

**THE BOSS  
AND THE  
BOOTLEG:**

WIDENER CONCERT VIDEO  
THE "HOLY GRAIL" FOR  
SPRINGSTEEN FANS

By Dan Hanson '97

The Widener student working the door to the Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band show on a freezing February night in 1975 looked quizzically at Michael Turner when he presented his \$6 ticket.

"What's that?" the student asked, his gaze fixed on the large case slung over Turner's shoulder.

Turner didn't miss a beat. "I have a breathing problem and this is a portable iron lung," he said.

Either satisfied with Turner's answer or too cold to inquire further, the student took Turner's and his friend Jeff Audet's tickets and waved them through the entrance to the Schwartz Athletic Center field house.

Turner and Audet didn't know it at the time, but their "portable iron lung"—actually Audet's Sony Portapak video camera and reel-to-reel video recorder—would record some of the earliest and rarest concert footage of Springsteen, a New Jersey rocker with a strong regional following poised to become a music industry icon.

Springsteen played three Widener concerts—one on April 5, 1974, and consecutive nights on February 6 and 7, 1975—before his *Born to Run* album launched him to superstardom and landed him on the covers of both *TIME* and *Newsweek* in October 1975. Video Turner and Audet shot of the first 1975 show became a hot commodity on the bootleg music market for years, first on VHS and then on DVD, before gaining a worldwide audience on YouTube.

"We didn't know it would be a piece of Springsteen history," said Turner, who grew up in Broomall, Pennsylvania, and was attending Temple University when

he and Audet recorded the concert. "We would show the video at parties in my parents' recreation room, hang out, and drink beer. We just thought it was pretty cool to have this thing."

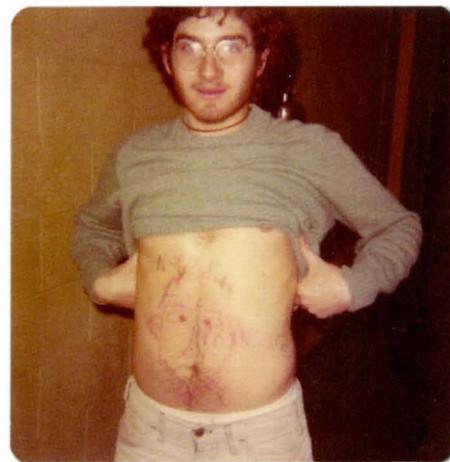
### Glory Days

Vivid images of Springsteen's shows also live in the heads of Widener alumni who attended the concert as students almost 40 years ago. New Jersey-native Anthony Zizos '75 was accustomed to seeing Springsteen play at the Jersey Shore prior to his rise in popularity. "It was as if he followed me to college, bearing comfortable memories of my high school days," Zizos wrote. "The indoor track was packed that night with a crowd so electrified it rivaled the Saturday afternoon rousing crowds watching the magic of Billy Johnson, Richie Weaver, and the PMC drill team on the football field behind Old Main. That concert was amazing!"

Paul Shandelman '79 was lucky to have a roommate, Ron Siarnicki, who worked behind the scenes at the field house and had backstage access. Siarnicki recruited Shandelman to help with concert preparations, and he got to meet Springsteen in person. "I asked for his autograph, but all we had was a magic marker," Shandelman said. "Springsteen's piano player lifted my shirt and drew two eyes and a face, and Springsteen signed it, 'Nice belly, Bruce Springsteen.' It was pretty awesome."

As a photographer for the Widener yearbook, Daniel Upton '75 had a pass to photograph the concert, and took the images that appeared in the yearbook and in this magazine. "I was there with my future wife, Jean, and remember it being a good show with a very

"I asked for his autograph, but all we had was a magic marker," said Paul Shandelman '79. "Springsteen's piano player lifted my shirt and drew two eyes and a face, and Springsteen signed it, 'Nice belly, Bruce Springsteen.' It was pretty awesome."



