



GOYAVES

PRESENTS

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

CITIZEN BRUCE, THE AMERICAN PAL

A FILM BY
THOMAS BOUJUT

WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH BELKACEM BAHLOUL

PITCH

“I remember I’m the President, but he... Well, he is the Boss!”

Barack Obama (2009)

World famous and cherished, idolised by several generations of fans, Bruce Springsteen still conceals many secrets, and remains sometimes the victim of his own success. This success he has always dreamed of, but which sometimes leaves the true Bruce and his roughness in the shadows, allowing solely glimpses of the rock star.

In a few chapters, like so many pages of an American novel, we will unearth the unconventional career path of this giant of rock and American culture and how a rough kid from New Jersey, could become the “Boss”, Bruce Springsteen. A man who has never strayed to remain steadfast in his commitments, yet who sometimes is dogged by certain contradictions. Those of a man racked by perpetual doubt who never ceases to question his iconic status.

Loyalty is perhaps the watchword that best defines Bruce Springsteen. An unwavering loyalty to his band the E Street Band, his first family. Yet a similar loyalty is displayed to his fans around the world whose extraordinary devotion warrants admiration.

In the world of rock, Springsteen has attained an unrivalled lofty status. His pictorial writing is more akin to that of a novelist or filmmaker than that of a songwriter.

Pieced together like a mental road movie, our film will aim to build bridges between the man himself, his country and the works that have influenced him. Springsteen at the fulcrum of a universe in which John Steinbeck, Terrence Malick, the photographer Robert Frank, Robert de Niro or John Ford, to name but a few, orbit. Understanding the Springsteenian oeuvre through the prism of American culture, its cinema and literature, its mythologies. An unprecedented inroad into this rock giant, thereby making him the essential pivot of a history “bigger” than even him, that of a country, which holds people’s fascination in equal measures, yet also capable of inciting concern or even revolt.



STATEMENT OF INTENT

1 - WRITING

After a career spanning half a century, nearly 130 million albums sold, concerts of more than three hours performed in sold-out stadiums, a roster of fans of the stature of Sean Penn, Bono, Sting, Prince or Barack Obama, Bruce Springsteen is today at 73 years old one of the major icons of rock'n'roll. The world tour that will take place in 2023 sold out months ago. As early as 1975, the American weeklies Time Magazine and Newsweek were not mistaken, placing the singer on the front page in the same week, prophesising the success fate had planned for him.

A multimillionaire singer, this "boss" has always directed his voice to the overlooked little people, the workers who get up early in the morning, the ones left behind by the American dream. Perhaps he still recognises himself in them, the son of a bus driver and prison guard.

On stage and in song, he continues to embody the American working class from which he came and of which he remains the voice, eschewing any demagoguery. Just as in a Frank Capra movie, anyone can become a hero in a Bruce Springsteen song. Bruce Springsteen as James Stewart in 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington'.

What is the secret behind this unfailing credibility which is lavished upon him ?

« My task has always been to gauge the gap between reality and the American Dream. »

His hit "Born in the USA" would cross borders and endow him with superstar status. The Oscar received for the film Philadelphia and the song of the same name meant he was destined for the rank of legend.

« I'm not here for any government, I came to play rock 'n' roll for you in the hope that one day all barriers will be removed. »

Of all the struggles, among veterans of the Vietnam War or the Amnesty International association, it was one of the pillars of the most important charitable piece of the music history: 'We are the World'. Unfettered by simplistic political intentions, he would give a concert in front of 300,000 people on the other side of the wall, in East Berlin in 1988. Today, certain historians even claim that this concert was the precursor to the fall of the Wall.

While his concerts are like giant rock masses, like a trance preacher, he is always wholly in unison with his fans. They seem to share the stage with him, dessine: Bruce est le tonton idéal, le frère que l'on n'a pas eu, ou le père que l'on aurait aimé avoir...

