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Records/Dan McMillan

New discs should score gains

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN



Nebraska
Bruce Springsteen

"Last night I dreamed that I was a child / Out where the pines grow wild and tall."

That sums up Bruce Springsteen's feelings on his new solo album, "Nebraska." It's the

feeling of hearing Springsteen for the first time, innocently and without prior expectations.

Because this album was so shrouded in secrecy and didn't utilize the vast talents of the E Street Band, even hardcore Springsteen fans had no idea what it would sound like.

"Nebraska" doesn't sound like any of Springsteen's five previous albums, including the often-mediocre "The River." But despite critics' claims, it isn't exactly a sparse, primitive sound. Using mainly acoustic guitar and harmonica, a little light electric guitar and some occasional organ and echo, Springsteen weaves a deceptively intricate framework of sound.

Lyrical, the songs deal with familiar territory: passions between brothers, down and

out people, his father and even a token car song. What distinguishes "Nebraska" is that these familiar themes are not transformed into anthems like "Born to Run" or "Prove it all Night," but are left without easy resolutions.

On an artistic level, "Nebraska" is a wise move. By not releasing a 'typical Bruce Springsteen album,' Springsteen forces both admirers and detractors to listen carefully. Secondly, this album should save Springsteen from the trap of being both a popular and critically acclaimed artist who always has to balance commercial concessions against critics' expectations.

For now, though, Bruce Springsteen has released his most personal album, a sometimes gloomy album with no cheap answers. The songs on "Nebraska" deal with emotions and feelings, the very things that give real people a "Reason to Believe."



Who Can It Be Now
Men At Work

It is usually a bad sign when the first album by an unknown group yields a Top 40 single. The automatic assumption is that the band isn't too talented, but just followed a hot style.

Men at Work, a new Australian band (remember Cold Chisel?), and the group's debut album, "Business as Usual," almost avoids this problem. What is troubling, is that "Business as Usual" is so instantly likeable one expects to find some hidden flaw. But after six close listenings it still sounds good.

The hit single, "Who Can It Be Now?," is a great Top 40 song. Its picture of a paranoid locked in his house to avoid bill collectors is a rather vivid cut. The song has a good beat, is very danceable and I give it about an 80.

Every album should have a highlight, although with quite a

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