



Newsletter

July 2025

In this issue:

- President's Message - John Harvell
- Growing the Hobby - David Snyder
- John Harvell's System After Room Correction - David Das
- All Born Screaming: A St. Vincent Retrospective - Barrett Strong
- Dave's Record Review: Heather Myles – *Sweet Talk, Good Lies*
- Catchgroove's Record Review: Bruce Springsteen - *Tracks II: The Lost Albums*

President's Message

By AAVC President John Harvell

1. Join me and the other club members for the next AAVC event, "Achieving Studio-Quality Sound in Your Listening Room (Without Breaking the Bank)", Hosted by Our club member David Das @ the Faith Lutheran Church (Parish Hall), 801 E Camelback Rd., Phoenix AZ starting at 7 PM. I can say without reservation that we've implemented the process David will talk about on my system, and I've become an absolute believer. The improvement in the quality of my listening experience has been profound and very satisfying.

2. After discussion on the steering committee, there is interest in the club acquiring/developing a simple system that we can use for what I'm listening sessions and simple comparisons. Additionally, to increase interaction between club members and improve the quality of our listening experience, we've decided that it might be interesting to give all you interested club members an opportunity to work with a group of like-minded club members to design and build a monitor-style speaker for this audio system. I've reached out to Ed Goff (club member and speaker designer/builder himself) to see if he might be willing to help focus such a team. He has indicated that he would be happy to help the team get a design together. The steering committee has indicated that we have the resources to fund the construction of a speaker system with a total cost in the \$500-1000 range. I think this could be a lot of fun and might help enhance club member interactions. So, if you have any interest at all in participating in the design and construction of a new club monitor speaker system, please reach out of one of the club steering committee members (David Das, Joe Roberts, Paul Johnson, David Snyder, or me). We can get this team started on what will become a critical part of the club's

supporting audio system. You don't have to have all the answers; you just need the interest and a willingness to work with other club members to get these speakers together.

3. Finally, get out and mix it up with other club members, visit and listen to their systems, share your setup, talk about your experiences, and share your history living through this hobby. Invite a friend to a meeting, share the excitement. We all benefit from active participation, so be a contributor.

I'll see you out at the next club event, if not sooner...John

Are We Just a Niche Hobby?

A Guide to Becoming an Ambassador for the Sound We Love

By David Snyder

In a world overflowing with background music and disposable earbuds, how do we share the profound experience of true 2-channel audio? A powerful new 10-page article, [The Ambassador's Guide: Inspiring a New Generation's Appreciation for High-Fidelity Audio](#), tackles this question head-on, offering a fresh and inspiring roadmap for every member of our club.

This isn't another technical paper about specs and measurements. Instead, it's a strategic manual for becoming an effective, empathetic ambassador for the unique joy found in a quiet room with a great stereo. You'll see that our passion isn't about having a better way to listen to "background noise," but about offering an invitation to a more profound and rewarding way to engage with music.

This guide will challenge you to rethink how we communicate our passion. You will discover:

- **The Revelation:** Why a single, well-crafted listening demonstration is more powerful than a thousand words of technical jargon, and how to create that unforgettable, "paradigm-shifting" experience for someone new.
- **The Gateway System:** A practical strategy for dismantling the "prohibitively expensive" myth. The article details how to curate accessible, high-value used systems that can deliver a revelatory experience without breaking the bank.
- **The Gentle Guide:** Learn how to move beyond technical terms and use evocative, relatable language to help newcomers hear the magic in a recording, transforming a listening session from a clinical trial into a personal discovery.
- **The Bridge from Streaming:** A clever, step-by-step approach that meets new listeners where they are—on services like Spotify—and guides them toward appreciating higher-quality sources without judgment or snobbery.

This article is a call to action. It's a forward-looking plan that encourages us to be generous with our time and equipment, to learn from the inclusive nature of the "Head-Fi"*

community, and to see our systems not just as sources of personal pleasure, but as powerful tools for sharing a profound experience with our community.

Prepare to be inspired. This article provides the tools we need to stop lamenting cultural shifts and start securing the future of our hobby, not by having the loudest system, but by having the most generous spirit. Don't miss it!

**Head-fi" refers to high-fidelity (hi-fi) headphone audio, particularly in the context of audiophile-grade systems. It encompasses headphones, amplifiers, digital audio players, and other equipment designed for high-quality, personal listening experiences. The term is also associated with the online community Head-Fi.org, a platform for enthusiasts to discuss and share information about this type of audio.*

Editor's Note: I challenge all members to share their ideas for promoting our hobby. I encourage you to share your ideas and your reaction to the article. It would be great if you could share a success story too!

