



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

ALL THE SONGS
THE STORY BEHIND EVERY TRACK

PHILIPPE MARGOTIN & JEAN-MICHEL GUESDON

DUTCH ORIGINS

Springsteen is of Italian, Irish, and Dutch descent. The Boss's ancestors include Casper Springsteen and his wife Geertje, who were both born in Groningen, circa 1620, and left the United Provinces several years later for New Netherland (a Dutch colony between New England and Virginia). Interesting fact: the name Springsteen is derived from two Dutch words, *spring* and *steen*, meaning "leap" and "stone."

Springsteen was modelled on the classic rock 'n' roll look at the beginning of his career, something that shifted in later years as his on-stage persona evolved.

INTRODUCTION

A New Jersey boy

New Jersey, to the south of New York state with the Atlantic Ocean to the east, has witnessed the arrival of successive waves of Europeans, starting with the first settlers from the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the 1630s. In the early 20th century, the population of the Garden State, as it is known, was 90 percent white and included large Irish and Italian Catholic communities. Bruce Springsteen belongs to both these groups, as well as to the Dutch community.

Bruce Frederick Joseph Springsteen was born on 23 September 1949 in Monmouth Medical Center, Long Branch, New Jersey, and raised in Freehold, a small town in central New Jersey. He is the son of Douglas Frederick "Dutch" Springsteen and Adele Ann Zerilli. Douglas was descended from the Dutch and the Irish on his father's side (Frederick H. Springsteen, son of Anthony Springsteen and Martha Ann O'Hagan) and from the Irish on his mother's side (Alice Helena McNicolas), while Adele is of 100 percent Italian descent (her family originated from Campania and Sicily). Bruce's father was an apprentice in a rug factory and, during the Second World War, he sailed on the *Queen Mary* to Europe where he took part in the Battle of the Bulge. When the war ended, he returned to Freehold where he had a number of jobs, including as a bus driver. He also worked on

the production lines in the Ford factory in Edison, and was a regular in the local bars. *"I was not my father's favorite citizen," Bruce Springsteen writes in his autobiography Born to Run, describing their complex relationship. "He loved me but he couldn't stand me."* Adele, his mother, worked as a legal secretary at Lawyers Title Inc. "My mother showered me with affection," he adds. "The love I missed from my father she tried to double up on and, perhaps, find the love she missed from my dad."¹

Bruce initially lived with his parents and younger sister Virginia (born in 1950) at his paternal grandparents' home on 87 Randolph St. In 1955, the family moved to 39½ Institute St, then just before the family grew with the birth of Pamela in 1962, they moved to 68 South St. Young Bruce was educated at the St Rose of Lima Catholic school, where catechism classes were followed by English and math. "No matter how much I want to, no matter how hard I try, 'the way things are' eludes me," he writes. "I desperately want to fit in but the world I have created with the unwarranted freedom from my grandparents has turned me into an unintentional rebel, an outcast weirdo misfit sissy boy. I am alienating, alienated, and socially homeless...I am seven years old."¹



BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

Bruce Springsteen / 5'02

Musicians

Bruce Springsteen: vocals, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, bass

Harold Wheeler: piano

Clarence Clemons: saxophone, backing vocals

Vini "Mad Dog" Lopez: drums

Unidentified musicians: organ, tambourine

Recording

914 Sound Recording Studios, Blauvelt, New York State:

11 September 1972

Technical team

Producers: Mike Appel, Jim Cretecos

Recording engineer: Louis Lahav

Assistant recording engineer: Larry Alexander

COVER

Blinded by the Light became a huge hit for the English rock group, Manfred Mann's Earth Band. Their version went to No.1 in the United States in December 1976 (and No.6 in the United Kingdom in August 1976). Was this down to a change of lyrics? "Cut loose like a deuce [the 1932 Ford hot rod]" in the original was replaced by Chris Hamlet Thompson singing "revved up like a deuce," which many listeners heard as *douche!* Springsteen was clearly amused: "I have a feeling that that is why the song sky-rocketed to No.1."¹³ But the excellent rendition by Manfred Mann should not be underestimated. A must-listen.



