



## Human Touch Lucky Town Bruce Springsteen (Sony)

Wow, what a great way to end the year--two new Springsteen albums. I haven't had such high expectations since *Achtung Baby*. But while *Achtung* scored big in the artistic integrity categories, it was an emotional let-down. *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, on the other hand, are just another pair of excellent Bruce Springsteen albums.

*Human Touch* is a return to *Born in the U.S.A.* territory. The powerhouse first single, "Human Touch," leads off the album much like "Born in the U.S.A." did that album. While definitely not as powerful as "Born," "Human Touch" is the best song on both albums and one of the best of recent memory. The rest consists mainly of E Street-styled rockers. The songwriting is, of course, uniformly excellent. As usual it all echoes classic rock but is defined by Springsteen's unique vision. "Soul Driver" is reminiscent of an up-tempo "Little Wing" and "Cross My Heart," "Real World" and "The Long Good-bye" are bar band rock at its absolute best. Helping Bruce out on vocals we have Sam Moore, formerly of Sam & Dave (yahoo!), and Bobby King. Springsteen's own singing has advanced much since, say, *The River*, where his lion's roar sometimes got a bit grating. He's evolved into quite a soulful vocalist and sings with emotional intelligence (if that makes sense).

Lyrical *Human Touch* breaks little new ground. It's filled with Bruce's

traditional Americana themes. This is Springsteen's first album since *The River* to not be a distinct lyrical piece. On *Tunnel of Love* Bruce managed to come up with an interesting view of luv, rock 'n' roll's thoroughly drained milking cow. I'll assume his life was quite tumultuous then and now I'll assume he's quite contented--*Human Touch* reflects it. Regardless, the sound of Bruce spinning his word-wheels ain't all that bad.

A testament to *Human Touch*'s quality is that it actually rivals *Born in the U.S.A.*, possibly Springsteen's best album (the common choice generally being *Born to Run*). The reason I prefer *Born in the U.S.A.* is because it's far more interesting lyrically and nothing here matches the emotional wallop of "Born in the U.S.A." But even comparing it to that album, one of the greats, is a huge compliment. This is a great one, folks; the best since *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*. (About my hailing of the Junkies, I overrated that one. I mean, it's really good but not in this territory.)

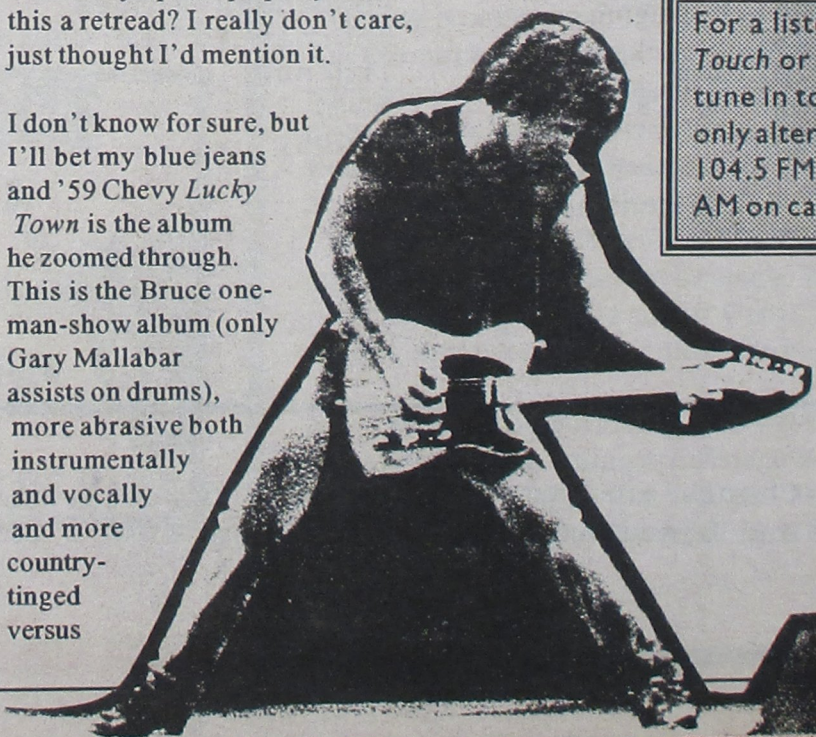
I've gotta mention this, maybe it's just me, but this album bears a lot of similarities to *Born in the U.S.A.*: the opening songs are both epic rockers, the second last are both synthesized rockers, the sixth and last are both acoustic ballads and the rest of both are mainly up-tempo party tunes. Is this a retread? I really don't care, just thought I'd mention it.

I don't know for sure, but I'll bet my blue jeans and '59 Chevy *Lucky Town* is the album he zoomed through. This is the Bruce one-man-show album (only Gary Mallabar assists on drums), more abrasive both instrumentally and vocally and more country-tinged versus

*Human*'s soul/rock-tinge. Also different is the background singing--a few women as opposed to the one soul man on *Human*. Numbers like "If I Should Fall Behind," "Book of Dreams" and "My Beautiful Reward" are straight off *Tunnel of Love*. The rest is similar in tone but more up-beat. The songwriting is almost as good and hits highs with "Living Proof," with its gloriously shredded vocal, the ominous "Souls of the Departed" and one of the few moments of bitterness, "The Big Muddy."

Not at the level of *Tunnel*, a total triumph in my eyes, *Lucky Town* is the sound of Bruce Springsteen showing just how easy it is for him. Both of these works are heavenly, inspiring rock 'n' roll. *Human Touch* is absolutely the pick of the pair, but if you're a fan of the Boss, or a fan of rock 'n' roll, you'll need both. Ah, the sun rises, the sun sets and here's two more great Springsteen albums. It's nice to have such regularity in my life. So summer's approaching, enrich your appreciation of life with these glorious albums.

Well, I guess this is it, y'all. I'd like to thank all the people who've read my stuff. Oh yeah, and to Heather: I hear ya. Anyway, enjoy these Springsteen albums and see ya in the fall.



For a listen to *Human Touch* or *Lucky Town* tune in to the Island's only alternative, CIMN 104.5 FM cable or 700 AM on campus.