Beyond his insightful introductory note, Bruce Springsteen elected not to annotate the 66 songs included on Tracks. However, with the release of the box set, he did give an unprecedented number of interviews to publications like Billboard and MOJO which revealed fascinating background details about these songs, how he chose them, and why they were left off of the albums in the first place. Over the last 19 years that this magazine has been published, the editors of Backstreets have attempted to catalog Springsteen’s recording and performance history from a fan’s perspective, albeit at times an obsessive one. This booklet takes a comprehensive look at all 66 songs on Tracks by presenting some of Springsteen’s own comments, historical context with each track’s researched history (correcting a few Tracks typos along the way) and the editors’ contemporary analysis. It is in no way intended to replace the Tracks booklet, nor is it meant as our statement as to what kind of liner notes should have been included in Tracks. In the purest sense of the word it is a supplement, one which we hope will broaden our readers’ understanding and interest in 66 fascinating songs recorded over 27 years. If Tracks itself is the “alternate road map,” consider this booklet the alternate road map.

The Editors of Backstreets

1. Mary Queen of Arkansas
2. It’s Hard to Be a Saint in the City
3. Growin’ Up
4. Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?

RECORDING LOCATION: 914 Sound Recording, Blauvelt, NY
RECORDING DATE: June 28, 1973
HISTORY: These three songs, along with “Thundercrack” and “The Fever,” were cut the same day at the start of the sessions for the second album, about a week after pianist David Sancious joined the E Street Band. All five were eventually passed over for use by Springsteen and Hammond. The session was assigned the job number 79682, and “Mary Queen of Arkansas” was the first song performed that day; “Cowboys of the Sea” the last. Of the remaining eight songs which constitute the Hammond demos, only one, “The Angel,” would be recorded on a future album.

Some have wondered whether Springsteen’s ongoing legal battle over early recordings prevented him from including any of the unreleased songs from this session such as “I Was the Priest”—which, legend has it, impressed Hammond the most. Springsteen recently told Mark Hagen in MOJO magazine, “I think the record John Hammond would have liked would have been one that the first four or five cuts from Tracks sound like. Maybe that exact thing, and, listening back, he may have been right.” Bruce was offered a contract with Columbia the day after this audition.

Bruce says: “It was a big, big day for me.… I was 22 and came up on the bus with an acoustic guitar with no case which I’d borrowed from the drummer for the Castles. I was embarrassed carrying it around the city. I walked into his office and had the audition and I played a couple of songs and he said, ‘You’ve got to be on Columbia Records. But I need to see you play. And I need to hear how you sound on tape.’ Me and Mike Appel walked all around the Village trying to find some place that would let somebody just get up on stage and play. We went to the Bitter End. It didn’t work out. We went to another club. And finally we went to the old Gaslight on McDougal Street and the guy says, ‘Yeah, we have an open night where you can come down and play for half an hour.’ There were about ten people in the place and I played for about half an hour. John Hammond said, ‘Gee, that was great. I want you to come to the Columbia Recording Studio and make a demo tape.’ A demo I made at Bill Graham’s studio in San Francisco in ’68 was the only other time I’d ever been in a real recording studio. Columbia was very old-fashioned: everybody in ties and shirts; the engineer was in a white shirt and was probably 55, 50 years old, it was just him and John and Mike Appel there, and he just hits the button and gives your serial number, and off you go. I was excited. I felt I’d written some good songs and this was my shot. I had nothing to lose and it was like the beginning of something. I knew a lot about John Hammond, the work he’d done, the people he’d discovered, his importance in music, and it was exciting it was you felt to be your worth. No matter what happened afterwards, even if it was just for this one night, you were worth your time. That meant a lot to me. I was very encouraging—simply being in that room with him on the board was one of my greatest recording experiences.”

—MOJO interview, 1998

5. Bishop Danced
RECORDING LOCATION: Max’s Kansas City, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: Listed as February 19, 1973, but there is some confusion about this date. Most assign the performance to August 30, 1972, the date given by the King Biscuit Flower Hour broadcast (see below), while a bootleg release of the complete Max’s set, including “Bishop Danced,” dated the show as March 7, 1973. Based on the known tour chronology and on comments Bruce made during the show, the date of this performance is most likely January 31, 1973.
HISTORY: One of two live cuts on Tracks, “Bishop Danced” was also aired on the inaugural King Biscuit Flower Hour and reprised in the pre-show special to the 1988 Tunnel of Love radio broadcast from Stockholm. The same live version was also used as a publishing demo by Laurel Canyon. Performed by Bruce with Danny Federici’s accordion accompaniment.

6. Santa Ana
7. Seaside Bar Song
8. Zero and Blind Terry

RECORDING LOCATION: 914 Sound Recording, Blauvelt, NY
RECORDING DATE: June 28, 1973
HISTORY: These three songs, along with “Thundercrack” and “The Fever,” were cut the same day at the start of the sessions for the second album, about a week after pianist David Sancious joined the E Street Band. All five were eventually passed over for use by Wild & Innocent, but the recordings went on to be used as publishing demos. A six-song acetate (adding “Bishop Danced” and substituting a live “Thundercrack”) was pressed for use by Springsteen’s British publishing agency, Intersong: material from that disc was eventually bootlegged on the LP Fire on the Fingertips (which got all the titles wrong) and later on the CD Forgotten Songs. Springsteen performed all three songs on the Chicago tour. While “Seaside Bar Song” and “Santa Ana” might both be called “bar songs,” “Zero and Blind Terry” was the first of Springsteen’s romantic epics, paving the way for “ Incident on 57th Street,” “Backstreets,” and “Junglegland.”

Bruce says: “These really long, strange stories, these kind of funky epics—I don’t know what they were!”

—Rolling Stone interview, 1998

“I just wrote what came out and the songs work on an abstract basis, but that’s what makes them fun. ‘Santa Ana’ is just a series of images, but it works, there’s a story being told. But later I turned away from that kind of writing because I received Dylan comparisons…. Many of the songs we played early in concert—we played ‘Santa Ana’ all the time. When I went on the road, I took the point of view I developed on my first record and I began to just write with the band in mind, with...
LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: “French cream won’t soften those boots, baby! French kisses will not break your heart!” The lyric was later rephrased for use in “Shesh’s the One.” “The highway is alive tonight,” from “Seaside Bar Song” became one of the defining phrases in “The Ghost of Tom Joad” 22 years later.

ALTERNATE SONG TITLES: “Santa Ana” was also known as “Contessa” and “The Guns of Kid Cole.” “Seaside Bar Song” was listed as “Coup Deluxe” on early set lists. “Zero” known as “Phantoms,” was recently released on the: “Boss time.” Also shining are the Horns of Love, the horn parts with “broken hearts” would be used again on 1987’s “The Ghost of Tom Joad.”

11. Rendezvous

RECORDING LOCATION: Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, NY

RECORDING DATE: December 31, 1980

HISTORY: This perfect pop song made its live debut in August 1976; the Tracks recording comes from the legendary New Year’s Eve 1980 marathon gig, curiously the last time Springsteen ever performed the song in concert. “Rendezvous” was one of the first tracks recorded for Darkness on the Edge of Town during sessions at Atlantic Studios in the summer of 1977. Apparently, however, no suitable studio version was available, which is why Springsteen chose to make it one of his two live performances on Tracks along with “Bishop Danced.” Bruce’s fondness for the song prompted him to give it to Greg Kihn, Gary U.S. Bonds, and the Knack. While the Knack went with “Don’t Look Back,” Bruce’s second stab at it wound up on the album albums With The Naked Eye and On The Line, respectively.

