Highway Alive: A concept Album

by

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The music from the show is available for download at

www.soundcloud.com/LindsaySchapiroMusic
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This play is dedicated to my father.
INTRODUCTION

On October 28, 1996 Bruce Springsteen participated in a rally held in Westwood, California to battle Proposition 209. Proposition 209 is a California proposition which prohibited public institutions from considering race, ethnicity, or sex in their admissions processes. My father was invited to attend the rally by a friend and he brought me along. I was four years old at the time and I knew nothing about the issues that gathered this group of people together. All I knew was that my dad was taking me to meet Bruce Springsteen. When I left the house, I put a harmonica in my pocket in the hopes of striking up a conversation with the Boss. When I arrived, my dad spotted Bruce in the distance and brought me over to meet him. As the story goes, I tapped him on the shoulder, pulled out my harmonica and shouted, “Look what I got!” According to my dad, Bruce knelt beside me and talked to me about my harmonica for almost ten minutes. Before he left, he told me that if I found him after his performance, he would give me his harmonica. I remember standing in the crowd, impatiently awaiting his arrival on the stage. After what felt like a lifetime but was likely only a few minutes, I wanted to leave. I was running late to my friend’s pumpkin carving party. My dad obliged and I left, without the harmonica.

Nearly 18 years later, I have written, composed, and produced a musical based on actual events from Bruce Springsteen’s life. This paper outlines the process of this project: the genesis, the researching, the writing, the evolution, the rewriting, the
composing, the rehearsing, the recording, and the performing of this work. Yet there is one thing this paper does not seek to answer: why?

Perhaps I wanted to explore the nature of the American Dream through the story of an American rock hero? Perhaps I wanted to investigate the formation of mythology and celebrity in popular music culture? Perhaps I wanted to examine the nature of authenticity and its relationship to representation and self-representation in the production and perception of popular music? Or maybe it’s just my simple, albeit lengthy, attempt to reclaim the harmonica that was once promised to me.

If I cannot convey the intention behind this work adequately, I will at least describe how it all came to be. Or at least the way I remember it. Besides, can you really trust my word?
CHAPTER ONE: DISCOVERING THE BOSS

In the fall semester of 2011, my playwriting professor assigned the class the project of writing a short scene about a historical character using the conventions of the Kitchen Sink Drama. Kitchen Sink Drama refers to the British style of realism that emerged in the arts during the 1950s. These dramas most often portrayed working-class people in domestic situations navigating through contemporary social and political realities. They explore the relationship between working-class peoples and the sociopolitical landscape they live in. This relationship is fundamental to the ethos of the United States: the American Dream.

The American Dream is predicated on the belief that each individual has certain inalienable rights, such as the right to “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” It proposes that anyone can achieve anything through hard work regardless of one’s social, economic, and political status. It ignores the systems of oppression that hinder progress for people who present certain racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, or class identities. In doing so, it implies that those who fail have only themselves to blame. When I received the assignment, I knew that I wanted to write a scene that explored the truths and falsehoods wrapped up in the American Dream ideal. The next step meant choosing my historical character.


Without a moment’s delay, my mind landed on a man who has submitted his life’s work to the exploration of the American Dream ideal. In fact, in many ways this man is the platonic ideal of the American Dream. He came from humble beginnings in a run-of-the-mill blue-collar town known as Freehold, New Jersey. He refused to settle, dropping out of community college and instead devoting every minute and every dime he had to honing his craft. He endured years of economic hardship and emotional turmoil until eventually someone recognized his talents. He was presented with the opportunity to pursue his dream and he grabbed onto it, and never looked back. He became an international rock legend. The world’s one and only Boss. If you don’t know by now, the man I am referring to is Bruce Springsteen.

Picking Bruce Springsteen to be the protagonist in my Kitchen Sink Drama scene was an obvious choice for me. One of my earliest childhood memories is driving around Los Angeles in my dad’s Mustang convertible blasting Born to Run. As a ten-year-old, attempting to make sense of the 9/11 attacks, Springsteen’s album The Rising introduced me to the complex ideas of community, trauma, and healing. And as I made the trek through my adolescence, Springsteen himself became the beacon of hope in my bleak suburban existence. Bruce’s catalogue is the soundtrack to my childhood, or at least to my remembering of my childhood; therefore, it is necessary to admit my own biases. However, in the context of writing a Kitchen Sink Drama that challenged the American Dream ideal, I knew that I would have to work against those biases and create a humanized version of the man whom I had always regarded as a symbol.
With my protagonist chosen, the hard part became figuring out what he should be doing. I locked myself in an abandoned science classroom and stayed up all night brainstorming ideas. I covered an entire chalkboard wall with questions, phrases, circles and arrows. It was the work of a madwoman but it felt intense and exhilarating to a nineteen-year-old who wanted so desperately to be an artist. When I finally took a step back to synthesize my scribbles, I found that the entire chalkboard was nearly impossible to read. It was fully covered in a layer of white dust. From there my mind made the following leaps:

3 dust > dust bowl > Grapes of Wrath > Tom Joad > The Ghost of Tom Joad > Bruce Springsteen > Bruce Springsteen writing his 1995 album The Ghost of Tom Joad > Bruce Springsteen talking to the ghost of Tom Joad and transforming their conversation into an album.

As I began to write my scene I made the following decisions. I placed Bruce and Tom in a domestic setting, in conjunction with the conventions of the Kitchen Sink Drama. There, they ate, drank, and discussed a number of topics related to the American Dream. By humanizing Bruce Springsteen and Tom Joad, two symbols of the American Dream, I aimed to expose the reality of the relationship between the individual and the American Dream. My goal became to show the ways that the American Dream ideal presents a false sense of upward mobility for all. For the domestic setting, I chose a makeshift kitchen by a campfire—a location taken directly from Springsteen’s song “The Ghost of Tom Joad.” When the scene opened, Bruce

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3 This really did happen. However, I must acknowledge that I have likely romanticized and/or poeticized the writing process in my memory. There is an interesting parallel occurring between my romanticization of my writing process and Bruce’s romanticization of his identity as an artist.
was in actuality “sitting down here by the campfire light, with the ghost of old Tom Joad.”

By actualizing Bruce’s dream-like encounter with the ghost of Tom Joad in a realist theatrical piece, I began to wonder who Bruce is beyond his status as a cultural icon. I became intrigued by the obvious contradiction in his identity: his status as a rich and famous rock star versus his continued self-representation as one with the working class. I began to question not only the authenticity of the American Dream but also Bruce’s authenticity as an individual and an artist. I began to question the nature of authenticity itself. What is authenticity? How do people claim it? Does it even exist? Nonetheless, I turned in my assignment and turned my attention to the next prompt. My 5-7-page Kitchen Sink Drama scene was complete, but I knew that the story that I was telling had only just begun.

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As the class progressed, I was presented with the opportunity to resume work on the Springsteen play. The professor assigned the class the project of developing a one-act play that we would work on throughout the course of the semester. I returned to the same science classroom hoping to spend another night at the chalkboard. To my dismay, inspiration did not come as easily to me the second time around. I found it increasingly difficult to develop a narrative for Bruce Springsteen, a character

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whom I knew next to nothing about. While I had grown up listening to his music, I had never been inclined to research his life.

I dedicated the following weeks to reading biographies, watching interviews, and closely listening to Springsteen’s entire catalogue. As one can imagine, the amount of academic, journalist, and fan produced work about Springsteen is incredible. The more I learned about his life and career, the more obvious it became that it would be counter-productive to attempt to tell his whole story in a single one act play. Such a vast time span would likely result in a shallow portrayal of both his character and his music. Instead, I realized it would be more effective to narrow my focus to a single epoch in Springsteen’s musical career. I started thinking about how to divide Springsteen’s 40-year-long career into distinct epochs. The definition of an epoch is a “period of time in history or a person’s life typically marked by notable events or particular characteristics.”

Applying this definition to my analysis of Bruce’s career, I realized that the release of his 1984 album *Born in the U.S.A.* marked a notable change in his level of international recognition. *Born in the U.S.A.* sold 18 million copies worldwide, more than his all of his previous albums combined, and resulted in a two-year long worldwide tour that catapulted his fame to the international stage.

As a child of a talent manager in “the industry,” I had always been fascinated by the concept of fame. How does one become famous? Is it a product of the quality

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6 The Los Angeles colloquial term for the “entertainment industry” or “Hollywood.”
of the work that they produce? Is it a void in the public consciousness that a certain individual incidentally fills? Perhaps it is no coincidence, and is rather a conscious representation of identity on the part of the performer in order to achieve a higher level of notoriety? And once one becomes famous, what is the relationship between their individual and public identity? I began to wonder what it was about the album *Born in the U.S.A.* that made the entire world pay attention to Springsteen. I also began to wonder how complicit Springsteen was in his transformation into an international icon—a symbol for America. In essence, I was again wondering about the nature of authenticity. From this point, I set out to understand everything about the time surrounding the release of *Born in the U.S.A.* I wanted to know the story of its composition, the recording process, the publicity, the music videos, the tour, and the aftermath. What I found perhaps left me with more questions than answers about the nature of authenticity. Nonetheless, investigating the conception, production, reception, and aftermath of “Born in the U.S.A.” allowed me to see the various forms of representation and self-representation involved in the production and perception of popular music.

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In December of 2011, I sat down to craft my play. I had done my research and chosen which part of Bruce’s story I wanted to tell. I wrote a play that started with Bruce writing *Nebraska* and ended with him writing *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. The play focused mainly on the built up to and the aftermath of the *Born in the U.S.A.*
tour. The play oscillated between monologues and conversations between Bruce, Clarence Clemons, Julianne Philips, Jon Landau, Patti Scialfa, and old man he meets on the road who he imbues with the ghostly cynicism of an old Tom Joad. Along the way, Bruce grappled with the dissonance between the American Dream as Tom experienced it versus the American Dream as he experienced it. He wondered which portrayal of the American Dream is closer to that of the working class. Bruce also grappled with the contradiction in his own identity and authenticity—singing songs about the workingman as he dives deeper into a life of celebrity and money. I finished the play with a dramatic scene between Bruce and Tom Joad, reminiscent of the scene where Tom leaves his mother in The Grapes of Wrath. In my version, Bruce leaves Tom behind, taking his story with him as he dedicates his career to social and political activism.

When I turned the play in for the class to read and workshop, I was disappointed to gather less than positive reviews of my work. Many of my classmates wondered if this play was exclusively for Springsteen fans. Others felt that it simply did not make sense. I ended the semester feeling deflated and once again I placed this project on the shelf. It stayed there for the next year and a half. In the mean time, I dedicated my time to working on other plays, taking more writing classes, and reading and watching theatrical works. I wrote, composed, and directed an original One Act musical that went up in the spring semester of my junior year. However, as I moved in and out of different projects my mind was always coming back to this incomplete work from my sophomore year.
When the time came for me to decide on a thesis project for my senior year, I wondered if there was any way I could transform my Springsteen project into a Music Department thesis. In May of 2013 I picked up my old script for the first time in a year and a half. Reading the work from a distance, I could see all of the problems that my classmates saw. I began to doubt everything about my progress as a student at Wesleyan: my ability to write, my ability to self-critique, my ability to think critically about the world, my knowledge of music, etc. It was heartbreaking. But amidst all of the self doubt, I began to think about how Bruce must have felt in those years practicing guitar as a child, or in those years leading up to his first record deal, or when Steven Van Zandt quit the band, or when he realized that he needed to break-up the band and head in a new direction. Bruce’s ability to overcome his moments of self-doubt empowered me to believe that I too was capable of such a feat. I was also aware that this was my one opportunity to produce this production. Given the delicacy of copyright law, I knew that I could not use Bruce’s life story or music in a non-educational production in which I or anyone else was making a profit. I was overwhelmed with a sense of both empowerment and urgency that made this project impossible to resist. The next day I informed Professor Kuivila that I wanted to write a play that incorporated original music to tell the story of Bruce Springsteen’s rise to international stardom in the 1980s. I asked him to be my advisor, he accepted, and the countdown began.
At the start of the fall semester of 2013 I began to synthesize all of the work that I had done over the course of two years. I had spent the summer researching Bruce Springsteen’s life and music, writing short scenes, and composing original music based on themes such as the American Dream, isolation, desperation, and celebrity. While I had collected an abundance of musical material, I still lacked a coherent vision for the storyline of the play. I found myself at a crossroads, unsure how I could continue developing a musical without a storyline. At this point, I decided to reconfigure my writing process, treating the music and the story as two separate but connected projects. I began transcribing my repertoire of songs without knowing where the storyline was going to go. It became immediately apparent that this writing process would require me to explore the realm of theatrical form.\(^7\) I would not be able to create a musical in which the music and the story are intrinsically linked. Instead I would have to find another approach within which I could integrate music into the story while treating the two as independent entities.

There are many theatrical forms a playwright/lyricist can use to synthesize music and story in a theatrical work. In the American Broadway musical theater tradition,\(^8\) best exemplified by composers Oscar Hammerstein and Stephen

\(^7\) I use the term “Form” to mean techniques that theater-makers use to convey their work.

\(^8\) My use of the term “Broadway American musical theater tradition” is not taken from a specific source. Instead, it is my empirical categorization of those musicals that are dependent on song to drive the narrative forward.
Sondheim, the works rely on songs to convey crucial information that isn’t otherwise in the narrative. Music and narrative are interconnected to the point where one cannot exist without the other. Dialogue and plot are translated into song, and the audience is asked to suspend their disbelief and accept music as a natural communication tool between characters. In the 21st century, many musical theater writers/composers have taken a new approach to the relationship between music and story. For example, in the Tony Award winning musical ‘Once,’ adapted from a film of the same name, the music remains separate from the dialogue/plot of the show. The actors perform songs in a quasi-soliloquy style that complements the story without driving the narrative forward. Narrative and music are able to inform one another while existing in isolation from one another. Upon realizing that I could develop the music and the story independently from one another, I began work on the music for this production.

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The first step in realizing the songs that I had written was to gather a group of musicians. My need to focus on the theatrical component of the project in addition to the music made me inclined to act solely as the conductor and not a musician in the band. After a long recruitment process I acquired a group of five musicians: Dylan Nelson on bass, Zachary Burns on keyboard, Nate Campagne on drums, Ian Anderson on guitar, and Matthew Stein on electric violin. While I now had a band, one crucial instrument was missing: saxophone. Since the saxophone is essential to Bruce Springsteen’s music, I wanted to find someone who could bring that melodic
rock and roll saxophone sound to my own music. Though finding a saxophone player on Wesleyan’s campus is not difficult, finding a saxophonist who could also play the role of the late Clarence Clemons was difficult for many reasons. First, Clemons’ style of saxophone playing in the E-Street band is a fusion of his soul-rooted upbringing and his self-identification as “a rocker, a born rock and roll sax player.”\textsuperscript{9} The saxophone players I knew were either jazz or neo-soul\textsuperscript{10} saxophone players, and few could truly capture his signature sound. Secondly, Clemons’ on-stage identity is crucial to the identity of the E-Street band. Clarence Clemons is the “Big Man,” a larger than life African American male among a group of scrawny white men. Through their years together, Springsteen and Clemons cultivated and capitalized from their on-stage image of brotherhood. Emulating that bond between two charismatic showmen was crucial to my production. I was lucky to find a saxophonist and actor who could fill these shoes in Donovan Brady.

