



Western Stars by Bruce Springsteen

A new album from the Boss is always an event, but this is something a bit special. *Western Stars* sees him channelling Glen Campbell and Burt Bacharach among others in a widescreen homage to Westerns. It's Bruce taking a bold new direction down well-travelled roads. Rumours that Bruce has been through writer's block give writers everywhere a boost when the results are an album of easy-listening gold.

There's all the storyteller Springsteen as usual with beautiful arrangements and orchestration. This is rock-pop infused with Country tales of mortality. Bruce, who is nearing his 70th birthday, doesn't sugar coat life. Track by track is steeped in empathy for small lives written large.

The song *Tucson Train* has Bruce's trademark lyrics

"We fought hard over nothing. We fought till nothing remained"

Sleepy Joe's Cafe sounds like a song of *The Mavericks*. Apart from that, this record has more in common with *Tunnel of Love*. Other stand-out tracks are *Stones* and *Hello Sunshine*. It's a bit left-field, but I think it will become a fan favourite. There's also a connection between this record and *The Rising*; both were when he had nothing to prove but he had something to say. We can only hope that he tours this album. After his stint on Broadway, he might prefer smaller venues.

We can only hope he hasn't lost that fire.

Thomas McGovern

Thomas McGovern writes short stories and lives in Derrylin