ERRATA: The Tracks booklet gives Mike Appel a production credit for “Rendezvous”—Appel was long gone by this point.

12. Give the Girl a Kiss

ALTERNATE SONG TITLES: Called “Wendy Let Me Be the One” on an early lyric sheet.

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: The rhyming couplet of “spare parts” with “broken hearts” would be used again on 1987’s “The Ghost of Tom Joad.”

10. Thundercrack

RECORDING LOCATION: 914 Sound Recording, Blauvelt, NY

RECORDING DATE: June 28, 1973

HISTORY: This song held the role of show-stopper until Springsteen wrote “Rosalita,” and the live version was frequently bootlegged. But Tracks marks the first appearance of a snippet of this outtake from the second-album sessions. Given that as early as 1975 a live recording was being used as a publishing demo (see “Seaside Bar Song”), “Thundercrack,” as Bruce said in recent interviews, simply never got finished. As such, Bruce added new overdubs with help from Vini Lopez (see below). Harmony vocals and guitar parts were definitely added, and comparisons between the many live versions and the Tracks cut suggest that the entire lead vocal may be new given the distinct differences in phrasing and delivery.

BRUCE SAYS: ‘The song ‘Thundercrack’ was something that we wrote as the showstopper. It ended three or four different times—you didn’t know where it was going to go. It was just a big, epic show-ender that was meant to leave the audience gasping a little bit for their breath—‘Hey, who was that guy? That was pretty good.’ That was ‘Rosalita’s’ predecessor; later on, ‘Rosalita’ began to fill that spot in the show and held it for many, many years; probably the best song I ever wrote for that particular job. Before that, ‘Thundercrack’ had the same function. It was meant to make you nuts, and that’s why I wanted to get that song on this record…. It was one of the few songs that actually was [not] finished when I went and found it. I listened to it, and it seemed like it was so long and the guitar didn’t sound right; I just said, ‘This is going to be too much work’… But I found a version which was actually pretty good,” called up Vini Lopez and I said, ‘Vini, I have some singing for you to do…”

—MOJO interview, 1998

VINI LOPEZ SAYS: “Bruce called me up and said, ‘Hey, I have some music from the early days. One of the songs needs vocals, and I was wondering if you wouldn’t mind coming in after all this time and doing it.’ I said, ‘No, I’d be glad to. So I went to his studio by his house and did the vocals. It took me a few minutes.”

BRUCE SAYS: “I knew all my parts like there was no time in between, like we were just there again, like a time warp.”

13. Iceman

RECORDING LOCATION: The Record Plant, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: September 10, 1977

HISTORY: A previously unknown outtake from Darkness and a wonderful showcase for the E Street Band, as most of its members step out for a moment in the spotlight—even Bob Benjamin, who introduces his guitar solo with the words “This is Bruce Springsteen.” Also shining are the Horns of Love, the horns—see 1984’s Tunnel of Love tour (Ed Manion on baritone sax, Mark “The Love Man” Pender on trumpet, Richie “La Bamba” Rosenberg on trombone and Mike Spengler on trumpet, with newcomer and Max Weinberg #7 member Jerry Vivino, stepping in for Mario Cruz on tenor sax), who over-dubbed the brass parts sometime in 1988. The song is loosely based on the Shangri-Las’ “Give Him a Great Big Kiss.”

BRUCE SAYS: “The editing on Darkness was based around creating a record that had a seriousness of tone. Meanwhile, there were all these bar-band records that we had cut, [such as] ‘Give the Girl a Kiss’ and ‘So Young and in Love.’ So I had all this music that I couldn’t use…”—Billboard interview, 1988
LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: “I wanna go out tonight, I wanna find out what I got” would become one of the core declarations of “Badlands.”

BRUCE SAYS II: “That line [‘I wanna go out tonight...’] is what I was thinking about at that time. I hadn’t recorded in a couple of years, I was stuck in that big lawsuit [with former manager Mike Appel] in the early part of my career, and there was a tremendous amount of ‘what happened to articles’ at that time. That whole record was a record where I felt I was going to have to test myself and that was what I wanted to know, so that line ended up in a few different songs.” —Los Angeles Times interview, 1998

14. Bring on the Night
RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: June 13, 1979
HISTORY: Originally recorded in late 1977 for Darkness on the Edge of Town, this urgent rocker feels more like a Darkness-era track, so it is somewhat surprising to learn that the song was probably recorded soon after Max and Roy joined the band, most likely October of 1974 at 914 Sound Recording in Blauvelt, NY.
HISTORY: Springsteen often performed his rewritten version of the Chiffons’ “A Love So Fine” prior to the release of Born to Run, including the legendary February 5, 1975 Main Point radio broadcast gig. The live “A Love So Fine” and this studio version of “So Young and in Love” share almost identical verses, but different choruses which reflect the songs’ titles. An instrumental version of the song was included on the early bootleg LP Live Ticket and is widely assumed to be the first track cut during the 914 Sound sessions. The song “So Young and In Love” is also a close cousin to that of the spritely power-pop tracks circa 1977-79 which appear on the box, Darkness. Several lines and themes from “So Young and In Love” would later turn up in “Night.”

BRUCE SAYS: “...a full band, beautiful ensemble club playing, very exciting. Meant to blow your head off.” —MOJO interview, 1998
LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: “Hat traps filled with soul crusaders” would later turn up in “Night.”
ALTERNATE SONG TITLES: Known as “A Love So Fine” circa 1974-75.

15. So Young and in Love
RECORDING LOCATION: The Record Plant, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: Listed as January 6, 1974, but this would contradict musician credits in the Tracks liner notes which mention Roy Bittan and Max Weinberg. The song was probably recorded soon after Max and Roy joined the band, most likely October of 1974 at 914 Sound Recording in Blauvelt, NY.
HISTORY: Springsteen has historically been credited to 3/1/78, though given the July date may be accurate. Given the joined-in-progress, fade-out-before-ending nature of the song, this may be a one-off performance, with the E Streeters following Springsteen’s direction as he sings from a lyric sheet. Offering yet another perspective on isolation, the song is thematically kindred to Nebraska and, by its mention of Saigon, to “Born in the U.S.A.” and “Shut Out the Light.” But “A Good Man is Hard to Find” paints an alternate portrait, of the resulting isolation when a man did not come home from the war. Curiously, Steve Van Zandt is not credited on the track, though he does play on the other three songs from the May 1982 sessions.
BRUCE SAYS: “There are things that make sense of life for people: their friends, the work they do, your community, your relationships and your family. When you take those things, then what are you left with? The political aspect wasn’t something that was really on my mind at the time, it was more just people struggling with those particular kinds of emotional or psychological issues.” —MOJO interview, 1998
LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: Adds new context to lines that would eventually appear on Nebraska: “across the Michigan line” references the tale of the soldier returned to life in Highway Patrolman, and “the meanness in this world” also turned up in “Nebraska,” which offered a completely different response.

1. Restless Nights
RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: April 11, 1980
HISTORY: One of the many songs Bruce wrote and recorded after scrapping the proposed 1979 album The Ties That Bind in favor of what would eventually stretch to a double LP. A number of the outtakes from these sessions are accurately described as pop songs, but they fall into two distinct categories, light romantic fare (“Ricky Wants a Man of Her Own,” “Be True,” “I Wanna Be With You”) and romantic tales of a darker nature (“Loose Ends,” “Take ‘Em As They Come”). Restless Nights falls into the latter category, describing a world of “whispering trees,” “dark rivers” and “gray streets.”

