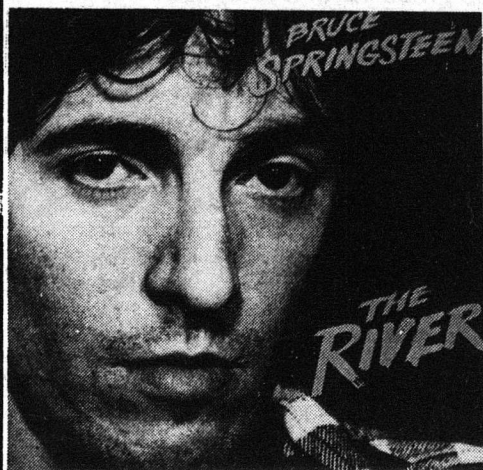


Springsteen: the Boss is Back

by Michael Dennis Skeet

"THE RIVER"
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
(COLUMBIA XPC2 36854)



Bruce Springsteen's new album is a stunner, and makes the two-year wait seem totally insignificant. North America's premier rocker more than justifies the appellation "The Boss", and while the law of diminishing returns dictates that a double Springsteen album is not necessarily as good as the sum of two single Springsteen albums, the end result is still far ahead of most other artists.

By way of example, listen to *Hungry Heart*, then pick any tune from Jackson Browne's *Hold On*. Now you know why the critics dumped on Browne (incidentally, Flo and Eddie are alive and well and doing backup vocals on *Hungry Heart*.) Now you know why Springsteen is viewed with awe by so many.

Hungry Heart isn't even the best of the tunes on *The River*, though I wouldn't want to pick one stand-out from such a fine collection. It's not always easy to identify with Springsteen's characters (nor would you often want to), but the strength of his writing is in his establishment of a clearly-defined world, and

subsequent examination of its inhabitants. There aren't many of us who can identify with the characters of James Joyce's Dublin, but *Dubliners* is still being taught as great literature.

Springsteen's characters are supposed to be representative, but, perhaps in spite of the author's intentions, they nevertheless take on epic characteristics. This album is not, after all, simply a collection of New Jersey vignettes - this is Springsteen's ultimate chronicle of the decay of the urban dream (see the first chapter of Dean Miller's *Imperial Constantinople* for an interesting discourse on the supposed functions of the city).

Twentieth Century North American society was built around the car, and now it seems we're all going down together. The automobile and the street are Springsteen's urban metaphors, and they predominate in *The River* as they have in none of his previous recordings. One or another of these symbols appears in nearly every song, and in many cases forms part of the title: *Out in the Street*, *Cadillac Ranch*, *Stolen Car*, *Drive All Night*, *Wreck On the Highway*. The characters are all part of a mobile ethos (they're Born To Run, as it were), and yet, in the end, they're not going anywhere.

Needless to say, this is all incredibly depressing. Indeed, knowing the fragile nature of the average student's psyche, I'm inclined to suspect a sudden and massive increase in the suicide rate at about the mid-point of side three. My own humble suggestion is that sides three and four should not be listened to without the non-stop rocking of side 1, which moves as well as *Born To Run* ever did.

All of the talk about lyrics and concept shouldn't be allowed to eclipse the music or its interpretation by the E Street Band. Both are straightforwardly superb. There's no tinsel and sham here, no fancy tricks - just good, clean rock 'n' roll, a much-maligned and abused musical form that occasionally makes a reappearance. It's all here on *The River*. You can even dance to it...

The Doobie Brothers have gone *One Step Closer* (Warner Bros. XHS 3452) to becoming the *Lawrence Welk Orchestra* of pop music. The snappy jazz and R & B - influenced rhythms that *Mike McDonald* brought to *Taking It To The Streets* have slowly but steadily fossilized into cliché. On *Minute By Minute* McDonald teamed up with Kenny Loggins to create the Grammy-winning *What A Fool Believes* on *One Step Closer* he collaborates with Paul Anka. The playing and singing are as smooth and slick as dacron, and about as exciting. Only the title song, written by newcomers Keith Knudsen and John McFee with Carlene Carter, lives up to past glories.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Greg Kihn Band reminds me of a slightly dotty bar band playing for kicks and expense money. On the fulltilt bonzo *Glasshouse Rock* (Beserkley SBZ 10068), the boys romp through eight originals, not particularly memorable but well-done and a lot of fun, and two wonderfully straight-arrow versions of early 60s hits - Gene Vincent's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and the Yardbirds classic *For Your Love*. Those who deride California pop should keep in mind that while the Doobies are based in LA, Greg Kihn and Beserkley Records (Home of the Hits) call San Francisco home. Same state, different state of mind.