John Harvell's System after Room Correction

Review by David Das

I had the pleasure of reviewing the results of applying Digital Room Correction to Club President John Harvell's audio system on Friday, June 13, 2025.

This was a collaborative effort amongst John, Club Secretary Paul Johnson, Joe Roberts, and me. We all arrived at John's home around 1 pm, eager to start our experiment, not knowing what to expect from applying the ROON + ACOURATE workflow to his Martin Logan CLX Electrostatic speakers.

THE ROOM

The Room is the largest factor that dictates how well a given pair of speakers would perform.

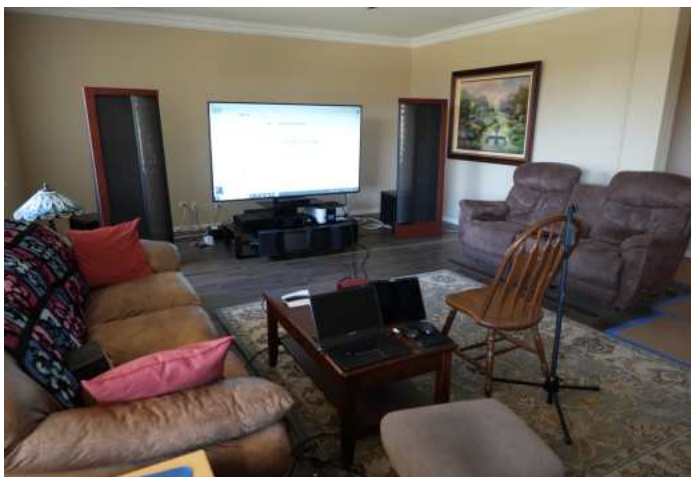
John has the largest living room within our members' circle. This expansive space is about 19' wide x 58' long when you consider the open floor plan that flows into the kitchen.



MAIN SPEAKERS: Martin Logan [CLX](#) (\$22,700/pair).

These majestic panels measure 70" tall x 26" wide and weigh 110lbs each. They are considered the finest full-range electrostatic loudspeakers designed by Martin Logan. They have a frequency response of 56Hz to 23kHz (+/- 3dB). The Absolute Sound ran a glowing [review](#) on this model.

These dipole radiators need a large room to perform their magic. John has spaced them 9' apart with about 4' of clearance from the front wall and 2' of clearance from the side walls.



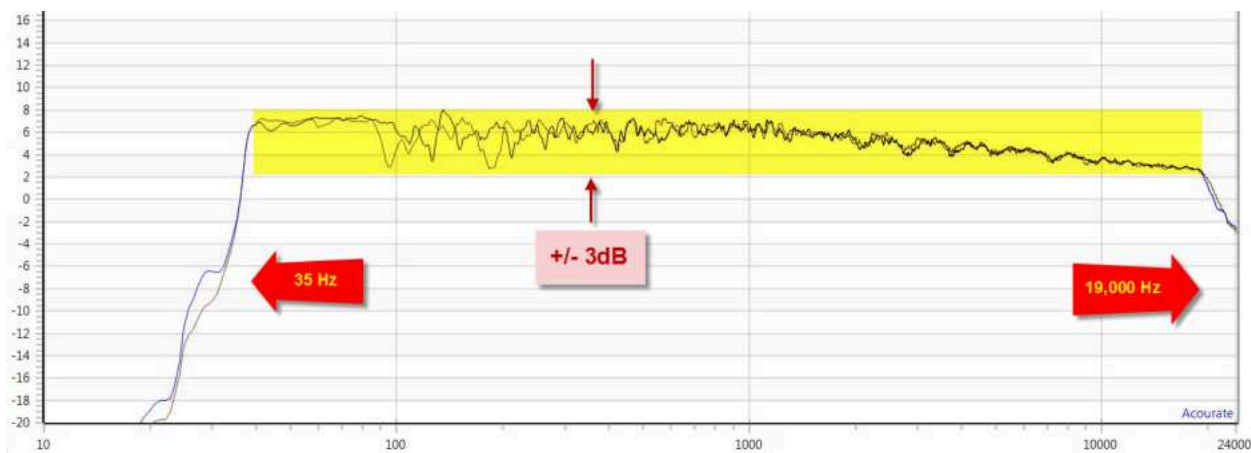
John's living room is ideally suited to take full advantage of these large electrostatic panels. It is a match made in heaven. They throw a soundstage that expands to the full width of the front wall.

We positioned the iSEMcon EMX-7150 measurement microphone at the optimal listening position, exactly equidistant from the main left and right speakers, and took the measured impulse responses before any room correction.

This was the result *before* any room correction. As you can see, there is a large swing of +/- 11dB between 35Hz and 19,000Hz.




This was the result *after* applying Room Correction. The deviation of the frequency plots has been confined within a narrow band of +/- 3dB between 35Hz and 19kHz.