Genesis and lyrics

Blinded by the Light did not originally feature on Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J. Like *Spirit in the Night*, Bruce Springsteen wrote the song after Clive Davis rejected the album in its initial form because he felt that it did not contain any potential hits. "I [...] came home, busted out my rhyming dictionary, and wrote *Blinded by the Light*,"¹⁴ Springsteen explains in his autobiography. The song was largely inspired by the melody of the demo track *Henry Boy* that he had recorded in June 1972 at Mediasound Studios, in New York, and which features on the 2016 Chapter and Verse compilation album.

This opening track of Springsteen's first album is an impassioned rereading of his own adolescence. He explains this in detail on the DVD *VH1 Storytellers—On Stage*: "So it was really a young musician's tale. Kind of a litany of adventures and it was rather on the autobiographical side."¹⁵ He goes on to explain the title of the song: "I wanted to get blinded by the light, I wanted to do things I hadn't done and see things I hadn't seen."¹⁶ It is obvious that the boy from New Jersey wanted to burn his bridges, sling his guitar over his shoulder, and set out to conquer New York.

The verses also draw on the songwriter's own experience. The expression "madman drummers" explicitly refers to Vini Lopez, the E Street Band drummer, known as "Mad Man" (then "Mad Dog"), while "Indians in the summer" alludes to the songwriter's favorite baseball team when he lived in Freehold. "Teenage diplomat" is a reference to himself, with "a boulder on my shoulder"—a symbol of oppression. He also includes memories of the YMCA and his first sexual stirrings ("the adolescent pumps his way into his hat"). Inevitably, this invites comparisons with Bob Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited*. "And go-cart Mozart was checkin' out the weather chart to see if it was safe to go outside" could have been borrowed from the couplet: "You don't need a weather man to know which way the wind blows" in Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues*.

Blinded by the Light (in a shortened 3'58 version) was released as a single with *The Angel* on the B-side in February 1973 but did not make it into the Billboard charts. Why February, which is traditionally a bad month to launch a record? "Because they [the record company] didn't believe it

had a chance to go Top 40," explains Mike Appel. "And they were right."¹⁷ However, that did not stop Bruce Springsteen performing the song regularly onstage—the first time was most probably at the Captain's Garter in Neptune City, New Jersey, on 30 January 1972.

Production

Jon Landau, a journalist at *Rolling Stone magazine*, was listening to his car radio when he was grabbed by a particular song: "*Blinded by the Light*, one of the cuts on *Greetings*, was on," he recounts. "I didn't know who it was, but I thought it was a great song and a great singer, an exciting record. It sounded like—a bit like The Band, the group The Band. I wondered, who was that? It was identified at the end. I made a mental note."¹⁸ Good job too, because, thanks to this track, not that long after Landau would meet the singer in question, become his manager, and go on to coproduce many of his albums. *Blinded by the Light* unquestionably already had this immediately recognizable force and resonance that would soon become known as the Springsteen sound. Rather surprising, perhaps, because the only musicians present at the recording session on 11 September were Springsteen himself, Vincent Lopez, Clarence Clemons, and Harold Wheeler, a musician who was not part of the songwriter's inner circle. Springsteen poured all his talent and energy into this piece, showing such conviction that it left no one indifferent. Hence Jon Landau's reaction.

The introduction is structured around three guitars: the first, an electric guitar, starts with a country-rock lick; the second, an acoustic guitar (the Martin D-28); then a third, electric again, for the solo parts. Was Springsteen using his Fender Telecaster with the Esquire neck? It's hard to tell. The introduc-

tion continues with the drums, bass, piano, and saxophone coming in. This is followed by a short liaison in which the electric guitar adopts a rhythmic pattern similar to the one used on The Doobie Brothers' smash hit *Listen to the Music*, which was released in early September 1972 (listen from 0'12 onward).

