

## Who's The Boss? *Springsteen and rock and roll rule in Cleveland*

By Lisa Codianne Fowler



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“You've always got to remember, rock and roll's never been about giving up. For me, for a lot of kids, it was a totally positive force... not optimistic all the time, but positive. It was never, never about surrender.” ~ Bruce Springsteen

### **DANCING IN THE DARK**

Live music pulsates. The room is packed and dimly lit. Like everyone else, my husband and I are helplessly captive to the beat. In town for a conference, we share the floor with dozens of colleagues, all reveling in this unplugged reception at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Unexpectedly, the others gradually shrink from the dance floor. Suddenly the two of us are alone, jitterbugging, hopping, bopping, twirling and dipping. We sense all eyes on us. It's just, well, eerie.



Photo courtesy Eileen Marie Roche



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The medley of high-octane songs seems interminable... my heart rate approaches stroke levels. No matter. Just call me Proud Mary. The show, such as it is, must go on. If I'm going down, it will be in a blaze of glory.

Finally, the music ceases. There's deafening crowd applause (or so it seemed at the time) and an announcement from the stage. We won the couples dance contest!

## **GLORY DAYS**

This was one of many memories made here that we will carry with us as we hobble past our baby boomer prime. Being huge fans of The Boss, the new Springsteen exhibit was a serendipitous and unforgettable discovery. Two sprawling floors of Bruce-abilia captivated us at every turn.

His guitars – including the Fender Esquire on the cover of “Born to Run” – clothing, furniture, even pages of hand-written lyrics, scratched out and doodled on, delight ardent fans and intrigue even those whose interest is less than obsessive. Videos, including archival footage, demo tapes and listening stations complete the multi-media display, one that easily entertains and educates for hours.

Don't miss seeing the 1993 Oscar awarded for his haunting “Streets of Philadelphia”, nor listening to the audio of an early 70s performance in Cambridge, Massachusetts that prompted music critic Jon Landau, who later became Springsteen's manager, to write: "I saw rock and roll future and its name is Bruce Springsteen."

Delve into Springsteen's music, from such early bands as Child, the Castiles and Steel Mill through his work with the E Street Band and as a solo artist. The exhibit also includes Springsteen's 1960 Chevrolet Corvette, which he purchased after the success of “Born to Run”.

Titled, “From Asbury Park to the Promised Land: The Life and Music of Bruce Springsteen”, it is the first major artifact-driven exhibit about Springsteen's career. It will run through the spring of 2010.

## **BORN IN THE U.S.A**

Rock and roll is such an integral part of Americana, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame makes that crystal clear; or rather, a Whiter Shade of Pale. The exhibits take visitors on a fast-paced journey through the history of rock and roll music, from one-hit wonders to legendary inductees, from its roots in gospel, country and blues to the important local music scenes in such cities as Memphis, Detroit and San Francisco.



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Other exhibits are devoted to the pioneering rock and roll artists of the Fifties, the soul artists of the Sixties, the political protests against rock and roll and interplay between fashion and rock.

Plan on spending a full day here – at least – to appreciate what we found to be an overwhelming display of interactive exhibits, intimate performance spaces and artifact and costume

displays. The Motown exhibit is a perennial favorite. Don't be surprised if you feel compelled to break into dance. I did, and I was not alone!

Some of the many highlights of the museum's collection include (forgive the laundry list that follows – it's actually a fraction of what you can expect to see): Prince's *Purple Rain* coat; Madonna's bustier from "Like a Virgin"; Roger Daltrey's fringed leather outfit from the Rolling Stones' *Rock and Roll Circus*; David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* jumpsuit; Bono's Zoo-TV "Fly" costume; John Lennon's and Ringo Starr's *Sgt. Pepper* uniforms; the telegram from Paul and Linda McCartney to Neil Young in 1982; Jimi Hendrix's handwritten *Purple Haze* lyrics; Hendrix's 1965 Fender Stratocaster guitar; handwritten lyrics to the Beatles' *In My Life* and *Lucy In the Sky With Diamonds*, John Lennon's grammar school report card and Buddy Holly's high school diploma.