Notice how the bass has been smoothed out from 35Hz to 80Hz. It is practically flat. This correction in the bass region brought the biggest impact in cleaning up the overall sound.

For more details on how we designed the Target Curve and built the FIR Filters in ACOURATE, please read: <http://bit.ly/445mBRU>

 John Harvell's System after Room Correction.pdf

All Born Screaming A St. Vincent Retrospective

By Barrett Strong



St. Vincent playing her Ernie Ball St. Vincent Signature guitar as one of her “archetypes”

Annie Clark was born in 1982, started playing guitar at the age of 15, and by 25 had already toured with both the Polyphonic Spree and Sufjan Stevens at which point she went solo and began performing as St. Vincent, a homage to both her great-grandmother's middle name and the hospital in which the American poet Dylan Thomas died. I've been a fan for years, but it wasn't until her release of **All Born Screaming** in 2024 that I saw a fascinating albeit obscure connection which provided the impetus for this piece. The album won Grammys for best rock song, best alternative music performance, and best alternative music album. In an interview, she explained the title:

"We're all born in some ways against our will. But at the same time, if you're born screaming, it's a great sign – it's a sign you're alive. We're all born in protest, so screaming is what it means to be alive... It's the beauty, it's the brutality, and it's all part of the same continuum".

The word "continuum" drew me in, as I considered how the quality of human existence can range so dramatically, with the luck of the draw granting a life filled with joy and comfort or one surrounded by violence and despair. The little control we have is our reaction – what do we do with what we are given? At birth, a scream is uninformed, but as we age and become informed, new reasons to scream develop, and some choose to cry out through art. In a recent interview, St. Vincent commented on how she knew from as far back as 2006 she wanted to use **All Born Screaming** as the title of an album, but didn't feel she was "worthy", not having lived enough to make such a statement. It wasn't until the events of the last few years that she felt ready to make what she calls "post-plague pop".

Not surprisingly, that's exactly what it sounds like - a career-spanning amalgamation that is at times optimistic but more often dark and even dangerous. In the video for "*Broken Man*" which won for Best Rock Song, she keeps catching fire, at first flailing and putting the flames out, but over the course of the song her rage increases and fear diminishes and she is left at the end completely engulfed but with no apparent burns screaming not in pain but defiance. Rock and Roll is still very much alive.

It's yet another iteration in a long line, with each album, it's not only the music that evolves, but St. Vincent herself. In the tradition of David Bowie, to whom she is most often compared, her stage persona is recreated and changes dramatically with each album, introducing what she calls a new "archetype". From indie-pop darling to fetish dominatrix, from vulnerable singer-songwriter to hyper-confident guitar goddess, 70's retro to cutting-edge art rock, it's all there and she nails every one. But as I did my research, I realized she had something else in common with Bowie – for as much confidence and showmanship she exhibits onstage, when off-stage and just Annie, she is soft-spoken, articulate, and kind, with a human warmth and illumination that permeates. A multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter, and producer, she is probably best known for her innovative guitar technique, with Rolling Stone placing her as the 26th greatest of all time. Her influences beyond Bowie include Kate Bush, Jimi Hendrix, Tori Amos, Talking Heads,

Pink Floyd, Robert Fripp, and Adrian Belew. Nice crowd. You can hear every one of them in her music.

For the AAVC, I put together a list of recommended tracks from her career, as well as a video or two for the visual aspect of her performances. Her lyrics are often opaque, but every time I did any research on their meaning, I was amazed.

Marry Me album, released 2007

“*Human Racing*” – West African guitar bossa shuffle acoustic prog is a thing, right?

“*What Me Worry*” – Chanteuse vocals put a velvet glove on a chilly heart.

Actor album, released 2009

“*Save Me From What I Want*” – A multilayered soundscape channeling Fripp and Eno.

“*The Party*” – Sparse and honest, languid and melancholic. A party where most have left.

Strange Mercy album, released 2011

“*Champagne Year*” – Incredible recording of depth and space - atmospheric Leonard Cohen.

“*Dilletante*” – Plodding groove played “behind the beat” is roused by a fuzzed-out sustain guitar.

St. Vincent album, released 2014

“*Huey Newton*” – Wall-shaking synth-bass under profound lyrics builds to a wall of sound.

“*Severed Crossed Fingers*” – An anthem of hope and resilience against mangled optimism.

YouTube video – “*Bring Me Your Loves – Outside Lands Fest 8.07.15*” – Captures what a recording simply cannot. That live guitar sound. Those outfits.

Masseduction album, released 2017

“*Pills*”- Jungle and world rhythms build tension till a possibly Faustian release is found in drugs.

