

U2 – Achtung Baby (1991)

Written by bluesever

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*1. Zoo Station 2. Even Better Than The Real Thing 3. One 4. Until The End Of The World
5. Who's Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses 6. So Cruel 7. Fly, The 8. Mysterious Ways 9.
Tryin' To Throw Your Arms Around The World 10. Ultra Violet (Light My Way) 11. Acrobat
12. Love Is Blindness*

Or how U2 reinvented themselves into something deliciously post-modern. After taking being earnest to new levels with their part-studio, part-live homage to America, Rattle & Hum in 1988, U2 realised that to keep their exalted position as 'Greatest Rock Band In The World' from up-and-coming whippersnappers such as REM, they needed to do something radically different. So, glitter, glam and irreverence replaced large hats, furrowed brows and facial hair. Working again with their production team of Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois, they created a noise that was irresistibly modern yet absolutely classic. And for a while in rock, it was impossible to escape from the spell and influence of Achtung Baby.

Recorded in Berlin and Dublin, the album feels similar in many respects to David Bowie's Low and "Heroes", and, in Eno, they had a direct link with the period. Opening with The Edge's guitar squall and electronics, this dense sound is irresistible; sometimes, this creates moods rather than hummable tunes, such as on "The Fly", "Zoo Station", Acrobat", yet it also contains the grandstanding stadium-sized "Even Better Than the Real Thing", the baggy-influenced "Mysterious Ways" and arguably the greatest U2 anthem, "One". The relentless playing down of their previous seriousness (the title was a line from Mel Brooks' The Producers) actually made U2 even more unassailable

Later, lots of other lesser groups donned make-up and went po-mo (INXS, Deacon Blue) poorly, but under the pretence of not caring very much, U2 painstakingly crafted an album of incredible depth and texture. ---Daryl Easlea, BBC Review

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