Springsteen then attacks the first verse with a warm voice, not yet perfectly mastered or polished, but already unique and luminous. When the record was released, critics rushed to compare him to Bob Dylan, but the resemblance is definitely not in the voice; Springsteen was a real singer, and Dylan, without wishing to be pejorative, was more of a storyteller than a singer. However, there is an obvious Van Morrison influence, notably from the *Wild Night* track on the *Tupelo Honey* album (1971). In the chorus, Clarence Clemons supports the lead vocal with his powerful voice, and Springsteen harmonizes with him in the last line (at 1'33).

The piece continues with alternating verses/choruses, a bridge at 2'37, and a coda starting at 4'29. The overall result is positive, with Springsteen performing the three guitar parts, the bass, and the vocals himself. He is supported by a piano accompaniment that is unfortunately buried too deep in the mix. It is performed by the excellent Harold Wheeler who also worked with Burt Bacharach and Nina Simone, among others. Clemons contributes some very R&B parts on the saxophone and Vini Lopez is solid on the drum part which, sadly, sometimes sounds a bit "cardboard cutout" because the sound recording is too dry. Note: A tambourine can be heard from 3'22, while a sustained note on the organ appears from the first verse (at 0'36).



A young Bruce poses for an early photoshoot.

ALBUM

BORN TO RUN

Thunder Road . Tenth Avenue Freeze Out . Night . Backstreets . Born To Run .
She's The One . Meeting Across The River . Jungleland

Outtakes : Walking In The Street (*aka* Lovers In The Cold) . Lonely Night
In The Park . A Love So Fine . A Night Like This . Janey Needs A Shooter .
Linda Let Me Be The One . So Young And In Love

RELEASE DATE

United States: 25 August 1975

Reference: Columbia Records – PC 33795

**No.1 in *Record World* magazine and No.3 in the
Billboard chart, No.17 in the United Kingdom**

DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

Bruce Springsteen / 4'28

Musicians

Bruce Springsteen: vocals, guitars
Steve Van Zandt: guitar
Clarence Clemons: tambourine
Roy Bittan: piano
Danny Federici: organ, glockenspiel
Garry Tallent: bass guitar
Max Weinberg: drums

Recording

The Record Plant, 321 West 44th St, New York: September to December 1977 (?); 8–10 March 1978

Technical team

Producers: Jon Landau, Bruce Springsteen
Assistant producer: Steve Van Zandt
Recording engineer: Jimmy Iovine
Assistant recording engineer: Thom Panunzio
Mixing: Chuck Plotkin, Jimmy Iovine

Genesis and lyrics

Logically enough, the title track concludes Bruce Springsteen's fourth album. The final verse of this song—starting with “Tonight I'll be on that hill...”—marks a point in the lives of Springsteen's characters when they are unsure of what the future holds, but they are determined and committed to whatever that may be.

While the songwriter describes the humble folk of New Jersey—the manual workers and low-ranking employees who lived alongside him in Freehold, as well as the blue-collar workers that his father rubbed shoulders with in the bars—as opposed to the privileged classes of Manhattan, here he certainly seems to be alluding to the narrator of *Racing in the Street*, who still has the company of Sonny, but no longer of the woman he loves. “Now I hear she's got a house up in Fairview/In a style she's trying to maintain,” Springsteen sings in the first verse.

Misfortune has befallen the narrator—but there is still hope: “You can tell her that I'm easily found/Tell her there's a spot out 'neath Abram's Bridge.” These words express all the songwriter's spirituality: “I grew up Catholic, and I suppose I go back to that for so much imagery in my music over the years,” Springsteen told *Spin* magazine's Steve Kandell (in December 2007). “I was always interested in the spiritual background; it's just what fascinates me. Like, hey, where's the place you lose your soul, and how do I get there without falling in? I was always drawn to that, and it's shot through all my music, including this record.”⁶⁷

The hero of a film noir, has the central character found refuge in the “darkness on the edge of town”? Might he have found the way to transcendence there? Bruce Springsteen touches on this in his autobiography, explaining that by the end of the *Darkness* album he felt he had found his adult voice.