2. A Good Man is Hard to Find
RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: May 5, 1982
HISTORY: A previously unknown Born in the U.S.A. outtake, recorded the same day as “My Love Will Not Let You Down” (though at a different studio), during early album sessions which also yielded “Wages of Sin,” “This Hard Land,” and “Frankie.” Presumably, full-band attempts at Nebraska songs were also cut at these sessions. The sound, however, is more reminiscent of The River than it is of Born in the U.S.A. Given the joined-in-progress, fade-out-before-ending nature of the song, this may be a one-off performance, with the E Streeters following Springsteen’s direction as he sings from a lyric sheet. Offering yet another perspective on isolation, the song is thematically kindred to Nebraska and, by its mention of Saigon, to “Born in the U.S.A.” and “Shut Out the Light.” But “A Good Man is Hard to Find” paints an alternate portrait, of the resulting isolation when a man did not come home from the war. Curiously, Steve Van Zandt is not credited on the track, though he does play on the other three songs from the May 1982 sessions.
BRUCE SAYS: “There are things that make sense of life for people: their friends, the work they do, your community, your relationships and your family. When you take those things, then what are you left with? The political aspect wasn’t something that was really on my mind at the time, it was more just people struggling with those particular kinds of emotional or psychological issues.” —MOJO interview, 1998
LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: Adds new context to lines that would eventually appear on Nebraska: “across the Michigan line” references the tale of the soldier returned to life in Highway Patrolman, and “the meanness in this world” also turned up in “Nebraska,” which offered a completely different response.

3. Roulette
RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: April 3, 1979
HISTORY: Reportedly written days within Three Mile Island incident. “Roulette” was Springsteen’s first true topical song, a powerful tale of legitimate paranoia, the intensity of which is matched by a driving E Street Band performance. Originally released in 1988 as the B-side to “One Step Up” and performed in concert on the Tunnel of Love Express Tour, “Roulette” was remixed for Tracks, and this version differs slightly from the B-side, most notably in the snare drum, which is toned down considerably from the ’88 mix
and restored to its original sound. Fans’ appetites for this one were whetted prior to its release by a detailed description of the song in the second and later editions of Dave Marsh’s book Born to Run.

BRUCE SAYS: “It was the first song we cut for [The River] and maybe later on I thought it was too specific, and the story I started to tell was more of a general one. I may have just gotten afraid—it went a little over the top, which is what’s good about it. In truth it should have probably gotten put on. It would have been one of the best things on the record and it was just a mistake at the time—you get oversensitive when you’re going to release the things.” —MOJO interview, 1998

4. Dollhouse

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATES: August 21, 1979

HISTORY: Written in June 1979, “Dollhouse” belongs to a family of urgent and edgy rockers cut during the Darkness and River sessions but largely left off of the finished albums. It is lyrically significant in that the first-person narrator is speaking directly to the woman with whom he is having a relationship, something Bruce hadn’t done much up to this point.

BRUCE SAYS: “Tracks consists of an enormous amount of material that was just cut out on its own. The interesting thing about the early stuff from CD 2 is that I thought I hadn’t really written about men and women until Tunnel of Love. Then I found ‘Dollhouse,’ plus a lot of other things that began to address those issues, even in the early ’80s.” —MOJO interview, 1998

ALTERNATE SONG TITLES: The early demo was referred to as “Living in a Doll House.”

5. Where the Bands Are

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: October 9, 1979

HISTORY: This longtime fan favorite (presented here at its proper speed and pitch unlike previous bootleg releases) captures the E Street Band in maximum pop mode, peppered with the infectious, upbeat rock tonality, harmony vocals, and inventive drum fills. For his part, Springsteen seemed to be having a great deal of fun with this celebration of pop music itself and how good it makes us feel; his guitar solo sends the message home.

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: Three straight lines, beginning with “I get off from work and I grab something to eat,” reappeared in “I’m on the Cover of the Sun.”

BRUCE SAYS: “When you get into the second CD, that’s when we really learned how to record the band in the studio dramatically for the first time. On those sessions for The River album—when Stevie Van Zandt came in and joined the production team—we were committed to capturing some of that excitement. You hear the band tightening and there was a sort of very controlled chaos on songs like ‘Roulette,’ ‘Dollhouse,’ and ‘Where the Bands Are.’” —Boston Globe interview, 1998

ALTERNATE SONG TITLES: Referred to for years by fans and bootleggers as “I Wanna Be Where the Bands Are.”

6. Loose Ends

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: Listed as July 18, 1979. The tape box reproduced on The Ties That Bind bootleg appears to credit the track to 9/23/79, but the inconsistency could mean that the September date is for mixing, not recording.

HISTORY: Fans have been calling for the release of this one since the very first batch of River outtakes circulated in 1981. Another early and, until Tracks, unreleased example of Springsteen exploring male-female relationships. “Loose Ends” was to have been the final track of The Ties That Bind that Bruce elected to release the single album in 1979. Tracks uses the same take as the aborted LP, in a new mix which emphasizes organ and Glockenspiel over guitar.

ALTERNATE SONG TITLE: Bruce called the song “Loose End” on an early handwritten lyric sheet.

7. Living on the Edge of the World

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: December 7, 1979

HISTORY: This track explodes the myth that all of the Nebraska material poured out of Springsteen’s pen in late 1981 and early 1982. On November 28, 1980, a performance of “Ramrod” included some lyrics that would later be used in “Open All Night,” but “Living on the Edge of the World,” cut with the E Street Band in late 1979, is the real eye-opener. Two years later he would transplant four of these verses into “Open All Night,” only leaving behind a light-hearted chorus about trying to make a connection to a girl. Musically, the song is yet another River-sessions foray into pop power; rockabilly would replace pop as the genre of choice when Bruce next convened the E Street Band for Born in the U.S.A. During acoustic home demo sessions for his sixth album in 1981, Bruce attempted this song in the musical style of “Used Cars” and weaved in two lines he would later use to open “This Hard Land.”

BRUCE SAYS: “If you have a good line, you don’t like to throw it—you don’t write that many. If I came up with a line that I liked I always tried to use it because writing was hard and, for one reason or another, things would begin here and end up there.” —MOJO interview, 1998

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: Bruce took these verses, wrote several more and threw out the chorus entirely to create “Open All Night”; identical lines also appeared in “State Trooper.”

ALTERNATE SONG TITLE: Springsteen’s hand-written song lineup for Nebraska pictured in Songs calls the rewritten version “Wanda (Open All Night).”

8. Wages of Sin

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: May 10, 1982

HISTORY: A yearning, moody burner from the early Born in the U.S.A. sessions, and a beautifully restrained performance by the E Street Band. Springsteen’s first attempts at the song in acoustic demo form were upbeat and along the same musical lines as “Glory Days.” But the tone would shift dramatically, and Bruce knew what mood he wanted by the
time the E Streeters held got of the song. Imagine the dramatically different album that would have resulted had Bruce opted for songs like "Wages," "Murder Incorporated," "Frankie," and "This Hard Land." One more example of Springsteen's lost relationships.

BRUCE SAYS: "That was a real find. I forgot I wrote it. It may have been one of those songs that cut too close to the bone at the time, so I put it to the side. [Laughs] It was actually cut for Born in the U.S.A. ('Sherry Darling' overseas) for its eventual release in 1979, "Be True" was relegated to the B-side of "Fade Away"—a cornerstone of the '77 date would also make the studio outtake and the '77 date would also make the studio outtake and the '77 date would also make the studio outtake and the '77 date would also make the studio outtake.