“*Smoking Section*” – Poignant lyrics teeter between defiance and resignation. Both intimate and bombastic.

MassEducation album, released 2018—an acoustic version of Masseduction with sparse piano-based arrangements.

“*Los Ageless*” – Impermanence. What is “having”? What is “losing”? It’s all in your head.

“*Happy Birthday Johnny*” – I don’t even know who Johnny is but it still makes me cry.

Daddy's Home album, released 2021

"Live in the Dream"- On a 70s retro album and drugs fit right in. So does her Gilmour-esque guitar.

"Down" – A Wurlitzer sets up the funk, guns are hidden under polyester, and eyes hide behind dark sunglasses.

All Born Screaming album, released 2025

"Broken Man" – The rhythm track opening will pop your ears before the power chords finish them off.

"Big Time Nothing" – A bass line so fat it makes A5 Wagyu look like health food. YouTube video – *"Reckless (Live performance) Vevo"* – It pulses and builds like blood flowing through veins until the beat drops and some of the most epic descending slides ever recorded begin.

Todos Nacen Gritando album, released 2025—a reworking of **All Born Screaming** with dramatically different arrangements and sung by St. Vincent in Spanish. There's a reason they call it a romance language.

"El Infierno Esta Cerca" – Angelic and lush. I don't understand the lyrics, but I think it's even more beautiful than in English.

I hope you spent the time to listen to the tracks, and even more that you enjoyed them as I did.

I love researching, listening to, and writing about artists who cry out. We are living through rapid change, and dark clouds are on the horizon. I know I am lucky to have lived through this time in world history, but I am bracing for what comes next. Life has always been hard, but sharing in protest against clearly avoidable suffering helps. I feel lucky to be a witness and point others to what I think is worth spending our fleeting time experiencing.

And that brings me back to the connection.

All Born Screaming by St Vincent, who took the name of the hospital where Dylan Thomas died, who wrote the poem **Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night** – literally an ode to the raving protest, the beautiful scream, which in part reads-

"Do not go gentle into that good night,

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light."...

We are born screaming as a reaction to life, but as we age, we begin to scream for different reasons. To turn that energy into art is a rebellion, a protest against passivity and decay. We may all be born screaming, but many over time simply grow silent. But much like profanity, when used with skill, a scream is a cathartic and beautiful thing.

St. Vincent is only 42 while I am 60, and yet when I listen to her burn and rage, I still feel lucky. Because not all screams are created equal, some are a beautiful thing.



St. Vincent c 2024

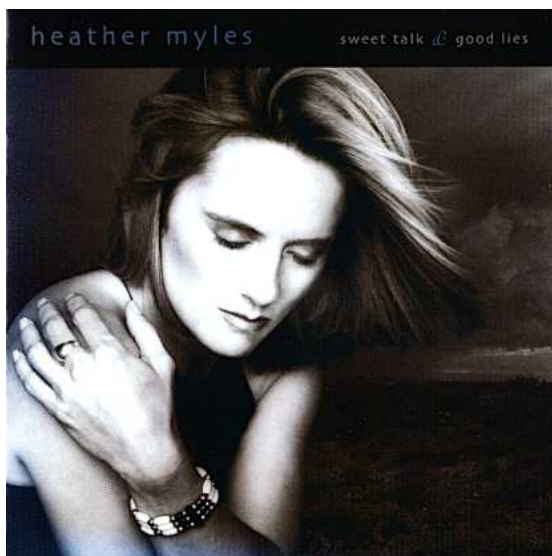
Dave's Record Reviews

For the AZ Audio Club

#29

Heather Myles – **Sweet Talk, Good Lies**

(Rounder, CD only, 2002)



Club members who read **Stereophile** magazine – many of us, I imagine – may well have noticed that over the last couple of years or more, some of their writers have dared to begin calling attention to various albums in the genre of country music. I can only say: It's about freakin' time! Some folks are all too ready to look at any artist or album that may be labeled in that category and simply write it off, unwilling to consider it worthy of attention. Now, I grant that a lot of music of that classification is not going to inspire interest on the part of many audiophiles. But those who are willing to open up a closed mind a crack and venture into unfamiliar musical territory might just discover that they have been missing out on some very interesting, worthy sounds. Bear with me for a minute or three here.

Heather Myles was born in southern California, where her family bred and trained racehorses. Growing up, she thought she would be going into the family business, but a love for country music and a talent for making it drew her in.

Her distinctive music is decidedly country, and other reviewers often cite echoes of classic country artists in her sound. However, hers is not "Nashville" country, but is "California" or, as it is often labeled, "Bakersfield" country, which is more guitar-driven, with elements of both rock 'n' roll and honkytonk that are not customarily found in the traditional Nashville country sound. And her lyrics are a cut above what country music nay-sayers are usually thinking of when they heap scorn on the genre – they are often insightful, intelligent, and to my mind quite more entertaining. Her powerful vocals deliver those lyrics with swagger and sass.