Few artists can boast that they brandish this hypnotic power over millions of men and women. A total relationship between an artist and his audience is unique in Rock'n'Roll. An international and anonymous «Bruce – base», worshiping at the alter of the «Boss». It is this passion that Ridley Scott's film *Springsteen & I* documents, thanks to dozens of poignant testimonies, from devotees of the “guru” Springsteen.

Where does this closeness, this coexistence, this pure love come from, effortlessly bonding an artist and his audience ?

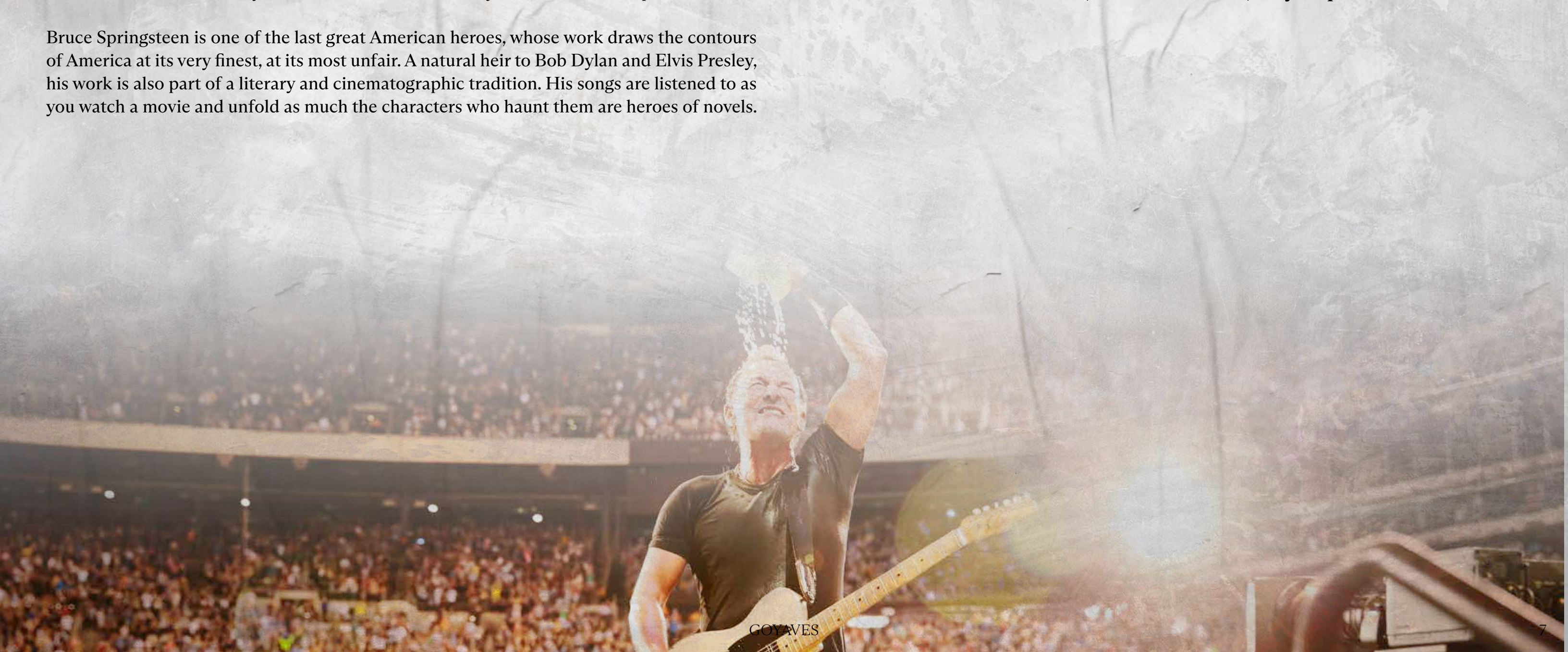
A clay foot colossus, Springsteen would discover the bittersweet and double-edged tinge of success. While Reagan tried to appropriate for his re-election the anti-militarist anthem *Born In the USA*, and some pour scorn him for his millionaire lifestyle while he sings for the destitute, Bruce definitively embodies, and more than anyone, the American paradox.

