

# For his new album, Jesse Malin enlists 'regular guy' Bruce Springsteen for guest vocal

Story by MARK VOGER | Staff Writer

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"HE DROVE UP ON HIS MOTORCYCLE AND BANGED IT OUT. THE GUY JUST SANG HIS HEART OUT."  
That's how Jesse Malin describes his duet with Bruce Springsteen. Springsteen sang on Malin's "Broken Radio," a song on the New York-based singer/songwriter's new album, "Glitter in the Gutter" (Adrenaline/East West), due Tuesday.

"It was pretty thrilling," Malin says. "Here's a song I wrote in my little Lower East Side apartment. To finally get to hear it after you step away from it — and here's this guy that you've been listening to, and my dad and my friends grew up listening to, singing this song about my mom with me. He was just there. He was part of the team."

Buzz about Malin has been growing steadily since his 2002 debut, "The Fine Art of Self Destruction" — something Springsteen played no small part in with occasional shout-outs from the stage.

Malin's roots are in punk — he played in the punk bands D Generation and Heart Attack — but his more radio-friendly solo sound has only tinges of punk and glam. In a cell phone call during a cab ride in Manhattan, Malin jokingly categorizes his style as "whatever you wanna call what I do: emo, vocal, alternative, glam, industrial, songwriter, mambo."

He admits that lyrically, "Glitter in the Gutter" is more uplifting than his first two albums. (Malin's "The Heat" was released in 2004.)

"For me," he says, "it's a striving to find a kind of hopeful record. I guess it's the most

positive of the three. I had two years to write this record. I started it when I was touring at the end of the 'Heat' record. A lot of it was written on electric guitar in energy blasts, having a drummer play along, or just banging stuff out in this basement underneath a bar on Avenue A.

## Unplanned cohesiveness

"It kind of brought me back to why I originally got into music. Like, the heroes, the people that inspired me — the Ramones, the Replacements and just that raw energy."

After writing "Glitter in the Gutter" (sample song titles: "Don't Let Them Take You Down," "Prisoners of Paradise," "Love Streams," "Happy Ever After"), Malin says he was surprised to discover the album had a cohesiveness that was wholly unplanned.

Says the songwriter: "It ended up becoming a record, I guess, not with a conscious theme; I didn't sit down and try to write a rock opera. But then when you look back at the body

See Malin, Page E4 **G**



# Working with THE BOSS

# Malin

FROM PAGE E1

of work — I wrote 30 songs — you kind of say, 'All right. There's something connecting these songs here.'

"To me, it was a belief in dreams and the things that we do to get through hard times."

There also are some oblique references to the current national and international situations.

"It's not political, like all of this is directly about George Bush," Malin says. "It's about the world."

Malin monitors current events, though perhaps not *too* closely. (When he refers to Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama as "Baracka," he doesn't seem to be joking.)

"I'm still kind of sitting back, watching what's going on with the 2008 race," he says. "There's things I like about Hillary (Clinton), and there's things I like about the other guy, Baracka. But I'm just watching it all and thinking."

Malin first met Springsteen when both played a Light of Day benefit for Parkinson's disease in Asbury Park. (Malin calls organizer Bob Benjamin "a great guy and a real fighter who has become a real good friend.")

Recalls Malin of that first meeting: "Bruce said, 'I've read a lot of great things about your record. I haven't heard it yet.' We gave him one."

Later, through Malin's manager, Springsteen contacted Malin by telephone.

"He seemed like such a regular, real guy. He was really cool," Malin says.

"And then he's like, 'We're gonna do a Christmas show.' So I was like, 'Oh, I know some Christmas songs.' He's like, 'No, we'll do *your* songs.' I was like, 'Wow.' So I played three shows down there (in Asbury Park). It was like a dream, with him and Max (Weinberg) and Nils (Lofgren) down at Convention Hall. They were such a good time.

"We stayed in touch over the years. I went up to see him during the 'Seeger Sessions' tour in Massachusetts. I mentioned I was starting a record in a week. He said he would love to do something, if anything came up that fit."

Malin thought of "Broken Radio," a song he wrote about his late mother, described by her son as a "frustrated singer" who died when Malin was 18.

"We weren't sure if this song was even going to make the record," Malin recalls. "I kept listening to it. I thought, 'This

would be perfect for Bruce, in a way.' Because it's about radio as a force and music having this kind of power. The piano was kind of a '70s-type arrangement. So I sent it to him with a letter and myself singing a 'scratch' (temporary) vocal. We heard back a couple of weeks later. He said he liked the song and he'd like to do it.

"You never know how people's voices are gonna blend. You could be a fan of somebody, and both of you get in the studio and when you start to harmonize — some voices complement each other, some don't. But I think this time, it worked out."

*Jesse Malin will make an appearance at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Vintage Vinyl, Route 1 North, Fords section of Woodbridge. For information, call (732) 225-7717.*



**Singer/songwriter Jesse Malin (above) said he first met Bruce Springsteen (below, right) at a Light of Day benefit show in Asbury Park.** Springsteen photo by MICHAEL J. TREOLA/Staff Photographer

