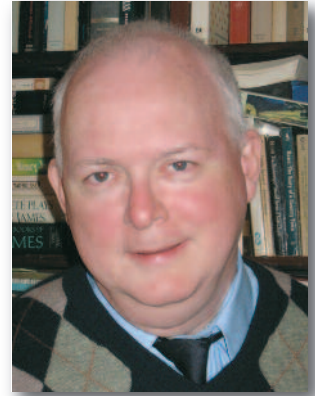


10 Minutes with EDGE

Marc Dolan

Author of *Bruce Springsteen and the Promise of Rock 'n' Roll*



What is it that people love about seeing a rock concert live?

That it will never happen again. Live performance is always happening now. There are more chances for flaws, mistakes, even total disasters in a live performance, but you get to be there for the rough act of creation. Springsteen transcends that experience. He sees his audience as participants in that act of creation.

Name a couple of critical game-changing moments in his career?

In 1971, Springsteen's future manager, Mike Appel, told him he needed to write better songs. He literally went from being one of the worst lyricists in rock 'n' roll to being one of the best in about three months. In 1984, Ronald Reagan name-checked Springsteen at a campaign stop in Hammonton. That speech forced the singer to finally articulate his politics, in order to differentiate himself from Reagan.

In doing a book on the music industry, where so much of the fact-gathering involves anecdotes, what are some basic rules an author must follow?

(1) The most reliable sources are the ones in greatest chronological proximity to the events themselves; (2) Never accept a single source's account

of an event as unimpeachable fact; (3) Always look for contemporaneous circumstantial evidence that confirms a source's memory. In practice, this has meant that my most valuable sources have been live "bootleg" recordings, because I could assign definitive dates to them. I also owe an extraordinary debt to the earliest journalists to interview Springsteen, particularly Paul Williams of *Crawdaddy*, who just passed away this year.

Having talked to hundreds of people about Bruce, what is something that surprised you during this process?

Learning that everyone's favorite Springsteen album is someone else's *least* favorite Springsteen album, and vice versa. I'm not sure any other modern musician has that broadly based a fan reaction. And so many fans feel as if they know Springsteen through his work—as if he were not just an artist, but a brother, a cousin, an uncle, a father.

Is there a quintessential live Springsteen song?

Hearing "Jungleland" at Giants Stadium in the Meadowlands—with tens of thousands of people singing along, and all of them seeming to know every single syllable of a ten-minute song letter-perfect—was an incredibly thrilling experience.

Do Springsteen's songs stay the same over the years, or have some of them changed?

The nature of a song always changes. Only a fool would sing "Rosalita" or "Born to Run" in his 60s as if he were still in his 20s. But some songs have been changed as the times have changed around them. "Born in the USA," for example. "Land of Hope and Dreams" was meant to be an anthem but it never really caught fire. With the addition of a gospel choir, it soared. Thirteen years later, he opened the 12.12.12 concert with it.

Editor's Note: Want to compare your Top 10 Springsteen songs to Marc Dolan's? Log onto edgemaonline.com to see the author's list, and analysis of his personal picks. *Bruce Springsteen and the Promise of Rock 'N' Roll* (2013, W.W. Norton & Co., \$17.95) is out in paperback this June.