BRUCE SAYS: "It was a funny time, cause I'd gotten into Woody Guthrie for the first time. I'd come off Darkness and I felt I really found the characters and the type of writing that I wanted to do. But one of my favorite records that summer was The Raspberries' Greatest Hits: they were little four-minute pop songs. I loved the record, and when I went into the studio a lot of things we did were like that. Two-, three-four-minute pop songs coming one right after another. So there was an extra album of those things that got left off, just because I wanted that balance that balanced the two things that I was doing, that had a sense of continuity coming out of Darkness where you'd recognize the characters.'"

—MOJO interview, 1998

12. I Wanna Be With You

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: May 31, 1979

HISTORY: First recorded for Darkness on the Edge of Town, and later re-cut during the River sessions when Springsteen's power-pop obsession was at its peak. In title alone, the song is an homage to the Raspberries, whose own song of the same title is the opening track of their debut album. Vocally, Bruce has never sounded more exuberant.

BRUCE SAYS: "It was a fun record, I could get into it. But one of my favorite records that summer was The Raspberries' Greatest Hits. They were little great pop songs that were love songs and when I went into the studio a lot of things we did were like that. Two-, three-four-minute pop songs coming one right after another. So there was an extra album of those things that got left off, just because I wanted that balance that balanced the two things that I was doing, that had a sense of continuity coming out of Darkness where you'd recognize the characters…"

—MOJO interview, 1998

13. Mary Lou

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: May 30, 1979

HISTORY: Though not the best example of Springsteen pop records, I loved the production, and when I went into the studio a lot of things we did were like that. Two-, three-, four-minute pop songs coming one right after another. So there was an extra album of those things that got left off, just because I wanted that balance that balanced the two things that I was doing, that had a sense of continuity coming out of Darkness where you'd recognize the characters…"

—MOJO interview, 1998

14. Stolen Car

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: Listed as July 26, 1979. Again, this conflicts with The Ties That Bind credits (which list September 24, 1979), but that may be the mixing date.

HISTORY: This alternate version (one of but two on the set) presents a completely different arrangement to the released Rocky Target, and was cut at the end carry the story line into a provocative dream sequence and stunning denouement. Like Tracks' other alternate take, the acoustic "Born in the U.S.A." which follows "Stolen Car," both versions of this song are more rounded, more introspective, more different. This "Stolen Car" is a cinematic tale told in a plaintive voice which rides Roy Bittan's pristine piano. When Elliott Murphy covered "Stolen Car," included on One Step Up/Two Steps Back in 1998, he added a different voice, and the timbres change from a delicate, distant sound of Danny Federici's organ, and son with an almost palpable sense of detachment by Springsteen.

BRUCE SAYS: "'Stolen Car' was the predecessor for a good deal of the music I'd be writing in the future. It was inner-directed, psychological; this was the character whose good deal of the music I'd be writing in the future. It was the archetype for the male role in my later songs about men and women."

—MOJO interview, 1998

11. Ricky Wants a Man of Her Own

RECORDING LOCATION: The Power Station, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: Listed as July 16, 1977 in the Tracks booklet, but this is clearly a typo as the song is a known River outtake and the "77 date would also make the studio outtake and the "77 date would also make the studio outtake and the "77 date would also make the studio outtake and the "77 date would also make the studio outtake and the "77 date would also make the studio outtake.

RICKY WANTS A MAN OF HER OWN

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK:

Two months later, Bruce would record the superior "Be True" with most of these lyrics intact. A third musical approach to these same words is also known from the River sessions, titled "White Lies" (AA: "Don't Do It to Me")

BRUCE SAYS: ""Stolen Car' was the predecessor for a good deal of the music I’d be writing in the future. It was inner-directed, psychological; this was the character whose progress I'd soon be following on Tunnel of Love. He was the archetype for the male role in my later songs about men and women."

SONG ESSAY: Songs essay on The River: "'Stolen Car' was the presentation of that particular guy, of somebody who was concerned with those ideas, for the first time: that you don’t connect yourself to your family and to the world, you feel like you’re disappearing, fading away. I felt like that for a very, very long time. Growing up, I felt invisible. And that feeling is an enormous source of pain for people.
To make your life felt, it doesn’t have to be in some big way; just seemed to make more sense. I think I was unsure if I had completely gotten it acoustically.”

—MOJO interview, 1998

15. Born in the U.S.A.

RECORDING LOCATION: Thrill Hill Recording, Colts Neck, NJ

RECORDING DATE: January 1982

HISTORY: Springsteen’s misunderstood anthem can be traced to the same inspiration. Ron Kovac’s book Born on the Fourth of July; his friendship with Vietnam vet Bobby Muller which led to the August 1981 benefit gig in Los Angeles; Jimmy Cliff’s song “Vietnam,” which was pre- sumably included on the same-best-of tape as “Trapped” that Springsteen was shopping around the 1981 European tour; and Paul Schrader’s film script of the same name, which was later re-titled Lifted Day. Springsteen used a bit of Cliff’s melody and his title as a starting point for a song about a Vietnam vet (two lines that would later open “Shout Out The Light” turn up in an early demo version of “Vietnam”). Though recorded along with the rest of the Nebraska songs, and presumably considered for inclusion on that album, Springsteen seems to have recognized early on that the song was meant to rock. At the 1986 Bridge School Concert and on the Tom Joad tour, he reclaimed the misinterpreted song by performing an acoustic arrangement closer to this original form (the Joad tour versions took an even bluergrass approach). But the impact of the E Street Band-powered released take remains undeniable. “Over the years I’ve had the opportunity to reinterpret ‘Born in the U.S.A.’ many times in concert,” he writes in his PBW autobiography. “Partly, because the Tom Joad tour, I had a version that could not be misconstrued. But those interpreta- tions always stood in relief to the original and gained some of their new power from the audience’s previous experience with the original version. ‘Born in the U.S.A.’ was born the way it is the most powerful presentation. If I tried to undercut or change the music, I believe I would have had a record that might have been more easily understood, but not as good.”

—Springsteen’s summary of the Nebraska tape sent to Jon Landau as reprinted in Songs

16. Johnny Bye-Bye

RECORDING LOCATION: Thrill Hill Recording, Los Angeles, CA

RECORDING DATE: January 1983

HISTORY: One of Springsteen’s finest B-sides—for that matter, songs—and an appropriate story to put on the flip side of “Born in the U.S.A.” in late 1984. The original version on the Nebraska LP was longer and included two verses which fleshed out the story considerably and made an allusion to the main character’s possible drug addiction—lying awake until morning in a back bedroom, “Just him and a few bad habits he couldn’t throw back over the shoulder.” Before being released as the B-side to “I’m on Fire” in 1985. The Tracks version’s vocal has much less reverb, and Soozie Tyrell’s wonderful violin part is even clearer and up-front. Performed at 23 shows on the 1984-85 world tour, and resurrected for 11 solo acoustic sets in 1999.

—MOJO interview, 1998

17. Shut Out the Light

RECORDING LOCATION: Thrill Hill Recording, Los Angeles, CA

RECORDING DATE: January 1983

HISTORY: One of Springsteen’s first B-sides—for that matter, songs—and an appropriate story to put on the flip side of “Born in the U.S.A.” in late 1984. The original version on the Nebraska LP was longer and included two verses which fleshed out the story considerably and made an allusion to the main character’s possible drug addiction—lying awake until morning in a back bedroom, “Just him and a few bad habits he couldn’t throw back over the shoulder.” Before being released as the B-side to “I’m on Fire” in 1985. The Tracks version’s vocal has much less reverb, and Soozie Tyrell’s wonderful violin part is even clearer and up-front. Performed at 23 shows on the 1984-85 world tour, and resurrected for 11 solo acoustic sets in 1999.