With the addition of Donovan Brady to our team of musicians, I now had a rock band. The next step was to begin rehearsals. Having only performed my music in a singer-songwriter setting, I immediately ran across the hurdle of transforming my music from solo piano/voice to a full band. I came to the first rehearsal as prepared as I could have been— with the lead-sheet notation of my song, “I Wandered.” After performing the song for the band, we dove right into a jam session based on the chord progression. While the jam session produced a powerful wall-of-sound-like effect, the


\textsuperscript{10} Neo-Soul here refers to an amorphous genre of music that blends elements of popular and contemporary R&B while retaining the influence of old-school soul music.
result was incredibly messy. I soon realized that without being given direction, musicians who have never played together tend to play loud solos over one another. I quickly realized after that first rehearsal that I was going to have to educate myself on how to be a bandleader. I thought about potentially writing out parts to each of the songs and creating a through-composed work, but that felt completely inharmonious to the rock and roll ethos. Over the course of a few more rehearsals I settled on a conducting technique that worked. I would describe, either through vocal impersonation or descriptive language, what I wanted to hear from an instrument and then “point them in.” This became a term that I would use throughout the entire rehearsal process. Musicians would start each piece silently and I would “point them in” at certain moments of the song and “point them out” at others. By using this technique I was able to play to my own strengths, controlling the lyrics, melody, and mood of the piece, while getting inventive individual parts from the players themselves.

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The first original song that appears in the show, “I Wandered,” tells the story of the Joad family headed to California after the dust bowl hit Oklahoma. I wrote an initial version of the song during my sophomore year. I had just read Grapes of Wrath and wanted to write a song that could capture the mood of the novel. The original version of the song oscillated back and forth between two distinct lyrical and musical narratives: a family migrating to California during the dust bowl and a young girl
learning how to ride her bicycle. While the stakes of the two stories were immensely different, the lyrics in both alluded to the false promises of the American Dream ideal. The music that represented the Joads’ story featured a swinging arpeggio in B minor with a walking bass. The music that told the little girl’s story featured a bouncing rhythm in D major that resolved into a deceptive cadence and transitioned back to the B minor arpeggio. At the time of its original composition, this song had nothing to do with the play that I had been writing. It was just another piano song for my singer-songwriter repertoire. However, when I began thinking about which songs to use for my thesis project, it became immediately obvious that I resurrect and restructure this song. At the start of the fall semester of 2013, I began composing the version of “I Wandered” that I would use in my thesis production. I decided to abandon the double narrative lyrical and musical structure. The play already had the double narrative of Bruce Springsteen’s story and the Joads’ story; therefore adding another character would simply confuse the audience. By eliminating the bicycle narrative from the song, the song naturally transformed into a musical motif—a song that could indicate the Joads’ entrance into and exit out of Bruce’s story. I produced a recording of a solo piano performing the chord progression that acted as a leitmotif for the Joads that ultimately resolved into the full-band version of the song that appears in the play.

The second song that appears in the show, “I’ve Been Around” began with a bass line. I was working on improving my left-hand piano skills in the music studios when I improvised a b minor bass line. I had never written a bass line that had an offbeat feel before and I knew that I wanted to explore the rhythmic potential further.
After writing the bass line I began doing vocal improvisations over it and settled on a melody that filled in the empty space of the bass line. The melody was in communication with the bass line, thereby re-emphasizing the offbeat feel of the song. The communication between the bass line and the melody evoked the image of a person experiencing some sort of internal conflict or monologue. The repetitive nature of the bass line also evoked a feeling of stagnancy. It became apparent that the character singing this song is torn between wanting to get out of a situation and having no idea how. As many singer-songwriters do, I applied this feeling to the events in my own life while searching for the proper lyrics. I soon jotted down the lyrical theme, “I was thinkin’ bout.” I then did a free write of all of the things that I have always thought about doing and never done: skydiving, backpacking, hiking, et cetera. Eventually I realized that the lyrics would be more powerful if the person is thinking about doing something entirely mundane, yet still cannot get find the motivation to do it. I began jotting down mundane activities: walking, eating, breathing, waking up, cooking, driving, et cetera. After crafting a simple narrative using the “I was thinkin’ bout” theme, I turned my attention to the chorus. The big question became: why is this person so uninspired? Again relating the song to my own experience, I realized how over four years the wonders of Wesleyan have become normalized. Those experiences that left me wide-eyed freshman year are now second nature. The words for the chorus came out naturally: “I’ve been around, this awful lonely town. It’s been four years since I was home. I’ve been around. You betcha I’ve been around.” However, the chorus was missing something—an audience. Who is the speaker addressing? I realized that while the melody and bass line created
the feeling of an internal monologue, the chorus was an attempt to connect with someone or something. I added a suffix to the ending: “Can’t you see me?” To mirror the attempt at connection in the chorus’ lyrics, I modulated to the key of D major for the chorus. However, at the end of the chorus, the B minor bass line picks up again and this person is thrown back into a state of monotony. After the final chorus I repeated the lines, “Can’t you see me?” to reiterate this feeling of desperation.

When I introduced “I’ve Been Around” to the band, they immediately slid into a reggae-like feel. While it sounded pleasing to the ear, the one-drop rhythm was too dance-like for the mood of the lyrics. On take two, Nate (the drummer) introduced a shuffle beat to the song that complemented the offbeat rhythm of the bass line without creating a reggae feel. In the introduction to the song, I used the “point them in” technique to cue the musicians in one at a time, starting with the bass. I had the keys and guitar enter with sustained chords on the one to evoke a sense of longing in the listener. In directing the saxophone and the violin parts in the introduction, I demonstrated a few blues riffs that I thought would embody the overall theme of the song and asked them create variations on the riff while trading two bars of four. For the verses of the song, the bass continued the theme from the introduction while the piano and saxophone began to hit the offbeat. The guitar and violin stuck to more sustained notes and chords in the verses. When the verse transitions into the chorus, the piano and guitar duplicate the shuffle rhythm of the drums, causing the mood of the song to become more upbeat. After the second chorus, each of the instruments drops out except for the bass and light percussion. The song ends with a sustained
bass that mirrors the longing of the final question from the narrator: “Do you wanna see me?”

The third song that appears in the show, “I Don’t Know,” is the most compositionally complex song that I wrote in this project. I began writing this song over the summer of 2013. I had been listening to a lot of minimalist-electronica pop music and wanted to write a song that a producer friend of mine could transform into a song in that style. I came up with a syncopated left hand piano part that utilized jazz-influenced parallel ninth intervals while maintaining the minimalist aesthetic of this genre of popular music. For the right hand, I added arpeggios that hit the fourth and minor seventh tones. Unlike my composition in the previous two songs, I composed specific parts for the piano, saxophone, violin, and bass. Also unlike my composition in the previous two songs, the lyrics in this song are not inspired by personal experience. Instead, they are repetitive ramblings on the feeling of being trapped. The simple-declarative sentence structure in the lyrics mirrors the minimalist style of the music. For the chorus, I transition into a common pop music chord progression—vi-IV-I-V. Many have dubbed this chord progression the “sensitive female chord progression.” By using a familiar pop chord progression, the listener’s experience becomes easy. The chorus provides liberation from the syncopated rhythm and spooky minimalism of the verses. The chorus ends with a rhythmic

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11 With the popularization of artists such as Lana Del Rey, Lorde, Chvrches, Haim, and Sky Ferreira in 2013, this minimalist style of electronica pop music has become very popular among aspiring female singer-songwriters.

embellishment on the B major power chord, strongly signaling the end of the chorus and return to the minimalist verse. Verse two is a variation on the same musical themes explored in verse one. The major change comes in the transition from verse two back into the chorus. While the lyrics repeat the phrase, “through the wall,” the saxophone and violin build towards a climactic rhythm embellishment on the B major power chord. To provide finality to the song, the chorus switches to a half time rhythm as the lyrics repeat the phrase “Is it just a call?” The song ends by repeating this same B major rhythm embellishment. Because the parts were not too difficult to play, I used the oral tradition to teach the musicians their parts. I played the saxophone, bass, guitar, and violin parts on the piano and used the “point them in” technique to signal when they should enter. After solidifying the song in only two rehearsals, I then turned my attention to the final song in the production.

The fourth and last original song in the production, “Information Age,” is a commentary on the accessibility of self-aggrandizement in a world in which social media is omnipresent. I began writing this song after noticing unhealthy patterns in my own relationship with social media. While social media has made it easier to access information, communicate over distance, and reach a wide audience, it has also become easier for a person to use social media platforms to garner attention. With the advent of the “liking” tool on Instagram and Facebook and the “favorite” tool on twitter, people can evaluate their own self-worth by how many others “like” or “favorite” their photos, comments, and videos. Unlike the previous songs, the

13 It is important to note that these are my empirical observations on the effect of social media on the human condition. I share my observations to provide context for the lyrical composition of “Information Age.”
composition for this song began with the lyrics. After writing the words, “We are all children of the information age,” I began contemplating the effects of social media on people who were born into the digital age. I began to realize that I, being a child of the 90s, have never lived in a world in which information is not readily accessible to me. I also realized that I, being a teen when social media first surfaced in the mid 00s, experienced my cognitive coming of age through the world of online representation. It is important to note that I am not making a universal value judgment about the effects of social media. Instead, the song emerged out of my personal observations on the ways that social media enables me to construct an identity through the online documentation of my “real” life.\textsuperscript{14} Just like the lyrical composition of “I’ve Been Around” and “I Don’t Know,” I ended this song with a repeating phrase: “Whoa, we are not a living show.”

After composing the music for this song, I recognized that I had a pattern of starting each song with a soft solo introduction that follows the chord progression of the verse. The piano floats over the chord progression until the bass joins in with a leading-tone pick up. The first verse of the song continues the slow tempo of the introduction; however, when it arrives at the chorus the drums enter with an up-beat pop rhythm that drives the rest of the song. In the second chorus, the melody floats over the same chords as the previous verse while the rhythm maintains the pop rhythm of the chorus. After the second chorus, the song transitions to an outro. The outro is in half time and has a quality that I described to the musicians as “wavy.” After much deliberation we realized that what I called “waviness” was actually just

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\item \textsuperscript{14} I put the word “real” in quotes to refer to the colloquial use of the term “real life” to mean lived experience.
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the effect of a rhythmic triplet. After rehearsing the song with the band, I realized that the ending had so much room for vocal harmony potential. It became apparent that not only did I have another song for the play, but I also had the finale song—a song in which each of the actors could reprise their role and pronounce that they are “not a living show.” I began to contemplate the irony of having a group of performers singing the phrase “we are not a living show.” The singers are part of a performance so they are a literal living show. Unless the characters singing the song are not the characters from the play but rather the actors breaking character, eliminating the fourth wall, and declaring their authenticity to the audience.

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By the time I composed the song “Information Age” in November of 2013, I had completely transformed and mapped out the storyline for the production. The timeline in Springsteen’s career that the play covers was the same timeline from the version I had written sophomore year: starting with Bruce writing ‘Nebraska’ and ending with Bruce writing ‘The Ghost of Tom Joad.’ However, the new version of the play was no longer a Biodrama\(^{15}\) on the life of Bruce Springsteen. Nor was it a partly fictionalized retelling of Bruce Springsteen’s rise to international stardom. Instead, it subjected the original concept to a series of theatrical veerings that would serve to expose the myriad levels of representation involved in the production and perception

\(^{15}\) This is a term I learned from Bob Krakower, a professional director with the Atlantic Theater Company. It means a drama depicting a real person’s life.
of popular music: being a fan, writing music, performing music, attending a show, watching footage of a show, journalism, working in the industry, etc.
CHAPTER 3: REPRESENTATION IN PERFORMANCE

In the midst of brainstorming potential storylines for my play in the fall of 2013, my advisor Ron Kuivila asked me a question that changed the direction of this project. While I cannot quote him exactly, he said something along the lines of, “Why are you so set on trying to replicate Bruce Springsteen?” I had never thought about this question before. Over the course of two years, I had conducted all of my research and writing with the sole purpose of answering, “Who is the ‘real’ Bruce Springsteen?” I never realized how my enormous fandom would make it impossible for me to answer that question, and furthermore, that my play didn’t have to answer it. As the playwright, I have the freedom to create my own Bruce Springsteen. I could use the name, the icon, and the events from his life to create a new character that carries the symbolic weight of the “real” Bruce without attempting to authentically replicate the “real” Bruce. Within this invented Bruce narrative, I began to play with theatrical techniques of representation and self-representation such as lip-sync, reenactment, eliminating the fourth wall, songs, improvisation, anachronism, storytelling, switching character and breaking character. Through these techniques, I found that I could more effectively examine the nature of authenticity as it pertains to music performance.

* * *

16 I use the word “real” to mean the man behind the image that he has become.
In November of 2013, I began writing the book for this production. I started by creating a Biodrama out of various events from Bruce Springsteen’s life. Act One takes place between 1982 and 1984 and was centered on the impetus, composition, and recording of “Born in the U.S.A.” Act Two takes place on the “Born in the U.S.A. tour” between 1984 and 1985. Within this time frame, Bruce married his first wife Julianne Phillips, recorded his first ever music video for MTV, and toured the world for two years becoming an international super-star. Act three chronicles the aftermath of the “Born in the U.S.A” tour—his confusion with his artistic direction, the dissolution of his first marriage, his decision to break up the band and reemerge as a solo artist, and his new domestic life with Patti Scialfa. The text for the play was a combination of found interviews and original material. In writing the original text, I often incorporated phrases and idioms that I found in the interviews so as to keep a consistent literary voice throughout the play. After mapping out the storyline to the play, I realized that the scenes that I wanted to portray would be difficult to produce in a single venue. For example, a scene that takes place in Bruce Springsteen’s living room should have a different atmosphere than a scene that takes place at a stadium rock show. I immediately thought about the possibility of creating a traveling production. While I had seen immersive theater performances, in which the audience moves within the set, I had never seen a production that physically moved between two separate venues. The idea became more compelling when I thought about the fact that the show traced the years leading up to, the years on, and the years after the “Born in the U.S.A.” world tour. It made sense that the production itself would take the audience on a tour. I shelved the idea temporarily and continued writing the
Biodrama draft of the play. However, once I got this idea in my head, I knew it was not going away.

* * *

After drafting the Biodrama version of this play, I began experimenting with theatrical techniques that I could layer into the Biodrama in order to transform the piece into an investigation of the many layers of representation and self-representation involved in the entire project: being a fan, performing music, writing music, attending a show, etc. I scanned the play and annotated the moments in which the aforementioned theatrical techniques—lip-sync, reenactment, eliminating the fourth wall, songs, improvisation, anachronism, storytelling, switching character and breaking character—could interrupt the dramatic course of the play. Within each scene I found many opportunities for deviation from the Biodrama form. The next step was to decide where and when to use specific techniques so that the play could most effectively convey the many levels of representation involved in the production and perception of popular music.

Throughout the play I utilize each technique to achieve a specific effect that highlights the play’s dealings with representation. In the music video and concert scenes I implemented lip-sync to show the artifice and performativity of rock and roll performance in the commercial market. Live performance, which is fundamental to
Bruce Springsteen’s claim to authenticity,\textsuperscript{17} becomes a farce—a silly demonstration of the exaggerated on-stage persona of a rock and roll band. The music video scene also plays with the representational form of reenactment. In real life, Bruce Springsteen, the E Street Band, a film crew, and an audience of extras filmed a music video for “Glory Days” in order to capitalize on the burgeoning commercial demand for visual accompaniment via MTV. By using the theatrical technique of lip sync to reenact a scene that took place in real life, the artifice of the medium of a music video becomes tangible to the audience.