Darkness on the Edge of Town has been performed more than 700 times since the concert at Shea's Performing Arts Center in Buffalo, New York state, on 23 May 1978, but the song has not been released as a single.

The song also rests on Roy Bittan's sumptuous piano part. From the introduction he plays a melodic phrase (or gimmick) at the keyboard, which he repeats regularly until the final bars of the fade-out. Supported by Garry Tallent's bass guitar, the result is exquisite. The other instruments join in as the song



Back by an enormous stars and stripes, Springsteen embodied the American spirit for millions of people. But a closer listen to songs such as this reveals deeper, more complex themes.

develops: Danny Federici and his organ appear in the second verse; his glockenspiel joins the dance in the following verse (beating a delicate, crystalline note—a G—which returns insistently); and a rhythm guitar comes in, probably played by Steve Van Zandt. As for Clarence Clemons, from the start he plays a metronomic tambourine that jingles in the reverb.

As regards the singing, Springsteen varies the intensity of his performance, as he likes to do, starting pianissimo, only to roar from the second verse (starting at 0'36). The phrase that

functions as a chorus is harmonized by two voices; it would seem that this is his voice, overdubbed, and not his voice with Miami Steve's.

“That was a very important song to me,” the songwriter once confessed. “It was my samurai song.”⁷³ And that is indeed the impression it has on the listener. The beauty of *Darkness on the Edge of Town* lies as much in its starkness as in the alternation of melancholy passages and sudden bursts of passion.

Darkness on the Edge of Town is one of the ten songs performed most often in concert by the E Street Band and its Boss.

SIDE B

LUCKY MAN

Bruce Springsteen / 3'30

Single: Brilliant Disguise/Lucky Man **Reference:** Columbia Records – 38-07595 **Release date:** United States, 3 October 1987 **Musician** Bruce Springsteen: vocals, guitars, bass, synthesizers, drum machine programming, cabasa **Recording** Thrill Hill East, Rumson, New Jersey: 4 April 1987 **Technical team** Producers: Bruce Springsteen, Jon Landau, Chuck Plotkin Recording engineer: Toby Scott Mixing: Bob Clearmountain

Genesis and lyrics

The sound of Louisiana blues permeates this song about a very lucky truck driver. A gypsy has read his palm and told him, “You’re a lucky man.” A lucky man compared to those around him, like his Pa who came back from the army to work in a factory; a lucky man because he left his girlfriend in Calgary in order to avoid emotional attachments. He has no shortage of girls and no need of a home. What he wants is to travel for life, and so he travels alone.

Although *Lucky Man* was recorded during sessions for *Tunnel of Love*, it was not included on that album. This was not so much because it is a tribute to freedom and lone travel, but as a result of its sound, which contrasts sharply with the other songs on this eighth album. However, it was chosen as the B-side of *Brilliant Disguise*, the first single from *Tunnel of Love*, and for the third CD of the *Tracks* box set (1998).

Production

Lucky Man clashes with the other songs on *Tunnel of Love*: the piece is centered around a low, hypnotic bass line that develops into a bluesy, dark, and intense atmosphere. It had initially been intended for the album instead of the song *Tunnel of Love*, but Springsteen changed his mind at the last moment, no doubt to preserve a consistency of sound.

The Boss is alone at the controls, taking on the various guitars, the bass, the LinnDrum programming, the synthesizers,

and the only percussion part in the song (a cabasa from 1'37). Two elements in particular give *Lucky Man* its bluesy feel: first, the songwriter’s properly rough voice, with its hints of Louisiana Red; then, his Telecaster-Esquire, which is played sparingly and surrounded by a deep reverberation, creating long phrasing in the arrangements (on the left). Only the LinnDrum (which runs in the same pattern throughout) and the synth pads tie *Lucky Man* to its era. An excellent B-side.

