

Bruce sends Limerick fans straight to Promised Land

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OH that all weeks could be like this - a monumental sporting achievement topped off by an epic outpouring of emotion fuelled by the music of New Jersey's finest in Limerick.

Bruce Springsteen in Thomond Park. The words alone are enough to send grown men into ecstasy.

More than 30,000 people saw history being made on the turf made hallowed by generations of Munster men this Tuesday night, the first of a string of sold-out shows in Ireland for The Boss and the biggest concert Limerick has ever seen.

It is hard to quantify the love and dedication among Springsteen fans for their idol, but the mass singalong that greeted his three and a half hour set paints as plain a picture as is required.

Fans like Jamie Tongue from Birmingham queued from Thursday of last week to get access to the pit area of the pitch, while to walk out from the city centre approaching showtime last night was to experience a carnival atmosphere.

Springsteen arrived into Shannon Airport yesterday afternoon and was quickly whisked to his purpose-built compound on the back pitch in Thomond, which housed a yoga centre and landscaped garden for him to chill before the marathon set he produced with his ever faithful E-Street Band.

Shortly after 5.30pm, there was a major surprise for the hundreds of fans who had arrived at the stadium early.

Without any fuss The Boss performed three songs, including For You and Hearts of Stone, during a ten minute impromptu soundcheck.

Two hours later, he received a rapturous reception as he emerged on stage for what was the biggest concert ever staged in Limerick.

Before his first song, Springsteen told the massive crowd he was thrilled to be performing in the city.

"Good evening Limerick. We are so glad to be here with you tonight and are here to fill you with the everlasting power of rock and roll."

Opening with This Little Light Of Mine, The Boss was greeted with a roar that shook the very foundations of the stadium, one that was heard across the city.

The legendary, sprightly 63-year-old rocker then proceeded to race through some of his biggest hits including American Land, Badlands and Hungry Heart.

"We are here to fill you with the everlasting power of rock and roll"

During the concert, The New Jersey native accepted a giant Irish Passport from a member of the crowd before downing a pint of beer.

"I drank a beer, I think I earned my Irish Passport," he proudly declared.

Following the gig, the party continued into the early hours of this morning as pubs across the city remained open until 2am have been granted special exemption for the night.

For Thomond Park director, John Cantwell, the impression that last night's gig will create nationally and internationally is almost priceless. "The man is legendary in terms of performance, so many people want to see him," he explained.

Limerick Chamber president Fergal Barry estimates the economic impact of the concert on the city was in excess of €5m.

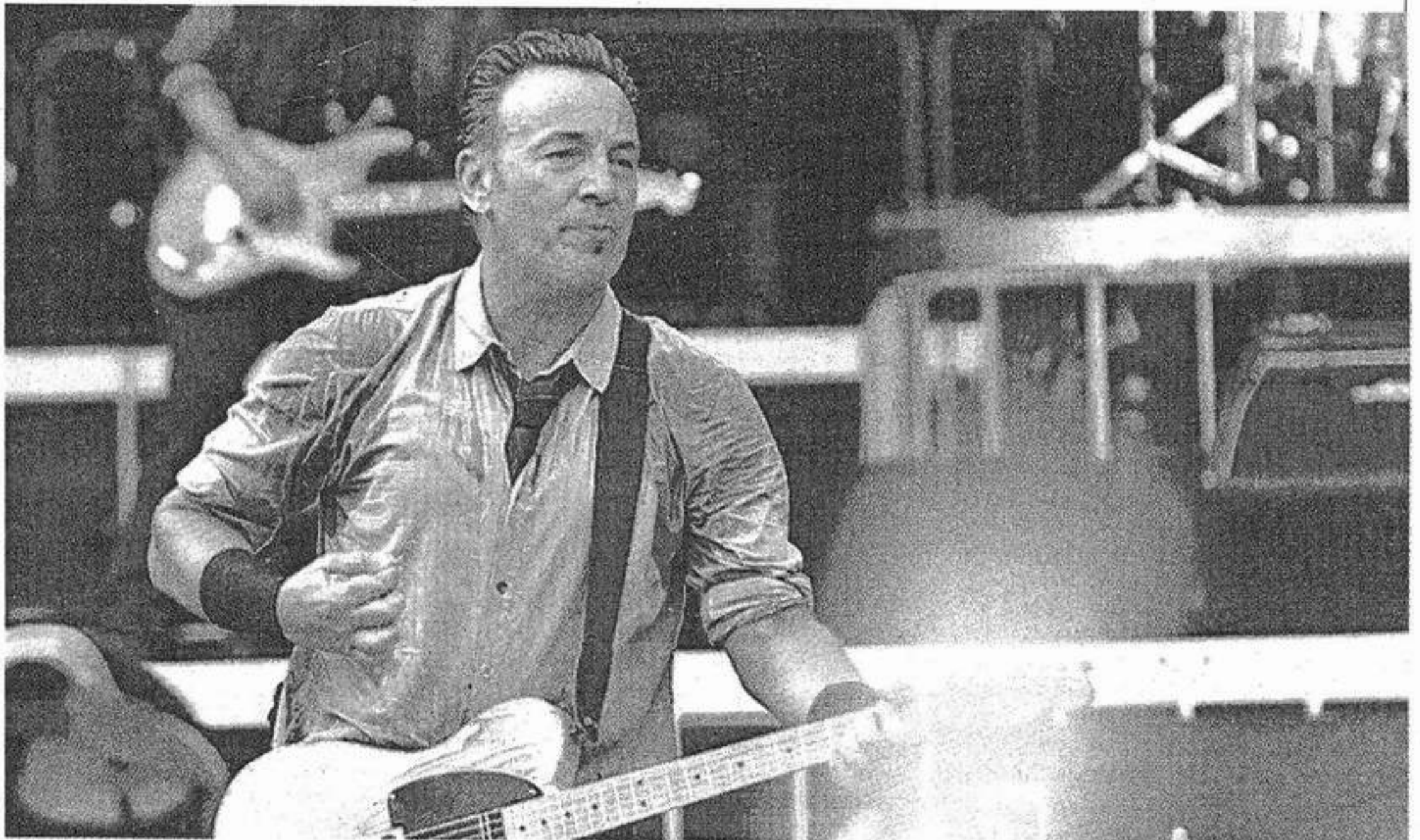
WHAT DID YOU THINK?

+ IF YOU WERE IN THE AUDIENCE FOR SPRINGSTEEN AT THOMOND, TELL US WHAT YOU THOUGHT. EMAIL NEWS@LIMERICKLEADER.IE OR COMMENT ON OUR WEBSITE

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Some of the 30,000 fans who packed into Thomond Park for last night's Bruce Springsteen concert



Legendary rocker Bruce Springsteen on stage at Thomond Park