



A trip back to 1978 with Bruce

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Springsteen tribute band wows soldout SRO crowd at Showcase Live in Foxboro, MA

FOXBORO - How would you like to see a Bruce Springsteen tribute band and not hear "Born in the USA?" Or "Tunnel of Love?" Or "The Rising?"

You would if you were at Showcase Live on Friday night.

Tramps Like Us, a 20-year-old Springsteen tribute band out of New York, treated a stand-room-only crowd of mostly graying baby boomers to a re-creation of The Boss' most critically-acclaimed concert: a Sept. 19, 1978 show at the Capitol Theatre in Passaic, N.J.



Springsteen, then approaching his 30th birthday, was, arguably, at his artistic peak. He had grabbed the music world's attention in 1975 with "Born to Run," but then a contract dispute left the prolific singer/songwriter with no albums for three years.

The New Jersey show was to promote the just-released "Darkness on the Edge of Town," a hard-rocking, often angry album that was far different from the poetic, elegant "Born to Run." Springsteen had a lot of pent-up energy and plenty of time to beautifully craft music, and it was all on display during that tour. Tramps Like Us, like Springsteen did 32 years ago, melded material from the two albums - as well as a few tunes from his first two albums, "Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J." and "The Wild, the Innocent and the E Street Shuffle" and some unreleased songs such as "Because the Night" - into a powerful, riveting 3 1/2-hour show.

The five-piece band led by Bruce sound-alike Mark Salore worked hard to recapture the high-energy performance starting with the opening notes of "Badlands," "Streets of Fire" and "Spirit in the Night."



Among the show's highlights were "Prove It All Night" with an extended, not-played-anymore piano and guitar solo intro, "She's the One" with the equally definitive prelude of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," and the extended "Backstreets" with its rare "Sad Eyes" interlude.

As well as Salore did bringing Springsteen's raw vocals and searing guitar to the audience, he was perhaps outdone by Brian "The Bo Man" Ognan, whose saxophone sounded as good, if not better, than Clarence Clemons'. Providing solid backup were keyboard player Kenny Hope (who captured Roy Bittan's piano beautifully on songs from "Born to Run"), bassist Jonathon Sanborn and drummer Rudy Feinauer.



But the highlight for me came at the end of the first set (the show, like Springsteen's, was so long it required an intermission). Tramps Like Us blended three songs from "Born to Run" - "Thunder Road," "Meeting Across the River" and the epic "Jungleland" - into an emotional portrait of urban youth, much as The Boss did then.

How do I know? Within a few weeks of that 1978 show in New Jersey, I saw Springsteen perform much of the same material at the Providence Civic Center, and he closed the first set with the same three songs. It was undoubtedly the best concert I have ever seen.



Friday's show was an enjoyable trip back to those days.

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