



*By Larry Dobrow - GJD Contributor*

Critiquing the guitar work at a Springsteen concert is like critiquing the harmonic precision at a Spice Girls one: it's thoroughly beside the point. You go to a Bruce show for the anthems, for the community, for the rare opportunity to leave irony at the door and indulge your inner populist. You go to wear headbands, pump your fists and generally act like a Baby Boomer doofus.

But Bruce's show on Monday night at Long Island's ramshackle Nassau Coliseum was all about the guitar –specifically, Nils Lofgren's guitar. Earlier in the "Magic" tour, Nils was given few moments to stretch out. He soloed alongside Bruce during the unknown-to-all-but-the-disciples "Thundercrack" and added a few slide squeals during the ZZ Top'd-up version of "Reason to Believe," but that was it. How unjust a state of affairs was this? Even rhythm foil Steve Van Zandt received more time in the guitar spotlight.

Springsteen has righted that wrong, simply by adding "Because the Night" to the set and freeing Nils for a monstrous three-minute guitar coda. I'm not sure what kind of axe he used – from my nosebleedy seats, he appeared to be playing either a Les Paul or a Donnay tennis racket – but Nils pulled tones and harmonics out of it that one usually associates with Eddie Van Halen. How the guitar survived the assault is anybody's guess.

Bruce himself enjoyed a few fine moments on his well-worn Telecaster during the show, extending his bendy "Adam Raised a Cain" solo by eight bars and toeing the line for the "Incident on 57th Street" outro. But what Nils did during "Because the Night" recast him as a guitar hero, one who oughta be pulled out of the sideman shadows much more often. It was the most buzzed-about moment of the night. At a Springsteen show, that's no small feat.

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