Throughout the play, I included many moments in which the fourth wall disappears. For example, in performance Bruce and other characters guide the audience into and out of specific locations by speaking directly to them. At one point in Saturday’s performance, Bruce even said, “bless you” to an audience member who had sneezed. Each moment that the fourth wall disappears reminds the audience that they are not witnessing a series of real events but rather a series of performed scenes. The audience can then question the relationship between performativity and authenticity.

It is important to note that throughout the play Bruce Springsteen never performs live in a rock and roll setting. Bruce sings an acoustic song at the beginning and the end of the show and the actor playing Bruce sings an original song; however, Bruce Springsteen as a character never performs a rock and roll song. The representation of Bruce Springsteen as a world-famous rock and roll super-star despite the fact that the audience never sees him perform is meant to question the

\textsuperscript{17} Bruce became known as the guy who puts on three-hour rock concerts because of how authentic his devotion to his art and his fans is.
authenticity of rock and roll performance, industry, and fandom. The only real live performances in the entire show are the performances of the original songs. I placed each of the four original songs in scenes that either paralleled or complemented the theme and/or story of the song. While the songs fit with the overarching storyline, they are not musical numbers that blend seamlessly into the overall narrative of the show. Even the visual of the performer holding the microphone separates the audience’s experience of the songs from the audience’s experience of the play. The songs become isolated live performances—momentary snapshots of how a performer conducts him/herself on the stage. During the songs, the audience becomes a listener rather than a viewer. It is critical to give the audience the experience of listening so they can compare the subject position of being a listener to the subject position of being an observer in the world that the play has created.

As neither character nor plot is a strictly enforced element of this play, there is a lot of room for improvisation. For the audience, who can only speculate which parts of the show are improvisation and which parts are scripted, they are left to question, “Was that supposed to happen?” In doing so, the audience is really assessing the role of intention in this performance. Artistic intention is often linked to the subject of authenticity. The audience is forced to consider whether determining authenticity is possible when intentions are unclear. For the actors, there is an element of surprise that comes with improvisation. Improvisation in theatrical performance, just like improvisation in music, requires the collection of individuals to respond to and build from one another. Through improvisation, the troop of actors become their own rock and roll band, working together to create a coherent piece of art.
In order to deviate from the Biodrama form, I added anachronistic elements to the set, props, and script. These elements include not-yet-invented technologies, contemporary vernacular, and contemporary pop culture references. For example, despite the fact that the play supposedly takes place between 1982 and 1993, John Hammond conducts his interviews over an iPhone. Similarly, the characters and planted audience members made frequent references to and use of social media outlets. The fake audience’s use of social media to engage in the play functions like a mirror—showing the real audience what people look like when they engage in self-representation and pop-culture participation through social media outlets. By including anachronistic elements I distanced the action of the play from a specific place and time. This feeling of being “unstuck in time” allows the production to provide a metacommentary on the nature of performance in contemporary life.

Storytelling appears throughout the play to serve as a reminder to the audience that any representation or self-representation involves the assemblage of fragments from everyday life into a clean narrative. When Bruce slips into his monologues, the audience can see him as a writer, creating a narrative out of disassembled parts of his life. Bruce is participating in the mythology that the music industry and fans have attributed to him. In the interview scenes, the audience can see music industry executives attempting to craft a narrative of their subjects. The storytelling through the Joads serves not only as a recurring motif about the false promises of the American Dream but also to show the similarities in creating a biography and work of fiction. Bruce’s story, as told in this play, parallels the Joads. It is a story about dreams, travel, love, loss, and finding your own way. In terms of authenticity, it is
hard to tell which is the more authentic story: Bruce’s life or the Joads’ migration. Fans, journalists, record executives, friends and Bruce himself have all contributed to the representation of Bruce as a mythologized icon—a modern day Tom Joad.

Throughout the production many actors switch and/or play multiple characters. For example, the actors who start the production as members of the Joad family become vignettes along the walking path, audience members, and eventually the E-Street band members themselves. The fluid representation of character in this play proposes that identity is not necessarily something one is but something some acts. A single person can perform multiple identities in accordance to context. In fact, a person can even perform an identity that is contrary to the front that they present.

For example, all of the industry executives—Jon Landau, Steve Harris, and the Rolling Stone Interviewer—are men performed by women. I did this for two reasons: First, I wanted to include women in positions of power in the music industry to show how naturally woman can perform the role of an industry executive. As an aspiring music executive myself, I wanted to comment on the lack of female authoritative presence in an industry that thrives on and often exploits female talent. Second, I wanted to show that a person could represent a character in direct opposition to her physical body. Bruce’s blackness in this production further emphasizes this point. Of course Bruce Springsteen is not African American. In fact, Springsteen is a cultural icon for white, male, working-class America. However, by choosing to represent this icon through the physical body of Matthew Lynch, an African American male, I challenged the audience to question the notion that identity is a stagnant property of one’s physical body.
Although rare, there are a few moments in which actors explicitly break character. For example, John Hammond appears repeatedly throughout the show to function not only as a pseudo-narrator but to also demonstrate the potential for a performer reveal him/herself as a performer. The version of John Hammond in the play is not a faithful representation of the former Columbia A&R executive. Instead he is an anachronistic caricature, a fake-pipe-cellphone-using trope of the old-school record executive. Furthermore, whenever John Hammond settles into the transcript of the interview, the actor playing John Hammond breaks character, reminding both the interviewer and the audience that he is not really John Hammond. The idea of assuming an identity in performance is very prevalent in the world of commercial music. Popular musicians are not only people who make music but also individuals who perform roles that they don’t necessarily inhabit in their “real” lives. Additionally, the continuous occupation of an identity that is not one’s own can be an exhausting requirement of celebrity. As Bruce points out in his interview with Rolling Stone, “You end up creating this sort of icon and eventually it oppresses you.” \footnote{James Henke. “The Rolling Stone Interview: Bruce Springsteen Leaves E Street.” \textit{Rolling Stone Music.} 6 August, 1992. Web. Feb, 2014.} By keeping these moments of character breaking to a minimum, the act of breaking character becomes a significant event. When Bruce—the only consistent character and the focal subject of the performance—breaks character, the purpose of the play becomes clarified. The actor playing Bruce deviates from his character, firmly demonstrating the point that the play is not about the life of Bruce Springsteen. It is an investigation of the role that representation play in the production of and
perception of rock and roll and how it contributes to the way fans as I form our identities.

* * *

At the start of the spring semester of 2014, I had a complete draft of the play and a group of actors eager to begin rehearsals on this project. The first weeks of rehearsals with the actors was geared towards familiarizing the actors with the concept and the lines. Once the actors became comfortable with their characters and the purpose of the show, the director, Kirby Sokolow, and I began experimenting with improvisation. The script became more a blueprint rather than a strict text that the actors had to adhere to. Kirby and I encouraged actors to change specific lines to make them more comfortable and natural in performance. As the rehearsal process progressed, I began to see the parallels in theatrical improvisation and rock music improvisation. The act of using the script as a blueprint is similar to the act of using a lead-sheet rather than a strict score. Just as I would give the band members melodic ideas and then “point them in,” Kirby would give the actors theatrical ideas and release them into the scene. Using improvisation and loose adherence to the script inspired the same sense of joy in the actors that I witnessed among musicians when they fall into a rhythm with one another. As we rehearsed the actors, I also began incorporating the actors who sing into the band rehearsals. Because I had been singing with the band since the start of the fall semester, the band was used to playing
the music with a singer. The synthesis of the actors with the band was easy and by spring break all of the songs were fully developed.

When we returned from spring break, we recorded an album of the music in the show. I had titled the production “Highway Alive: A Concept Album,” in November of 2013 and I wanted to release an album with the production. I called it a concept album because of the relationship between the music and the story of this production. Although the music was not essential to the overall narrative of the play, each of the songs highlighted themes of the American Dream, fame, isolation, identity, and self-representation. Also, the fragmented scene progression of the play has an “albumness” to it—a chronological set of isolated yet related events.

After we recorded the concept album, we began preparing for tech week. By the week of April 1st, we were prepared to synthesize each of the pieces to this production that had up until this point remained separated: the band, the play, the lights, the set design, the costumes, the props, the sound design, and especially the space. Since 200 Church and Eclectic are residential dorms, we were not allowed to use the space until the week of the production. We also had the limitation of only being able to use the spaces for four hours a day Monday-Thursday of tech week. We spent the Monday and Tuesday of tech week reconfiguring our blocking to fit the space, transforming the houses into sets, and configuring the lighting. Wednesday we brought the band into the spaces and began experimenting with the sound design. Rachel Day, the sound designer, and I had mapped out the sound design at the beginning of the semester: two full band set ups, one in the recording studio room of

19 The album is available at www.soundcloud.com/LindsaySchapiroMusic
200 Church and one in the ballroom of Eclectic. Our original plan to have the band playing from the recording studio room while the actors sang from either the middle table room or outside worked smoothly in this space. However, the sound design for Eclectic did not work as planned. We were unable to hear the band through the open windows of Eclectic the way we were able to hear the band outside of 200 Church. I made the decision to use the instrumental version of the recording for the song “I’ve Been Around” instead of performing it with the live band. The song played through a PA system set up by the window while the actress, Mariana Quinn-Makwaia sang into her microphone. By Thursday we had everything set—lights, set, props, sound, costumes, run crew—and we prepared for our first full run through. After Thursday night, our show was locked and we were set for opening night. Needless to say, it was a long week.

* * *

When the show came to life, I was able to see the full effect of the work that our team had done. The scenes transitioned within and between venues effectively and I was pleased to find that the audience engaged in the multiple layers of representation and self-representation that were happening in the show. The technical aspects of the show worked as well as they possibly could have given the materials and time span that we were working with. The actors were able to improvise seamlessly. The planted audience members brought a huge amount of energy and fun to the production. In fact, despite my role as the musical director and writer in this
production, the energy from the planted audience inspired me to join in their improvisation. Their mastery at improvisation allowed the show to come to life in a way that strict adherence to the written word cannot. The whole team functioned just like a rock and roll band in live performance—following each other’s lead and working together to create an immersive experience for the viewer.

I was surprised to find that many of the effects that I expected to emerge in the performance did not. For example, I expected that the audience would join the planted members of the audience in the social media aspect of the show. I expected the audience to stop and watch the vignettes placed along the pathway from 200 Church to Eclectic. I also expected that the audience to join the cast and crew in song as we moved along the pathway. While the limitations in audience participation were unexpected, they revealed much about the relationship of the observer to a performance. The conventions of viewing a theatrical production are so ingrained in the mind of a viewer that she will not disobey these conventions unless explicitly told to do so. Even in a play that explicitly informs the viewer to explore new forms of self-representation, the audience still participated in accordance to convention. The deviations from my expectations for the live performance proved to enlighten my understanding of the subject of self-representation and representation in music production and perception. Just as one cannot predict what will happen at a rock and roll concert, one cannot predict what will happen in a theatrical production. Watching this show from the perspective of the audience, I saw that this production is a commentary on popular music. It explores the writing, production, recording, publicity, journalism, commercialism, fandom and criticism of popular music.
CONCLUSION

Two and a half years ago I set out to write a realist, Kitchen-sink, Bruce Springsteen Biodrama. What emerged on the stage on the weekend of April 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2014 was the complete opposite. It was a blatant rejection of convention. While the performance utilized elements of Brechtian Epic Theater, it went beyond making the audience aware that they were viewing a production. It made the audience a player in the dramatic action of the play. This play is the furthest away I’ve gone from conventions in theatrical representation. By introducing a set of theatrical veerings to a strict Biodrama, I was able to explore the nature of representation and self-representation in the production and perception of music. It is important to note that I did not discover these theatrical veerings through my study of theater. Instead, it was through my study of music. By studying rock and roll performativity, industry, musicology, performance, composition and fandom, I was able to create a theatrical work that explored forms of representation and self-representation not only in music but also in every day life.

Returning to the unanswered question of authenticity. I can provide an endless list of not’s: intention is not intrinsically linked to authenticity, cultural upbringing does not guarantee authenticity, identity is not a signifier of authenticity, industry does not always eliminate authenticity, dedicated fandom is not the same as authentic observation, etc. I can posit only one theory: “authenticity” is a term without a clear meaning that is instrumental in organizing the way people produce and perceive
popular music. As authenticity is impossible to detect and convey, this production is about enacting that impossibility of knowing.

While I cannot speak with certainty about Bruce Springsteen’s intentions, I will propose that he is aware of the role representation and self-representation has played in his career. In a skit on Saturday Night Live, Bruce Springsteen joins Jimmy Fallon in a parody version of “Born to Run.” The song uses the melody and chords of “Born to Run” to satirize New Jersey governor Chris Christie’s decision to shut down lanes on the George Washington Bridge. Fallon starts the song dressed-up like Bruce Springsteen on the “Born in the U.S.A.” tour. Springsteen emerges from the dark in the transition before verse two, dressed in the same outfit. By playing with his old costumes, Springsteen comments on role representation and self-representation has played in his life. However, I cannot help but wonder if this demonstration is hinged around verifying his authenticity. Perhaps Springsteen feels that by admitting the role representation and self-representation has played in his career, he can claim authenticity. I cannot know with certainty because all I have are observations of fandom. Besides, even if he told me, could I really trust his word?

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Bibliography


APPENDIX 1:

HIGHWAY ALIVE TEXT
Highway Alive

*A Concept Album In Three Acts*

a play with music

By Lindsay Schapiro

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

A note on the Cast and Characters:
Most of the Cast perform multiple Characters. The E-Street Band is the group of musicians in
the show. The F-Street Band are the actor doubles for these musicians. Audiences are the
people placed in the audience to perform both scripted and unscripted tasks at the director's
discretion. When I refer to "the audience," I mean the group of spectators seeing the
production.

BRUCE, a rock star

STEVEN, guitarist in the E-Street Band and Bruce's best friend

JOHN HAMMOND, an old dying A&R executive who is sometimes not John Hammond

INTERVIEWER #1, a frustrated young journalist who is really Steve Harris

MA, Tom Joad's mother in John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath /
AUDIENCE, a planted audience member /
HOMELESS WOMAN, an out-of-work mother

TOM, Tom Joad in Grapes of Wrath /
GARRY TALENT, bassist in the F-Street Band

AUDIENCE, a planted audience member /
VIGNETTE # 1, a busker

PA, Tom Joad's father from Grapes of Wrath /
VIGNETTE # 2, brothers playing catch /
ROY, keyboard player in the F-Street Band /

GRANDMA, Tom Joad's grandma in Grapes of Wrath /
AUDIENCE, a planted audience member /
VIGNETTE # 3, a couple on a date /
TABLOID # 2, a gossip columnist

RUTHIE, Tom Joad's kid sister in Grapes of Wrath /
AUDIENCE, a planted audience member /
VIGNETTE # 4, a daughter and a mother

WINFIELD, Tom Joad's kid brother in Grapes of Wrath /
AUDIENCE, a planted audience member /
VIGNETTE # 2, brothers playing catch

UNCLE JOHN, Tom Joad's uncle in *Grapes of Wrath* / AUDIENCE, a planted audience member / VIGNETTE # 3, a couple on a date / NILS, guitarist in the F-Street Band

JON LANDAU, Bruce's manager

CLARENCE, saxophonist in both the E-Street and F-Street Bands

JULIANNE, a model and Bruce's first wife

MAN, a creepy fan / DIRECTOR, a music video director

MAX, drummer in the F-Street Band / VIGNETTE # 4, a daughter and mother / TABLOID # 1, a music reporter

PATTI, singer in both the E-Street and F-Street Band and Bruce's second wife

INTERVIEWER #2, an androgenous British journalist / AUDIENCE, a planted audience member / TABLOID #3, perhaps the same British journalist
 SETTINGS

Outside a house

A house:

   Living room / Joad family home

   Table room

   Recording studio room

A walkway

Outside a venue

A venue:

   Music video set

   Music venue
SCENES

ACT 1

Scene 1 Outside a house Late 1981
Scene 2 Living room / Joad family home January 3, 1982 / 1930s
Scene 3 Recording studio room Late 1982 - Early 1984

TRANSITION

A walkway

ACT 2

Scene 1 Outside a music venue/ California October, 1984 / 1930s
Scene 2 Music video set Early 1985
Scene 3 Music venue 1985

TRANSITION

A walkway

ACT 3

Scene 1 Table room 1986-1988
Scene 2 Recording Studio room 1992
Scene 3 Living room 1994 / 1930s
PRODUCTION NOTES

This play spans 13 years, from 1981-1994. It takes places in two locations, a house and a music venue. The house is used in Act I and III. The music venue is used in Act II. The actors and the audience travel between venues together. Along the way there is a walkway with vignettes lining the sides.

