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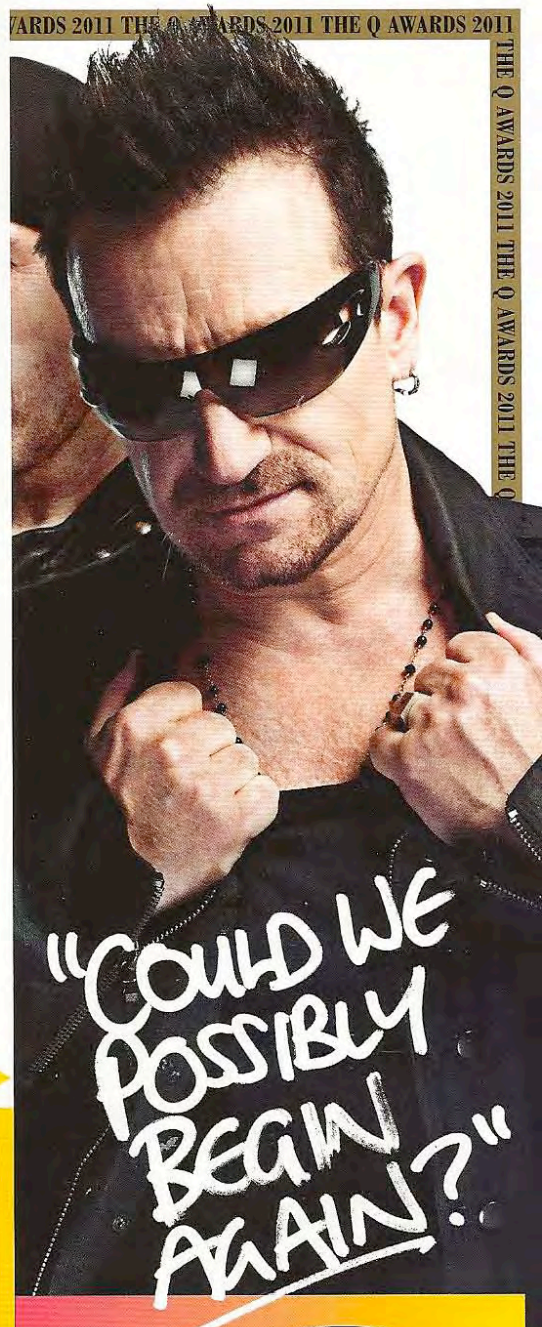

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ON YOUR FREE CD

ZOO STATION
Nine Inch Nails

EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING
U2 (Jacques Lu Cont Mix)

ONE
Damien Rice

UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD
Patti Smith

WHO'S GONNA RIDE YOUR WILD HORSES
Garbage

SO CRUEL
Depeche Mode

THE FLY
Gavin Friday

MYSTERIOUS WAYS
Snow Patrol

TRYIN' TO THROW YOUR ARMS AROUND THE WORLD
The Fray

ULTRA VIOLET (LIGHT MY WAY)
The Killers

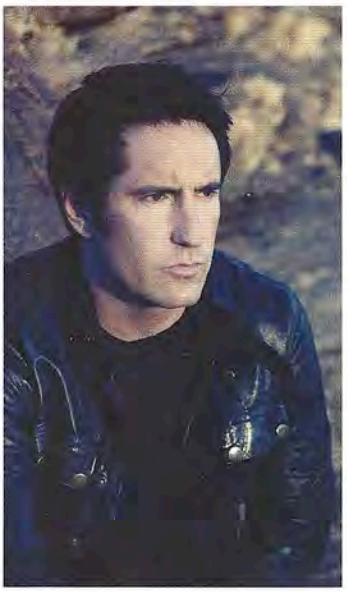
ACROBAT
Glasvegas

LOVE IS BLINDNESS
Jack White

WHAT'S ON YOUR FREE CD?

As Bono explains, this exclusive CD features artists personally chosen by U2 to cover their classic 1991 album.

"Jack White does Love Is Blindness, Depeche Mode do So Cruel, Patti Smith did Until The End Of The World, Damien Rice does One. It just goes on. And it's strange, because when I hear the album, when U2 do it, all I hear is what's wrong with it. But when I heard all these artists doing it, I thought, It's really good."



1 ZOO NATION
Nine Inch Nails

Critics accused much of U2's No Line On The Horizon as sounding too much like Nine Inch Nails. Here's what a U2/Trent Reznor crossover really sounds like – laid-back, expansive and quietly menacing.

2 EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING
U2 (Jacques Lu Cont Mix)

Better known as Madonna's producer Stuart Price, Jacques Lu Cont tips Achtung Baby's fourth single back into the '80s: "The original multi-tracks gave me an insight into how U2 worked, but I couldn't be too precious about the track."

7 THE FLY
Gavin Friday

"The Edge rang me up and said, Nobody wants to do The Fly – they're all afraid of it," explains Friday, Bono's childhood friend. "I think it's because it has its own essence sonically. It was the lead single and the point of reinvention. U2 said it best: it was the sound of four men chopping down the Joshua Tree. I remember seeing them working on Achtung Baby in its early stages. I just put a rocket up their asses and said, Go for it."

8 MYSTERIOUS WAYS
Snow Patrol

Snow Patrol's elegantly sparse Mysterious Ways is a chance to give something back to the band they call their mentors. "As much as it's a thrilling live-set stormer," says frontman Gary Lightbody. "We've always seen the quiet storm of gospel in Mysterious Ways."

APOLOGIES: THIS CD IS NOT AVAILABLE TO OVERSEAS READERS. HOWEVER, YOU CAN ORDER IT AT QTHEMUSIC.COM

3 ONE
Damien Rice

Damien Rice: "I remember seeing the queues on Dublin's Grafton Street, people waiting, sleeping, for the first copies of the new U2 record, as if some famine had hit the soul of the music world. Two decades later, I busked for the homeless with Bono on the same street. We played One and Bono appeared to forget the words, but I didn't – they were as clear to me as the Our Father. Seventeen is such a powerful age, and One is such a powerful song."