—MOJO interview, 1998

3. 1. "Cynthia"

RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: April 20, 1983

HISTORY: Following the release of Nebraska, the E Street Band reconvened in the spring of 1983 to continue work on an electric, full-band rock record. The tone of the material from these April-to-September sessions is lighter than the May ’82 sessions, as evidenced by this delightful tale of female appreci- ation and worship. Springsteen tried “Cynthia” at a snappier tempo and with a rockabilly flavor on his original demos of the song. Based on the musician credits, Steve Van Zandt was still involved in the sessions at this point. Curiously, Danny Federici does not play on the track. But in several instances he asked me to make the vocal drier than they might have been 20 years ago; make them a little more personal. We weren’t trying to recreate the past with this project; the songs and the music do that themselves.”

—Mix interview, 1998

2. My Love Will Not Let You Down

RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: May 5, 1982

HISTORY: One of the three earliest credited recordings from a three-week session during which a lot of the key Born in the U.S.A. period material was recorded. The unanswered question is whether it was during these sessions that electric versions of the Nebraska songs were attempted or if there was no further noodling to session that ended in early 1983 (“Lon’s Den” dates from January ’82, but appears to have been cut as part of the Gary U.S. Bonds On The Line sessions). If the former is true, then May was one of the most productive months in Springsteen history. According to Eric’s old buddy, its, “A Good Man is Hard to Find (Pittsburgh)” was recorded the same day as “My Love Will Not Let You Down.” The next couple weeks brought “Wages of Sin,” “This Hard Land,” “Frankie,” “Born in the U.S.A.,” “Downbound Train,” and one or two other songs released on Born in the U.S.A. According
Their singer as he spins his dusty story. And performance captured here and on "Frankie" show the E Street Band at its most effortless, sympathetically supporting their singer as he spins his dusty story.

MAX WEINBERG SAYS: "We recorded about 80 songs for Born in the U.S.A. Some of them are great. 'This Hard Land', which didn’t make it on the record, is just fantastic. That’s probably my favorite song we’ve done."

BRUCE SAYS: "'This Hard Land' has always been one of my favorites, and I don’t understand how I could let it be unreleased for so long. I really wanted to write music about You, and Your friends, so that you really could feel it when you walked through thousands of others in the audience. When people think back on their closest friends, the friends they had when they grew up, those friendships always go hand in hand with the music and all the strong feelings that the music brought, feelings which were even stronger if you shared them with somebody. It was an essential part of what rock ’n’ roll stands there among thousands of others in the audience. When you sing the song, you feel like you’re there."

That idea that your entire identity can be co-opted and twisted — a story. 'Hey, you are going to be a TV movie next week.' Then when I went to write about it, it became a mixture of things.... That idea that your entire identity can be co-opted and twisted around and reinterpreted and then accepted as fact because it is the most visible presentation of yourself at a particular moment. It was a joke, but it had some ironic undertones."

MAX WEINBERG SAYS: "I remember one night when we were completely packed up to go home and Bruce was off in the corner playing his acoustic guitar. Suddenly the bug hit him, and the rest of us started recording. We had been recording all night and were dead tired, but they had to open up the cases and set up the equipment so that we could start recording again at five in the morning. That’s when we got ‘Pink Cadillac,’ ‘Stand on It,’ and a song called ‘TV Movie.’ But his saxophone parts virtually disappear in the Traxx remix. It was about and I really tried to write songs that captured that. ‘This Hard Land’ was one of those."

BRUCE SAYS: "The way it came about was we were in the studio and someone was talking about some episode that had happened to them, and someone else said, 'Look out, maybe they’re going to do a TV movie.' I thought that became kind of a running gag whenever anyone came in with a story. ‘Hey, you are going to be a TV movie next week.’ Then when I went to write about it, it became a mixture of things.... That idea that your entire identity can be co-opted and twisted around and reinterpreted and then accepted as fact because it is the most visible presentation of yourself at a particular moment. It was a joke, but it had some ironic undertones."

BRUCE SAYS: "That’s probably my favorite song we’ve done."

4. Frankie

**RECORDING LOCATION:** The Power Station, New York, NY.

**RECORDING DATE:** May 14, 1982

**HISTORY:** The only Springsteen song considered for three albums, "Frankie" was first performed live in April of 1976 and was assumed by many to point towards a cinematic-meets-rock opera direction for Bruce’s Born to Run follow-up. The song was cut early in the Darkness sessions, but didn’t make the short list for the album. "Frankie" was resurrected with a few slight lyric variations five years later for Born in the U.S.A. in the version heard here. Had Springsteen chosen to release that album in the summer of 1983, "Frankie" would have likely made the cut, but by the spring of 1984, newer recordings bumped it off. In 1995, when the Springsteen camp was looking for previously unreleased recordings with which to augment Greatest Hits, the 1982 recording of "Frankie" was again considered. This time its seven-minute running time probably kept it off. Perhaps the best example on Tracks of a song Springsteen always favored but couldn’t fit in.

5. TV Movie

**RECORDING LOCATION:** The Hit Factory, New York, NY.

**RECORDING DATE:** June 13, 1983

**HISTORY:** Along with its close cousin "Stand on It," "TV Movie" is a lively rockabilly workout recorded during a short-lived jam in which Bruce took in the middle of the 1982-84 sessions (see Max Weinberg’s comments below). The song was probably never seriously considered for the album, but it was perfect B-side material (we’ll assume Bruce had a choice between "Stand on It," a semi-political track, and another serious pop-cultural commentary captured in an appealing, old-fashioned rocker. Neither Danny Federici or Steve Van Zandt plays on "TV Movie" or "Stand on It." Clarence Clemons credited on "TV Movie," but his saxophone parts virtually disappear in the Traxx remix.

BRUCE SAYS: "The way it came about was we were in the studio and someone was talking about some episode that had happened to them, and someone else said, ‘Look out, maybe they’re going to do a TV movie.’ I thought that became kind of a running gag whenever anyone came in with a story. ‘Hey, you are going to be a TV movie next week.’ Then when I went to write about it, it became a mixture of things.... That idea that your entire identity can be co-opted and twisted around and reinterpreted and then accepted as fact because it is the most visible presentation of yourself at a particular moment. It was a joke, but it had some ironic undertones."

—Los Angeles Times interview, 1989

MAX WEINBERG SAYS: "I remember one night when we were completely packed up to go home and Bruce was off in the corner playing his acoustic guitar. Suddenly the bug hit him, and the rest of us started recording. We had been recording all night and were dead tired, but they had to open up the cases and set up the equipment so that we could start recording again at five in the morning. That’s when we got ‘Pink Cadillac,’ ‘Stand on It,’ and ‘TV Movie.’ But his saxophone parts virtually disappear in the Traxx remix. It was about and I really tried to write songs that captured that. ‘This Hard Land’ was one of those."

—Rolling Stone interview, 1989

6. Stand on It

**RECORDING LOCATION:** The Hit Factory, New York, NY.

**RECORDING DATE:** June 16, 1983

**HISTORY:** Rockabilly numbers, take two. The most pleasant surprise about "Stand on It" is that the take included on Tracks is not the one released as the B-side to "Glory Days" in 1985. This one is longer, with an extra verse (bringing the song apparently isn’t played by the Big Man, but was added by Mario Cruz when the Horns of Love (Cruz, Manion, Pender, Rosenberg, and Spengler) overdubbed their parts in 1998.