The Museum also presents public programming, including the popular *Hall of Fame Series*, which features Hall of Fame inductees in an informal interview and performance setting. The annual *American Music Masters Series* is dedicated to the exploration of an early influence inductee's music and enduring impact on popular music.

Designed by internationally celebrated architect I.M. Pei, the building is a striking state-of-the-art facility that rises above the shores of Lake Erie. It is a composition of bold geometric forms and dynamic cantilevered spaces that are anchored by a 162-foot tower. The tower supports a dual-triangular-shaped glass "tent" that extends (at its base) onto a 65,000 square-foot plaza, providing a dramatic main entry facade.

"In designing this building," says Pei, "it was my intention to echo the energy of rock and



roll. I have consciously used an architectural vocabulary that is bold and new, and I hope the building will become a dramatic landmark for the city of Cleveland and for fans of rock and roll around the world." Indeed. It already has.

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## MY HOMETOWN

Not surprisingly, Cleveland has bred many notable musicians and songwriters; among them, Tracey Chapman, The James Gang, Chrissie Hynde and The Pretenders, Eric

Carmen, The O’Jays, even Dean Martin. In this city, where the term “rock and roll” was coined, you can feel the beat in everything that happens.



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The House of Blues is always jumping. We spent an evening devouring tasty southern-inspired cuisine – crunchy fried chicken, mac and cheese casserole, roast beef and more – before dancing our hearts out to rock and roll sung by a gospel choir. The event was punctuated by the dozen or more costumed singers descending from the stage to join in the dancing and shower guests with hugs. Hallelujah!

If symphony is more your style, check out The Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall (the magnificent hall itself is worth a visit), at an outdoor concert, or during The Cleveland Orchestra Blossom Festival from July through September. It consistently ranks as one of the top ten orchestras in the world.



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And, each Thanksgiving weekend thousands of polka fans convene in Cleveland to partake in Tony Petkovsek’s annual Thanksgiving Polka Festival.

More Cleveland highlights – some quirky, some not – include “A Christmas Story” House and Museum, where you can relive Ralphie’s adventures from the beloved movie of the same name; Big Fun, a treasure trove of trolls and other vintage toys, whoopee cushions and “just plain silly stuff” and b.a. Sweetie Candy Company, where you’ll find old-fashioned goodies like button candy, Pixy Stix, wax lips and PEZ dispensers.

Cleveland’s culinary scene is as savory as it is sweet. From the decadent pastries of Little Italy to the hipster hangout eateries and pubs of Tremont, Cleveland’s neighborhoods reflect the character and ancestry of its residents. The West Side Market is a culinary

extravaganza, recently rated one of 10 Great Public Spaces in America. East Fourth Street is the city's newest entertainment district, lined with an eclectic mix of cafés along a brick-paved walkway.

Though we didn't have the opportunity to spend time on Lake Erie, our lakeside room at the luxurious DoubleTree Hotel afforded us a spectacular view. The lake offers swimming, sailing, winter surfing and, we're told, some of the best walleye fishing in the country.

Cleveland also boasts numerous arts and cultural venues, such as SPACES contemporary art gallery and Playhouse Square, the country's largest performing arts center outside New York City; Cleveland Botanical Garden, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, the Cinematheque, the Western Reserve Historical Society and, of course, the Cleveland Institute of Music.

I admit when we first arrived we wondered what Cleveland could possibly have to offer. But within just a few days we discovered first-hand that this city's moniker is positively true...Cleveland Rocks!

*For more information about the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, call 216-781-ROCK (7625) or visit [www.rockhall.com](http://www.rockhall.com). To learn more about Cleveland and its attractions, call Positively Cleveland (CVB) at 1-800- 321-1001 or visit [www.positivelycleveland.com](http://www.positivelycleveland.com).*