The house has three rooms. The first room is called the "Living room." It functions as Bruce Springsteen's living room as well as the Joad family home. The second room is called the "Table room." It is bare except for a table. In the first act the Joads use the table to pack their belongings. In the third act, the table functions as a dining table. The third room is called the "Recording studio room."

The venue has one room. At first it is a music video set. It then transforms into a concert venue for Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." tour.

If the above staging is not possible, it may easily adapt to be a stationary play with traditional theatrical set transformations.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the most genius and inspired group I have ever had the pleasure to of making theater and music with. To our spirited cast, our groovy band, our fierce stage managers, our masterful director, our visionary design team, and our dedicated crew.

Many additional thanks to my advisor Ron Kuivila, Professor Charry, the music department, Angus Macdonald, Isaac Silk, Zak, Tennessee, 200 Church and Eclectic residents, Slavei, my roommates and friends within Wes and beyond, Adam, my wonderful grandparents, my angel of a mother, my best bro Dylan, and of course Bruce Springsteen.

DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to my Dad. If I had a million dollars... I couldn't buy a Dad who could teach me half what you've taught me.
SCENE 1

End of Bruce Springsteen’s “The River” tour.  *  

STEVEN walks over to BRUCE.

STEVEN
Hey Boss.

BRUCE
Miami Steve! How’s it going?

STEVEN
Ah you know, after another year of non-stop marathon shows and livin’ on a bus I’m finally goin’ home where the only thing I gotta do is stuff my face with Marlene’s home-baked lasagna and marinate in a long hot bath. So...

BRUCE
It’s goin pretty good then.

STEVEN
Can’t complain.

(They laugh. A pause.)

STEVEN
Listen. I’ve been thinking, and I don’t know the best way, or if there’s even a good way to say this but–

BRUCE
Then you don’t have to.

STEVEN
But I want to ta–

BRUCE
Just let me know when it’s time, and we’ll figure it out.
STEVEN

Time? What are you talking about?

BRUCE

Come on man, let’s not play this game. You’ve got that look in your eye.

STEVEN

What loo–

BRUCE

It’s that look that says I gotta get out on my own. There’s more out there I wanna do.

STEVEN

I don’t–

BRUCE

It’s that look that says, I feel bogged down in this life, in this band. I get it, I know the feeling.

STEVEN

Can you just let–

BRUCE

And hell, I’m not gonna try and fight ya. You and me have been friends since we were kids. We liked the same music, we liked the same bands, the same clothes, same girls. So when it’s time all you gotta do is look me in the eye and I’ll know that--

STEVEN

I’m leaving the band.

(No response.)

STEVEN

Not necessarily right now. But soon.

(No response.)

STEVEN

I gotta make my own mark. Ya know?

BRUCE

Of course, man. And I, I support that. Really. You got something to say, you should get out there and say it.
I appreciate it.

(Stevens pats his shoulder and starts walking away.)

Would you ever thought ten years ago we’d make it this far? Hell look at you, you got a wife, a home, and even your own bathtub.

We’re living the dream.

(They laugh.)

And we’re only going up from here.

(No response.)

And that won’t change anything?

(No response.)

Yeah.

I love you brother.

Yeah, you too.

(Stevens walks away. Bruce paces outside the house. Audiences snap pictures of him. John Hammond enters holding a telephone and smoking a pipe. He sits on the stoop. A phone rings.)
Hello Mr. Harris.

INTERVIEWER #1
(from the audience)

Hello there.

I’m John Hammond

INTERVIEWER #1

Oh nice to meet you.

JOHN HAMMOND

Well nice to meet you too.

INTERVIEWER #1

They have prepared the questions for me so I guess I’ll fire away if you’re ready.

JOHN HAMMOND

That’s wonderful. Do that please.

INTERVIEWER #1

You’ve established the careers of various artists, I don’t know exactly established, but at least got people like Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen going. How did this all start? How do you find these people?

JOHN HAMMOND

Usually I go out and find them you know. And uh I’m supposed to have ears. I’m a classical musician by training and uh and I played in a string quartet for many years. But I really love jazz. So I got into jazz early on. I cut my uh first real big band jazz uh real big band jazz record back in 1932 with Fletcher Henderson's band. And of course I did a lot of work with Count Bassie and I got Benny Goodman's band together originally. Uh and I mean, jazz is my bag I guess you could say although I'm not a jazz musician myself.

INTERVIEWER #1

How come you were able to see the talent in say a folkie like Bob Dylan or a rock n roller like Bruce Springsteen?

JOHN HAMMOND

Well, in the first place they got something to say. They're not just uh uh folk artists or rock artists. I mean, uh Bob Dylan happened to be a uh poet. Bruce uh Springsteen is a poet. I guess maybe I was attuned to that.
INTERVIEWER #1
You sort of raised a whole generation I mean Bob Dylan Aretha Franklin. Which are you most proud of?

JOHN HAMMOND
I'm awful proud of Springsteen. I'm awful proud of Stevie Ray to be perfectly frank with you because he's continuing the blues tradition you know. And the artist I always wanted to record and I was a few months too late was Robert Johnson. I got his records when they first came out in 1937 and I knew this was the greatest blues singer I was ever gonna hear and he was. I've also recorded Big Bill Boonsey and all sort of traditional blues musicians.

INTERVIEWER #1
Hm.

JOHN HAMMOND
Also I happen to be one blues fan who is not put off by rock cause I have a feeling that Rock and R&B really continued the uh blues tradition.

INTERVIEWER #1
Uh, next question here is, they wonder if you have some sort of special technique for plucking these diamonds from the rough as it were. You know in other words this may--

JOHN HAMMOND
I’m just l– Around an a–time–cut my fir–ears ago.

INTERVIEWER #1
I’m sorry could you repeat that, I’m having trouble hearing you?

(No response. JOHN HAMMOND mischievously breaks character and walks towards INTERVIEWER #1)

INTERVIEWER #1
(still in character)
Mr. Hammond?

JOHN HAMMOND
Yes, sorry about that Mr. Harris, we cut out for a minute.

INTERVIEWER #1
Oh that’s alright.
JOHN HAMMOND
You know, you should also know that I haven’t been completely honest with you.

INTERVIEWER #1
How so?

JOHN HAMMOND
Well for starters, I’m not really John Hammond.

INTERVIEWER #1
(nervously)
Oh?

JOHN HAMMOND
And this interview took place in the 80’s, John Hammond is actually dead now.

INTERVIEWER #1
(quickly)
Oh, well I’m sorry to hear that.

JOHN HAMMOND
Yeah, stroke. Turns out cigarettes really do kill you. Anyway, I just thought you should know.

INTERVIEWER #1
(nervously and quickly)
Well thanks. I appreciate your honesty. So Mr.... So what year is it?

JOHN HAMMOND
Well it’s uh 1982.

INTERVIEWER #1
And if you’re not John Hammond, who are you?
(pointing at Bruce)
And come to think of it, who’s he?

JOHN HAMMOND
Well if I didn’t know any better, I’d say that’s Mr. Springsteen.

(He hangs up the phone, puts his pipe back in his mouth, takes the phone with him, and walks in the house.)
Bruce!

(No response.)

INTERVIEWER

Hey, Bruce!

(BRUCE walks towards the front door.)

INTERVIEWER #1

Mr. Springsteen, over here!

(A pause. BRUCE turns to the audience)

BRUCE

But of course, I’m not really Bruce Springsteen. And this isn’t how it really happened.

(BRUCE walks into the house. The audience follows.)

LIGHTS UP.
SCENE 2

The house is divided into three rooms: Living room, Table room, and Recording studio room.

Lights up in the Living room.


There is a small kitchen attached to the living room. The living space is lit. The kitchen is dark. The audience takes a minute to explore the space. BRUCE is sitting in his chair.

As the audience take their seats, BRUCE begins to sing the first verse to “Ghost of Tom Joad.”

(BRUCE sings.)

MAN WALKIN’ ‘LONG THE RAILROAD TRACKS
GOIN’ SOMEPLACE THERE’S NO GOIN’ BACK
HIGHWAY PATROL CHOPPERS COMIN’ UP OVER THE RIDGE
HOT SOUP ON A CAMPFIRE UNDER THE BRIDGE

SHELTER LINE STRETCHIN’ ‘ROUND THE CORNER
WELCOME TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER
FAMILIES SLEEPIN’ IN THEIR CARS IN THE SOUTHWEST
NO HOME NO JOB NO PEACE NO REST

THE HIGHWAY IS ALIVE TONIGHT
NOBODY’S KIDDIN NOBODY ABOUT WHERE IT GOES
I’M SITTIN’ DOWN HERE IN THE CAMPFIRE LIGHT

BRUCE


(pause)

Today, I woke up about 6, caught the sunrise, shoveled out the front porch, made some breakfast and started doing some more songs.
I was workin' on the rhythm for this one song, think I'm callin' it “Atlantic City.” It's about these two young folks in love who go out gamblin' together cause they're sick of trying to make an honest living. Things get a little outta control, they get in over their head and the guy ends up dead.

(pause)
I like being home on my own for this one. I needed to get away from the studio. You can't write in a studio. But here, there's something inspiring about kicking open your own front door with your old winter boots.

(pause)
This record's gonna be different from the rest. Not as hopeful. No catches or hooks about how great the life of the workingman can be. Just the truth. Plain. Bleak. Truth.

(pause)
Ya know, one good thing about everyone knowing my name is I can write what I want and those old small men in their big grey suits won't say anything about it. And if they did, what do I care. I already got a million bucks in the bank.

(pause, mood change)
But hell, people still wanna hear a good story now a days. Hard working guy catches a lucky break, quits his job, hops in his rad old chevy with his bitchin' new girl and heads out west to Cali, never looking back.

(chuckles, pause)
I keep writing these songs about money, wine, and love and whining about love and money but that's no honest living. Hell, I might as well be that gamblin' man. At least he had a girl.

(pause)
You know, people want to hear a good story and some may say it's my job to give it to them, but I ain’t no delivery man. I got a guitar.

(refocuses on the recorder)
I thought of you earlier today. How you always used to say it was a “waste of time to bother with those damn unions.” You would do your work, come home, wake up, do it again.

(resentfully)
When you had enough, you quit, look for a new job.

(pause)
Anyway, I went looking through some old newspapers and I stumbled on an article about the Air Traffic Controller's strike a couple months back. Headline reads “Reagan Fires 11,000” and right below there's a picture of a little kid crying in his laid-off daddy's arms. It seemed timeless. Desperate. Like that dust bowl photograph of the two children hiding behind their momma.

(he picks up the recorder)
I went looking for your old copy of Grapes of Wrath. Thought I'd finally get around to it. Lord knows it's a long one. But hey, maybe I'll find something in there that'll help me write some good songs.
(BRUCE presses stop. A pause. The chord progression to “I Wandered” starts and plays throughout the scene. BRUCE closes his eyes to listen. TOM JOAD walks to the entrance to the Living room. A pause. He air knocks and stomps his feet. BRUCE opens the fake door. TOM and MA enter. MA hands BRUCE Grapes of Wrath. BRUCE sits in his chair. He opens the book and begins to read. The music stops. MA begins packing. TOM looks around the house. The Living room becomes the Joad family home in Sallisaw, Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl.)

BRUCE
“To the red country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth.”

MA
They called us the “Okies.”

BRUCE
“The clouds appeared, and went away, and in a while they did not try any more.”

MA
But we didn't care what we was called.

BRUCE
“A gentle wind followed the rain clouds, driving them on northward, a wind that softly clashed the drying corn.”

MA
No time for cares. They took our land.

BRUCE
“The air and the sky darkened and through them the sun shone redly, and there was a raw sting in the air.”

MA
They took our land. And we had to go.

(PA, GRANDMA, RUTHIE, WINFIELD and UNCLE JOHN enter. They help MA pack.)
BRUCE gets up and stands against the wall. PA makes himself outside. The music stops.)

TOM

“Pa”

PA

I’m outside. “What do you want?”

TOM

“It’s Tommy– It’s Tommy coming home.”

PA

“Tommy. You ain’t busted out? You ain’t got to hide?”

TOM

“Nah I’m paroled. I’m free.”

(TOM hands PA his papers.)

PA

“Tommy we are goin’ to California.

(awkwardly)

But we was gonna write you a letter an’ tell you.

(pause)

But you’re back. You can go with us. You can go!”

(PA puts his hands on TOM’s shoulder, timidly.)

BRUCE

“At last he touched Tom, but touched him on the shoulder, timidly, and instantly took his hand away.”

(UNCLE JOHN, GRANDMA, WINFIELD and RUTHIE step onto the imaginary porch one by one to greet TOM in pantomime, except MA. MA continues packing. BRUCE starts helping her.)

BRUCE

“The people came out of their houses and smelled the hot stinging air and covered their noses from it. And the children came out of the houses, but they did not run or shout as they would have done after a rain.”
MA
(to Bruce)
We were the 10%, you know. 200,000 of us headed to California in search of the promised land. 200,000 out of the 2 million of us, forced to leave our homes behind.

(BRUCE takes over packing for MA. The family exits. MA goes to the kitchen as PA and TOM enter pantomiming as BRUCE speaks.)

BRUCE
“Pa stepped inside clearing the door, and Tom looked at his mother. She was lifting the curling slices of pork from the frying pan. She looked out the door, but the sun was behind Tom and she saw only a dark figure outlined by the bright yellow sun light.”

MA
“Come in,”

BRUCE
“She said.”

MA
“just lucky I made plenty bread this morning.”

BRUCE
“Her eyes opened wide and the pupils dilated. She breathed heavily through her open mouth. She closed her eyes.”

MA
“Thank God,”

BRUCE
“She said.”

MA
“Oh, Thank God.”

(A pause.)

BRUCE
“And suddenly her face was worried,”
MA

“‘Tommy you ain't wanted? You didn't bust loose?’”

TOM

“‘No, Ma. Parole. I got the papers here.’”

(A pause. TOM, MA, AND PA exit the Living room carrying packed items. BRUCE closes the book. BRUCE picks up his guitar, starts the recorder, and plays an acoustic version of “Atlantic City.” From the Recording studio room, the band plays the electric version. BRUCE stops.)

BRUCE

That’s my cue.

LIGHTS OUT.
SCENE 3

BRUCE walks towards the Recording studio room holding his acoustic guitar. The audience follows. He passes through the Table room. The Joad family is placing various items on the table preparing to leave.