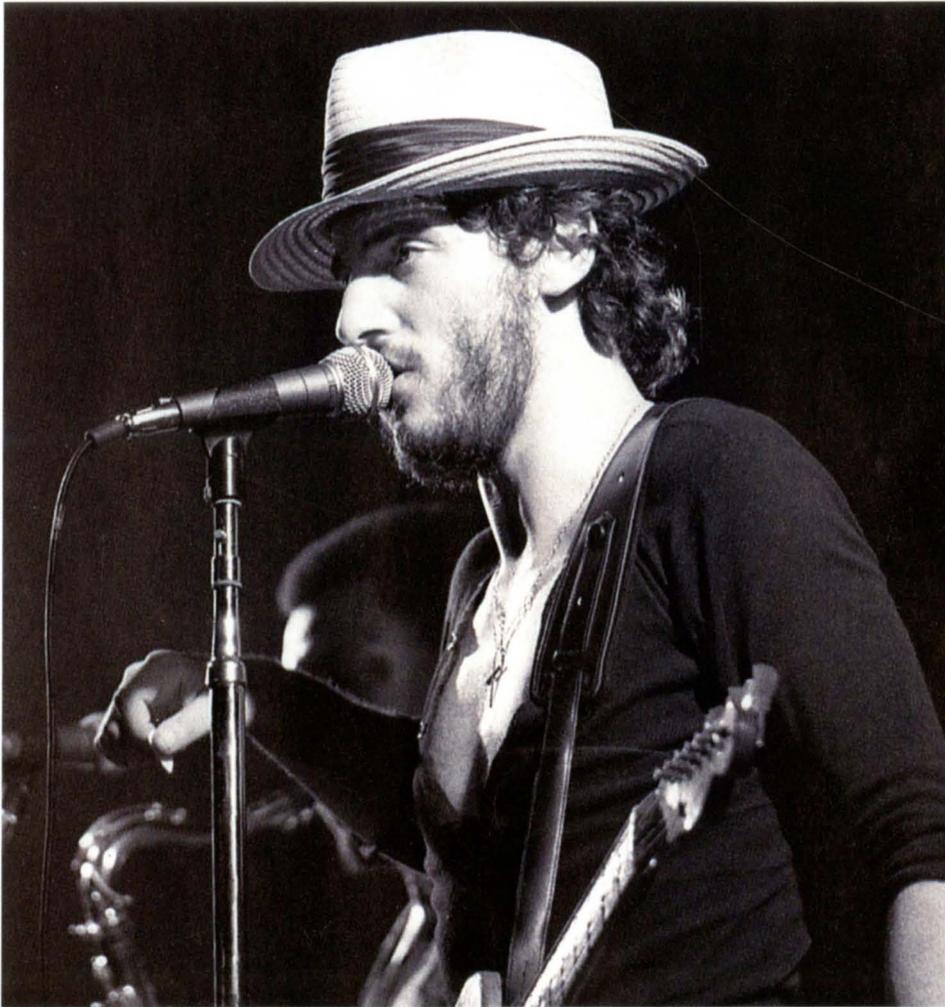
energetic crowd," Upton said. "He's a great entertainer, musician, and poet."

And Mark J. Luongo '78 remembers moving into his dorm as a freshman in fall 1974 and seeing posters for *Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.* plastered on walls and doors. "I recall asking myself what was the fuss over this guy named Springsteen," Luongo said. "I remember going to the field house and sitting on the track covered with a huge rubber sheet and waiting for this show to begin. Then one of the biggest people I had ever seen came out and started playing a saxophone, and that's how I was introduced to Clarence Clemons. Then this little, greasy guy hops out on stage, and the energy was phenomenal. I was mesmerized and came back for the next show. I have been a Boss fan ever since."

### Tracking "The Holy Grail" of Bruce Videos

For many years, the identity of who recorded the Widener concert footage was unknown. Springsteen

Photo: Daniel Upton '75



fans on the Internet speculated that the video was shot by Widener students with authorization from Springsteen's management.

As a Springsteen fan and director of public relations at Widener, I set out to solve the mystery. I solicited information on the *Widener Magazine* blog, but the request yielded nothing. While reading comments left by viewers of the video on YouTube, I stumbled across a response to a comment that led me to Michael Turner.

Turner said that he and Audet gave a copy of the reel-to-reel tape to a popular Philadelphia radio disc

jockey, and they believe that's how it was distributed. Other than that, Turner and Audet made a handful of copies for friends and family with the advent of VHS video technology several years after the show.

