen wrote about on both *The River* and *Nebraska* aren't credited to what he witnessed first-hand while touring the U.S. extensively as the country, lacking its former industrial might and a strong sense of unity/identity, drifted in Reagan's regime. Nothing is really mentioned of the well-known, tumultuous relationship Springsteen had with his father while growing up, which spawned the father-son conflict songs and spilled over into the girlfriend/marriage breakdown tracks.

Tales of the Working Man reveals far too little about the personal and social context that Springsteen experienced and how that affected these three significant albums. It's a documentary that lacks direction because it doesn't ask enough of the right questions. Consequently, you have too many people babbling on about their own Bruce interests, speculations and interpretations - hardly an objective view of his work.

Still, it does conjure a profile of Springsteen as the peoples' hero, who whooped it up on stage but was a tormented loner once he climbed down off it. Former *Rolling Stone* editor Anthony DeCurtis does zero in, however, noting that what Springsteen does best is write songs that give desolate, detached people some kind of meaning, beauty and dignity to their lives. Hail, hail the working man.