Enter Recording studio room.

As the audience and BRUCE enter, the E- STREET BAND is playing the electric “Atlantic City.”

JON LANDAU
Come on in, the guys are just getting started.

(BRUCE and the audience enter)

JON LANDAU
You too, come on!

(if the audience does not follow Bruce)

You can leave your acoustic right there.

(if the audience does follow Bruce, straight into the following line)

(pointing Bruce’s acoustic guitar to the empty guitar stand)

(BRUCE puts his acoustic down and picks up his electric. BRUCE greets the band. CLARENCE walks into the studio.)

CLARENCE
Sorry I’m late!

BRUCE
That’s it. You’re fired!

(A pause.)
BRUCE
(laughing)
I’m just messing with you.

CLARENCE
You little--

BRUCE
I can’t believe you fell for that.

CLARENCE
Yeah, yeah, you wouldn’t last a day without me.

(They laugh.)

JON LANDAU
Someone’s happy!

GARRY
It’s a studio day, someone’s gotta be.

(The E-Street Band nods in agreement.)

BRUCE
Alright guys, let’s take it from the top. A one, two, a one two three and.

(BRUCE tries the electric version of “Atlantic City.” BRUCE stops it midway.)

JON LANDAU
Everything alright in there?

BRUCE
Yeah, just need a second. Let’s take it from the top again. A one, two a one, two three and.

(BRUCE stops it again.)

BRUCE
Let’s take five guys. Hey Steve, come on in here with me.

(BRUCE and STEVEN walk into the booth.)

BRUCE
It’s just not working for me. The feel is off, I don’t know what--
(BRUCE takes a breath.)

BRUCE
I don’t know where to go from here.

(A long pause.)

JON LANDAU
Why don’t we just release the demos?

(A pause.)

JON LANDAU
Think about it. The songs are about isolation and depression. That's how they should sound. Recorded alone on a four-track in your bedroom with only your acoustic guitar.

BRUCE
I don’t know.

JON LANDAU
What’s not to know?

BRUCE
When I recorded them at Colt’s Neck I always pictured doing ‘em with the band.

JON LANDAU
Well it’s not working.

(A pause.)

JON LANDAU
When you walked into John Hammond's office and played four songs on your acoustic guitar he signed you right there. You were an acoustic act. You, Bruce Springsteen. Not the band.

(STEVEN looks at JON.)

BRUCE
What about the songs we’ve already recorded?

JON LANDAU
No reason to get rid of them for good. Just put them aside for now.
(BRUCE looks at STEVEN.)

STEVEN
I’m with Jon on this one.

BRUCE
Really?

STEVEN
Yep.

BRUCE
You’re sure?

STEVEN
The album is meant to sound like it does on that tape.

(BRUCE looks at STEVEN. STEVEN nods at BRUCE.)

BRUCE
Alright. I’ll go tell the guys. Jon you take care of it with Columbia.

JON LANDAU
Yup.

(BRUCE walks into the booth. STEVEN lingers and turns to JON about to speak.)

BRUCE
You coming Miami Steve!?

(STEVEN follows BRUCE. Everyone exits. Lights out. A pause. A phone rings. A lamp turns on. JOHN HAMMOND is smoking a pipe.)

JOHN HAMMOND
Hello?

INTERVIEWER #1
Hello there.
I’m John Hammond.

INTERVIEWER #1
Yes, we were just talking a minute ago before the phone cut out.

Oh hello Mr. Harris.

INTERVIEWER #1
Hello.

So where were we?

INTERVIEWER #1
I was just asking you if you had some sort of special way of finding these so called “diamonds in the rough” if you wi–

I'm just lucky. I've been around an awful long time. I cut my first record 53 years ago and I just happened to be around at the right time. I was around when Billie Holiday first came to New York from Baltimore back in 1933 and I figured that she was it and I turned down Ella Fitzgerald because I was so sold on Billy you know and I think I was right.”

INTERVIEWER #1
Hm How about other new artists like Stevie Ray Vaughn?

Well I got a couple of wonderful young ones comin’ up. There’s a Canadian boy called Peter Hamon. H-A-M-O-N no relation. Uh. And he’s living in LA right now. And uh. I’m doing all sorts of things. But you don’t wanna talk about me. You wanna talk about Stevie.

(INTerviewer laughs.)

I’m old fashioned. I’m an old hat you know.

That’s not true.
JOHN HAMMOND
Well maybe not. I hope not. But I like you know uh I think most people think of that. They
don’t wanna hear old stories repeated.

INTERVIEWER #1
There’s been some criticism leveled at –

(JOHN HAMMOND puts the pipe down. He
presses play on “Born in the U.S.A.” and begins
dancing. It is loud.)

INTERVIEWER #1
Stevie for his voice. Some say it’s not quite up to par. Would you agree?

(No response.)

INTERVIEWER #1
Mr. Hammond!

(No response.)

INTERVIEWER #1
Mr. Hammond can you hear me?!

(No response.)

INTERVIEWER #1
Whatever that is, can you turn it down for a minute?

(JOHN HAMMOND turns the volume off)

JOHN HAMMOND
You know I’ve been lying to you. I’m not really John Hammond.

INTERVIEWER
(quickly)
Uh huh. Well let’s get back to--

JOHN HAMMOND
And this interview took place in the 80's. John Hammond is actually dead now.

INTERVIEWER
(anxiously)
Oh, well that’s a shame. So Mister, what year is it now?
JOHN HAMMOND
Well Ella, it’s 1984.

INTERVIEWER #1
(feigning ignorance)
Ella?
(to the audience)
You mean Ella Fitzgerald.

JOHN HAMMOND
No I mean Ella Israeli. Red hair, small, freshman, Butts A. Do you know her?

INTERVIEWER #1
I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about.

JOHN HAMMOND
Hm. Anyway, Mr. Springsteen’s acoustic album “Nebraska,” have you heard it?

INTERVIEWER #1
(relieved)
Of course.

JOHN HAMMOND
But have you listened to it?

INTERVIEWER #1
I just said--

JOHN HAMMOND
Cause you know there's a difference between hearing and listening.
(Hammond picks up the Nebraska CD and inspects it)
You see in our generation, everything’s digital. We grew up on MP3s and iPods. You just plug it in and flip to any track you want. You can skip the whole album.

INTERVIEWER #1
MP3? I’ve never heard of that. As you told us, Mr. Hammond, it’s 1984.

JOHN HAMMOND
Couldn’t do that with “Nebraska” of course because even the CDs weren’t invented yet. You know...
(pause. He puts the pipe back in his mouth and switches back to Hammond.)
I may not hear as good as I used to, but listening, that I can do!
And “Nebraska,” I'll tell ya, it only sold a million or so, loose change compared to his previous records. But it was marvelous, just marvelous. Some say his best work. His most honest work. And this may be true! But I gotta say what he had cooking for the next record, buddy boy it was through the roof!

INTERVIEWER #1

Next record? What next record?

(JOHN HAMMOND hangs up.)

INTERVIEWER #1

Mr. Hammond, did I lose you again?

(JOHN HAMMOND takes the phone with him as he exits, leaving the lamp on.)

INTERVIEWER #1

For Christ sake.

(Lights up in the studio. JON LANDAU enters, sees the lamp on, is confused, and turns it off. BRUCE and STEVEN enter. JON LANDAU cuts the music.)

JON LANDAU

Mornin’!

BRUCE

 Alright fellas, what do we got?

JON LANDAU

We’ve narrowed it down to 21 songs.

BRUCE

21!

STEVEN

It was over 30 yesterday.

BRUCE

Jesus Christ.
JON LANDAU
And I say we try to get it down to at least 15.

STEVEN
I don’t see that happening.

JON LANDAU
Well that’s a surprise.

BRUCE
Someone tell me what we’ve got.

JON LANDAU
The album we’ve agreed on starts with “Born in the U.S.A” ends with “My Hometown.” So far so good?

(STEVEN and BRUCE nod.)

JON LANDAU
And we all feel good about “I'm on Fire,” “Cover Me,” “Darlington County,” “Working on the Highway,” “Downbound Train,” and “Glory Days?”

(STEVEN and BRUCE nod again.)

JON LANDAU
So we're looking at “None but the Brave,” “My Love,” “Pink Cadillac,” “County Fair,” “I'm Goin' Down,” “Stand on It,” and “No Surrender.” And keep in mind we're still looking for a hit.

STEVEN
We’ve got plenty of hits. This album is nothing but hits.

JON LANDAU
I’m talking a lead single. A song that will take this album to the top.

STEVEN
We already have--

JON LANDAU
(turning his back on Steven and addressing Bruce only)
Here's what I'm thinking. We add “I'm Going Down,” it gives the album that “America the sometimes ugly but still beautiful” thing you’ need. And then you can scratch a couple songs that do the same thing, like “No Surrender.”
STEVEN
You’re wrong.

(BRUCE and JON turn to STEVEN.)

STEVEN
“No Surrender” isn’t an acceptance song. It’s a rebel song. Every album needs a rebel song.

JON LANDAU
We have plenty of rebel songs--

STEVEN
Not like this one.

JON LANDAU
Oh wake up. It’s not the 70’s anymore. We’re in Reagan’s America now. People wanna get rich and love their country. They’re not looking to start a revolution.

STEVEN
That’s bullshit! This is rock and roll!

JON LANDAU
This is business.

BRUCE
(angrily)
Jon.

JON LANDAU
And it’s music. It’s music business. And whether you like it or not, if you wanna reach the whole world, sometimes you have to play your part.

STEVEN
In that case, allow me to play mine.

(STEVEN exits. BRUCE runs after him. From the distance we hear them fight. JON LANDAU and the audience await their return in silence. BRUCE comes back without STEVEN.)

BRUCE
I don’t know what you want from me.
JON LANDAU
I want whatever you want. But if you weren’t interested in having an enormous impact and success, you wouldn’t have picked me to work with. Because I am interested in those things. Is that what you want?

BRUCE
Yes.

JON LANDAU
Then I’m telling you that you need a song that will get you there.

BRUCE
And we don’t have it?

JON LANDAU
No.

BRUCE
Then write your own fucking song.

(BRUCE exits.)

LIGHTS OUT.
With the lights still out, “Dancing In The Dark” comes on the speakers.

AUDIENCE

I know this song!

(Another AUDIENCE shushes her.)

AUDIENCE

I’m just saying! I actually know this one.

The volume lowers. A recorded phone conversation plays.

JON LANDAU

Hi Al!

AL TELLER

Jon, this new song is unbelievable.

JON LANDAU

I’m glad you like it.

AL TELLER

Like it! We can’t get enough of it over here at the CBS building. “Listen, I don’t make predictions very often, but I guarantee you this album is a smash hit number one record. We’ll sell tens of millions of albums in the U.S alone not to mention international. We’ll get two legs of tour behind it and this song, is a smash hit number one single.”

JON LANDAU

Wow. This all sounds great. I’ll pass the news along to Bruce.

AL TELLER

You do that. And we’re still looking at a June release?

JON LANDAU

It seems that way, yes.

AL TELLER

And we’ll be ready to hit the road that month?
JON LANDAU
Looks like it. Bruce just decided on a new back up singer, red-head gorgeous girl.

AL TELLER
And what’s going on with Steve?

JON LANDAU
Don’t know, but Bruce said he thinks he can get Nils Lofgren to replace him.

AL TELLER
Okay, sounds good. Let me know.

JON LANDAU
Yes sir.

AL TELLER
Send Bruce my best and let’s get this thing on the road.

(Phone conversation ends.)

Lights up in the Table room. The Joads begin singing “I Wandered.” The audience goes into the room to check it out. The Joad family is packing. VIGNETTES line up and exit the house still singing. The audience follows.

(MA sings.)

I WANDERED
THROUGH THE NIGHT
AND I PONDERED
IF IT’S RIGHT
TO TAKE THE WATER FROM YOUR
WELL

I’VE GOT CHILDREN TO FEED
ANIMALS TO BREED
CROPS TO GROW
CAUSE THIS WORLD’S GOT ME TURNIN
MY LAND IS A BURNIN
EVERYBODY KNOWS
BUT NOBODY KNOWS
WHERE TO GO

(Everyone travels down a walkway. Along the way there are four VIGNETTES.)

#1 BUSKER
(playing the guitar with an open case filled with money)

#2 BROTHERS
(playing catch)

#3 COUPLE ON DATE
(sitting at a candle lit table)

#4 MOM AND DAUGHTER
(brushing her daughter’s hair before school)

ARRIVE AT VENUE.
Outside a music venue. It is October 31, 1984 in Los Angeles, CA. BRUCE is in the distance talking to a reporter and signing autographs. He keeps glancing at JULIANNE. JULIANNE stands against the wall of the venue smoking a cigarette. She is beautiful, a model/actress. One man approaches her. He holds a magazine.

Hey, I know you!

I don’t think so.

Yeah, you’re that girl, aren’t you? The one on the cover of--

Sorry you are mistak--

No it’s definitely you. I’d know that uh, face anywhere.

(JULIANNE is uncomfortable.)

I have a copy here, will you sign it for me.

(MAN shoves it in her face. She signs reluctantly.)

My buddy’s not gonna believe this. Hey! Quick, before my wife comes back can I get a picture with you? It’ll only take a second.

(MAN hands camera to an audience member. While he shows the audience member how to use the camera, BRUCE and JULIANNE lock eyes and smile an understanding smile. The camera flashes abrasively.)
MAN
Thanks! You have no idea how jealous my buddy’s gonna be. He’s got that picture of you above his toilet. You know the one, where you’re in a white shirt with your nipples po–

(MAN sees his wife approaching. And stops talking. He grabs his wife’s hand and walks away. He turns around and winks at JULIANNE. From inside the venue, the band plays “I’ve Been Around.” The sound is audible outside through open windows in the venue. JULIANNE looks over at BRUCE. He looks back at her. They laugh. JULIANNE turns away coyly. She puts out her cigarette. JULIANNE grabs the microphone.)

(JULIANNE sings.)

I WAS THINKING ABOUT TAKING A WALK
BUT I DON’T KNOW WHERE I WOULD WALK
MAYBE A TRIP AROUND THE PARK
OR JUST FOLLOW THE CARS

I WAS THINKING ABOUT TAKING A DRIVE
BUT I DON’T KNOW HOW TO DRIVE
NEVER GOT AROUND TO IT
NEVER EVEN TRIED

I’VE BEEN AROUND
THIS AWFUL LONELY TOWN
IT’S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I WAS HOME
I’VE BEEN AROUND
YOU BETCHA I’VE BEEN AROUND
CAN’T YOU SEE ME

I WAS THINKING ABOUT HAVING A PICNIC
HAVEN’T YOU ALWAYS WANTED A PICNIC
BUT I DON’T KNOW WHAT I WOULD PACK

I WAS THINKING ABOUT GOING TO A RESTAURANT
BUT I DON’T KNOW ANY RESTAURANTS
HEY MR. OVER THERE. YOU GOT SOMETHING TO RECOMMEND ME

ACT II--29.
I’VE BEEN AROUND
THIS AWFUL LONELY TOWN
IT’S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I WAS HOME
I’VE BEEN AROUND
YOU BETCHA I’VE BEEN AROUND
CAN’T YOU SEE ME
CAN’T YOU SEE ME
CAN’T YOU SEE ME
DO YOU WANNA SEE ME?

(BRUCE and JULIANNE kiss. TABLOIDS take photos. BRUCE and JULIANNE are smiling. JULIANNE is uncomfortable. BRUCE is natural.)