Bruce Springsteen is one of the last great American heroes, whose work draws the contours of America at its very finest, at its most unfair. A natural heir to Bob Dylan and Elvis Presley, his work is also part of a literary and cinematographic tradition. His songs are listened to as you watch a movie and unfold as much the characters who haunt them are heroes of novels.

From album to album, Bruce Springsteen went to draw inspiration from his life in a wholly natural manner. Thanks to his talent as an observer, he was able to take on the stance of chronicler to his contemporaries, acting as their mouthpiece. He has turned into an artform making characters poetic, who in reality would have no voice. Like an echo of his own existence, literature and cinema have structured his convictions, bringing the epic dimension that brazenly strides through each of his records.

After a 50-year career, the staunch New Jersey idealist has become a mentor to a generation of musicians, filmmakers, artists or authors. Told many times, the story of Bruce Springsteen deserves a new light, to understand the destiny of this man at the crossroads betwixt American mythologies and the disillusionment of a faded dream.

« I think that's what cinema, music and art do, they map out our emotions. »



2 – APPROACH

Several documentaries have already tackled the subject of Springsteen: his musical work and his reputation as a showman are no longer a secret to anyone. Our film will therefore try to bring an unprecedented and instructive light freeing itself from the chronology of its narrative.

There is a wealth of archival, audio and film footage unearthing the real Bruce Springsteen and those who know him best, musicians, singers, writers, filmmakers and even a former President of the United States. Interviews, press conferences, scenes of everyday life filmed by fans during impromptu meetings, there is no shortage of material to tell Bruce Springsteen's story. Thanks to these different sources, we have dared to tell Bruce Springsteen using only archives without conducting interviews today.

We will thus be permanently contemporaries of his commitments, his convictions and his own human growth, introducing in fact a closeness with the man himself by avoiding projecting ourselves from the present to the past through grainy interviews.

Our documentary will therefore be made according to the principle of the «whole archive» in order to understand the man and his work over the passage of time. The story of a man who scrupulously devoted his life to his work, even more than to his career itself. Many film excerpts will confirm and support the close-knit relationship between Springsteen and cinema. His songs can be intermingled with excerpts from films or, on the contrary, the reading of literary works become superimposed on excerpts from his clips to bolster the link that binds them.

« The large part of my songs are kind of autobiographies »

The documentary will be built in a succession of flitting back and forth between Bruce Springsteen's life story, his records, his major life events, and the works that have become etched into his mind and influenced him. This film or book will allow us to approach his childhood, his political ethos or his way of writing, his songs, and his fate.

The proximity between the work and the artist is such in the realm of Springsteen that to tell of his work is to tell of its creator. Thus, step by step, through a mirror game, we will watch as Springsteen's life is reflected in the “great American novel.”

This unbreakable and visceral link will allow us to use excerpts from films and songs to clearly set out our standpoint.

Rather than a linear timeline, we have opted to “tell” Bruce Springsteen in a non-chronological order. The film will begin with the standout moments throughout his career, upon which we will shed new light and hitherto unseen perspectives. It will end with the most intimate aspects of his personality, and therefore revealing the most unknown. The conclusion of the film will return to the present time, while aiming to project it into the future.

Provisional list of excerpts from non-exhaustive films envisaged :

‘The Indian Runner’ by Sean Penn

‘Badlands’ by Terrence Malick

‘Thunder Road’ by Arthur Ripley

‘Taxi Driver’ by Martin Scorsese

‘Journey to the End of Hell’ by Michael Cimino

‘The Grapes of Wrath’ by John Ford

‘Light of Day’ by Paul Schrader

‘Born in East L.A.’ by Cheech Marin

‘East of Eden’ by Elia Kazan

‘The Night of the Hunter’ by Charles Laughton

‘Easy Rider’ by Dennis Hopper

‘Music of My Life’ by Gurinder Chada

« I may be the President, but he.... He is the Boss ! » *a statement made by Barack Obama in the White House when awarding Springsteen with the highest US distinction.*

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