—Los Angeles Times interview, 1998

7. Lion’s Den

**RECORDING LOCATION:** The Power Station, New York, NY.

**RECORDING DATE:** January 25, 1982

**HISTORY:** At first glance, "Lion’s Den" appears to be the earliest credited recording of a song considered for Born in the U.S.A., but it is possible that this January session was where the E Street Band gave the Nebraska songs an electric try. However, the more logical explanation is that the song was cut during sessions for Gary U.S. Bonds’ second album, On the Line, which was recorded at the Power Station with River recording engineer Neil Dorfsman and co-produced by Springsteen and Van Zandt (though weirdly, Van Zandt gets no production or performance credit on the song; Dorfsman is credited). It is certainly easy to imagine Bonds singing this basically themed ditty. If "Lion’s Den" was a Born in the U.S.A. outtake, we would expect it to bear credits for the Hit Factory and engineer Toby Scott like the rest of the 1982-84 sessions. Another credit curiosity is the omission of Clarence Clemons. If Tracks’ credits are to be believed, the prevalent tenor sax part on the song apparently isn’t played by the Big Man, but was added by Mario Cruz when the Horns of Love (Cruz, Manion, Pender, Rosenberg, and Spengler) overdubbed their parts in 1998.
8. Car Wash
RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: May 31, 1983
HISTORY: Previously unknown Born in the U.S.A. outtake and Springsteen's first known composition with a female narrator. Opens with the same “My name is” statement previously used in “We Shall Overcome” on The Ghost of Tom Joad. Springsteen's early '83 stint living in Los Angeles is reflected in the "Car Wash" lyrics, which specifically mention the "Astrowash on Sunset and Vine."

9. Rockaway the Days
RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: February 3, 1984
HISTORY: Songs, Springsteen wrote that he intended Born in the U.S.A. to be a more straightforward approach of Nebraska and "electricity." "Rockaway the Days," cut in the waning days of the Born in the U.S.A. sessions, is a good example of that approach, as it tells a Nebraska-style story ("Yes, it's all over with the days, it's over with the days/it's over with the days")

10. Brothers Under the Bridges '83
RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: September 4, 1983
HISTORY: Not so much an early version of "No Surrender" as previously believed, but a parallel, nostalgic story about teenage friendships and finding one's place in the world. "Brothers Under the Bridge," a ghost of Tom Joad outtake recorded in May 1995 and now the closing track of Tracks.

BRUCE SAYS: "I should have put that out! Why didn't I put that out? It sounds like a hit now. The band is playing great and the horns come in and it has a great chorus. It was just too much fun to put out, I guess."

—Boston Globe interview, 1998

ALTERNATE SONG TITLE: Demo version was called "Daniel in the Lion's Den."

12. Pink Cadillac
RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: May 31, 1983
HISTORY: Arguably the most successful of Springsteen's rockabilly influences, a song for which Springsteen could play the sparest of acoustic numbers when Springsteen recorded it for Nebraska. "Self-explanatory," wrote Bruce of the song in his notes to Jan Landau about the Nebraska material reprinted in his Born to Run essay on "Pink Cadillac" and Springsteen's best-selling single ever, "Dancing in the Dark." No wonder it was such a fan favorite. Danny Federici is M.I.A. on this and the other '83 rockabilly numbers. Performed 95 times on the Born in the U.S.A. tour, and once in 1996 with the Nils Lofgren band at the Catallele, Southeast Pacific, and Carl Perkins among others.

13. Two for the Road
RECORDING LOCATION: Thrill Hill Recording, Rumson, NJ
RECORDING DATE: February 1987
HISTORY: Graduating from the four-track producer he used on Nebraska and the eight-track record producer employed on the Born in the U.S.A. solo demos, Springsteen had a 24-track digital recording studio installed on his New Jersey estate in late 1986 or early 1987. This allowed him the flexibility to write and record simultaneously, even to bring in additional musicians, without ever having to enter another recording studio. He had sought this kind of freedom for years. "I grown tired of expending so much energy in professional recording studios," Springsteen writes in Songs of his mindset following the River tour, "where I rarely got the right group of songs I was after without wasting a lot of time and expense. I found the atmosphere in the studio to be sterile and isolating...." He plays every instrument on the sweet "Two for the Road," a song which could be viewed as the sequel to "Two Hearts." BRUCE SAYS: "I set up my recording equipment above my garage in Rumson, New Jersey, and began demoing. I wanted to go back to the intimacy of home recording. I started to write about something I'd never written about in depth before: men and women.... I cut the songs like to a rhythm track, which provided the structure and the sense of a ticking clock. The passage of time was a subtext of my new stories. My characters were no longer in their teens. There was the possibility of life passing them by, of the things they needed—love, a home— rushing out the open window of all those cars I'd placed them in.

—Songs essay on Tunnel of Love

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: "When this world treats you hard and cold" is a minor rephrase of "Though the world turns you hard and cold" from "Two Hearts."

14. Janey Don’t You Lose Heart
RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY
RECORDING DATE: June 16, 1983
HISTORY: "Janey," the last song from the Born in the U.S.A. sessions on Tracks, was cut in June 1983 with Steve Van Zandt on guitar and background vocals. Like "My Love Will Not Let You Down," this was also on side two of Landau's suggested track listing for Born in the U.S.A. When the song was being reviewed for release as the B-side to "I'm Going Down" in 1985, new E Streeters Nils Lofgren went from a studio and replaced Van Zandt's vocal track. Another likeable, mid-tempo rocker in the vein of "Be True," "Janey" has only appeared in concert twice, first on September 27, 1985 at the opening night of Springsteen's record-setting four-night stand at the L.A. Coliseum, and eight years later in the much smaller confines of the Count Basie Theater in Red Bank, NJ on March 23, 1993, at the warm-up show for the European tour.

15. When You Need Me
RECORDING LOCATION: Thrill Hill Recording, Rumson, NJ
RECORDING DATE: January 20, 1987
Another previously unknown Tunnel of Love outtake, "The Honeymooners" was recorded the same day as "The Wish." Its story is basically 24 hours in the life of a young man getting married, moving from ceremony to reception to honeymoon night to morning after with the new one. It's one of the most accessible songs of the '90s outtakes, with the strong riff in the chorus giving way to a beautiful verse. On this and the remaining Human Touch sessions cuts on Tracks, the "band" is simply Springsteen and Roy Bittan, with others on hand as needed. Shawn Pelton, now a member of Saturday Night Live's house band and a former bandmate of John Eddie, plays drums here. While the remainder of disc four is a quieter affair, the moment of the whole punch of "Leavin' Train" and "Seven Angels" demonstrates that Springsteen is still drawn to writing loud rock songs.

Bruce Springsteen: "Part of this putting together was a way I felt like reconnecting more directly with the singing loud and playing loud. That's been a central part of my work since I started."—Associated Press interview, 1998

"[Human Touch] took shape when Roy and I would play together in my garage apartment and make tapes of songs and arrangement ideas I came up with. Then we'd go into the studio and set up what essentially a two-man band. I would sing and play guitar, Roy would play keyboards and bass. Together we'd perform to a drum track. We'd perform the song for the entire band sound live in the studio.... Then musicians would come in and play to what we recorded, or we'd play them with and record the song live."

