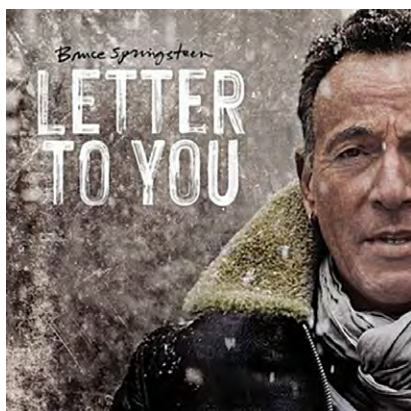




MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●○

Bruce Springsteen: *Letter to You*. Columbia.

The Boss is back. After a string of five politically-themed albums, Bruce Springsteen spent a decade navel gazing: penning a confessional autobiography, staging a one-man Broadway play, presenting a pair of HBO specials, and recording 2019's contemplative *Western Stars*. Now he's tapped his inner *vintage* Springsteen on a live-in-the-studio album. *Letter to You*, featuring the long-lost E Street Band, is a return to form, circa 1984—a love letter to fans and friends, living and dead. On “Ghosts,” one of three songs that reflect on how the dead continue to play a role in our lives, Springsteen also alludes to the thrill of a life spent on stage. “Burnin’ Train” and “Janey Needs a Shooter” capture the full-throttle rock that defined him on *Born to Run*, *The River*, and *Born in the USA*. That’s not to say this new material isn’t tinged with melancholy (“I’ll See You in My Dreams”) or touched by thoughts of aging (“One Minute You’re Here”). Recorded live in the studio in just five days, these high-energy sessions produced what Springsteen, who doubled as producer, has called “one of the greatest recording experiences I’ve ever had.” His fans reap the rewards. **Greg Cahill**

Further listening: Bruce Springsteen: *Born in the USA*; *Born to Run* (30th Anniversary Edition)



MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●○

John Lennon: *Gimme Some Truth: The Ultimate Mix*. Capitol (2 CDs, 1 Blu-ray).

Released on the anniversary of John Lennon’s 80th birthday, this box set offers songs of peace, love, and politics. The 36-track collection comes with postcards, a bumper sticker, a poster, and a 124-page hardcover book that features lyrics and track-by-track notes by Lennon, session players, and Yoko Ono Lennon (who compiled this collection with son Sean). The hi-res tracks are formatted in 24/96 PCM stereo, 24/96 DTS HD-MA 5.1 surround, and 24/48 Dolby Atmos (there also are four-LP and two-CD editions). Those with older AVRs might be able to access these tracks in 7.1 Dolby TrueHD, which is warmer than the DTS format. Paul Hicks, who remixed 2018’s *Imagine: The Ultimate Collection*, also remixed these tracks from original analog multi-track sources. To add clarity, Hicks has placed Lennon’s vocals in the center channel. That gives vibrancy to the dense anthems “Instant Karma (We All Shine On),” “Power to the People,” and “Give Peace a Chance” and lends intimacy to the piano ballads “Love” and “Imagine,” as well as the blissful “#9 Dream” and “Bless You.” There are many Lennon anthologies, including 2005’s *Working Class Hero* compilation. But these new surround mixes and the accompanying book should appeal to hardcore fans. **GC**

Further Listening: John Lennon: *Imagine: The Ultimate Collection*



MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●○

Run-DMC: *Raising Hell*. Mobile Fidelity (SACD or LP).

By this point the band from Hollis, Queens, had already dumped most of its disco and funk influence in rap; hard rock had been integral to their sound from the start. (Their previous album was *King of Rock*, after all, not *King of Rap*.) Producer Rick Rubin jettisoned the remaining glittery synth licks and brought the guitars even further forward, and not just in the blockbuster cover of “Walk This Way” with Steven Tyler and Joe Perry from Aerosmith. Run-DMC’s beats were spare, and sampling was rare. Phrasing and rhymes felt square compared to the more fluid fare from the Sugarhill Gang. They brought an aggressive tone to rap’s delivery, but most of their bluster was aimed at “sucker MC” competitors or the odd acquaintances (“Is It Live,” “You Be Illin’,” “Dumb Girl”). For my money, the taunting, layered nursery-rhyme riffs in “Peter Piper” can’t be beat. *Raising Hell* raised the bar for rap. The original CD already sounded good, and the SACD gives it more space, air, and detail—all the things we expect from hi-res. The music is looser, the beats are tighter, and the energy is higher. Mad props to MoFi for wading into hip-hop. **Stephen Estep**

Further Listening: Beastie Boys: *Licensed to Ill*; Public Enemy: *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*