4 UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD
Patti Smith

Bono once described Smith's Horses as his definition of a seminal album. Here, the punk poet turns in a twilight version of this track from U2's key recording, finding dark, bottom-of-the-bottle desperation in its lyrics.

5 WHO'S GONNA RIDE YOUR WILD HORSES
Garbage

"Achtung Baby was a huge influence on the first Garbage album," admits Butch Vig, Garbage's drummer and mastermind. "It's groovy and gritty, epic and intimate, hi-fi and lo-fi, industrial and orchestral. We picked this song because we love the lyrics. We stripped the verses down and changed the major chord to minor chord, which makes the lyrics more bittersweet. We were in the studio making the new Garbage album at the time; this was a good distraction."

6 SO CRUEL
Depeche Mode

Martin Gore, keyboards/guitar: "We first heard Achtung Baby working on Songs Of Faith And Devotion with *[producer]* Flood. It was the closest our bands ever got: U2 had become more electronic while Depeche Mode were working on a new rock vision. But there was never a rivalry. Bono used reverse psychology in his email, saying he totally understood why we'd say no. We just thought, Why not? So Cruel is Bono at his best, words-wise. And we couldn't tackle One – that would be almost sacrilegious."

9 TRYIN' TO THROW YOUR ARMS AROUND THE WORLD
The Fray

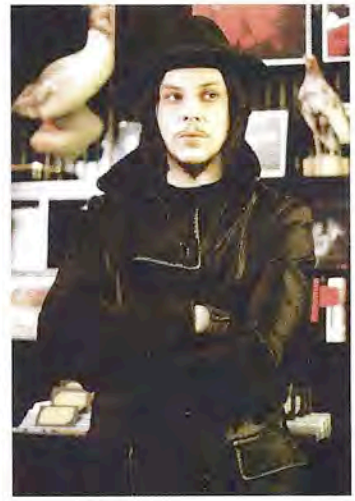
Colorado rockers The Fray supported U2 on singer Isaac Slade's 30th birthday. "They gave me a ping-pong table," he remembers, "and a ping-pong paddle with sunglasses drawn on it."

10 ULTRA VIOLET (LIGHT MY WAY)
The Killers

Ronnie Vannucci Jr, drummer: "Achtung Baby was U2's 'holy shit!' moment. I was in high school when it came out and we'd drive around in my friend's mom's car and rock that shit all the time. When we were asked to record a cover, Ultra Violet was a unanimous choice. It's reassuring to know that we're still on the same page after all these years. We brought it back to its bare bones, dumbed it down a little, took it back to the rock song underneath."

11 ACROBAT
Glasvegas

"Before Glasvegas," laughs James Allan, singer/guitarist, "I used to do the old hairbrush-for-a-microphone thing in the bedroom, fantasising I was David Bowie or Elvis. Doing this, I was fantasising I was Bono, shades and all. I was singing the line, 'Don't let the bastards drag you down', feeling determined, rather than angry. Before we started, Rab *[Allan, guitarist]* said, What are you thinking about this U2 cover? I said, Ach, it'll be easy, just make it sound bigger than U2."



12 LOVE IS BLINDNESS
Jack White

Jack White buddied up to the Edge and Jimmy Page in 2008's documentary It Might Get Loud, confessing, "I plan to trick these guys into teaching me their tricks." Here, he showcases his own solo-ing chops in a bluesy reading of Achtung Baby's epic closing track.

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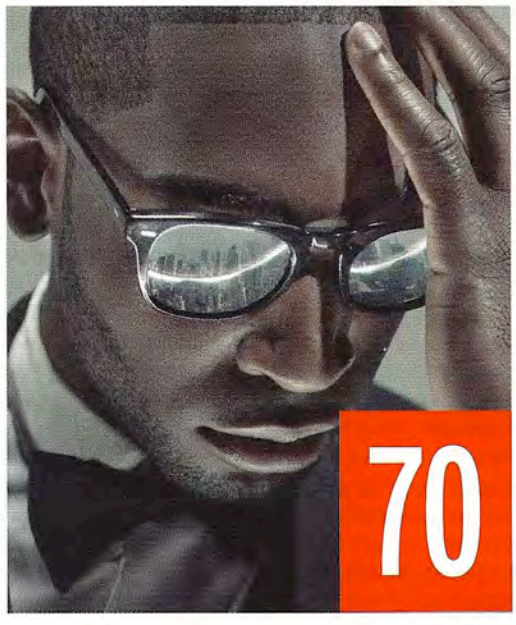

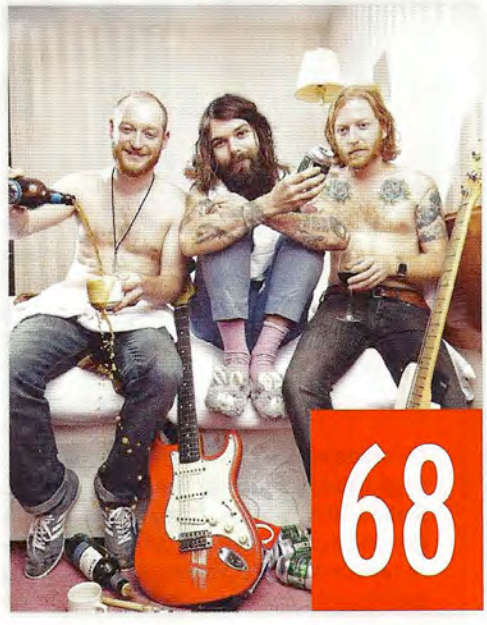

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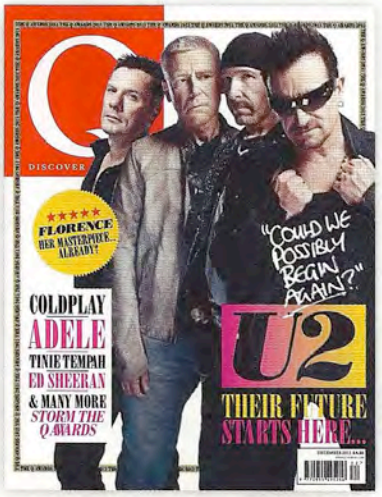

