

# The Boss' fans sing new anthem

By Paul Winegarden  
staff writer

Two things happened at Wednesday's Bruce Springsteen concert that haven't happened at many concerts at the Pontiac Silverdome in a long time. Come to think of it, one of the things that happened didn't actually occur at the concert site. But I'll come to that shortly.

Opening the concert, everyone stood and sang not the national anthem but different words and music. Try the lyrics of "Born in the USA" as a new anthem. You could have taken a vote on the idea at the concert and 69,000 would have voted in favor, I'm sure.

TIME MAGAZINE recently ran a cover on Springsteen. So did Life, as did numerous other publications. All made an attempt to understand just what it is that Springsteen has that puts about every crowd, including Wednesday's, on its feet. And keeps it there. All night.

The Silverdome was not just a concert site Wednesday. It became a mecca site. From just before 8 p.m. until well past 11, everyone stood. And clapped. And you could see them "Dancin' in the Dark" (one of the songs Springsteen sang).

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## review

ANOTHER STRANGE thing. There was no definitive makeup to the crowd. No one particular age or apparent economic background dominated. Looking back on it now, nobody cared either.

As for the other thing that took place, but not at the Silverdome itself, you have to take a look at other recent major concerts.

When Michael Jackson came to town last summer three of the seven major radio stations covered his tour stop extensively. Same thing goes for Prince. Just about any major recording and touring artist has a defined following and that includes the stations willing to air his or her music.

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FOR EXAMPLE, the heavy-metal station would hardly be expected to give extensive coverage to, say, Bette Midler. You get the idea, I'm sure.

Not so for the Boss. Before the concert began, it was a festival of competition on every major Top 40, rock, dance and even radio station in the lower part of the state. Every one of them.

The Springsteen "Born in the USA" tour is without parallel for the Silverdome in this decade. Those willing to dispute that can ask any of the other 69,000 fans. I'm sure they'd be willing to "Cover Me" (which Springsteen also sang).

I'm not sure if I witnessed history Wednesday night. One thing is sure, though. The Boss not only takes charge for more than four hours, he gives one, too.

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Anne Bancroft (right) is the Mother Superior and Meg Tilly (center) is Sister Agnes, a young nun accused of murder, in "Agnes of God."

the movies

**Dan Greenberg**

## Fonda, Bancroft are disappointing in 'Agnes of God'

When Jane Fonda as court-appointed psychiatrist Dr. Martha Livingston and Anne Bancroft as Mother Superior Miriam Ruth square off, one would expect sparks to fly.

The excitement of two superior actresses in conflict over the fate of Sister Agnes, accused of murdering her own baby at birth, and the major issues at stake in such a conflict are well calculated to energize the screen.

Not so, however, in "Agnes of God," a disappointing film rendition of the Broadway success. Both play and film were written by John Pielmeier who, somewhere along the line, lost his touch. Murky motivation, unresolved plot complications and childish dialogue leave the audience wondering what the hoopla is all about.

WHEN DR. LIVINGSTON first visits the convent, Mother Superior Miriam, with coy smile and adolescent twinkle, greets her: "Dr. Livingston, I presume."

While such a line is intended, no doubt, to endear us to the human qualities in this otherwise dour and severe nun, the cliché is beyond revival and reflects a simple-minded reading of major issues. One can only speculate, in the absence of other motivation, that Fonda's character was so named solely to prepare for that cliché. Such dramatic inspiration is, at best, weak.

Unfortunately, it is indicative of the entire scenario and editing pattern which flows erratically. Sven Nykvist's beautifully evocative cinematography, for example, a series of stately shots slowly building to describe the serenity of the convent and its spirituality, are interrupted much too early with a pattern of jumbled cuts reflecting psychiatrist Fonda's own mental confusion.

That cutting pattern is typical of the film's lack of clarity. One leaves the theater wondering what was said in a good deal of inaudible dialogue — sometimes the fault of recording or sound mixing levels and sometimes the lack of clarity in French-accented speech.

One wonders how Mother Superior Bancroft rose so high in the order, having joined the order after 23 years of marriage. One puzzles at Fonda's contorted posture and her almost faceless detective/bodyrider who exists only to provide evidence she needs in evaluating Agnes.

FINALLY, ONE WONDERS what dying Sister Paul told Agnes that led to her rape and impregnation. While that latter act and its perpetrator are necessarily ambiguous to set the scene for the clash between body and spirit, all the rest of it is lost, in Fonda's underlit apartment, apparently a simple-minded symbol of her own psychological imbalance, and elsewhere.

The expected screen magic between Fonda and Bancroft never materializes, with the latter alternating between coy and severe in a very artificial manner.

Fonda, on the other hand, is largely abrasive for the film's first third as she postures about in her stylishly irrelevant Guccis. Only when she begins to act, and react, to Sister Agnes does her talent appear. By then, however, the issues, and the film, are hopelessly lost. In the unresolved conflict between Mother Superior and psychiatrist — neither of whose psyches are sufficiently clearly realized for them to effectively represent the issues that divide them: body, spirit and human love needed by Sister Agnes as a symbol of humanity's two major drives.

Only Meg Tilly achieves the emotional intensity these roles demand as she effectively alternates moods of fear, serenity, belief, love and hate. Tilly's characterization as Sister Agnes, while the most tortured and complex, is also the most effective and best drawn.

With the exception of Tilly, and Nykvist's cinematography, "Agnes of God" is largely disappointing and it is a shame such talent has not been more effectively utilized.



Jane Fonda is forensic psychiatrist Dr. Martha Livingston, who questions her own beliefs during her examination of Sister Agnes' ability to stand trial.

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