Springsteen was not the only one to call a song *Lucky Man*: Emerson, Lake & Palmer and The Verge did so as well, in 1970 and 1997, respectively.

SIDE B

TWO FOR THE ROAD

Bruce Springsteen / 1'59

Single: Tunnel of Love/Two for the Road **Reference:** Columbia Records – 38-07663 **Release date:** United States, 17 October 1987 **Musician** Bruce Springsteen: vocals, guitars, synthesizer **Recording** Thrill Hill East, Rumson, New Jersey: February 1987 **Technical team** Producers: Bruce Springsteen, Jon Landau, Chuck Plotkin Recording engineer: Toby Scott Mixing: Bob Clearmountain

Genesis and lyrics

Two for the Road and *Lucky Man* convey opposing messages: where solitude is the ultimate expression of freedom in *Lucky Man*, in this song the happiness of being in a couple is what gives meaning to life. “One thousand dreams whispered in the dark/But a dream’s just a dream in one empty heart,” sings Springsteen in the second verse. By the same token, two are better than one when it comes to facing the hardships and difficulties of life. This is exactly what the narrator tells his partner when he says, “I’ll stand beside you, we’re two for the road.”

As with *Lucky Man*, *Two for the Road* was recorded during sessions for *Tunnel of Love*. It was released as the B-side of the *Tunnel of Love* single, then it was revived for the *Tracks* box set (1998). Bruce Springsteen sang it four times during the Devils & Dust Tour.

Production

Although the first line of *Two for the Road* is an adaptation of the lyrics to *Blue Suede Shoes*, one of the greatest rock songs of all time, written by Carl Perkins in 1955 and immortalized by Elvis the following year, this B-side is a sweet and vaguely country-and-western song, sung by a Bruce Springsteen gushing with tenderness and romanticism.

Springsteen is once again the only musician in the recording room: he accompanies himself on the acoustic guitar, adding an electric guitar (on the left, at 0'17) and an electric

piano to the synthesizer, a Yamaha DX7 or Roland D-50 (on the right). He harmonizes his vocals with a second vocal part in the second verse and performs a solo on his Telecaster-Esquire (enhanced by a chorus/flanger and a reverb), which he doubles with whistling (from 0'46).

Although likeable, *Two for the Road* could never be on the tracklisting for *Tunnel of Love*.

Two for the Road is also a 1967 British film directed by Stanley Donen and starring Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney. The score, by the same name, was composed by Henry Mancini.

THE RISING

Bruce Springsteen / 4'50

Musicians

Bruce Springsteen: vocals, guitars
Patti Scialfa: backing vocals
Steve Van Zandt: guitar, backing vocals
Nils Lofgren: guitars, backing vocals
Clarence Clemons: percussion instruments (?), backing vocals
Roy Bittan: keyboard
Danny Federici: organ
Garry Tallent: bass
Max Weinberg: drums
Soozie Tyrell: violin, backing vocals
Jane Scarpantoni: cello

Recording and mixing

Southern Tracks Recording Studio, Atlanta, Georgia: February to March 2002

Technical team

Producer: Brendan O'Brien
Recording engineer: Nick DiDia
Assistant recording engineers: Karl Egsieker, Billy Bowers
Mixing: Brendan O'Brien
Mastering: Bob Ludwig

For Springsteen Addicts

A mysterious video apparently aired once only on the Australian channel ABC, on the music video show *Rage*, on 20 December 2003. Springsteen is seen recording at the Southern Tracks studio in Atlanta and playing, among other instruments, an orangey Gretsch—probably the one he uses in the solo. This video was never officially recognized, by either the songwriter or his team.

