

# Growing up with a rock icon: a retrospective

*Editor's note: Former Enterprise staff writer Joel Davis attended the Bruce Springsteen concert at Arco Arena last week, which got him reminiscing...*

***By Joel Davis***

*Special to The Enterprise*

**1980:** First Bruce concert, crappy seats at Oakland Coliseum. Five of us from Davis High go on a weeknight and pretty much ruin the school week because we heard he put on a good show despite being an East Coast phenom and Styx and AC/DC being all the rage at DHS. Leo, the rebel in the group, snuck us close to the stage. Show taught me the healing power of rock in addition to how to sneak closer to the stage. Best \$9.50 I ever spent.

**1984:** Bruce in L.A. by way of Fresno State. Five-hour drive down, four-hour show. Five hours back. The kind of insane thing you do in college because ... you can. Worth every minute, plus I discovered Tommy's hamburgers in L.A. Bruce played a lot of "Nebraska." Apropos as I spent 10 hours in a car at night on I-5, and pretty much lived the song "Driving All Night."

"Hey, ho, rock 'n' roll, deliver me from nowhere," indeed.

**1985:** Bruce in Newcastle, England. By myself, rare off day from pub work, knew all the lyrics when most in crowd did not. Showed off a bit by singing every tune out of tune. Proud to be American. Brits around me looked at me with derision. Cover me.

**1985,** The Overseas Sequel: Bruce in London's Wembley Stadium on the Fourth of July, or as the Brits call it, "America's Independence Day." No tickets. Sat outside stadium. With a bottle of Scotch, a blanket, and a fabulous British babe who wore a lot of leather. Turned out to be a pretty good show. He he.

**1987:** "Tunnel of Love" tour. By far my favorite Springsteen album. So naturally, I miss show as I am in graduate school in New York and funds are tight. I do, however, see cameo Bruce as part of a Paul Simon fund-raiser at Madison Square Garden at which a scalper sold me a fake ticket — that worked anyway. Only in New York.

**1999:** Bruce Truce: Saw him with my sister in Oakland with reunited E Street Band. Sister and I can't seem to agree on anything besides Bruce and baseball. We see him without killing each other, and have a nice time. Enough said.

**2003:** "Rising Tour." First time seeing Bruce in Sacramento, never a strong Bruce city (heavy metal, for some reason, clicks in Tomato Town). Show, as with most Bruce shows in Sacto, not sold out, but I had been just diagnosed

with Parkinson's. Squeezed wife's hand extra hard during "Counting on a Miracle." Nice.

**2006:** Seeger Sessions tour, Concord Pavilion: Astonishingly good show. Bawdy, different. Great reworkings of classics. Acoustic Bruce with afterjets. Worth getting on DVD. Concord, you can have.

**2008/Last Friday:** No miracle. But two brain surgeries later, I can get to the show without a cane. Bruce needs no cane, did not even play "Adam Raised a Cain," but still put out. All energy now goes into the songs. Out of the staggering 70 tunes in the E Street repertoire, he plays 24 over a breathless 2 1/2 hours. I'd say the show came full circle from the 1980 wonder, but we are all 28 years older, and Rebel Leo could not go.

Bruce played past Leo's bedtime.

— Reach Sacramento writer Joel Davis at [justicewaits.com](http://justicewaits.com)