

The Boss' new album shows a social awarness

Columbia Records released Bruce Springsteen's 11th album, *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, last Tuesday.

After one listens to the new album, one can tell that Springsteen is no longer a Jersey boy. In these new songs, he makes numerous references to California and the West. This album of songs with a social conscience is reminiscent of his 1982 album, *Nebraska*, in its acoustic and melancholy look at the down-trodden.

Springsteen has always been associated with the working-class man. But now, with this new album, he's taking up for others, including the homeless, prisoners, and immigrants.

The title track, "The Ghost of Tom Joad," mentions the character of Tom Joad from John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. In the song, Springsteen loosely quotes from a passage that Tom says in

Music Review

By Dina Di Maio

the book. Incidentally, the feeling alive in the new album is best described by this passage: "Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy, wherever a hungry newborn baby cries, look for me Mom I'll be there. Wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place to stand or a decent job or a helpin' hand, wherever somebody's strugglin' to be free, look in their eyes Mom you'll see me." Perhaps Springsteen sees a similarity in the treatment of the early California immigrants with the California immigrants of today.

A few of the songs end ambiguously, or with no real resolution or

answer. For instance, in the song, "Youngstown," Springsteen sings of the hardship of a mine worker's life. For the character, nothing is resolved. He just "pray[s] the devil comes and takes [him] to stand in the fiery furnaces of hell." Like many other characters, he is left with uncertainty.

Other songs end adversely. The song "Balboa Park" is about young boys hired as drug smugglers. The song ends with one boy's getting shot and dying. By showing us that they are real people, Springsteen makes us empathize with them.

In the midst of all this pessimism, two songs stand out spreading humor and hope. In the light "My Best was Never Good Enough," Springsteen plays with clichés such as that famous line, "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're going to get."

Springsteen's song of hope is "Across the Border," a song about immigrants hoping for prosperity in a new land. Although it's about immigrants crossing the border, this song reflects the dreams and wishes of everyone. As Springsteen says, "For what are we without hope in our hearts."

This album is written in classic Springsteen style, and the stories are told in the classic Springsteen way: with truth, understanding, and hope to keep us going.

Balmer: continued from page 4

Balmer has a firm belief in what makes an effective student leader. "You must know who it is you're representing," she said, "and realize you're not representing yourself." She continued, "You are a servant to the people who have elected you."

During the last two summer breaks Balmer worked at Prince George High School as an administrative assistant. "Both summers I changed all the locker combinations in the school so they call me the safecracker," she laughed. Balmer also does a two-week stint each summer as assistant director of the Tri-Cities Work Camp, a Christian youth organization that rebuilds homes for the needy all over the state of Virginia. "It's not about rebuilding homes, but about rebuilding people's lives—bringing a positive direction to their lives," she said.

After graduation Balmer hopes to go to NCSU and earn a graduate degree in food science and then do some kind of research in the food industry. She works hard in her classes and says there is no current boyfriend. "I'm hot and heavy into my biology classes," she smiled, "and not having a special boyfriend keeps life a little easier right now."

During her free time Balmer enjoys being with her friends and flying kites at Emerald Isle, her favorite beach. She likes all kinds of music and plays the piano for relaxation. For summer reading she prefers murder mysteries, and she likes movies and tv shows with action. She watches the "X Files" every Friday night.

Balmer is looking forward to Christmas break when she plans to relax, visit with family, work on the SGA proposal and try to find a fun part-time job.

After the holiday break, the senate will focus on reviewing the constitutions of several campus organizations," Balmer said. "All organizations whose constitutions are due to be revised have been contacted. There are approximately 20 of them, so we'll be busy."

She is proud of her newly-acquired Meredith ring and is looking forward to her senior year. "Our class has a lot of strong leaders and creative minds," Balmer said, "and we're going to do some big things next year." If Erica Balmer is typical of the students leading the class of '97, they will indeed accomplish great things both during and after their years at Meredith.

Top Ten Ways You Know You're at Meredith

By Ginny Bonkemeyer

10. You catch yourself saying, "Hey look! There's a guy!" in public.
9. You eat chicken more than twice a day.
8. 6:00 am fire drills are the norm.
7. Burlap walls don't look half-bad anymore.
6. You have to explain to your date which buildings are legal and which ones aren't.
5. You start to look forward to the scald in the shower when the people upstairs flush.
4. You can walk directly through the courtyard fountain and not get wet.
3. You begin to enjoy frozen eggs on your salad.
2. You have at least 100 new t-shirts each year.
1. You wear something other than sweats and a ponytail and people ask, "Where are YOU going?"