NOVA AN ALBERTA CORPORATION

(FORMERLY ALBERTA GAS TRUNK LINE)



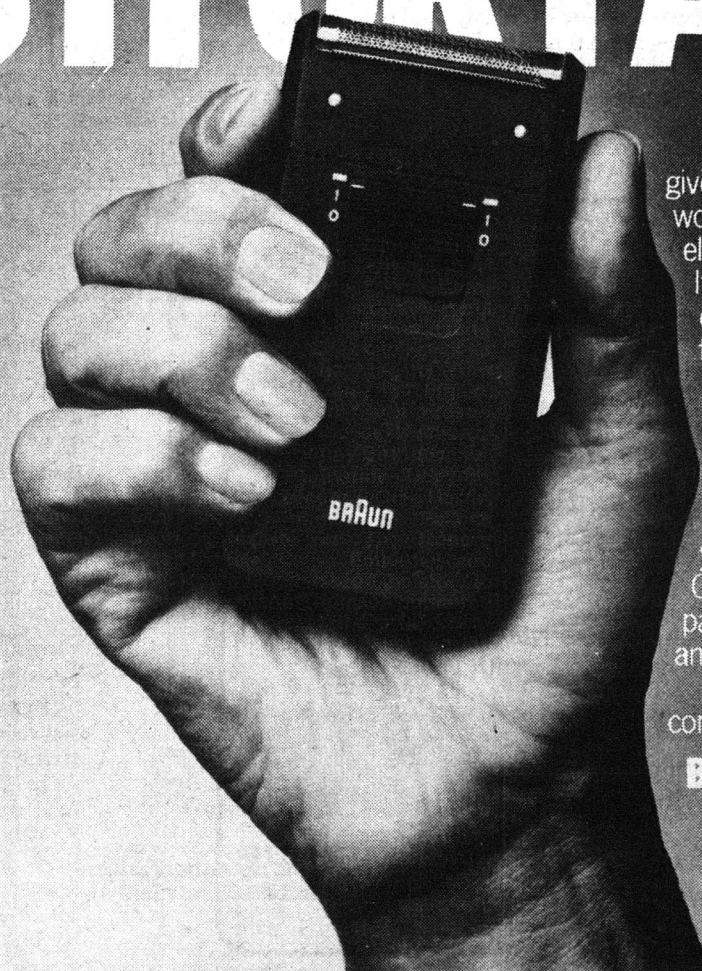
NOVA, a diversified Canadian-owned Company, will be on campus November 26, 27, 28, 1980 and is interested in receiving applications from graduates seeking challenge in their career development. Career opportunities exist within our Calgary and Edmonton locations for graduates in the following disciplines:

- Mechanical Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Civil Engineering
- Metallurgical Engineering
- Computer Sciences
- Applied Mathematics
- Commerce (Accounting Majors)

Prescreening deadline is November 5, 1980. For additional information, please inquire at the Canada Employment Centre on campus.

NEW AND NOTED

YOU'VE GOT 30 DAYS TO PASS IT OR FAIL IT.



The Braun Standard shaver will give you a shave so close you wouldn't believe you did it with an electric shaver.

It's true. Try it, and if you don't think so, you've got nothing to lose. Return your Braun Standard within 30 days of your purchase and we'll return your money.

That's how confident we are about this shaver. We're sure you'll give it high marks too. Offer & details available at participating electric shaver outlets, drug and department stores.

The Braun Standard shaver comes with a three year warranty.

**BRAUN STANDARD SHAVER
30 DAY TRIAL OFFER.**

BRAUN