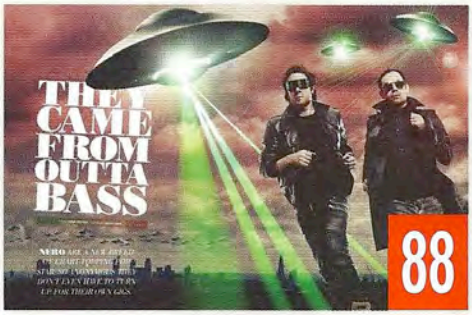

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THE Q REVIEW

148 RADIOHEAD

Thom Yorke's men appear reborn and revitalised in New York. Plus: five-star albums from Coldplay and Florence And The Machine set the bar for the month's other contenders, including Professor Green, Cass McCombs, Damon Albarn's latest project and Lou Reed and Metallica; How To Buy Def Jam; and Adele wows London's Hammersmith Apollo despite "shitting myself" all day.

QMASTHEAD

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EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING?

Perhaps not, but I genuinely don't think it's stretching credulity to refer to the Achtung Baby Covered album that adorns the front of this month's issue (readers overseas – order it online at Qthemusic.com) as the best ever free CD. Jack White's remarkable version of Love Is Blindness alone would validate that description for me, but collectively hearing the likes of Nine Inch Nails, Damien Rice, Patti Smith and Depeche Mode bringing such fresh insight to U2's finest album is a reminder of the power the very best music has to inspire, endure and be reborn. It also, I hope, adds weight to Q's ongoing aim to bring music fans the sort of unique access and experiences others can only dream about.

In this issue we also celebrate your winners of the Q Awards 2011. This year's event was an especially stellar one, but further to its packed guest list, it served to highlight what an extraordinarily vibrant and varied musical world we currently inhabit. Right here, right now, there is so much to be excited about – a theme that continues with our appraisals of the new Coldplay and Florence And The Machine albums starting on page 118.

Enjoy U2 reinvented and much more. And join us, please, next month to digest Q's picks of 2011 and tips for 2012.

PAUL REES, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (@PAULREESQ)

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[...And their all-time favourite cover version...]

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"You'd get the zing but not the taste..."

Q50

THE ESSENTIAL TRACKS TO DOWNLOAD THIS MONTH...

EDITED BY **NIALL DOHERTY**

1 NO LIGHT, NO LIGHT
FLORENCE + THE MACHINE

Ceremonials contains an embarrassment of riches: this gripping dispatch from the relationship wars could stand with ABBA's The Winner Takes It All, with its crisp military drumming and emotional sweep. "It's so easy to say it to a crowd, but it's so hard, my love, to say it to you aloud," runs the pivotal line.

ON: CEREMONIALS, ISLAND LP

Florence + The Machine: this photo is no reflection on Florenc... oh.

2 PROFESSIONAL LOVING
EMIKA

Berlin-based Bristolian Emika combines spooked, breathy vocals, sub-bass and atmospheres, recalling Mezzanine-era Massive Attack. Superb.

ON: EMIKA, NINJA TUNE LP

3 IT'S UP THERE
THE FIELD

Starting with the most simple loop, this standout track from the Swedish band's third ends up sounding like The Chemical Brothers' Star Guitar reshot for IMAX.

ON: LOOPING STATE OF MIND, KOMPAKT LP

4 LUIS
LIZ GREEN

This eerie, out-of-time song illustrates the Wirral-born singer-songwriter's old-world aesthetic in the same way carvings illustrate a gravestone.

ON: O, DEVOTION!, PLAY IT AGAIN SAM LP

5 TRON
JOKER

Detroit techno-inspired synths erupt into a grinding funked-up bassline. Dubstep's hottest producer, Liam McLean, is on fire here.

ON: THE VISION, 4AD LP

6 HALLO
DRC MUSIC

Damon Albarn returns from his recent Oxfam-backed trip to the DRC with this striking Afro-dubstep hybrid, gilded with an achingly melancholic melody.

ON: KINSHASA ONE TWO, WARP LP

7 KINDER BLUMEN
REAL ESTATE

New Jersey's new kings of guitar dreaminess are the glorious antidote to the dark nights closing in. Their second album is full of autumnal breeziness, none-more-so than on the gentle, reverb-drenched jangle of this instrumental. It might not have any vocals, but it's still more melodic than most.

ON: DAYS, DOMINO LP

Professor Green: tatt's entertainment.

Real Estate: they disagreed over whether to call a spade a spade.

8 WAY TOO FAST
ACTIVE CHILD

This track shows off Pat Grossi's impressive project at its glacial best: hints of personal pain almost threatening to crack the elegantly icy veneer.

ON: YOU ARE ALL I SEE, VAGRANT LP

9 FLAGSTAFF
ATLAS SOUND

Sounding like an androgynous, panting Syd Barrett, Bradford Cox talks alien visitation before a synthesizer-fantasia hovers in on ectoplasmic rotor blades.

ON: PARALLAX, 4AD LP

10 THE TWIST
AA BONDY

A luscious Nashville ballad that forms the mellow centre of Bondy's stately third album. Certainly, this is one AA that shouldn't stay anonymous.

ON: BELIEVERS, FAT POSSUM LP

11 I GOT A THING, YOU GOT A THING...
HANNI EL KHATIB

The current sound of Nike, but still a fabulously inventive, fabulously unhinged two-minute take on the Funkadelic classic.

ON: WILL THE GUNS COME OUT, INNOVATIVE LEISURE LP

12 READ ALL ABOUT IT
PROFESSOR GREEN

Hackney's Pro Green puts his aggro alter-ego to one side for the nerve-touching epic-pop of his latest single. The Need You Tonight rapper lays his absent father demons bare with brutal honesty over strings and piano. Emeli Sandé provides the soaring vocals that light up its emotive chorus.

ON: AT YOUR INCONVENIENCE, VIRGIN LP

13 UP IN FLAMES
COLDPLAY

Chris Martin returns to the pulpit with his band's stunning fifth album, crowned by this falsetto-quivering, breathtakingly sad sermon for lost love.