Myles paid her dues working in the Southern California music scene in the 80s. She released her first album, **Just Like Old Times**, in 1992, when I figure she must have been 30 years old – no sweet young thing with a nice voice and three guitar chords here! Her discography currently lists five studio and three live albums, plus a compilation and a couple of DVDs. The album I would raise up here, which I consider to be her best overall, was her fifth. All but two of the songs were written by Myles. Her backing band is capable, and instruments include electric, acoustic, and pedal steel guitars, fiddle, mandolin, banjo, bass, and percussion, as well as a trumpet, some tasteful strings. I don't recognize the names of her band – I am frankly not enough into country music enough myself to know side players. However, country superstar Dwight Yoakam, another proponent of the Bakersfield sound, does a duet with her on one song.

The album leads off with the title cut, an upbeat song about not being able to avoid falling for sweet spoken lies despite knowing that they are just that...

*"Every time I think I'm over you, knowin' I've got back my attitude
You call me up to have a drink or two, an' reel me right back like you always do."*

The next song is "*Nashville's Gone Hollywood*," an absolutely delightful, slanderous indictment of the movement of country music in Nashville to forsake its roots and go commercial.

*"They'll put you in the movies, you'll have your video.
An' if you're young an' sexy, you'll be rollin' in the dough.
You'll sell a million records, oh that must mean you're good.
Move on over, Ernest Tubb, Nashville's gone Hollywood."*

An absolutely wonderful song, written and sung by someone who has a heart for honest country music. But wait, there's more – more good ones!

“One and Only Lover” is a bouncy number, in which she sings of regret over not having given in to a lover with “only one thing on his mind,” wishing that she *hadn’t* “listened to my mother.” “Big Cars” is an ode to the age of Detroit’s big gas guzzlers: “They don’t make ‘em like that no more, not since nineteen seventy four.” She made a nice music video with that one. In “Homewrecker Blues,” she sarcastically exclaims to her ex, “I hope your little homewrecker’s crazy ‘bout you” after time has gone by and “the new’s worn off your bedroom.”

She comes across as dangerous indeed in, “Sweet Little Dangerous”:

*“Caught my old man messin' with that little redhead next door
Well now, he's been missin' goin' on five years, I ain't shed one single tear.
Some people don't like my attitude, Well, I don't give a damn
They ain't wearin' my shoes. They call me sweet little dangerous”*

The album closes with the old Julie London classic – or chestnut, if you prefer – “Cry Me a River,” which is not a country song and Myles does not treat as such. She imbues her strong vocal with less of her usual country twang and carries the song very effectively.

All too often, it seems as though I have occasion to decry the failure of the music-buying public to appreciate terrific albums. And on the whole, this is indeed an excellent album, and was well-received by reviewers when it was released. Why it did not do more to raise Myles’ profile in the ranks of country music practitioners is a mystery to me. The sound quality is not bad, if not stellar – not audiophile quality, but good. Some compression may be evident, perhaps on a good system, but nothing outrageous. It was never released in LP format – sadly – but the CD is available for cheap on Discogs.

Postscript: A few years ago, when I introduced this album to a friend with a known prejudice against country music, I did so by playing “Cry Me a River” first, then moved on to some of the other cuts. After four more songs, he turned to me and said, “Dave, thanks for playing that song first. If you had started with one of the others, I wouldn’t have been able to listen to them with an open mind.” So – I’m just sayin’...



Bruce Springsteen Tracks II: The Lost Albums (2025)

By Jim Welby (AKA Cathgroove)



Tracks II: The Lost Albums is for serious Bruce Springsteen fans. It is 83 tracks (nearly five and a half hours) of mostly previously unreleased music. Unlike **Tracks I** (1998), which was a collection of unreleased songs, this is a collection of seven unreleased albums.

Catchgroove's quick take: This collection does not revise Springsteen's career arc, but it does fill in some blanks and satisfies my craving to hear music that has been rumored over the years. It is a satisfying listen that rivals other major archival projects by my favorite artists (e.g., Bob Dylan, Prince, Wilco, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, etc.). What I really like about the project is its diversity and that it reveals Springsteen's musical curiosity.