TABLOID #1
Bruce! Over here Bruce!

TABLOID #2
Mr. Springsteen!

JON LANDAU
Alright everybody. Bruce has one more minute. Get your photos now.

(AUDIENCES pull out their phones and start snapping pictures)

TABLOID #3
Hey Boss!

TABLOID #2
Is it true that you and Julianne Phillips are an item?

TABLOID #1
Some say Steven left the band cause you’re a sell out, care to respond?

TABLOID #2
My sources tell me you and Juli are getting married in the Spring. Have you guys set a date?

BRUCE
(still smiling)

No comment.
TABLOID #3
Don’t you feel it’s a bit ironic to be singing songs about the working class when you’re a millionaire?

JON LANDAU
(to reporters)
Alright that’s enough.

(BRUCE and JULIANNE go inside the venue. BRUCE drops his copy of *Grapes of Wrath*. JON LANDAU picks it up and starts reading.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER
I’m totally gonna instagram this. Hashtag Bruuuuce! Hashtag Boss! Hashtag Thesis

(TOM JOAD and PA emerge.)

PA
“We’re there– we’re in California!”

TOM
(looking out)
“We got the desert, We got to get to the water and rest.”

(RUTHIE and WINFIELD emerge. RUTHIE runs and hugs TOM.)

RUTHIE
“California. This here’s California an we’re right in it!”

WINFIELD
“Feels nice an’ cool.”

MA
(from the distance calls)
“Ruthie! Winfiel’! You come back.”

(RUTHIE and WINFIELD exit.)
TOM
“I’m gonna go down an’ take a bath. That’s what I’m gonna do-- before I sleep. How’s Granma sence we got her in the tent?”

PA
“Don’ know. Couldn’ seem to wake her up.”

TOM
“She’s wore out. If she don’t get some res’ pretty soon, she ain’ gonna las’. She’s jes’ wore out. Anybody comin’ with me? I’m gonna wash, an’ I’m gonna sleep in the shade. All day long.”

(TOM exits. PA looks out. UNCLE JOHN emerges and stands next to PA.)

UNCLE JOHN
“Well, we’re here. This here’s California, (pause) an’ she don’t look so prosperous.”

(PA pats his shoulder. UNCLE JOHN exits.)

JON LANDAU
Well this is depressing. (he tosses the book in the trash and says to PA)
Hey you, (tosses him a neon security vest)
Put this on.

(JON LANDAU walks inside. A mob rushes to the front of the venue.)

SECURITY GUARD
One at a time people. I am not kidding around. Single file line. You will all get in I promise. Please check your pockets for any illegal substances as they will not be permitted inside. WESIDS people.

(SEcurity GUARD counts and grants entrance to people in chunks. He may call for different types of people based on the identity that they present.)

ENTER VENUE.
SCENE 2

Enter Music venue. It is loud. A film crew is running around putting candles on tables, bottles on an empty bar, instruments and sound equipment on an empty stage, and dressing the set for a music video shoot. DIRECTOR enters with a megaphone.

DIRECTOR
Shut up. Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

(reading from a piece of paper)
Alright people, everyone gather around. Let’s make this quick. First off I want to thank you all for coming. We appreciate you taking the time to blah blah blah. Couple rules. No eating/drinking on set, no talking while the camera is rolling, no harassing the band or Bruce, do not leak anything to the press before it hits MTV or you will not be happy. Is that all clear? Great.

(puts the paper away)
Now, here’s the way this is gonna work. This scene is set in a small local bar. You all are here for a drink after work. Most of you know each other either from work or school. The band is nothing more than a house band, so go about your business pretending to talk to each other and enjoying the music as you would if this was your high school chemistry teacher’s band and not Bruce Springsteen on this stage. You can dance around a bit and smile, but act natural. And have fun, or at least act like it. Fuck if I care. Thank you. And we’ll get the ball rolling in a few minutes.

(DIRECTOR puts the megaphone down and turns his attention to the stage. The AUDIENCES begin talking to each other. The E-Street Band members enter and circle the room, mingling with people and posing for pictures.)

DIRECTOR
Can someone please get the blue banner and put it up behind the stage. This place looks like shit!

(BRUCE enters. AUDIENCES start screaming and run over to his side.)

DIRECTOR
What did I tell you people?!
BRUCE

It’s alright now.

(BRUCE circles the room in a typical rock-star fashion. He then jumps on stage and grabs the mic. It’s off. He shouts out to the audience.)

BRUCE

How’s everyone doin’ tonight?

(Fans cheer.)

BRUCE

Are you ready to have some fun?

(Fans cheer.)

BRUCE

I said, are you ready to have some fun?

(Fans cheer.)

BRUCE

Alright. That’s what I like to hear. Now I try not to talk about what my songs are about. I like to let you guys read into it however you like. But I thought tonight I’ll make an exception. I wrote this song after running into my old baseball buddy at a bar on the great shores of Jersey. He and I got to talkin’ about our time on the field and it hit me that to this guy, those were the best days of his life. This is a true story. I wouldn’t lie to you now would I?

(chuckles)

So when the cameras are rolling and you’re dancing, think about the best day you ever had as a kid. What it looked like, how it smelled, who you were with. Think about how times change, how you’ve changed. And then take that thought and throw it out the window and dance like there’s no tomorrow. Can you do that for me?

(Fans cheer.)

BRUCE

Alright! Ready when you are.

DIRECTOR

Take your places everyone.
(The E-Street Band gets on the stage, the audience get in place.)

DIRECTOR
We’re rolling in 3, 2, 1 ac–

CLARENCE
Hold up a second. What am I doing up here?

DIRECTOR
What do you mean?

CLARENCE
Well this isn’t a sax song. So....

DIRECTOR
Right, can someone get him something to play?

(Crew member enters with a cowbell.)

DIRECTOR
That’ll work.

(CLARENCE looks at BRUCE. BRUCE shrugs his shoulders.)

DIRECTOR
Alright we’re rolling in 3, 2, 1 action--

(The E-Street Band starts playing “Glory Days.”)

DIRECTOR
Cut! What are you doing people?

MAX
(from the E-Street Band)
Are we supposed to play for real?

DIRECTOR
No. Just act like it. Move the sticks around and smile and you’ll be great, okay?

PATTI
And I’m just lip syncing right?
DIRECTOR
For the love of-- None of you are musicians...
    (the band is offended)
Right now. You’re actors....playing the role of the  E street band. Can you channel that for me?

NILS
    (from the E-Street Band)
We can try.

(The E-Street Band members close their eyes and think. Suddenly, the F-Street Band actor doubles come on stage and take the place of the E-Street Band.)

DIRECTOR
Alright, that’s what I call a band that’s ready for camera! We’re rolling in 3, 2–

STEVEN
Got room for one more?

(BRUCE turns around. DIRECTOR is annoyed.)

BRUCE
Steve! Glad you came brother.

(BRUCE walks over. They embrace, emotionally.)

BRUCE
Steven Van Zandt everybody!

(STEVEN waves. AUDIENCES applaud.)

BRUCE
Glad you made it.

STEVEN
Me too brother.

(STEVEN walks over to JON LANDAU. They shake hands awkwardly. STEVEN turns to the band. He pauses.)
STEVEN

I hardly even recognized you guys. Let me get a good look at you.

(STEVEN inspects each of them and improvises observations about their appearance. For example, he approaches NILS.)

STEVEN

You look different.

NILS

(from the F-Street Band)

I changed my hair.

STEVEN

No that’s not it. The guys have gone Hollywood. Even you look different, Boss. You been workin’ out?

(STEVEN proceeds to improvise different observations about people’s appearances.)

BRUCE

It’s a whole new band.

STEVEN

(sadly)

It’s a whole new band.

DIRECTOR

Alright. Are you guys done. Can we get back to work? Great.

Fill me in boss.

STEVEN

Well–

I meant him boss.

STEVEN

Alright.

BRUCE
DIRECTOR
We’re in a local bar, you guys are the house band. Everyone’s having a good time. That’s about it. So just get on stage, smile big, and I’ll take care of the rest.

STEVEN
I can do that. Who knew acting was so easy?

AUDIENCE
Ha! Sopranos!

(STEVEN gets on stage.)

DIRECTOR
And we’re rolling in 3, 2, 1 action!

(A woman hums from the back of the room. The F-Street Band pretends to play their instruments and the audience dances along. The room is awkward.)

DIRECTOR
Cut! I need more joy everyone! I wanna believe you guys are in this bar listening to the music with your best buds.

(DIRECTOR goes up to an AUDIENCE and puts their arm around an audience member.)

AUDIENCE
But I don’t even know this guy.

DIRECTOR
Tonight you two are blood brothers.

(to the F-Street Band)
Can you guys get some more movement going on? Great, thanks. In 3, 2, 1 action!

(Same woman hums from the back of the room. The room is less awkward. The F-Street Band is being over the top.)

DIRECTOR
Nice! Great job everyone! I need more smiling from the band. Can you guys dance a little bit while you play? Yeah that’s better.

(STEVEN is getting annoyed.)
DIRECTOR
I’m still not buying it people, act like you mean it.
(pause)
You’re still a little stiff Steve. Can you loosen up?

(STEVEN is getting more annoyed.)

DIRECTOR
Keep smiling everyone. I need more joy from you Big Man. Yeah, that’s it!

(DIRECTOR looks around the room.)

DIRECTOR
Cut! Hey you. Can you act normal. Like you’re enjoying the music in a bar.

AUDIENCE
But there’s no music. Just some lady humming in the back.

So?

AUDIENCE
I look ridiculous! I’m not doing this.

(A pause.)

DIRECTOR
Then there’s the door.

(The AUDIENCE member leaves.)

BRUCE
(preachy)
Well, I hate to see people go. This business, it’s tough. Steve knows!

(STEVE is offended.)

BRUCE
He’s out there on his own doing his thing. It ain’t always fun and it sure ain’t easy. But if you can come on this ride with me, I promise it’ll be a fun time! So what do you say! Can we do this?

(AUDIENCES cheer.)
BRUCE
That’s the spirit! Back to you, boss.

DIRECTOR
Alright, take your places everyone. And 3, 2, 1 action!

(Everyone hums along. The F-Street Band dances and smiles big. Everyone acts like they’re having a good time.)

DIRECTOR
And cut! That’s a wrap everyone.

(BRUCE goes into the audience to thank people. STEVEN storms out.)

BRUCE
Steve!

PATTI
(flirtatiously)
I think he left.

BRUCE

(JULIANNE jumps on stage. PATTI backs away awkwardly.)

BRUCE
We’re gonna get back on the road. Good night everybody! Thanks for your time and your love. I’ll see you next year in sunny LA, the land of hopes and dreams!

LIGHTS OUT.
The lights are out in the venue. Sound of screaming fans fills the room for about 3 minutes. Concert lighting turns on. A recording from a live Bruce Springsteen show comes on the speakers. AUDIENCES go wild and interact with the real audience members.

(BRUCE & F STREET BAND sync to “Born in the U.S.A.”)

BRUCE
Goodnight everybody. I love you all! See you next time down the road.

(Stage lighting out. House lights on.)

LIGHTS OUT.
TRANSITION

Lights up. The F-Street Band members and BRUCE wade through the crowd. AUDIENCES come up to them and ask them for autographs or pictures as everyone walks towards the venue exit. BRUCE disappears. After the crowd exits, the band stops outside the venue.

JON LANDAU
Alright people, settle down. You’ll all get a couple minutes to take your photos of the band.

(F-STREET BAND poses for the cameras)

ROY
Well.

NILS
Yeah.

ROY
That was something.

NILS
Sure was.

GARRY
I don’t know what to make of this?

CLARENCE
What?

GARRY
The last show. One second we’re on stage. The next, the tour’s done and I don’t--

CLARENCE
What’s not to get, tour’s over. We’re goin’ home.

ROY
To do what?

CLARENCE
(excited)
Take a bath.
ROD
A bath you want me to take a bath?

CLARENCE
That’s what I’m gonna do.

NILS
That’s cause you probably already have your next job lined up. You’re Clarence Clemons.

CLARENCE
Comeon man, you’re Nils Lofgren!

NILS

CLARENCE
That’s not true.

NILS
I hope not.

GARRY
At least you got hope. Nobody knows Garry Talent? See hey you, do you know who Garry Talent is?

AUDIENCE
Who?

GARRY
Exactly. Without the band, we’re nothing. We’ll be lucky to play shows like Steve’s doing.

(STEVE appears.)

STEVEN
Hey guys.

MAX
Steve!

F STREET BAND
Steve!

(Band members embrace STEVE.)
I didn’t mean it like that, Steve.

You know the band’s not over. Just this tour. Trust me, it’s nice to have a break from this show. To finally go out on your own!

It just feels so strange.

What?

Going back to normal. Waking up tomorrow, getting the mail.

Cooking breakfast.

Taking my dog out for a shit.

(A pause.)

But it did happen. Didn’t it?

I don’t know. I wasn’t a part of it.

Of course it did.

Exactly this way?

Now that’s a different question.

Hey, where’s Bruce?
MAX
Last I saw he was talking to a couple reporters backstage.

GARRY
Maybe he left?

(A pause.)

ROY
Should we go without him?

NILS
I gotta get some sleep, I’m exhausted.

Me too

CLARENCE
I’m sure he’ll find us.

PATTI
I’ll wait. You guys go ahead.

GARRY
It feels weird.

PATTI
I know.

(PATTI pats GARRY on the shoulder. She waits outside the venue. A homeless woman starts rummaging through the trash. PATTI sees her. HOMELESS WOMAN throws things out of the trash and onto the ground, including *Grapes of Wrath.*)

PATTI
Excuse me ma’am you dropped...

(HOMELESS WOMAN ignores her.)

PATTI
Ma’am, your book.
PATTI
Can I help you with anything? Do you want some money?

HOMELESS WOMAN
It’s not what you think.

PATTI
I didn’t think anything. I just--

HOMELESS WOMAN
I’m trying to feed my family.

PATTI
Of course. Is there anything I can do?

HOMELESS WOMAN
We lost our home and there’s no work.

PATTI
I’m so sorry to hear that.

HOMELESS WOMAN
What do you do?

PATTI
Excuse me?

HOMELESS WOMAN
What’s your job?

PATTI
I’m a singer. I’m in a band.

HOMELESS WOMAN
You make any money doing that?

PATTI
I do alright.
Hm.

PATTI

Here, just take this. Please.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Will it get you to stop bugging me?

PATTI

Yes.

(HOMELESS WOMAN takes the money)

PATTI

Thank you.

(HOMELESS WOMAN nods. PATTI starts walking away)

HOMELESS WOMAN

You forgot your book.

PATTI

It’s not mi... Thanks.

HOMELESS WOMAN

You too.

(PATTI takes the book. She opens the book. She begins singing “I Wandered.” PATTI and MA head back down the walkway. The audience follows. Along the way there are four VIGNETTES.)

#1 BUSKER

(playing the guitar with an open case with no money inside)

#2 BROTHER

(playing catch alone)

#3 COUPLE FIGHTING

(standing)
#4 DAUGHTER AND MOM
(brushing her old mother’s hair)

(The procession arrives back at the house. PATTI walks to the front door. PATTI almost puts the book down. She stops. She opens the book and begins to read. MA emerges. The band begins to play “I Wandered.”)

(MA sings.)

