



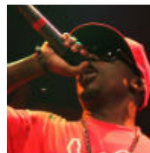
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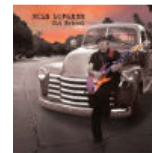
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Nils Lofgren Goes Old School Talks E Street Tour

Classic Rock Corner

Nils Lofgren Goes *Old School*, Talks E Street Tour

By [Bob Ruggiero](#) Thu., Mar. 29 2012 at 7:00 AM

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In a list of phrases that most music journalists would probably like to see banned, hearing that an artist's latest record "is their most personal yet" would rank near the top. But in the case of singer/guitarist Nils Lofgren --who, for the record, did not use that phrase -- it's actually true.

The songs on his latest solo release, *Old School*, tackle a lot of big issues from social problems and legal controversies to love, loss, death, and aging--but with a rock and blues edge that fans would expect on tracks like "60 is the New 18," "Love Stumbles On" and "Ain't Too Many Of Us Left."

Rocks Off spoke with Lofgren from his hotel room while on tour with that *other* little side project -- as one of the guitarists for Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band -- on the road to promote the newly-released *Wrecking Ball*. Lofgren even honored his time commitment, telling another writer on another the line he'd have to call him back.

Rocks Off: Squeezing in a lot before the next gig, are you?

Nils Lofgren: Well, as my wife would say, they are "champagne problems." I'm trying to cram for the E Street Band and let people know about this record as well. It's really a grass-roots effort, I did it live in my home garage studio.

RO: There's no doubt the songs really come from inside you. Did it develop that way?



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NL: Yeah. When I start writing I give myself permission to write whatever I want for a couple of months. Usually it's corny country stuff and pop that I end up not liking and would never play for you or *anybody*!

But for this, I was coming up on my 60th birthday, which is a number you cannot spin, and it was time for me to be a little extra-authentic. I'm so blessed with my career and my wife and family, but at the same time I've had to bury a lot of family and friends and we live on a planet that's in some deep trouble. I didn't have the stomach for anything superficial.

RO: On the title track, you rail against spoiled, Internet-addicted teenagers, Congress, child predators, and flag-waving TV commentators. After you wrote that, did you just kind of go "Whew, got *that* off my chest!"

NL: Yeah, that was an ominous thing! I found myself writing it and being a little uncomfortable. I poke a little fun about parents bitching about their spoiled kids by they're the ones spoiling them. It's enabling versus helping our children.

But my wife, Amy, and I have been screaming at the TV for years about why we let predators who go after our children get second chances. It's a controversial lyric.

RO: On the flip side, you have the really hopeful "Dream Big," with the chorus "dream big/work hard/stay humble/and dance a lot." The booklet has a picture of your parents next to the lyrics. Their personal philosophy?

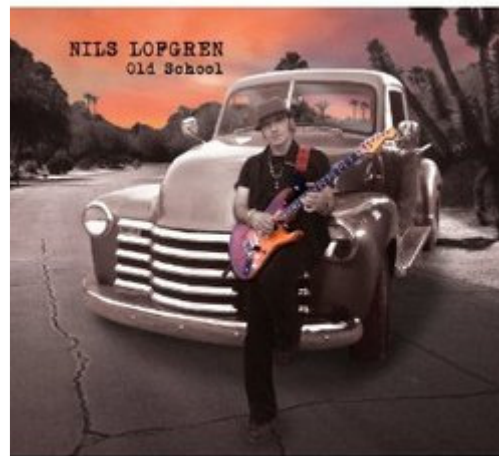
NL: They were dancers as a hobby, and they always encouraged me studying music. My wife Amy gave me this harp for Christmas and I started learning how to play it. So I'd go into the guest room and watch football games and sort of lean against it and play with my right hand backward.

And then I took up tap-dancing a few years ago when I got both hips replaced, and started tapping out rhythms. And it turned into this performance piece with a great message. The video is a hoot.

See the video where Nils sings, plays guitar and harp and tap dances [here](#) .

RO: I like the skull-tipped silver cane you use.

NL: Yes, the comedian Christopher Titus gave it to me. He calls it the "Pimp Limp" that I used when I was recovering from hip surgery.



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RO: *Old School* is dedicated to the memory of Clarence Clemons. What was he like the first time you met?

NL: I was going to see the band in the '70s and '80s and other then maybe passing in the hallway, I didn't really meet Clarence until I joined the band in May of '84. And we became fast friends. Clarence liked to chit-chat and so do I, so even off the road we'd speak every week or so.

Of course, after standing next to him on stage for 27 years, it was a brutal loss. I was on the road in England when he had the stroke. I thought I was going to fly to check in with him on a long recovery, and the next thing I know I'm flying home to Arizona, grabbed Amy, and then to Florida where we buried him on my 60th birthday, June 21.

It was a horrendous adventure and sad day for all of us. But I know that Clarence would want us to carry on.

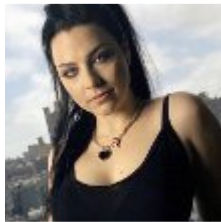
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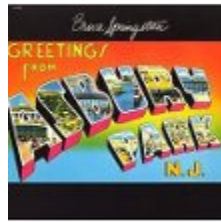
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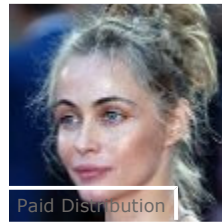
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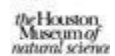
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Beerbo 3 hours ago

I started listening to Grin before I heard Bruce. Then I listened to both and eventually Bruce and the E Street Band got even better when Nils joined! Great interview, thanks.

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