"Human Touch/Lucky Town essay from Songs 1. Leavin' Train

RECORDING LOCATION: Oceanway Studios, Los Angeles, CA

RECORDING DATE: February 27, 1990

HISTORY: Another "men and women" song, the main theme that Springsteen carried over from the late '80s into his '90s work. "Leavin' Train" picks up on the motifs of 'lost faith' and 'lost faith' from Tunnel of Love, while resurrecting the old trick of mixing down Beatles-like upbeat music. The song title had circulated among fans after being registered for copyright on September 6, 1995. Though recorded some months after "Viva Las Vegas," Springsteen's first recording without the E Street Band, "Leavin' Train" has the same musician line-up: Human Touch mainstay Jeff Porcaro on drums, Ian McLagan of the Small Faces on organ, and Bob Glaub, a member of Jackson Browne's band who worked with Springsteen on "Fire.

Bruce Springsteen: "We recorded a lot of music for the Human Touch record, and it was just in search of what I was trying to say. I knew I wanted to develop the ideas I'd written about on Tunnel of Love, I felt that was where I had something of value to communicate."

2. Seven Angels

RECORDING LOCATION: Oceanway Studios, Los Angeles, CA

RECORDING DATE: June 29, 1990

HISTORY: With the clever songwriting device in "Seven Angels," Springsteen manages to capture in one song the restless spirit spread out across much of Tunnel of Love's material. This is one of the most accessible songs of the '90s outtakes, with the strong riff in the chorus giving way to a beautiful verse. On this and the remaining Human Touch sessions cuts on Tracks, the "band" is simply Springsteen and Roy Bittan, with others on hand as needed. Shawn Pelton, now a member of Saturday Night Live's house band and a former bandmate of John Eddie, plays drums here. While the remainder of disc four is a quieter affair, the moment of the whole punch of "Leavin' Train" and "Seven Angels" demonstrates that Springsteen is still drawn to writing loud rock songs.

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"Human Touch/Lucky Town essay from Songs

3. Gave It a Name

RECORDING LOCATION: Thrill Hill Recording, Rumson, NJ

RECORDING DATE: August 24, 1998

HISTORY: As he did in 1978, "Adam Raised a Cain," Springsteen invokes the biblical figures of Cain and Abel in this sketch of a legacy of violence and shame. Though recorded shortly before the release of Tracks, "Gave It a Name" was a Human Touch outtake re-recorded out of necessity—the only song on Tracks to be recreated from scratch.

Bruce Springsteen: "What happened is I cut the original at the time I cut these other songs, but we couldn't find the master tape of it, and I really liked the song. So Roy came out, and we recut it in August."

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: Borrows the same lines as "The Big Muddy" from Pete Dexter's novel Paris Trout. "Poison snake bites you, you're poison, too."

4. Tunnel of Love

HISTORY: The earliest Tunnel-era recording on Tracks. "When You Need Me" is another declaration of love and commitment; like "Two for the Road," it is more black and white in its sentiment than most of the songs on the album, in which the nature (and future) of relationships is more ambiguous. With Max Weinberg playing the only prominent solo on the Tunnel of Love LP, it is safe to assume that Gary Mallaber, long-time drummer for Van Morrison, recorded his drum part on "When You Need Me" relatively recently; that is likely the case as well with Soozie Tyrell's violin.

Bruce Springsteen: "Both 'When You Need Me,' which once again borrowed a lot from both country and gospel, and 'When You Need Me' is another declaration of love and commitment; like "Two for the Road," it is more black and white in its sentiment than most of the songs on the album, in which the nature (and future) of relationships is more ambiguous. With Max Weinberg playing the only prominent solo on the Tunnel of Love LP, it is safe to assume that Gary Mallaber, long-time drummer for Van Morrison, recorded his drum part on "When You Need Me" relatively recently; that is likely the case as well with Soozie Tyrell's violin.

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5. My Lover Man

**RECORDING LOCATION:** Soundworks West, Los Angeles, CA

**RECORDING DATE:** December 4, 1990

**HISTORY:** Sounding nearly identical at first to “Brilliant Disguise,” this song soon reveals its own twist (if the title hadn’t already). Springsteen is writing in the first person from a woman’s point of view. While Tracks shows that he had done this before with “Car Wash,” that Born in the U.S.A. outtake was little more than a character sketch. “My Lover Man” is a full-blown relationship song, told from the other side. There has been speculation that the song was written for Patti Scialfa’s solo album Rumble Doll, though this has never been confirmed. In keeping with his writing exercises during this period, Springsteen also tried changing his approach in other ways, composing this and several songs on bass guitar.

**BRUCE SAYS:** “I wrote about half a record on the bass, where you had a note and you had your idea. The only one that made it to release was ’57 Channels,” but on this thing there was ‘Over the Rise,’ ‘When the Lights Go Out,’ ‘Loose Change,’ ‘Goin’ Cali,’ ‘Gave it a Name,’ even ‘My Lover Man,’ all these very psychological portraits of people wrestling with their relationships and their own isolation.”

—MOJO interview, 1998

6. Over the Rise

**RECORDING LOCATION:** Soundworks West, Los Angeles, CA

**RECORDING DATE:** December 7, 1990

**HISTORY:** Like “Leavin’ Train,” this song title has been on fans’ radar since being registered for copyright on September 6, 1989. Aspects of the song were written on bass and recorded in the months following Springsteen’s stripped-down acoustic performance at the Christie Institute benefit concerts.

**BRUCE SAYS:** “Initially during Human Touch, I thought about putting out a record that was basically a bass, a synthesizer, and rhythm, and it created a very austere context for the songs to come forth in. I think that happens on ‘Over the Rise,’ ‘When the Lights Go Out,’ ‘Loose Change,’ ‘Goin’ Cali,’ ‘Gave it a Name,’ even ‘My Lover Man,’ all these very psychological portraits of people wrestling with relationships and their own isolation.”

—MOJO interview, 1998

**LYRIC CROSS-CHECK:** Though Springsteen hadn’t used it before, the title phrase appeared in multiple song lyrics from this period: “Lucky Town,” “Real World” and “Roll of the Dice.”

—Billboard interview, 1998

7. When the Lights Go Out

**RECORDING LOCATION:** Listed as The Record Plant, Los Angeles, CA

**RECORDING DATE:** December 6, 1990

**HISTORY:** Until Tracks, “When the Lights Go Out” was the lost track from the Christie Institute benefit concerts. Perhaps owing to bad vibes, on nights November 16 and 17, 1990, it was one of six new songs debuted at the Shrine Auditorium. For an event benefiting an organization that acts as a government watchdog, this may have been the set’s most appropriate selection. Springsteen dedicated the song to “the people at the Christie Institute, who watch what’s going on when the lights go out.” The song was conspicuously absent from Human Touch, but three others which debuted at the Christie gigs made it to that album. By late 1995, when “The Wish” turned up in several Tom Joad tour set lists, five of the six had resurfaced in one way or another. Recorded just three weeks after the Christic shows, “When the Lights Go Out” had, perhaps, arrived too early (is it a coincidence that a majority of the outtakes presented on the box set from Darkness, The River, and Born in the U.S.A. date from early in the sessions for their respective albums?), but with Tracks, all six of the songs debuted at the Christie shows have now been officially released. In the studio, Springsteen changed the bridge from third person to second, so that the person coming home late at night is no longer “Billy,” but “you.”

8. Trouble in Paradise

**RECORDING LOCATION:** The Record Plant, Los Angeles, CA

**RECORDING DATE:** January 31, 1991

**HISTORY:** Another song written on bass. A series of encounters tied together with a one-line chorus—“loose change in my pocket”—but Springsteen has since made the song’s meaningful explicit: the character’s connections with other people wind up meaning nothing more than a handful of pennies and nickels. If this song is a descendant of “Stolen Car,” the last verse serves as a close-up of “waitin’ on that little red light” and places “Loose Change” among Springsteen’s most chilling tales of isolation.