I WANDERED
THROUGH THE NIGHT
AND I PONDERED
IF IT’S RIGHT
TO TAKE THE WATER FORM YOUR WELL

I’VE GOT CHILDREN TO FEED
ANIMALS TO BREED
CROPS TO GROW

CAUSE THIS WORLD’S GOT ME TURNIN
OH MY LAND IS A BURNIN
EVERYBODY KNOWS
BUT NOBODY KNOWS
WHERE TO GO

I WANDERED
DOWN THAT OLD 66
AND I ENCOUNTERED
A FAMILY

(TOM joins.)

SLEEPIN IN A CAR

(TOM alone.)

AND IN THEIR LITTLE BABY’S HANDS STANDS
THEIR MONEY IN A JAR

(TOM and MA sing.)
I'VE GOT CHILDREN TO FEED
STORIES I NO LONGER BELIEVE
I'VE GOT

NOTHING BUT THE ROAD
CAUSE THIS WORLD’S GOT ME TURNIN
OH MY FAMILY’S A YEARNIN
EVERYBODY KNOWS
BUT NOBODY KNOWS

(MA sings alone.)

WHERE TO GO

TOM
“Say— you got any room here for us?”

(A pause. TOM shows PATTI where to read.)

PATTI
(in a fake country voice)
“Got one camp. How many of you?”

(TOM counts on his fingers.)

TOM
“Me an’ Pa an’ Ma an’ Uncle John an’ Ruthie an’ Winfiel’ an–

(A pause.)

MA
Grandma didn’t make it.

(GRANDMA falls down in the audience.)

TOM
“Them last is just kids.”

MA
She starved.
“Well, I guess we can fix you. Got any camping stuff?”

“Got a big tarp an’ beds.”

But we did, we made it.

“Drive down the end of that line an’ turn right. You’ll be in Number Four Sanitary Unit.”

“What’s that?”

“Toilets and showers and wash tubs.”

“You got wash tubs-- running water?”

“Sure.”

“Oh! Praise God.”

(PATTI closes the book and clutches it to her chest. She and the Joads walk towards the front door of the house. She almost knocks on the door. She stops. She leaves the book by the door and walks away. BRUCE opens the front door to the house. He sees the book, sees the Joads. He picks up the book.)

(to the audience)

You wanna come in?

(AUDIENCES guide the audience in the house.)

ARRIVE AT HOUSE.
SCENE 1

Enter the Table room. It is the dining room in BRUCE and JULIANNE’S home. The year is 1986. BRUCE hangs a calendar on the wall. “Tunnel of Love” plays from the Recording room. JULIANNE is unpacking her suitcase in the table room. BRUCE kisses JULIANNE. As the song continues, JULIANNE and BRUCE move around the house becoming more and more distant. When the song ends, the year is now 1987. JULIANNE is serving food onto the dining table. BRUCE enters, late.

BRUCE
Hey baby, sorry I’m late. This looks delicious.

(BRUCE kisses JULIANNE.)

BRUCE
How was your day?

JULIANNE
Fine, a little stressful.

BRUCE
Uh huh.

JULIANNE
I had to run down to Marty’s and pick up our dry cleaning.

BRUCE
Thank you so much sweetheart.

(BRUCE looks at her for approval)

JULIANNE
(lying)
Oh it’s no problem.

(A pause.)

JULIANNE
My agent called today.
BRUCE

Yeah?

JULIANNE

There’s a part in a new pilot for CBS he wants me to try out for.

BRUCE

That’s great.

JULIANNE

The audition’s tomorrow so I thought I’d just go to New York and meet you in Worcester on Saturday.

BRUCE

You’re not coming to opening night?

(BRUCE stops eating and gives her a concerned look.)

JULIANNE

Well if I wanna get this role... But being realistic I’d probably have to start shooting when we’re in Europe so I guess it doesn’t make sense.

(BRUCE is satisfied with this answer and continues eating.)

JULIANNE

She’s a cool character though. Like a woman police officer who gets a lot of flack from the guys but is actually a really really good cop.

(JULIANNE notices BRUCE is not listening.)

JULIANNE

It's great cause her arc in the show is that she finally starts to get some recognition. Anyway, how was your day?

BRUCE

Good.

(pause)

Actually, I can’t wrap my head around what this next tour means for us. Like, every other tour has been building up to something. And I should be excited because I did it. But I can’t figure out what’s next.
JULIANNE
Yeah, I mean life can be really--

BRUCE
It just used to be so easy. It was me and the band playing music. None of the other bullshit that comes with this being famous thing. Now, whether I like it or not it’s me on one side and the band on the other. I’m a symbol. People expect me to act the part.

JULIANNE
We all act parts Bruce.

BRUCE
And it all came at me so fast! One second the guys and I were traveling the world, playing a different city every night and the next we’re back here packing up to do it all again. It’s crazy to think that only two years ago--

JULIANNE
We got married.

BRUCE
Yes! Yes, and I’m so grateful for that. But also, two years ago all of this, and I mean all of this was just a dream, a childish fantasy. I mean people knew who I was but not like this. Now I have the whole world watching me, relying on me to provide some sort of wisdom. I’m not wise. I’m just good with words.

JULIANNE
That you are.

BRUCE
I keep thinking I should just quit while I’m ahead. Maybe change my name, get a new band and start all over.

JULIANNE
You can’t just go back.

BRUCE
(thinking)
You’re right! I just need to look forward. Switch gears maybe try something new. Thanks for listening baby. And thank you for this amazing meal. I love you so much.
(BRUCE gets up to clear his plate. JULIANNE gets up too.)

BRUCE
No you sit down. I’ll take that.

(BRUCE walks over to her side of the table. He kisses JULIANNE’s forehead.)

JULIANNE
Bruce.

BRUCE
Yes sweetheart.

JULIANNE
How long do you think we’re gonna be on the road this time?

BRUCE
I don’t know. But I’ll ask Jon. Why?

JULIANNE
I might cut out a little early if something I can’t turn down comes up.

BRUCE
Of course. You have your life too.

JULIANNE
But what about ours?

(BRUCE sees she is worried.)

BRUCE
Don’t worry Jules. We will figure this out. You and me.

(pause, then cheerfully)

Okay?

(JULIANNE nods uncomfortably. BRUCE exits with the dishes.)

BRUCE
(exiting)
Besides, I can always call you from the road.
JULIANNE
(to herself)
But I can’t call you.

(BRUCE re-enters. JULIANNE caves.)

JULIANNE
I love you. I just wish I were as good with words as you are.

BRUCE
It’s a blessing and a curse.

(A pause.)

BRUCE
(seductively)
I’m gonna go take a bath.

JULIANNE
(false amusement)
I’ll be up in a minute.

(BRUCE exits. JULIANNE is visibly upset. The band starts to play “I Don’t Know.”)

(JULIANNE sings.)

I DON’T KNOW
I DON’T KNOW
I DON’T KNOW
WHO I’M RUNNING FROM

I CAN’T SLEEP
I CAN’T SLEEP
I CAN’T SLEEP
IN MY OWN HOME
IN MY OWN MIND
THERE’S A WHISPER
WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
I CAN ALMOST MAKE OUT THE WORDS
SOUNDS LIKE A CALLING
OR IS IT JUST A CALL
TO GO

I HEAR FOOTSTEPS
I HEAR FOOTSTEPS
I HEAR FOOTSTEPS
THROUGH THE WALL

SOMEONE IS KNOCKING
SOMEONE IS KNOCKING
SOMEONE IS KNOCKING
THROUGH THE WALL
THROUGH THE WALL
THROUGH THE WALL
THROUGH THE WALL

IN MY OWN MIND
THERE’S AN ANSWER
BEATING TO THE RHYTHM OF MY HEART
SOUNDS LIKE A CALLING
OR IS IT JUST A CALL
OR IS IT JUST A CALL
OR IS IT JUST A CALL
OR IS IT JUST A CALL
TO GO

(A phone rings. JULIANNE looks at the phone. She exits the house. JOHN HAMMOND enters and answers the phone.)

JOHN HAMMOND

Hello Mr. Harris

INTERVIEWER #1

Hello there.

JOHN HAMMOND

I’m John Hammond.
INTERVIEWER #1
Yes Mr. Hammond. We have been talking for over an hour now.

JOHN HAMMOND
We have?

INTERVIEWER #1
Yes, I was just confirming that you are a descendent of William Henry Vanderbilt.

JOHN HAMMOND
Oh right of course.

INTERVIEWER #1
But you went to Yale.

JOHN HAMMOND
Dropped out but yes that’s right.

INTERVIEWER #1
So how does a guy like you get into producing the blues?

JOHN HAMMOND
I’ve always been into the blues. When I was 14 I would go down to Harlem to hear real jazz and that’s when I first heard Bessie.

INTERVIEWER #1
How much longer do you plan on working at Columbia or as an active A&R man as it were?

JOHN HAMMOND
I don’t know until I drop dead I guess probably. And that probably won’t be too long. Cause I go at uh at uh a pretty hectic pace as my poor assistant can assure you.

INTERVIEWER #1
Well I’m 26 years old but you sound a lot more energetic than me.

(JOHN HAMMOND laughs and climbs onto the table. He begins tucking himself under the table cloth as a group of people file in wearing black.)

JOHN HAMMOND
Well are you are you connected with Sony now?
INTERVIEWER #1

No I’m just a freelancer myself.

JOHN HAMMOND

A free lance that’s ho– Do you write for– ing at all?

INTERVIEWER #1

I’m sorry Mr. Hammond it seems we’ve cut out again. Can you hear me.

(No response.)

INTERVIEWER #1

Mr. Hammond.

(No response.)

INTERVIEWER #1

(irritated)

Mr. Hammond are you there?

JOHN HAMMOND

I’m not John Hammond.

INTERVIEWER #1

(angrily)

I know you’re not.

JOHN HAMMOND

And this interview took place in the 80’s, John Hammond is actually dead now.

INTERVIEWER #1

Stop telling me he’s dead. I know he’s dead!

JOHN HAMMOND

Yeah, stroke. Turns out cigarettes really do kill you.

INTERVIEWER #1

(whispering)

Why are you doing this?

JOHN HAMMOND

I can’t remember when he passed, but I know it was around when Bruce released that awful Tunnel of Love record.
INTERVIEWER #1
(louder)
Zach, why are you doing this?

JOHN HAMMOND
1987!

INTERVIEWER #1
(even louder)
What?

JOHN HAMMOND
(taking off Ella’s tie)
The year he died. I think it was 1987, Ella.

INTERVIEWER #1
(very loud)
For the last time, why the fuck are you doing this?

JOHN HAMMOND
Why not? It’s just a play Ella.

INTERVIEWER #1
I’m Mr. Harris!

(INTERVIEWER #1 storms out.)

JOHN HAMMOND
Anyways, just thought you should know.

AUDIENCE
So what year is it?

JOHN HAMMOND
Is that all I’m here for? Well it’s 1992. Which is funny cause that’s the year I was born.

(JOHN HAMMOND dies. CLARENCE and BRUCE walk towards his body.)

CLARENCE
Great man.

BRUCE
He really was.
(An awkward pause.)

Also kind of a slimeball.

Yeah, I was gonna say.

(A pause.)

But we shouldn’t speak ill of the dead.

Oh no, never.

(They look at each other and laugh. An awkward pause.)

Have I ever told you the story of when I met Norman?

Yes.

Well I’m gonna tell you anyway.

Of course you are.

I walk into this joint and uh –

It goes back a little further than that I’ll take it back a little bit. I was playin’ in this soul band and we were playin’ at uh Fort Mama. And we’re comin’ back and the car breaks down in front of this bar and I hear this music. Whenever I hear music I wanna play. So I took my horn and went inside and there was Norman. Norman was a Jewish guy with a big red afro and uh he did cover music. And I walked in and uh Norman hired me right there. I left the black band and uh because I wasn’t into that James Brown thing. All the time. All the time. I wanted some adventure I wanted somethin’ new. Rock ‘n roll was new to me.
BRUCE
Why’re you telling me this again?

CLARENCE
And you know Norman took a chance by hiring me back in those days the 70’s. A black man playin’ in this white band and uh alot a people didn’t hire him but the music was so good so strong he said I gotta do this. He took the step and that’s what really impressed me with Norman. He took the step to hire me in his band cause the music was good.

BRUCE
Sounds like John Hammond.

CLARENCE
Sounds like you.

(A pause.)

BRUCE
I’ve always liked that story.

CLARENCE
Yeah,

(pause)
still doesn’t compare to ours.

BRUCE
You know the second you walked into that club, sat down and started playin’, it was magic man. I knew I had to hire you. That if I didn’t I’d never make it.

CLARENCE
Oh you’re doin’ just fine without me now.

(pause)
Right?

BRUCE
Yeah totally, I’m fine. But it’s not the same.

CLARENCE
I’m always here when you want to get the band back together.

BRUCE
It’s not about what I want. I just need to do something new.
Sometimes what you want and what you need just aren’t the same.

Take care, Boss.

You too Big Man.

ACT III-1-63.

CLARENCE

BRUCE

LIGHTS OUT.
SCENE 2

Lights up in the Recording room. The room is now decorated with gold records on the walls. BRUCE is sitting with INTERVIEWER #2. As the interview progresses, the script disappears and BRUCE begins interacting with the audience.

JON LANDAU
(to the audience)
Be very quiet as you’re coming in here. We’re rolling.

(The audience enters.)

INTERVIEWER #2
We now come to our final of three interviews with rock n’ roll’s very own Bruce Springsteen for Rolling Stone Magazine. We’ve been talking about a variety of subjects ranging from rap music to the presidential race. So if you’re ready, let’s pick up where we left off.

(A pause.)

INTERVIEWER #2
The music scene has changed a lot since you last released an album. Where do you see yourself fitting in as we enter the 90’s?

BRUCE
I never kind of fit in, in a funny way. In the 70’s the music I wrote was sort of romantic, and there was lots of innocence in it. And in the 80’s, I was writing and singing about what was happening to the people I was seeing around me or what direction I saw the country going in.

INTERVIEWER #2
Well, given the response to your music, I think you fit in pretty well during the 80’s.

(An awkward pause.)

BRUCE
Well, we were popular, but that’s not the same thing.

(A pause.)
INTERVIEWER #2
At the same time, your new albums haven’t fared as well on the charts as most people expected, and you’ve had to endure some sniping from the media. How do you feel about that?

BRUCE
I try not to get involved in it. There’s a media game that’s played out there, and I guess it sells newspapers and magazines.

(an awkward pause, then Bruce gets up)
You make your music, then you try to find whatever audience is out there for it.

INTERVIEWER #2
For the first time in about twenty years you’re embarking on a tour without the E Street Band. What led to your decision to get rid of them?

BRUCE
(looking at the Elvis record sleeve)
At the end of the Born in the U.S.A. Tour, I felt like it was the end of the first part of my journey. You can get to a place where you start to replay the ritual, nostalgia creeps in. I knew it was time to cut it loose a little bit, get rid of the old expectations.

INTERVIEWER #2
You mentioned the Born In the U.S.A. Tour as a marking the end of one phase of your career. How did the enormous success of that album and tour affect your life?

BRUCE
I really enjoyed the success, but by the end of that whole thing, I just kind of felt “Bruced out.”

(BRUCE picks up a Bruce Springsteen album.)

INTERVIEWER
(pointed)
What specifically are you referring to?

BRUCE
(cought off guard)
You know, the whole image that had been created. This macho thing, that was never me. You end up creating this sort of icon, and eventually it oppresses you.

(BRUCE stops dancing. He paces the room, looking at his accolades. He starts taking gold records off the walls.)
INTERVIEWER #2
What was it that woke you up to the fact that you were missing something or had a problem?