ON: MYLO XYLOTO, PARLOPHONE LP

14 THESE ARE MY FRIENDS
DAVID LYNCH

Taken from the cult director's debut album, this is an oddly touching portrait of small-town life that feels at once consoling and achingly sad.

ON: CRAZY CLOWN TIME, SUNDAY BEST LP

15 REVELATION ROAD
SHELBY LYNNE

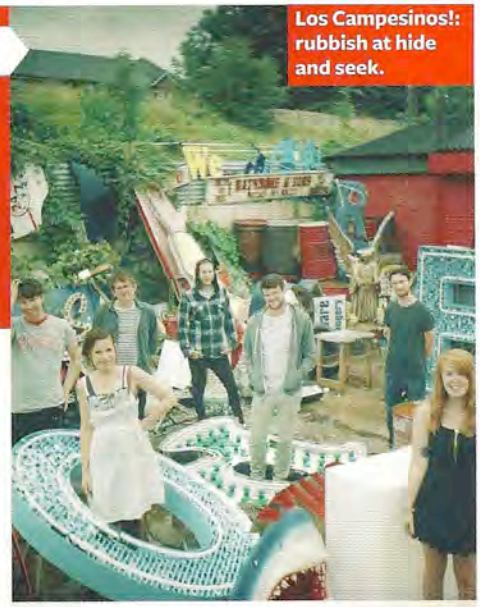
One-woman cottage industry Shelby Lynne spurns the cosy Nashville tradition to sing, play and produce everything on this rumbling, rustic folk-blues.

ON: REVELATION ROAD, EVERSO LP

16 HELLO SADNESS
LOS CAMPESINOS!

He may be heartbroken but Gareth Campesinos! is on compelling form as he documents the end of a recent relationship on this highlight from the Welsh seven-piece's fourth album. An epic-pop effort spills over with sick-to-the-stomach emotion as the frontman roars his way to recovery.

ON: HELLO SADNESS, WICHITA LP



Los Campesinos!: rubbish at hide and seek.

17 EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING (FISH OUT OF WATER MIX)
U2

Declan Gaffney and Matt Paul's remix gives the 1991 anthem a 20th-anniversary overhaul.

ON: ACHTUNG BABY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION, ISLAND LP

18 HEROES AND VILLAINS
THE BEACH BOYS

Still sounding gratifyingly strange and adventurous, Brian Wilson and lyricist Van Dyke Parks let their imaginations run riot on this landmark 1967 hit.

ON: THE SMILE SESSIONS, CAPITOL/EMI LP

19 WHITE FEATHER
RED SKY JULY

Sublime mix of duetting female vocals, twanging guitar and a pop pulse, a languid haze permeating its gentle country breeze.

ON: RED SKY JULY, PROPER LP

20 ENGLISH ELECTRIC LIGHTNING
THE WILD SWANS

Desperately sad, but impossibly anthemic state-of-the-nation address, which links "a thousand burning Ford Sierras" with bargain booze and Geoffrey Chaucer.

ON: THE COLDEST WINTER FOR A HUNDRED YEARS, OCCULTATION LP

21 MISTY
KATE BUSH

The sensual world freezes over to eerie effect as the pop anchoress returns with her winter-themed album and this impressively odd jazz-frosted song about a snowman.

ON: 50 WORDS FOR SNOW, FISH PEOPLE LP

22 BORDERLINE
FILTHY WHISKY

The Apprentice's Nick Hewer visited the Q office recently to recommend his favourite new band – this is the bluesy, brooding standout from their debut EP.

ON: THE SEAS ARE DEAD, ITUNES LP

23 UNTER
NILS FRAHM

Ghostly piano tinkering from the Berlin-based classical impresario, whose delicate melodies concede to lonely whistling as this wistful cut from his new album unfolds.

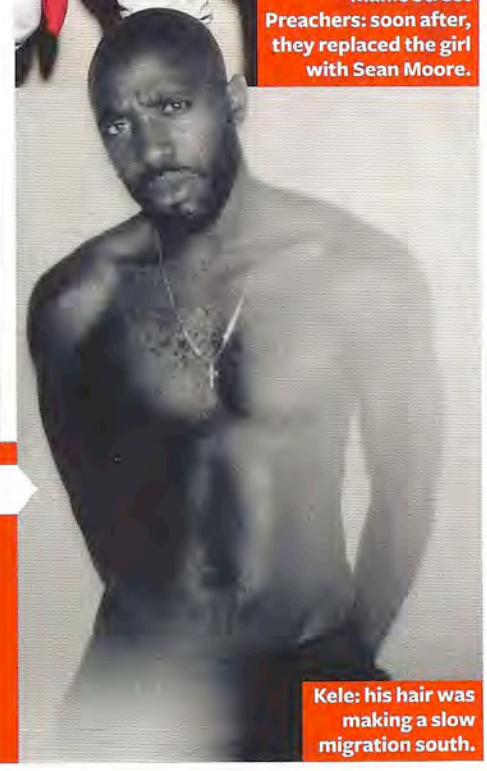
ON: FELT, ERASED TAPES LP

24 LOVE AS A WEAPON
KELE

As the debate over his continued standing as Bloc Party frontman rolls on, Kele Okereke's solo aspirations show no sign of slowing with this cut from his new EP. While The Boxer was all brazen Balearic bombast, this reverts to jittery electronica, his croon providing warmth amidst the post-industrial twitches.

ON: THE HUNTER, WICHITA EP

Manic Street Preachers: soon after, they replaced the girl with Sean Moore.



Kele: his hair was making a slow migration south.

PHOTOSHOT; MICK HUTSON

25 SVEFN-G-ENGLAR
SIGUR RÓS

Recorded at London's Alexandra Palace in 2008, this version of the Icelandic band's breakthrough UK single serves as a reminder of their spellbinding powers.

ON: INNI, KRUNK LP

26 TEAM JETSTREAM
SWIMMING

The closer from the Nottingham quintet's second album comes across like Depeche Mode rewired by Mansun, all synth twists and intensely-delivered vocals.