Let's start with what Bruce's PR machine is saying. Per Bruce's website/store:

***TRACKS II: THE LOST ALBUMS** are seven unheard Bruce Springsteen records made between 1983–2018. Featuring 82 previously unreleased songs, Tracks II: The Lost Albums fill in chapters of Springsteen's expansive career timeline, while offering invaluable insight into his life and work as an artist. "The Lost Albums were full records, some of them even to the point of being mixed and not released," said Springsteen. "I've played this music to myself and often close friends for years now. I'm glad you'll get a chance to finally hear them. I hope you enjoy them." From the lo-fi exploration of LA Garage Sessions '83, serving as a crucial link between Nebraska and Born in the U.S.A., to the drum loop and synthesizer sounds of Streets of Philadelphia Sessions. Tracks II: The Lost Albums offers unprecedented context to 35 prolific years of Springsteen's songwriting and home recording. "The ability to record at home whenever I wanted allowed me to go into a wide variety of different musical directions," Springsteen explained. Throughout the set, that sonic experimentation takes the form of film soundtrack work (for a movie that was never made) on Faithless, country combos with pedal steel on Somewhere North of Nashville, richly woven border tales on Inyo, orchestra-driven, mid-century noir on Twilight Hours and E Street favored rock on Perfect World. Tracks II: The Lost Albums is available in limited-edition nine-LP and seven-CD formats, including original packaging for each previously unreleased record, with a 100-page cloth-bound, hardcover book featuring rare archival photos, liner notes on each lost album from essayist Erik Flannigan and a personal introduction on the project from Springsteen himself.*

Springsteen has a 17-minute [video](#) explaining the project. One of my favorite music writers, Steven Hyden, has [a great review and profile](#) of the project at The Ringer.

I will comment on each of the "albums" in the collection.

ALBUM #1: L.A. Garage Sessions '83 is the missing link between **Nebraska** and **Born In The U.S.A.** Springsteen fans are well aware of the gap and juxtaposition between **Nebraska** (released in September 1982) and **Born In The U.S.A.** (released in June 1984). After a decade of toiling and an upward trajectory that resulted in a number-one album, **The River** (1980), and an epic year-long tour in support of it, Bruce was trying to figure out his next artistic chapter. He recorded solo demos in his bedroom and decided to release them as is (rather

than record them in a commercial studio with the E Street Band) under the name **Nebraska**. This was pretty mindblowing at the time – not the kind of thing a major rockstar would do on their upward trajectory. It seemed like a side project, yet it opened up a new way of working for Springsteen. He learned that he could compose and record at home at his own whim. No need to book an expensive studio, manage the team (recording staff and band), and, most importantly, schedule his creativity. This would impact his record-making for the rest of his career.

As soon as he was done with **Nebraska**, he proceeded to record most of **Born In The U.S.A.** but had self-doubt about releasing what he could see was going to be a pop phenomenon. So he toiled in his L.A. home studio to create something more fleshed out than **Nebraska**, but not as over-the-top as **Born In The U.S.A. L.A. Garage Sessions '83** was the result. In the end, he shelved this and put out **Born In The U.S.A.**, and as they say, the rest is history. This is a fascinating chapter in Bruce's career – numerous books have been written about this period, and a biopic focused on this period is in the works (**Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere**, with **The Bear's** Jeremy Allen White playing Bruce). For true fans, **L.A. Garage Sessions '83** has been available on bootlegs, but for the rest of us, **Tracks II** is a chance to finally discover what Bruce was thinking in anticipation of the biggest album of his career.



L.A. Garage Sessions '83 are low-fi and sound like demos, just like **Nebraska**, but with more fleshed-out instrumentation than **Nebraska**. I find this low-fi presentation distracting; I wish that these songs had been finished by the E Street Band in a proper studio. Whereas the austere instrumentation of **Nebraska** allowed you to focus on the songs. All the same, it is nice to have this batch of songs, and there are some gems here.

Unfortunately, there is no “**Electric Nebraska**” that is rumored to exist (the E Street Band versions I am pining for) – maybe we will get that on **Tracks III** (a follow-up collection that Bruce has teased). My guess is that the E Street Band only recorded a handful of the **Nebraska** and **L.A. Garage Sessions** songs, and thus, there was not a whole album of material to release in the spirit of the **Tracks II** project.

Sidebar: My introduction to Bruce Springsteen was KQ (a Twin Cities FM radio station) hyping his new album, **Darkness on the Edge of Town**, in the summer of 1978, as I drove to and from my window washing job in North Minneapolis. It hooked me enough that later

that year, I hitchhiked from college (the College of St Thomas) to the St. Paul Civic Center Arena on November 29, 1978, to witness the **Darkness on the Edge of Town** tour. I was blown away by the show – a standout among the hundreds I have attended. It converted me into a fan of the Boss. I was late to the Springsteen party (**Darkness** was his fourth album and his first after appearing on the covers of Time and Newsweek) – he was already a big deal at this point. But I have made up for it over the last four decades, keeping up with new releases and archival releases.