BRUCE
Unhappiness. And other things, like my relationships. They always ended poorly. I didn’t know how to be a husband to Julianne. Also, I wondered how can I have this much money and not spend it? Up until the Eighties, I really didn’t have any money. When we started the River Tour, I had about twenty grand, I think. So really around 1983 was the first time I had some money in the bank. But I couldn’t spend it, I couldn’t have fun. Once out of the touring context, and out of the context of my work, I felt lost.

INTERVIEWER #2
Was Patti the person who really helped you get through all of this?

BRUCE
Yeah. She had a very sure eye for all of my bullshit. She was able to call me out on it.

INTERVIEWER #2
Some of your fans seem to think that by moving to LA and buying a $14 million house, you’ve let them down or betrayed them.

BRUCE
I kept my promises. I didn’t get burned out. I didn’t waste myself. I didn’t die. I didn’t throw away my musical values. But I came out here, and I just felt like the guy who was born in the U.S.A. had left the bandanna behind, you know?

(A pause.)

BRUCE
(to the audience)
Can I go off record?

(No response. The scene freezes. BRUCE begins to improvise.)

BRUCE
I really like the sound a record makes when you snap it in half.

(BRUCE snaps the record in half.)

BRUCE
It’s like popping a balloon or cracking your back when it’s too tight.
(BRUCE snaps another record.)

BRUCE
(handing a record to an audience member.
Bruce signals him to snap it)
You know you’re not supposed to, but you do it anyways. And it feels good doesn’t it?

BRUCE
(sits next to an AUDIENCE)
Where do you live?

AUDIENCE
In life or on campus?

BRUCE
On campus.

AUDIENCE
I live in Bennett.

BRUCE
Freshman, nice! I’m in Senior Fauver. Basement, which kinda sucks but I’ve got my own room and a kitchen so I can’t complain.

(BRUCE goes up to another AUDIENCE.
AUDIENCES stars taking pictures of him.)

BRUCE
What about you, what’s your deal?

AUDIENCE
I’m not sure I underst--

BRUCE
You play a sport? You a hipster kid? A capella?

AUDIENCE
I paint.

BRUCE
A painter, that’s dope.
AUDIENCE
What about you?

BRUCE
I play soccer but I’m also in Quasi.
(to audience member)
Yo, you wanna send a snapchat video of me beat boxing? Or maybe a silly face selfie?

(BRUCE goes up to the audience member. They take a selfie.)

BRUCE
That’s cute, instagram it! Wait tag me? Are you following me? Here.

BRUCE
(to another AUDIENCE)
What about you, wanna post a twitpic of us looking off to the distance #pensive.

AUDIENCE
(whispering)
No, what are you doing?

BRUCE
I just thought, I mean, you asked to take my picture when we were over at Eclectic.

AUDIENCE
That’s cause you were Bruce Springsteen and I was Audience Member #5. This is not in the script.

BRUCE
We don’t need the script.

AUDIENCE
Just stop, whatever you’re trying to prove, stop.

BRUCE
I’m just goofing around.

AUDIENCE
You are Bruce Springsteen. Get your shit together and do the scene. This is the show.

BRUCE
Exactly. It’s a show.

(BRUCE steps on the broken records.)
BRUCE

This, plastic. The gold, spray paint.

(BRUCE picks up a chord.)

BRUCE

This isn’t even plugged in.

BRUCE walks over to JON LANDAU. Takes down her hair.

BRUCE

This guy Jon Landau, my manager, she’s a chick. And she’s the one with the rock and roll band. And me–

(a pause, he opens his arms)

I’m black. So if you’re upset because I’m not taking this seriously, the fake doorway is right there so you can leave whenever you want.

(AUDIENCE MEMBER storms out, flipping BRUCE off. BRUCE tells the story of Asian Hamlet)

BRUCE

It’s nice when people can see past this.

So where were we?

(pause)

(pause, Bruce picks up the script)

Ah right, So this guy is about to ask me what my plans are for the future? Am I going to get the band back together? Am I gonna keep making solo music? Is it even about the music anymore?

(pause)

I don’t know the answers. I don’t think Bruce knew either. But I’m sure he’ll come up with something, he’s very good with words.

INTERVIEWER #2

So what are your plans for the future? Do you think you’ll get the band back together or are you going to keep going solo?

(A pause. The band enters the room and takes their place at the instruments. INTERVIEWER #2 does not notice them.)
BRUCE
(reading from the script)
All I try to do is write music that feels meaningful to me, that has commitment and passion behind it. And I guess that I feel that if what I’m writing about is real, and if there’s emotion, then hey, there’ll be somebody who wants to hear it. I’ve had a kind of story I’ve been telling and I’m really only in the middle of it.

(INTerviewer #2 packs up their stuff, shakes BRUCE’s hand and leaves. BRUCE nods at JON, turns around, and cues the band.)

LIGHTS OUT.
SCENE 3

The band starts playing “Information Age.”

(BRUCE sings.)

WE ARE ALL CHILDREN
OF THE INFORMATION AGE
FROLICKING FALSELY THROUGH A
CYBER TOXIC MAZE

(JON joins.)

WITH NO ESCAPE
TO ANY REAL HUMAN PLACE

(Lights up in the Table room. BRUCE guides the
audience into the Table room. The entire cast is
dispersed throughout the room.)

(PATTI sings.)

WE ARE ALL CHILDREN
OF THE INFORMATION AGE

(GRANDMA and MAX sing.)

BATTLING BLINDLY TO REACH THE
DIGITAL VIRAL STAGE

(GRANDMA, MAX, and PATTI sing.)

WITH NO ESCAPE
TO ANY REAL HUMAN PLACE

(Chorus joins.)

WHOA
WE ARE NOT A LIVING SHOW X 4

(BRUCE guides the audience into the Living room.
Lights out. MA enters the dark room with a candle.
TOM holds a candle. BRUCE lights his own
candle.)
“That you, Ma?”

“Right over here.”

“You shouldn’t of came.”

“I got to see you, Tom. I got to talk to you.”

“Then come along. Come quiet.”

“Tom-- Ruthie tol’ about you.”

“Ruthie! What for?”

“Well, it wasn’t her fault. She got in a fight, an’ says her brother’ll take that other girl’s brother. You know how they do. An’ she tol’ that her brother killed a man an’ was hidin’.”

(chuckling)

“That’s jus’ kid talk, Ma. That’s awright.”

“No it ain’t. Them kids’ll tell it aroun’ an’ when the folks’ll hear, an’ they’ll tell aroun’, an’ pretty soon, well, they liable to get men out to look, jus’ in case. Tom, you got to go away.”

“That’s what I said right along.”

“I know. But I wanted you near. I was scared for you. I ain’t seen you. Can’t see you now. How’s your face?”

“Gettin’ well quick.”
(pause)
You got to go away, Tom.”

TOM

“Yea. I knowed it from the start.”

MA

“We made purty good. I been squirrelin’ money away. Hol’ out your han’, Tom. I got seven dollars here.”

TOM

“I ain’t gonna take ya money. I’ll get ‘long all right.”

MA

“Hol’ out ya han’, Tom. I ain’t gotta sleep none if you got no money. Maybe you got to take a bus, or somepin. I want you to go a long ways off, three-four hundred miles.”

TOM

“I ain’t gonna take it.”

MA

“Tom, you take this money. You hear me? Maybe you could go to a big city. Los Angeles, maybe. They wouldn’ never look for someone like you there.”

TOM

“Lookie, ma. I been all day an’ all night hidin’ alone. Guess who I been thinkin’ about? The preacher Casy! He talked a lot. Used ta bother me. But now I been thinkin’ what he said, an’ I can remember-- all of it. Says a wilderness ain’t no good, cause his little piece of a soul wasn’t no good ‘less it was with the rest, an’ was whole.”

MA

“He was a good man. But --”

TOM

“Ma, I been thinkin’ a hell of a lot, thinkin’ about our people livin’ like pigs, an’ the good rich lan’ layin’ fallow, or maybe one fella with a million acres, while a hundred thousan’ good farmers is starvin’. And I been wonderin’ if all our folks got together an’ yelled.”

MA

“Tom they’ll drive you, an’ cut you down.”
TOM
“They gonna drive me anyways. They drivin’ all our people.”

MA
“You don’t aim to kill nobody, Tom?”

TOM
“No. I been thinkin’, long as I’m an outlaw anyways, maybe i could-- hell I ain’ thought it out clear, Ma. Don’ worry me now. Don’ worry me.”

MA
“How’m I gonna know ‘bout you? They might kill ya an’ I wouldn’ know. They might hurt ya. How’m I gonna know?”

TOM
“Well maybe like Casy says, a fella ain’t got a soul of his own, but on’y a piece of a big one– an’ then–”

MA
“Then what, Tom?”

TOM
“Then it don’ matter. Then I’ll be all aroun’ in the dark. I’ll be ever’where– wherever you look. Wherever they’s a cop beatin’ up a guy, I’ll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I’ll be in the way guys yell when they’re mad an’– I’ll be in the way kids laugh when they’re hungry an’ they know supper’s ready. An’ when our folks eat the stuff they raise an’ live in the houses they build– why, I’ll be there.”

MA
“I don’ understan’’”

TOM
“Me neither. It’s jus’ stuff I been thinkin’ about. Get thinkin’ a lot when you ain’t movin’ aroun’. You got to get back Ma.”

MA
“You take the money then.”

(A pause.)

TOM
“Awright.”
“An’, Tom, later– when it’s blowed over, you’ll come back. You’ll find us?”

“Go up the field till you come to a sycamore on the edge, an’ then cut across the stream. Good-by.”

“Good-by.”

(BRUCE approaches MA.)

“Her eyes were burning, but she did not cry. Her footsteps were loud and careless on the leaves as she went through the brush. And as she went, out of the dim sky the rain began to fall, big drops and few, splashing on the dry leaves heavily. She turned about-- took three steps back toward Tom; and then she turned quickly and went back toward the road. She went straight out to the culvert and climbed up on the road. The rain had passed now, but the sky was still overcast.”

(MA exits. TOM takes off his jacket and hands it to BRUCE. BRUCE hands TOM his candle. TOM exits. BRUCE turns on a lamp, sits down on the chair, still reading. PATTI enters, pregnant and seductive.)

What are you still doing up?

Reading.

Reading?

Yup.

Come up to bed.

In a minute.
PATTI
What are you reading?

(No response.)

PATTI
Hey, you.

BRUCE
Shhh.

PATTI
Don’t you shush me mister.

BRUCE
I’m sorry, one second.

(BRUCE closes the book. PATTI grabs up the book and sits on the corner of the chair. BRUCE is thinking.)

PATTI
You’re still reading this thing?

BRUCE
(not paying attention)

What?

PATTI
(grabs her stomach and starts walking away)

How does it end?

BRUCE
(playfully)

Read it yourself.

PATTI
(from the other room)

Not if it’s gonna take me 12 years.

BRUCE
This is how Springsteen men read.
ADDITIONAL SOURCES USED IN PLAY


Springsteen, Bruce. “Ghost of Tom Joad” *Ghost of Tom Joad*. Columbia, 1995. MP3,

Springsteen, Bruce. “Ghost of Tom Joad” *High Hopes*. Columbia, 2014. MP3,


I Wandered
by Lindsay Schapiro

I wandered through the night and I pondered if it's
right to take the water from your well I've got

- children to feed animals to breed crops to grow cause this

world's got me turnin' oh my family's a yearnin' every body knows but

nobody knows where to go
I Wandered lyrics
By Lindsay Schapiro

I wandered
Through the night
And I pondered
If it’s right
To take the water from your well

I’ve got children to feed
Animals to breed
Crops to grow
Cause this world’s got me turnin
My land is a burnin
Everybody knows
But nobody knows
Where to go

I wandered
Down that old ’66
And I encountered
A family sleepin in a car
And in their little baby’s hands stands their money in a jar

I’ve got children to feed
Stories I no longer believe
I’ve got nothing but the road
Cause this world’s got me turnin
My land is a burnin
Everybody knows
But nobody knows
Where to go
I've Been Around
by Lindsay Schapiro

I was thin kin bout ta kin a walk__
but I don't know where

I would walk may be a trip a round__ the park__
or just follow

the cars i was thin kin bout ta kin a drive__
but I don't know

how to drive never got a round to it__
ever even tried__

and i've ben a round this awful lonely

(and i've ben a round)

It's been four__ years__ since i was home__

and i've ben a round you betcha i've ben a round

Can't you see__ me i was
I’ve Been Around lyrics
By Lindsay Schapiro

I was thinkin bout takin a walk
But I don’t know where I would walk
Maybe a trip around the park
Or just follow the cars

I was thinkin bout takin a drive
But I don’t know how to drive
Never got around to it
Never even tried

And I’ve been around
This awful lonely town
It’s been four years since I was home
And I’ve been around
You betcha I’ve been around
Can’t you see me?

I was thinkin about having a picnic
Haven’t you always wanted a picnic?
But I don’t know what I would pack

I was thinkin bout goin to a restaurant
But I don’t know any restaurants
Hey mr over there, do you have any to recommend me?

And I’ve been around
This awful lonely town
It’s been four years since I was home
And I’ve been around
You betcha I’ve been around
Can’t you see me?
Can’t you see me?
Can’t you see me?
Do you wanna see me?
almost make out the words

sounds like a calling
or is it just a call

to go
I hear footsteps

i hear footsteps
i hear footsteps through the wall
someone is knocking someone is

knocking through the wall
through the wall

In my own mind there's an answer
125  B\(^9\)  F\(^\#\)  G\(^\#m\)

A.

beating to the rhythm of my heart

Alto Sax.

Vln.

Pno.

E. Bass

128  E\(^9\)  B\(^9\)  F\(^\#\)

A.

sounds like a

Alto Sax.

Vln.

Pno.

E. Bass
calling or is it just a call

Alto Sax.

Vln.

Pno.

E. Bass

136
E\(^9\) B\(^9\) F\(^\#\) G\(^m\) E\(^9\)

A.

Alto Sax.

Vln.

Pno.

E. Bass
I Don’t Know lyrics
By Lindsay Schapiro

I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
Who I’m running from

I can’t sleep
I can’t sleep
I can’t sleep
In my own home

In my own mind
There’s a whisper
When I close my eyes
I can almost make out the words
Sounds like a calling
Or is it just a call to go?

I hear footsteps
I hear footsteps
I hear footsteps
Through the wall

Someone is knocking
Someone is knocking
Someone is knocking
Through the wall
Through the wall
Through the wall
Through the wall

In my own mind
There’s an answer
Beating to the rhythm of my heart
Sounds like a calling
Or is it just a call
Or is it just a call
Or is it just a call to go?
Information Age
by Lindsay Schapiro

We are all children of the information age.
frolicking falsely through a cyber toxic maze
with no escape to any real human place

with no escape to any real human place
we are all children of the information age
battling blindly

digital viral stage
with no escape to any real human place
Alto Sax.

S.

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

we are not a living show

T.

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

whoa

Pno.

C#m7

G#m7/B

A maj7

A maj7
whoa_______ whoa_______

whoa_______ whoa_______

whoa_______ whoa_______

____ whoa_______ whoa_______ we are not a living show

whoa_______ whoa_______

C#m7  G#m7/B  Amaj7  Amaj7
Information Age lyrics
By Lindsay Schapiro

We are all children
Of the information age
Frolicking falsely through a
Cyber toxic maze

With no escape to any real
Human place

We are all children
Of the information age
Battling blindly to reach the
Digital viral stage

With no escape to any real
Human place

Whoa Whoa
We are not a living show (x4)