ON: ECSTATICS INTERNATIONAL, TUMMY TOUCH LP

27 SONG TO THE SIREN
THIS MORTAL COIL

From guitar-reverb-happy 1983, Liz Fraser from the Cocteau Twins re-renders Tim Buckley's immortal song of being dashed on the shores of wild romance.

ON: THIS MORTAL COIL, 4AD BOXSET

28 CLOSE YOUR EYES
THE BULLITTS

Jeymes Samuel's hi-concept hip hop troupe centres around fictitious femme fatale Amelia Sparks, portrayed here with breathless panache by Kill Bill star Lucy Liu.

ON: CLOSE YOUR EYES, OUTFIT EP

29 THIS IS THE DAY
MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Almost as if they didn't want to sully the spirit of their singles collection with a new one, the last track on National Treasures sees the Manics take on The The's This Is The Day. Keyboards are replaced with distorted guitars, and James Dean Bradfield's hollers turns it from introverted pop whimsy into an arena-ready roar.

ON: NATIONAL TREASURES – THE COMPLETE SINGLES, COLUMBIA LP

30 SOMETHING SO RIGHT
PAUL SIMON

Originally recorded as a love song to his first wife, one of Simon's sweetest melodies and most thoughtful lyrics has endured, even if the marriage didn't.

ON: SONGWRITER, SONY LP

31 I'LL NEVER LET GO
SNOW PATROL

Starting like Kids In America and ending like Gimme Shelter, this is Gary Lightbody's lot at their most convincing and stentorian.

ON: FALLEN EMPIRES, FICTION LP

32 SICK
THE TWILIGHT SAD

Kilsyth's most menacing return with this Andrew Weatherall-produced single, a sparse riff rallying round James Graham's typically soot-black vocals.

ON: SICK, FATCAT SINGLE

33 BLACK KEYS
THE MINUTES

Not an ode to the beardy blues duo, rather Black Keys is three and a half minutes of thumping straight-arrowed indie-rock from a hotly-tipped Dublin trio.

ON: BLACK KEYS, MODEL CITIZEN LP

34 EVERYBODY LOOKS BETTER (IN THE RIGHT LIGHT)
FRANKIE & THE HEARTSTRINGS

The first new material since their debut, the playful rock'n'roll pout of Everybody... sounds like the Grease soundtrack relocated to Sunderland.

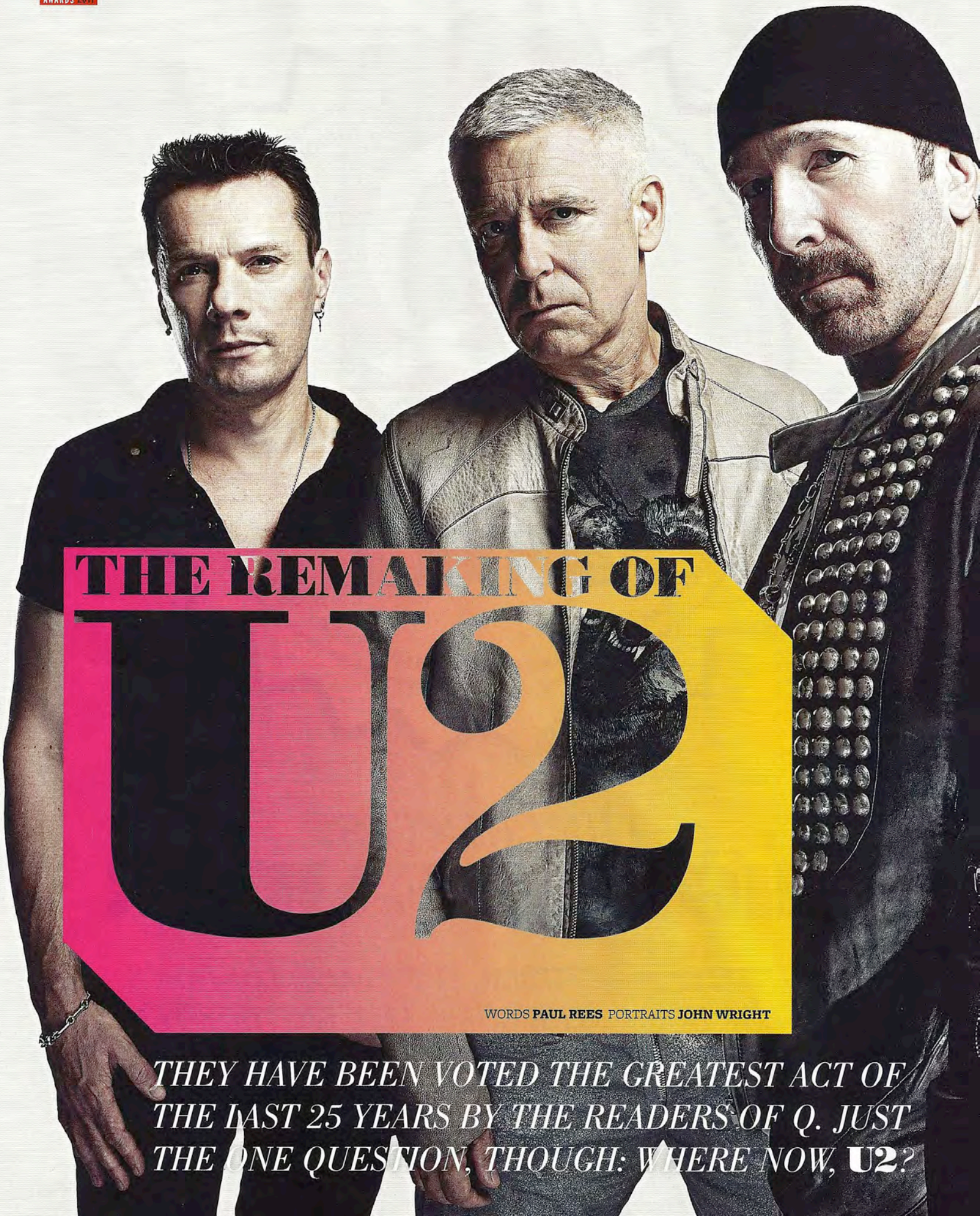
ON: EVERYBODY LOOKS BETTER..., WICHITA SINGLE

>>>

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!