Genesis and lyrics

The Rising was written as recording for the album was coming to a close. On the DVD VH1 *Storytellers—On Stage*, Bruce Springsteen explains that after *Into the Fire*, it was like “something inside you says it wants another song.”¹³ It’s a song about the ultimate sacrifice, the one that leads to death, because it is dictated by a supreme sense of duty. “I got down toward the end of the record and I think I was searching for the voice of someone who died, and I wanted to have a voice that addresses the living,”¹⁹ he explained to *Uncut* magazine. “So I just sort of imagined the main character basically...I dunno, speaking to his wife. Who would you want to speak to? Your wife, and you’d think of your children. And then just those left at large, I think. The different verses move slowly toward that kind of crossing-over point. *The Rising*—that was it, that was the moment when the souls rise.”¹⁹

The main character in *The Rising*, or main characters, are the hundreds of firefighters who, on 11 September 2001, went to their deaths in the flames and rubble of the World Trade Center. “Come on up for the rising.” This line from the chorus has two meanings: the climb up the stairs of the twin towers—a real-life Way of the Cross—and the rise to heaven. Similarly, “the cross of my calling” refers both to the Maltese cross (the firefighter symbol of courage since 1865) and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The second part of the song leaves us in no doubt as to the spiritual aspect of *The Rising*, as the narrator says that he sees the “fiery light” of the Lord and Mary “In the garden of a thousand sighs.” What’s certain is that this song landed Bruce Springsteen firmly in the ranks of America’s most inspired popular musicians.

Springsteen performed *The Rising* for the first time at the Jacksonville Memorial Coliseum, in Florida, on 4 March 2002. The song came out as a single (with *Land of Hope and Dreams*) in July. It went to No.24 in the United States, but reached No.5 in Norway and No.6 in Italy. It also won two Grammy Awards, one for “Best Rock Song” and one for “Best Male Vocal Performance.”

Production

Springsteen’s art can be confusing: while the lyrics to *The Rising* seem to call for a rather serious and collected music,

Performing at a charity concert, Springsteen looked every inch the confident, experienced artist.

THE BOSS'S GRAMMYS

You could say that the Boss “has a subscription” to the Grammy Award for best vocal performance by a male artist: before hitting the jackpot with *The Rising* in 2002, he’d already won one for *Dancing in the Dark* in 1985 and *Streets of Philadelphia* in 1995—not to mention six other nominations in this category between 1980 and 2002.

the songwriter wrote a rock song that, while not particularly hard, has an infectious energy and a frightening efficacy. He avoids all pathos, so as not to weigh down his words. Whatever the case, this song expresses and communicates extraordinary emotion, which is enhanced by a feeling of spiritual elevation that grows progressively until the last note.

In an unusual move, the Boss launches the lead vocals in the first measure. Thus, his voice opens *The Rising* modified by a slight delay and accompanied by Soozie Tyrell’s violin, Jane Scarpantoni’s cello, an acoustic guitar, an electric guitar, a very pronounced quaver (on the right), another rhythm guitar (on the left), and some keyboard layers, not to mention Max Weinberg’s cymbals. From the second verse, Weinberg accompanies his bandmates with his hi-hat, then—supported Garry Tallent’s powerful bass line—he emphasizes the first chorus with his bass drum (at 0’35). Springsteen’s incredible performance makes the chorus sound immediately like a hymn, a rock hymn to honor those who sacrificed their lives on 11 September 2001. A real success.

The song really takes off in the following verse, the drummer providing a strong beat with a clear swing (it’s almost as if we are listening to Charlie Watts!), followed by several percussion parts (tambourine, maracas) and various guitars, notably Nils Lofgren’s saturated slide guitar, which, once again, showcases his considerable talent. The second chorus

is enhanced by Danny Federici’s organ and by superb backing vocals, most notably from Patti Scialfa and Soozie Tyrell (at 1’12). *The Rising* has the intrinsic power of gospel—one might even call it a gospel rock. Springsteen then sings a short, heated, and inspired solo, picking up the melody from the vocals and generously deploying the whammy bar from his guitar—likely a Gretsch belonging to his producer (at 1’44). The rest of the song is dazzling, the Boss’s vocals are decidedly among the best of his career—hence the Grammy for best vocal performance by a male artist in 2002.