ALBUM #2: Streets of Philadelphia Sessions is the long-rumored drum loops album, a further exploration of the electronica sound of the Oscar-winning song “*Streets of Philadelphia*.” This album was recorded from 1993 to 1994.

One of the things I never realized about Bruce until this **Tracks II** project is how self-aware and deliberate he is about the narrative of his career. One of the things that has been bugging him for years is the perception that the 1990s were a lost decade for him. Some of his motivation for **Tracks II** was to correct the narrative. He wants everyone to know he was productive during the decade, and the **Streets of Philadelphia Sessions** is Exhibit Number One.

For me, this is the strongest lost album in the **Tracks II** collection. I loved the moody and dreamy atmosphere of “*Streets of Philadelphia*” when it came out. That Bruce sound has been hugely influential – The War On Drugs has made a career of it.

We will never know, but I think this would have been an artistically and commercially successful album if it had come out in 1995. However, Bruce decided to focus instead on his **Greatest Hits** album, which was a huge commercial success, and this album was set aside until now.

ALBUM #3: Faithless is the commissioned soundtrack to a movie that never got made, recorded between 2005 and 2006. This is the least satisfying of the seven albums. It is a combination of lyrical songs and instrumental music. This is not a bad album; it simply isn’t resonating with me.

ALBUM #4: Somewhere North of Nashville is Bruce’s stab at country and rockabilly music. It was recorded in 1995, concurrently with the sessions for **The Ghost of Tom Joad**. The fact that those two projects were happening simultaneously (**Joad** in the daytime and **Nashville** at night) is mind-blowing. **Joad** is stark and dark, whereas **Nashville** is rowdy and playful. Would **Nashville** have been a hit in the grunge and Garth era? It’s hard to say, but the music is enjoyable, and the style suits Bruce well. I like that Bruce sings like Bruce. No country music affectations. He makes it his own. This is an excellent record, and I’m surprised he didn’t release it in the ’90s. Exhibit Number Two in the 90s was not a Springsteen wasteland argument.

ALBUM #5: Inyo is a companion to **Joad**, inspired by the culture of Mexican immigrants in the American Southwest, and appears to have been recorded during the **Ghost of Tom Joad**

tour (1995–1997). It is a timely album in 2025. Although it features Mexican themes and music, this doesn't sound like cultural appropriation; it's simply Springsteen's continued fascination with ordinary working men and women. Mexican influence on American culture is significant, and it seems only natural that Springsteen would be drawn to it. Despite the Mexican themes, this sounds remarkably like a Springsteen album. It is just as much a love letter to Southern California as it is about Mexican American culture. **Inyo** is Exhibit Number Three that the '90s were not a Springsteen wasteland.

I went back to **The Ghost of Tom Joad** in light of how much I like **Somewhere North of Nashville** and **Inyo**. **Joad** never resonated with me, and my recollection was that it had starker arrangements. Returning to it in the context of **Nashville** and **Inyo**, **Joad** is a more energetic and enjoyable album than I recall. But I like **Nashville** and **Inyo** more than **Joad**.

ALBUM #6: Twilight Hours is a companion to 2019's **Western Stars**, recorded between 2010 and 2011 and 2017 and 2018 during the **Western Stars** sessions. **Western Stars** was Bruce's attempt at recreating the '60s pop aesthetic of Burt Bacharach and Jimmy Webb. Bruce said **Western Stars** was his Jimmy Webb and Glen Campbell album, and **Twilight Hours** is his Burt Bacharach album. **Western Stars** was Bruce dipping his toe in the water, and **Twilight Hours** is the full body plunge. Only "There Goes Miracle" on **Western Stars** sounds like **Twilight Hours**.

I grew up on the sounds of Jimmy Webb and Burt Bacharach, so I can understand why a pop musician a decade older than me would be intrigued by this music. I fully appreciate Webb and Bacharach. In case you don't know these songwriters, here are some huge songs in their catalogs:

Jimmy Webb is one of America's most acclaimed songwriters – here are a few of his hits:

- "Up, Up and Away" The 5th Dimension
- "By the Time I Get to Phoenix" Johnny Rivers and Glen Campbell
- "MacArthur Park" Richard Harris
- "Wichita Lineman" Glen Campbell
- "Worst That Could Happen" 5th Dimension
- "Galveston" Glen Campbell
- "All I Know" Art Garfunkel
- "The Highwayman" The Highwaymen

Burt Bacharach wrote fifty-two US Top 40 hits, including:

- "This Guy's in Love with You" Herb Alpert, 1968
- "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" BJ Thomas, 1969
- "(They Long to Be) Close to You" Carpenters
- "Arthur's Theme (Best That You Can Do)" Christopher Cross
- "That's What Friends Are For" (Dionne Warwick, 1986),

I re-listened to my vinyl copy of **Western Stars**, and it's great, but Bruce is still Bruce. On **Twilight Hours**, he becomes a new character. Bruce takes this assignment seriously, evident in his songwriting, lush arrangements, and his crooning vocal performance. He leans over the precipice of Shmaltz but never falls off that cliff. Bruce, as a crooner, works better than I

would have ever expected. This version of Bruce, despite my familiarity with **Western Stars**, is a pleasant surprise. This is not a typical rock star playing around with the American songbook. This is clearly an obsession. This album is the most pleasant surprise in the collection.