THE DATE: 24 OCTOBER. THE PLACE: LONDON'S GROSVENOR HOUSE. THE GUEST LIST: U2, TINIE TEMPAH, ED SHEERAN AND MANY MORE. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ALL RISE FOR THE WINNERS OF THE Q AWARDS 2011...

>>>



THE REMAKING OF U2

WORDS **PAUL REES** PORTRAITS **JOHN WRIGHT**

THEY HAVE BEEN VOTED THE GREATEST ACT OF THE LAST 25 YEARS BY THE READERS OF Q. JUST THE ONE QUESTION, THOUGH: WHERE NOW, **U2***?*

WINNER
GREATEST
ACT OF
THE LAST
25 YEARS
PRESENTED BY
BlackBerry

I am going to die in a plane crash with U2. This unlikely scenario springs to mind 47 minutes into our flight from Dublin to London. The gentle turbulence that began rattling our plane as we neared the English coast has turned to something altogether more jarring. It is, for the record, a small private aircraft of the kind purpose-built for chief executives and rock stars: deep leather seats, crisp white tablecloths, silver service lunch.

The first significant jolt is met by nervous laughter from the seats in the rear, in which sit U2's manager Paul McGuinness, a bodyguard and four members of staff. Further banging about quietens the plane's occupants entirely. Even Bono, who has maintained a constant dialogue since take off, is silenced.

U2's singer and I sit facing each other at the front of the plane. One's attention up to now had been focused on keeping track of the rapid gear-shifts of a Bono discourse, leaping as he does from one subject to the next with no apparent rhyme or reason (today's themes: the joys of Oasis; significant dotcom pioneers of the age; the pleasures of walking the hills about Dublin...). That, and the degree to which, compact, stocky and squashed into his seat as he is, he looks like a gothic SpongeBob.

Across the aisle sit Edge, ever-present black hat screwed onto head, and Adam Clayton, looking like a man off on holiday, his stylishly casual attire dismissing the need for socks. Family commitments account for Larry Mullen absenting himself from this trip to the Toronto Film Festival, via an overnight stop in London. As the plane is being buffeted, the irony in the fact that U2 are bound for the premiere of a new documentary called From The Sky Down is not lost.

The plane is shaken still more violently. Crockery rattles. Someone emits a shriek. At the apex of all this, and with rich comic timing, Bono hauls himself up in his seat, raises his hand and loudly announces: "I'm gay!"

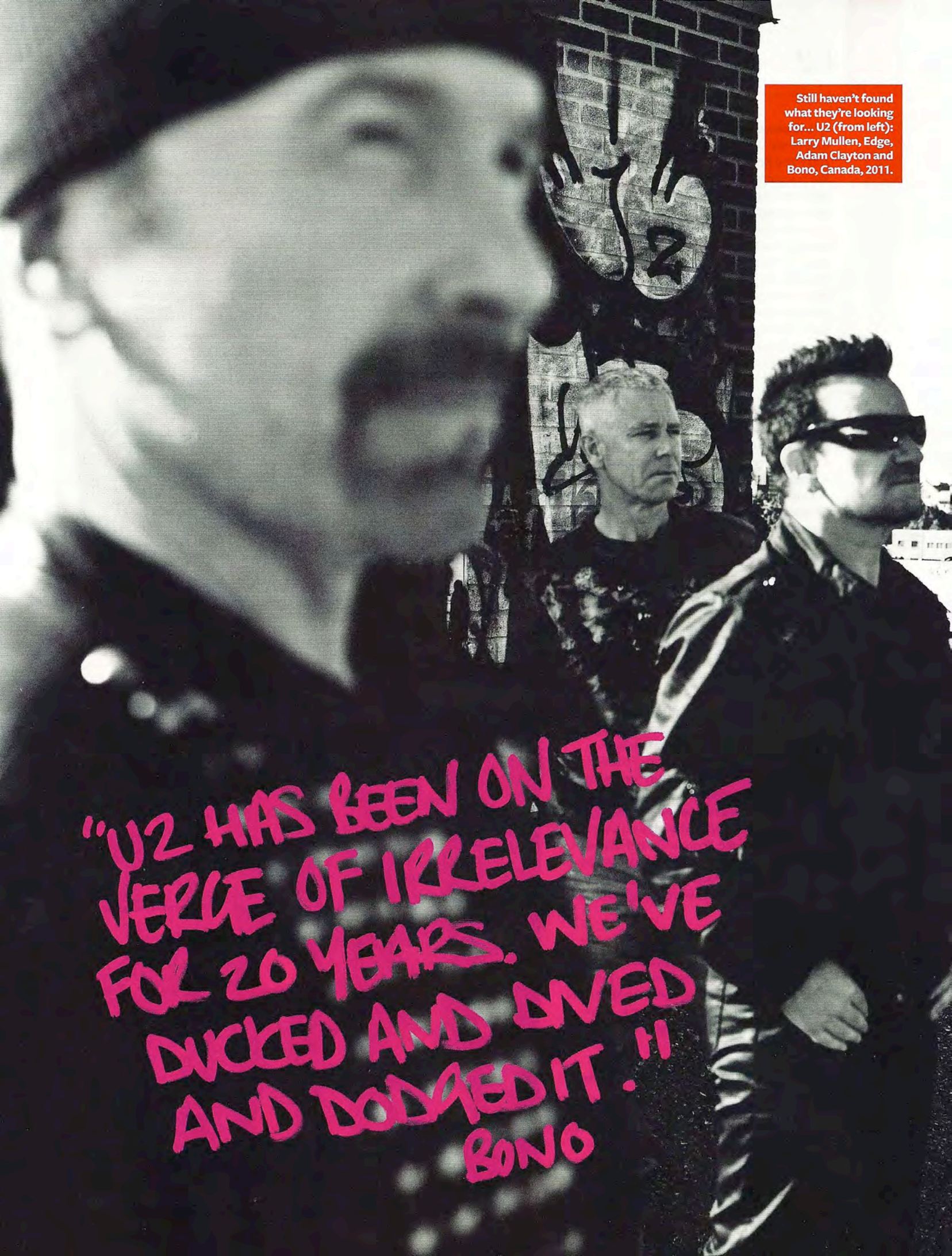
From The Sky Down – screened on BBC One earlier this month – charts the rocky path U2 took to making their seventh album, Achtung Baby, 20 years old this month and reinterpreted with this issue of Q. The story it tells is a simple one of conflict and resolution: four Dublin lads become the world's biggest band; they adopt the mantle with grim seriousness; half of them (Bono, Edge) come to decide a radical reinvention is needed without being able to explain what this actually entails to the other two; there is bickering and sulking; then they write One and all ends happily.