**BRUCE SAYS:** “With ‘Stolen Car’... being able to have an intimate life, [that’s] something that’s essential to filling your life. He was the guy that started the rest of that idea—the things that I wrote with the bass, whether it’s the guy in ‘Goin’ Cali’ or the guy in ‘Loose Change’ that no matter what he touches it just becomes loose change in your pocket. That’s something that everybody has to learn, to find their way through.”

—MOJO interview, 1998

9. Trouble in Paradise

**RECORDING LOCATION:** Soundworks West, Los Angeles, CA

**RECORDING DATE:** December 1, 1989

**HISTORY:** In the late fall of 1989, as the story goes, Springsteen contacted the members of the E Street Band to let them know that he was going to try recording and touring without them. “Trouble in Paradise,” recorded shortly after the E Street “breakup” and the earliest Human Touch outtake on the box, is perhaps understandably the least musically successful. Shortly after the news broke, Nils Lofgren told Rolling Stone: “Right now he’s just a little... he’s searching. He’s allowed to be confused. He specifically said, ‘I’m just gonna do some experimenting and try recording some songs with some different players.’ Randy Jackson and Jeff Porcaro, who played on this track, would remain at the core of the musicians on Human Touch. Lyrically, the song news close to Tunnel of Love territory, moving slightly beyond the suspicion of ‘Brilliant Disguise’ to look back at a relationship in ruins, interspersing its demise with “storybook” scenes of domesticity. “Trouble in Paradise” joins “Real World” and “Roll of the Dice” as songs co-written by Roy Bittan, one of only two cuts on Tracks with a shared songwriting credit (the other being “Johnny Bye-Bye”).

**BRUCE SAYS:** “One day in L.A. Roy Bittan played me a couple of pieces of music that he’d written. I had never collaborated with another songwriter on any of my other records. I was looking for something to get me going; Roy was enthusiastic and had good ideas. He soon joined the production team of Human Touch, with Jon [Landau] and Chuck [Plotkin].”

—Human Touch/Lucky Town essay from Songs
“Throughout ’88 and ’89, every time I sat down to write, I was just sort of rolling over in my head that I didn’t have a new song to sing, I just ended up rehearsing. Tunnel of Love, not even as good.”

—Rolling Stone interview, 1992

10. Happy

RECORDING LOCATION: A&M Studios, Los Angeles, CA


HISTORY: The only outtake from a song recorded at A&M Studios on Tracks is “Goin’ Cali,” which was recorded a year earlier and suggests that this recording date could be a typo. If “Happy” was actually recorded on January 18, 1992, rather than January 18, 1991, that would be the song on the box not recorded specifically for an album. The Lucky Town sessions took place in the fall and winter of 1991; by January 1992, it would have been too late for this song to be considered for Lucky Town or Human Touch as the press release announcing both albums, completed in late 1991, did not list the date of any of the credited recording date for “Happy.” Regardless, the song seems to serve as a summation and distillation of Springsteen’s state of mind at the time. As he told Rolling Stone in 1992: “I’ve struggled with a lot of things over the past two, three years, and it’s been real rewarding. I’ve been very, very happy, truly the happiest I’ve ever been in my whole life. And it’s not that one-dimensional idea of ‘happy.’ It’s accepting a lot of death and sorrow and mortality. It’s putting the script down and letting the chips fall where they may.”

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: With “Let’s shed our skins and slip these bars,” “Happy” shares imagery with the similarly themed “Street of Dreams.” One can see the coupling occurring.

“Some need gold and some need diamond rings/Or a drug to take away the pain that living brings,” turn up more directly in “Gold Ring,” a track from the album Chapter and Verse, released in December 1992. It is not a common thematic thread in Springsteen’s fare, but it traces, ironically, my journey at that time out West.”

—MOJO, interview, 1998

LYRIC CROSS-CHECK: “A little while later a son comes along” hearkens back to “Separate Parts,” but Springsteen took that image of new life, put it at the beginning of a song and created something new altogether when he railed this Human Touch touch for Lucky Town’s superior “Living Proof” later in 1991. The latter song reworked lines like “It could burn out every trace of where you been” and “So he pulled his heart and soul down off the shelf. Packed them next to the faith that he’d lost in himself.”

13. Back in Your Arms

RECORDING LOCATION: The Hit Factory, New York, NY

RECORDING DATE: January 12, 1995

In a documentary with plenty for Springsteen fans to gawk at, this song was the primary attention-grabber. Blood Brothers captured the E Street Band’s studio reunion at the Hit Factory in January 1995, with a batch of new songs recorded for Greatest Hits. The song was seriously considered for the album, but unlike every other new recording seen in the film, it was not issued on either Greatest Hits or the subsequent Blood Brothers EP. The documentary didn’t present a complete version of the song; Tracks not only serve up the song whole, it offers a completely different take. Springsteen’s impassioned vocal has been toned down a bit, and more prominent vocals for the horns and background vocals have been added. Roy’s piano solo has been removed, but the piano swells nicely at the end to join Clarence’s sax solo. As the only representation of the E Street Band on disc out, it’s a powerful demonstration of their balance of soul and restraint.

JON LANDAU says: “He cut a version of this by himself for the project he was working on for the last year or so, and it’s a terrific version of it, but it always felt sort of like it could really be a great band song, one that it really fits right.”

—Brothers, 1995

ALTERNATE SONG TITLE: Blood Brothers titled the song “Back in Your Arms Again.”

14. Brothers Under the Bridge

RECORDING LOCATION: Thrill Hill Recording, Los Angeles, CA

RECORDING DATE: May 22, 1995

“Part Man, Part Monkey” was a staple of the Springsteen set list from 1989 to 1995. Steve Morse in the LA Times, 1998.

BRUCE SAYS: “This is a song set in the San Gabriel Mountains, a mountain range in between the San Fernando Valley and the Mojave Desert, just outside of Los Angeles. Los Angeles is a funny town, because you can go about 25 minutes east, and you hit the foothills of these mountains. And you’ll go for 100 miles and there might be one little store. There’s a little town up around 7,000 feet, and the rest is just pines, takes you down the other side into the desert. There was a group of homeless Vietnam vets that had left L.A. to set up a camp, a camp out there in the mountains. This is a story about people who have a grown daughter that he never sees, and she grows up, and she comes looking for her dad. And what he tells her.”

—concert introduction, April 24, 1996

ALTERNATE SONG TITLE: In a demonstration of their balance of soul and restraint.

Blood Brothers

Backstreets regularly introduced the song as “Brothers Under the Bridges.”

Backstreets is grateful for the insights provided by recent interviews with Bruce Springsteen, which are the source of many of these liner notes possible. MOJO magazine’s in-depth interview with Springsteen, conducted by Mark Hagen and published in the January 1999 issue, was essential to this project. We also refer you to that issue for the complete interview. Thanks also to articles and interviews by Robert Hilburn in the Los Angeles Times; Melissa Newman in Billboard (11/7/98); Steve Morse in the Boston Globe (11/20/98); Larry McShane in In these liner notes possible. MOJO magazine’s in-depth interview with Springsteen, conducted by Mark Hagen and published in the January 1999 issue, was essential to this project. We also refer you to that issue for the complete interview. Thanks also to articles and interviews by Robert Hilburn in the Los Angeles Times; Melissa Newman in Billboard (11/7/98); Steve Morse in the Boston Globe (11/20/98); Larry McShane in the Associated Press (7/5/99); and the Charlie Rose program on PBS.

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