The message from *The Rising* resonated particularly well within American politics, especially with Barack Obama, who asked Springsteen—and other artists—to perform on 18 January 2009 at We Are One: The Obama Inaugural Celebration at the Lincoln Memorial, which was held to celebrate his imminent investiture to the White House. Springsteen performed *The Rising* on the acoustic guitar accompanied by The Joyce Garrett Singers, a gospel choir. An amused comment from the Boss: “Once you start doing that kind of writing, it feeds off itself [...] If someone had told me in 2001 that ‘you’re going to sing this song at the inaugural concert for the first African-American president,’ I’d have said, ‘Huh?’”¹²⁰



PAY ME MY MONEY DOWN

Traditional/ Arrangements Bruce Springsteen / 4'32

Musicians

Bruce Springsteen: vocals, guitar
Patti Scialfa: backing vocals
Soozie Tyrell: violin, backing vocals
Sam Bardfeld: violin, backing vocals
Frank Bruno: guitar, backing vocals
Mark Clifford: banjo, backing vocals
Charles Giordano: accordion, backing vocals
Eddie Manion: saxophone, backing vocals
Mark Pender: trumpet, backing vocals
Richie “La Bamba” Rosenberg: trombone, backing vocals
Jeremy Chatzky: double bass, backing vocals
Larry Eagle: drums, percussion, backing vocals

Recording

Thrill Hill, Boxwood Studios, New Jersey: 19 March 2005

Technical team

Producer: Bruce Springsteen
Recording engineer: Toby Scott
Assistant recording engineers: Kevin Buell, Ross Peterson
Mixing: Bob Clearmountain (Mix This! Los Angeles)
Mixing assistant: Brandon Duncan
Mastering: Bob Ludwig (Gateway Mastering & DVD, Portland)

For Springsteen Addicts

On 23 June 2006, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band performed *Pay Me My Money Down* on the NBC show *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, with the show's presenter on guitar.

Genesis and lyrics

Lydia Austin Parrish (1871–1953), wife of the painter Maxfield Parrish, spent many winters on St Simons Island, one of the Sea Islands, and developed a passion for local history and folk tunes. In her book *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands* (1942) she listed many African-American songs, notably *Pay Me My Money Down*, a dockers' work song that was later adopted by Caribbean sailors.

The story is quite simple. Especially in the ports of Georgia and South Carolina, ships' captains only paid the African-American dockers who loaded or unloaded the ships the following day. Very often, they would leave port in the dead of night, without paying a dollar to their workers. This gave rise to the slogan: “*Pay Me My Money Down.*”

This song has often been revisited, most notably by The Weavers, who sang it during their concert at Carnegie Hall, New York, in 1955.

Production

Springsteen and his Seeger Band made an excellent, energetic, and exhilarating cover of *Pay Me My Money Down*. The Boss begins the song alone with Gibson J-45 guitar, and is soon joined by the whole band, from the end of the first chorus (at 0'25). The rhythm is irresistible, the double bass and drums producing an infectious groove that invites the listener to tap their foot and clap their hands. The backing vocals reply to Springsteen with exuberant enthusiasm, while he delivers lead vocals that are both warm and relaxed. Solo follows solo: first the violins (at 0'47), then the trumpet—the Boss requesting: “*Let's hear the trumpet!*” (at 1'41)—followed by the accordion, which launches into a superb improvisation with Cajun accents (at 2'33), and then a finale in which all band members let rip (at 3'58). The piece features a key change—requested by Springsteen (at 1'57)—from G to B flat, followed by a return to the home key, also demanded by the songwriter: “*Alright now, back to G*” (at 3'10). *Pay Me My Money Down* is one of the album's gems, and probably superior to the superb version Pete Seeger had immortalized with The Weavers.

For Springsteen Addicts

Bruce Springsteen's version of *We Shall Overcome* was chosen to feature on the soundtrack of the documentary made by NBC on the September 11 attacks.