What gives the film added resonance is the sense that it captures U2 at the point of coming full circle. Several are the parallels between then and now: their last album No Line On The Horizon was an austere affair that didn't connect outside of their – albeit extremely large – fanbase. In place of the ill-starred Rattle And Hum film there is Bono and Edge's Spider-Man musical, which became the most expensive production to open on Broadway when it finally did so earlier this year. And, as with their confusion over just what to do during the initial Achtung Baby sessions, so the current suggestion that U2 are working on three different albums – Songs Of Ascent, a long-gestated, still more downbeat companion piece to No Line On The Horizon; one with Lady Gaga producer RedOne; another with Brian "Danger Mouse" Burton.

Then there was Glastonbury. Delayed a year by Bono's troublesome back, their first UK festival headliner was meant, at a stroke, to revitalise U2 as a band fighting fit for contemporary purpose. Instead there they were, battling the elements and the unfamiliarity of their setting, looking uncertain and – a rarity this – vulnerable. The sense of deflation their set engendered was cruelly highlighted the next night, when Coldplay, the sleek 21st-century stadium rock model, took to the Pyramid Stage. As one observer succinctly put it to me that night: "Chris Martin has just handed Bono his arse on a plate."

U2 would seem very much to need rewiring and reinventing once more. Which brings us to the present – and to 72 hours in their company in Dublin and London (their plane having remained aloft). The record-swallowing 360° tour over, U2 are, if not at rest, at least in a state of contemplation.

I speak to each of them over three days. The missing Larry Mullen via email. Edge – softly spoken, scholarly – over a pint of Guinness and a cheese toastie in a snug room at the Clarence, the Dublin hotel he and Bono have owned since 1992. Adam Clayton – silver-haired, charming, the air of a raffish British diplomat in a Graham Greene novel – in his elegantly appointed suite at London's Claridge's hotel. And Bono – oft perceived by U2 naysayers as, well, a bit of a cock, but in my experience always entirely engaging company – while sat side by side in the back of a saloon car being piloted through London traffic and then at his capacious hotel suite. En route Bono will ask – and attempt to answer – why anyone needs another album from U2. >>>



Still haven't found what they're looking for... U2 (from left): Larry Mullen, Edge, Adam Clayton and Bono, Canada, 2011.

Q first encountered U2 on The Joshua Tree tour in the US. You'd become the first band since The Beatles and The Who to make the cover of Time magazine, and you had upscaled to playing stadiums. What was it like at the centre of it all?

Edge: We were always running to catch up – that was the sense. *[The Joshua Tree]* had taken us way out of our comfort zone in terms of the size of venues we played and what was expected of us.

Bono: I remember meeting Bob Dylan at the time and him saying, "Imagine going through all of this and not being in a band." It was a tumult but we were having a lot of laughs together. But I think we felt guilty about our success: we didn't feel that we quite lived up to it. Catholic guilt.

Larry Mullen: We all changed with success: girls, marriage, cash, alcohol, houses, children, drugs, divorce, politicians, touring, failure, supermodels, Africa, and so on.

E: I remember just after The Joshua Tree tour we ended up in LA. I was living in Beverly Hills in this awful, over-the-top house. The others were living together in this mad house in Bel Air. It was a strange time for me – things weren't going great at home. Then up the road the others... *[He stops talking and fixates on his food].*

Yes, what were they doing up the road?

E: Ha! The seeds of The Fly were sown in LA during that time. If you're going to be in any city in the world to revel in that kind of success, LA is the one that will run with you. People were really enjoying the fact that they were in a rock band that was a big success. It was like being in a candy store – a lot of partying, a relatively hedonistic time... for the other three. It was more of a refuge for me. I was throwing myself into work.

Adam Clayton: It was a mad house. To be fair I think Bono drove us mad. It's very hard to live with Bono. It was a house that was due to be demolished and was built in blocks around a pool. We each had a bedroom and living area; it was basically a commune. Bono would find all these things to do late at night; all these underground clubs. It was the early days of hip hop, NWA were just starting to happen. It was exciting from that point of view.

Ever considered sharing a house since?

LM: It kind of did happen in Bahia, Brazil, on the Vertigo tour. Sadly Adam didn't make it – he said he just couldn't take sharing a bed with Edge again, so me and Edge shared. And... wait for it... Bono and Quincy Jones hooked up. Quincy is a truly great guy. We were jealous.

When was the last time you watched Rattle And Hum?

B: I haven't seen it since it came out.

E: A good few years ago. It's very difficult to watch – I couldn't believe we were so uptight. Mostly we felt out of our depth. We were literally like rabbits in the headlights. There's no hint of humour – it's just four incredibly tense guys.

Even better than the real thing?: U2 echo Achtung Baby's iconic artwork in a derelict building, Montreal.

LM: The original idea was good. Throw in bad advice, plus some bad decisions, and it equalled a crap movie. I still can't watch that one scene *[around Elvis's grave in Graceland]*. But the fiction is that Mullen cries in it. Only girls cry.
B: We were self-conscious. When we went to see the premiere of Killing Bono this year... There's quite a talented actor *[Martin McCann]* playing me in the movie. But I said to Edge, "What accent is he speaking in?" – because I didn't recognise it. Edge said, "That's the accent you used to do interviews in." My telephone voice! He'd obviously done his research on YouTube. We were never self-conscious in the studio but outside of it I remember being very uncomfortable. And knowing when the '90s came we had to... not so much break our mould as smash it to pieces.