ALBUM #7: Perfect World is the one non-album in the collection; it is a compilation of odds and ends from the E Street Band recordings from 1994 to 2011. I am not sure why Bruce didn't save this for **Tracks III**, but after all the experimentation on the previous six albums of **Tracks II**, it's nice to have some comfort food for dessert.

Conclusion: Typically, recording artist focus their archival releases on a specific era, but Bruce has taken a different approach: filling in the blanks from over three decades. Springsteen has stated that he did not release these albums at the time he recorded them because he did not feel they were essential. There must have been some dissatisfaction with them, causing him to leave them on the shelf. One of the benefits of the COVID pandemic was that several artists were motivated by thier boredom to create new work or excavate their archives. I am grateful for Bruce's COVID boredom, as we have **Tracks II** to show for it.

When Bruce came on the scene in the early 70s, he was touted as a new Dylan (many artists were struck with this curse, and Bruce is one of the few who was not smothered by it). I am a big Dylan fan and never recognized the comparison. But **Tracks II** is outright Dylanesque: the shape-shifting, the use of Dylan tropes (both acoustic and electric), the fascination with "old music" and the habit of leaving some of his best work in the can. **Tracks II** is my favorite release of 2025 so far.

Formats: The album was released in four formats: CD (\$300), Vinyl (\$360), lo-fi streaming (e.g., Spotify), and hi-fi streaming (most of the material is 24-bit/96 kHz FLAC, and the rest are 24-bit/44.1 kHz FLAC). The physical versions are nicely packaged (gatefold jackets, original art, etc.) with a 100-page coffee table book with liner notes and photos. I have been consuming it via hi-fi streaming (Tidal) and vinyl. There is also a single CD/double vinyl LP sampler (**Lost And Found: Selections From The Lost Albums**).



CD Version



LP edition

I tried my best to resist purchasing the vinyl, but I finally gave in, as this is my favorite release of 2025 so far, and so I couldn't stop myself. The first LP I played was **Twilight Hours**, and it sounds fantastic – its retro sound is even better in analog. All the vinyl pressings sound great.

The price point on this package is steep. I judge a box set's pricing by the number of discs it contains. In today's market, a new single vinyl LP typically costs between \$25 and \$40, while a single CD is usually priced under \$20. **Tracks II** is \$40 per LP and \$43 per CD, so it's on the high end, particularly with the CD edition, which seems overpriced. That being said, I have no regrets procuring this collection on vinyl.

Dealers Corner

As always, we want to recognize and thank the local retailers who graciously support our club.

Equipment Dealers:

Acoustic Designs Group <https://www.adgroupaz.com/>

Arizona HiFi <http://tubeaudio.com/>

Audio Video Excellence <https://www.audiovideoexcellence.com/index.html>

Cinematic Home AV <https://www.cinematichomeav.com/>

Dedicated Audio <https://www.dedicatedaudio.com/>

LMC Entertainment <https://www.lmche.com/>

Woolson Audio <https://www.woolsonaudio.com/>

USA Tube Audio <https://www.usatubeaudio.com/>

Mythic Home Theater <https://mythicsls.com/>

Vinyl/CDs:

In-Groove Records <https://www.theingroove.com/>
They also sell audio equipment per the store's website.

Zia Records <https://www.ziarecords.com/> Zia has several stores throughout The Valley.

Stinkweeds <https://www.stinkweeds.com/>

Repair Work: The editor recently contacted these repair providers to confirm they are still in business. As of the newsletter's publication, he has not heard back from all the companies.

James Koch - confirmed James is still in business
james@highendrepair.com
480-398-7362

Audio Doctor - active website
<http://www.audiodoctor.biz/>
602-741-0730

Jeff's Professional Audio Repair [602-274-0794](tel:602-274-0794) - Also, Car Stereo work was emailed on 9/9/24 jparepair@yahoo.com

Re-foaming Speaker Surround Service:
Michael Mitchell 480-749-7003
mmiller43228@yahoo.com emailed on 9/9/24

Turntable Set-up and record cleaning:
Richard Jensen confirmed still in business
[602 717 2399](tel:6027172399) | worksbau@gmail.com