Now anyone can access the video. Go to YouTube.com and search "Springsteen Widener" and be transported 38 years back in time to February 6, 1975—three months before the release of *Born to Run*. Through a haze of smoke, Audet's video camera focuses on a 25-year-old Springsteen belting out favorites from his first two albums, *Greetings from*

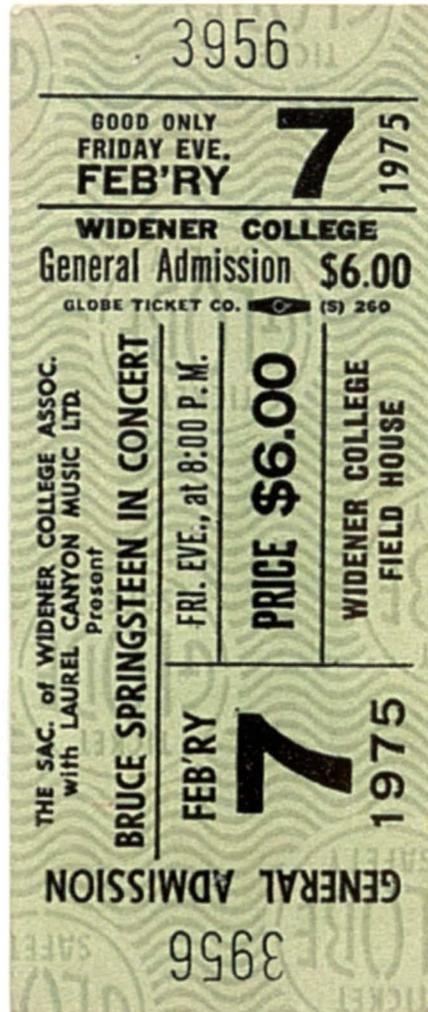
*Asbury Park, N.J.* and *The Wild, The Innocent, and the E-Street Shuffle*. The grainy black-and-white image jumps, goes in and out of focus, and cheering concertgoers temporarily block the camera's view of the band.

As the concert progresses, you are there with Turner and Audet, moving closer to the stage as they move closer with the camera. You hear familiar tunes from *Born to Run* as they are heard by many for the first time—including the title track and the song "Wings for Wheels," which would become "Thunder Road" on the album. Comments left by viewers of



the concert footage on YouTube treat it as a rare archaeological find. "This is the Holy Grail of Boss performances," writes one. "This is like finding an early version of the Gettysburg Address. Priceless!" says another.

The rarity of the video is unmistakable according to Erik Flannigan, a national expert on digital media and the senior editor of *Backstreets*, the official Springsteen fan magazine. "When it surfaced, it was a revelation," Flannigan said of the Widener concert footage. "Nobody had ever seen any footage of Springsteen from this era unless



they attended those shows in person. In 1975, it was almost unthinkable that someone would sneak a video camera into a concert. They were almost the first ones to do it."

When a documentary on *Born to Run* was released on the 30th anniversary of the album in 2005, Turner, as a devoted Springsteen fan, purchased a copy. Watching the documentary in his living room, he was blown away by what he saw. There, in all of its grainy, black-and-white glory, was Turner and Audet's footage of the song *Born to Run* they shot at Widener. "I was flabbergasted,"

Daniel Upton '75, a photographer for the Widener yearbook, shot the photo of Springsteen at far left in the hat during the 1974 concert, as well as images used on page 16 and the cover of this magazine. The two center images of Springsteen from the 1975 concert appeared in the yearbook, and are believed to be taken by Joe Quinn '75. The image of the ticket was provided by [brucebase.wikispaces.com](http://brucebase.wikispaces.com).

Turner said. "I had no knowledge that it would be on there."

Turner said he doesn't know if the original half-inch reel-to-reel exists anymore. Even if he could find it and the video was worth big money, Turner said it probably wouldn't be for sale. "I'm not sure I would take money for it. I would rather donate it to Springsteen or the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame." He paused for a moment and added, "But I would take a couple of front row tickets to a Springsteen concert for it."

Turner's and Audet's efforts to film the Springsteen show has allowed a younger generation of Springsteen fans, such as William Mikolajewski, a 2011 graduate of Widener's School of Engineering, to connect with the legendary shows here. "I was not in attendance at this concert as I was not born yet, but I couldn't help but respond to how amazing this show was," Mikolajewski said. "The set list has to be one of Bruce's best. A show with 'Rosalita,' 'Born to Run,' 'Spirit in the Night,' and a 'Wings for Wheels' rendition is to be remembered for the ages. As a younger Bruce fan who has attended Widener, this show will always hold special meaning to me, and remain a frequent play on my iPod." [w](#)

*Please see page 30 for a story about alumni who won tickets from the Widener fund to attend a 2012 Springsteen concert.*