WE SHALL OVERCOME

Guy Carawan, Frank Hamilton, Zilphia Horton, Pete Seeger / 4'53

Musicians

Bruce Springsteen: vocals, guitar, organ (?), tambourine (?)
Patti Scialfa: backing vocals
Soozie Tyrell: violin, backing vocals
Sam Bardfeld: violin
Frank Bruno: guitar
Mark Clifford: banjo
Charles Giordano: piano, accordion
Eddie Manion: saxophone, backing vocals
Mark Pender: trumpet, backing vocals
Richie “La Bamba” Rosenberg: trombone, backing vocals
Jeremy Chatzky: double bass
Larry Eagle: drums, percussion

Recording

Thrill Hill, Boxwood Studios, New Jersey: 2 November 1997

Technical team

Producer: Bruce Springsteen
Recording engineer: Toby Scott
Assistant recording engineers: Kevin Buell, Ross Peterson
Mixing: Bob Clearmountain (Mix This! Los Angeles)
Mixing assistant: Brandon Duncan
Mastering: Bob Ludwig (Gateway Mastering & DVD, Portland)

The version of *We Shall Overcome* that features on Bruce Springsteen's album is the same as the one on the 1998 recording for *Where Have All the Flowers Gone: The Songs of Pete Seeger*. Only the mixing is slightly different, and the counting-in only features on the 1998 record.

Genesis and lyrics

One of the most famous songs in America's folk repertoire, *We Shall Overcome* has its origins in two spirituals. *I'll Overcome Some Day (and/or I'll Be Alright)*, written by the Rev. Charles Albert Tindley (published in 1900), is the source for the lyrics, while the musical framework comes from *No More Auction Block for Me*, a work song that predates the Civil War. Over the years, its strictly spiritual dimension evolved into a message of protest, notably when it was adopted as the battle cry of the striking workers of the American Tobacco Company in Charleston, South Carolina (they went on strike for five months from October 1945). In 1946, the folklorist and civil rights activist Zilphia Horton rewrote the lyrics; these were subsequently modified by Pete Seeger, who recorded the song and published the lyrics in the journal *Sing Out!* in 1959, under the title *We Shall Overcome*.

From then on, *We Shall Overcome* was established as one of the great protest anthems throughout the 1960s. In 1963, Pete Seeger performed it during his famous concert in Carnegie Hall and subsequently at the Newport Folk Festival, this time with the Freedom Singers, Peter, Paul & Mary, and Bob Dylan. Also, during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Peter, Paul & Mary sang it in chorus. Finally, in 1969 Joan Baez sang it to the flower children gathered at Woodstock.

“We shall overcome [...] We shall live in peace.” There are dozens of recordings of this non-violent anthem. After those by Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, the version by Bruce Springsteen is the most famous.

An anthem for peace—and a copyright issue

In 2016, legal proceedings were begun against Ludlow Music and The Richmond Organization, the publishers of *We Shall Overcome*, by Isaias Gamboa—who had made a documentary about the song's history—and the producers of Lee Daniels' movie *The Butler* (released in 2013). The plaintiffs were objecting to the sum of \$100,000 that Ludlow was demanding from them for using the song in their movie and were also challenging the copyright protection Ludlow was claiming. The publisher, which had registered copyrights to the song in 1960 and 1963, essentially based its case on the fact that the word “will” in the original lyrics had been changed to “shall.” But federal

This is the full story behind every single song that Bruce Springsteen has ever released. Spanning nearly 50 years of albums, EPs, B-sides, and more, *All the Songs* contains fascinating stories and detailed information on every track. Arranged chronologically and packed with photographs, this is the definitive story of one of music's true greats.



UK £45 | US \$60 | CAN \$65

ISBN 978-1-78472-649-2



9 781784 726492

WWW.OCTOPUSBOOKS.CO.UK
WWW.OCTOPUSBOOKSUSA.COM