

Cultural Daily

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Springsteen, My Easy Bake Oven and Destiny

Jennifer Appel · Wednesday, July 24th, 2019

I grew up with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street band's graffiti on my basement wall, right behind my Easy Bake Oven. While I was fascinated with the smells of the cake mix and how the little light bulb created enough heat to actually cook the cake I was making, I was also mysteriously drawn to the cave—like inscriptions left over from the music makers—the hieroglyphics of rock stars. It would not be until years later, when I stood front row at Giant Stadium, where Bruce sang right into my little face and Clarence played a solo just for me, where I would come to understand this mythic pull. In the quiet basement in Old Brookville, I was in the presence of legends. Icons. And I was left a sort of symbolic road map on how to get to their magical world.

My eldest brother Mike had discovered, produced and managed Springsteen and I was born into the very year where the story tipped—the year *Born to Run* was about to change the lives of every member of that band, the life of my brother and, in some ways, the lives of many Americans. It was the year where there was a frenzy of possibility in the air, all knit up in the romance of Americana idealism while “Rosalita” and “Thunder Road” blasted throughout my house, and the disgruntled romanticism of backstreets and forgotten seaside towns found their epic moment in “Jungleland”...it was a record that would reignite the fumes of the American Dream and remind us of what was possible and it would take its root in my very soul. The songs in *Born to Run* were my lullabies. I was not learning my ABCs. I was listening to how we were going to discover what true love was and honor the madness of our souls. I was raised on rock anthems that promised we were going to win, if we could just get outta here. All I knew, is we were born to run. And run I would.

And so, this was my welcome to the planet earth. Quite the entrance. I can't say I thought the parade was for me, but the ecstasy in the air would permeate my very being and set the course for the rest of my life.

Whether it is my current media project, [Traitor](#), that calls our attention back to The Constitution and our founding fathers, and their hypocrisy, mis-steps and brilliance, or my own meandering journey through music as a [singer/songwriter](#), or the heartache in my paintings, or the urgency in my acting or the forever present inspiration in my teaching, it's all because of Bruce, Mike and that Easy Bake oven. That's what formed me.

Because against the backdrop of grandiose madness and frenetic possibility that true iconic rock-n-roll breeds, was the silent ticking of time as I watched that little light bulb bake a cake. There was a slower pace to glory. One that ended in warm nourishing chocolate velvet comfort and a few sweet

sprinkles.

And that has been my life. It has been a remix, a juxtaposition, a vibrant tension between the magnificent and the serene. The humble and the grand. The famous and the forgotten. It has been a ride through the anonymity of teaching and the explosion of art. It has been noise and silence. It has been music.

But it took decades to appreciate this sweet symphony. For years I wrestled with the empty promise of the stage and the let down of earthly glory. And I battled against the monotony and overly sober regularity of the average life. I didn't want to be regular, with you people. I knew Bruce Springsteen on stage with thousands of screaming fans. I knew Giant Stadium lit up with enough human potential to light up New York City. I knew greatness. But I didn't know Glory. Not yet. That would come after much heartache and life kicking my ass.

What I was yet to learn is that no human can really touch the sky. But artists have an incredibly important role. Great musicians, along with all other incredible artists, bring the sky down to touch us for a minute. They connect us to the bigger story, the larger picture, to...eternity. We have different names for it, but that is what it is. It is the Truth. The capital "T" truth we all ignore as we go along our busy everyday lives trying to survive. But there is a greater promise. A greater truth and that's art's job. To remind us of that.

And what is it? It is the promise that while we all have a right to be here and take up our space in this hungry broken world, and we all have an important role to play, we do not belong here. None of us. We belong to a much greater destiny. A far reaching knowing gnaws at our soul and tries to assure us of this daily. But whether we eat it away, drink it away or keep ourselves so busy with activity we can't hear it, it remains. That's the truth. And the capital "T" truth is it's a good place. If you can choose it. If you can reach it. If you can find it here.

So that's my hope for you. Whether it's in the quiet of the woods on a long walk, or by the shore of the sea or at a great rock concert – I hope you find it. And I most of all I hope you let yourself acknowledge you found it. Because it's real. You're right. We don't belong here. But where we do belong is greater than anything this person could ever put into words. For that, you might have to go see Bruce Springsteen live. I hear he puts on quite a show.

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