

U2 – No Line On The Horizon (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1 *No Line On The Horizon* 4:12 2 *Magnificent* 5:24 3 *Moment Of Surrender* 7:24 4
Unknown Caller 6:03 5 *I'll Go Crazy If I Don't Go Crazy Tonight* 4:14 6 *Get On Your Boots*
3:25 7 *Stand Up Comedy* 3:50 8 *FEZ – Being Born* 5:17 9 *White As Snow* 4:41 10
Breathe 5:00 11 *Cedars Of Lebanon* 4:13 Bass Guitar – Adam Clayton Drums,
Percussion – Larry Mullen Jr Guitar, Vocals – Danny Lanois Guitar, Vocals, Piano – The Edge
Loops [Rhythm Loops], Programmed By, Synthesizer, Vocals – Brian Eno Piano [Additional],
Electric Piano [Fender Rhodes], Keyboards – Terry Lawless Vocals, Guitar – Bono +
Keyboards [Additional] – Bono, Terry Lawless, Will.i.am Cello – Caroline Dale Violin – Cathy
Thompson French Horn – Richard Watkins Percussion [Additional] – Sam O'Sullivan Soprano
Vocals [Boy Soprano] – Louis Watkins

Like all of U2's best work there's a schism at the heart of their 12th studio album. It's the polarity between the hedonistic and the profound; the thin line between the general and the particular: rock and a very hard place. Their very lucrative humanitarianism may stick in the craw of many, but this skill allows them to make important points about all our lives while never forgetting to move our collective booties.

Much of *No Line On the Horizon* examines the state of the planet from the viewpoint of victims and witnesses. *White As Snow* sets a traditional air beneath a tale of an Afghanistan where, "only poppies laugh under a crescent moon". World citizenry is reflected in uber-cool, William Gibson-style lyrics on *Breathe* ("16th of June, Chinese Stocks are going up, And I'm coming down with some new Asian virus"). Only in *Unknown Caller's* dreadful "Force quit and move to trash" lines does the hi-tech metaphor card get overplayed.

There's plenty to rejoice about here. Not only is old mucker Steve Lillywhite back at the desk on several tracks, resurrecting the days of War, but the Edge's guitar also returns to the glory days

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on the title track as well as the hilariously titled I'll Go Crazy If I Don't Go Crazy Tonight; with the echo pedal set to 11. Add to these the massed "oh, ohs", and this at least feels like a classic; even if a lack of obviously hummable tunes makes it more of a grower than an instant hit.

The symbiotic relationship with Brian Eno (and Daniel Lanois) seems to have reached the point of imperceptibility. From the musical box sprinkles on the chugging title track to the midway palate cleanser FEZ-Being Born's cut-up first half, the touch may be light but it's now as much a part of their sound as Larry's rattling toms or Adam's one-note runs.

Get On Your Boots sounds unnervingly like U2 doing a Muse impersonation. Not necessarily a bad thing but, as on Pop, it sounds odd when U2 sound like followers rather than leaders. But it would be unrealistic to expect a band at the wrong end of a 30-year career to be as lithe as they once were.

There are at least two classics here. The closing Cedars Of Lebanon is a beautifully weary tale told by a journalist in the Middle East; while conversely Stand Up Comedy is a rowdy, grand gesture urging you to "stand up for love" as only U2 can. It also contains one of Bono's greatest lines in "stop helping God across the road like an little old lady".

It seems that faith is what still drives these men: the faith in music to convey an important message and faith in the power of faith itself. But overall No Line On The Horizon proves that U2 really still have faith in themselves. ---Chris Jones, BBC Review

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