Perhaps the clearest insight to emerge out of From The Sky Down is that Bono is the conduit for all U2's bigger ideas – for good and ill. In the archive footage of them working on Achtung Baby in Berlin, as Edge immerses himself in his guitar as a distraction to his marriage disintegrating, and with Clayton and Mullen becoming more bewildered by the day, there is their indefatigable singer, pushing them to go off in a new direction but without being able to articulate to where.

"TO BE A SINGER TAKES A CERTAIN KIND OF MADNESS. THEY'RE ALL FUCKING CRAZY." LARRY MULLEN

In the scenes showing the rehearsals for this year's Glastonbury he's still at it, badgering his bandmates to find new ways to coax 20-year-old songs to life. Often, the expression on the face of whomever he's talking at suggests it is only Bono who really knows what Bono is talking about. In the interviews the band gave for the film, Larry Mullen reflects, "*[Bono's]* a very good salesman – he could sell sand to the Arabs. He still comes in with daft ideas all the time. But to be a singer it takes a certain kind of madness, a different side of the brain. They're all fucking crazy."

Speaking to Q in January 1998 Bono said: "The trouble is I'm interested in everything. I'm finally realising how great it is to be in a group and not fuck it up trying to do everything else." Discuss.
AC: *[Snorts with laughter]* He really took that on board!
B: Oops. The spiritual principle that my life – and this band – is based on is the idea of rebirth; that you don't keep repeating the same mistakes. But I fear that's exactly what I do. But... Jay-Z's a mate. I look up to him as an artist. I like the way he carries himself. The reason we're connected is we're interested in what F Scott Fitzgerald referred to as "the whole equation" – all the different aspects of a project. Looking at music from the point of view of politics, commerce... If you go back to The Beatles, John Lennon was writing to The Sunday Times about the *[European]* revolts of '68; their spiritual sojourn is well known; they formed Apple... In hip hop that's what they do, they follow their noses wherever it takes them. That's why with our band there's a lot going on in many different areas. That shouldn't be as unusual today as it is.

Let's go back to making Achtung Baby. Not a fun time?
E: It was a very sobering, challenging period for us – very uncomfortable.
B: The band just got too straight in the '80s. I mean we were wrestling with some pretty big questions... but I kind of lost touch with my friends. I remember one night at home on Cedarwood Road *[in Dublin]*, my father woke me up and said, "There's someone trying to steal your car." He had an iron bar in his hand. I looked out the window... I had this tiny little Fiat Bambino. They'd wrapped the entire car in toilet roll and were smashing eggs on it. I didn't see it at the time but it was my mates saying, "You need to lighten up."
E: It was at the end of my marriage. I'd moved in with Adam for a while... I threw myself into work. I guess that's how I got through and maybe why the album is as dark as it is. The last three songs on it... it's intense stuff. Listening to what Jack White has done for the Q album *[Love Is Blindness]*... It's incredible. Then I realised he'd been through a similar thing to me not that long ago *[White announced his split from wife Karen Elson in June]*.

More seriously, would Adam have appeared naked on the sleeve artwork had he been hung like a budgie?
E: Ha ha! I don't think so. We all got close to doing it, but I think we realised it was going to be the butt of too many jokes. Mystery – it's very important.
AC: I was more concerned about how my belly looked. I still can't quite believe I did it.

Looking back at the Zoo TV tour in Q in 1993, Bono suggested you'd enjoyed "a lot of the bullshit aspects of the road – whereas before we didn't"...
E: We certainly did revel in it during that period. That was when Adam started going out with Naomi Campbell and that seemed to epitomise what you'd expect of a rock star and a rock band.
AC: You know... it was fun until it started to turn. It was unrelenting for a year and there was no real time off. Then we did the Zooropa album and toured again the following year. I got absolutely caught up in the crazy atmosphere of it. >>>

#YOU ASK
U2 TWEET THE PEOPLE

What one song from your catalogue would you rework given the chance? – *@seamuskelly81*
Edge: Get On Your Boots. Based on what we know about the song live, it could have been a much bigger radio song than it was.

Do you still go out together socially and when was the last time? – *@AlexCornish*
Adam Clayton: We do. We went to the Edge's 50th birthday party together *[in August]*. But at the moment that's a hard question to answer because we've been together a lot, so now we're getting used to living apart again.

Why did you drop songs from No Line On The Horizon during the tour? As a fan since 1980, I felt it was the best album you'd done... – *@bashu2*
Bono: Real simple: tempo. Sometimes great listening albums are mid-tempo and you don't often pull mid-tempo out in a live gig. It's why we don't play a lot from Zooropa or Pop. Unknown Caller is an ecstatic piece of work but it's not going to rock the house – same with Moment Of Surrender.

The Edge jammed with Jimmy Page and Jack White in It Might Get Loud: who would your dream jam partner be? – *@barry_webb*
Adam Clayton: Oh gosh. I guess I would love anything that was with Sly & Robbie.
Larry Mullen: The Coen Brothers.

If you had to replace yourself for one show who would you choose to do it with? – *@AtkoAtco*
Edge: Ooh... very good question. The obvious one would be Johnny Marr and he'd be a fine choice. I think Nick Zinner *[of Yeah Yeah Yeahs]* would also be very good.

Do you recognise or remember faces in the crowds at your gigs? – *@sarahstonej333*
Adam Clayton: Er... quite often. When you see people that are... good customers, you do get to recognise them.

Will we ever hear the Rick Rubin stuff? – *@TuckerGilmore*
Bono: We will do a record with Rick. He does a very particular thing, which is he gets you to the essence of what the group is about, strips everything away.

FOLLOW @QMAGAZINE TO QUIZ MORE STARS

U2: THE GREATEST ACT OF THE LAST 25 YEARS

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You do tend to resort to other stimulants. I drank a lot and it didn't really suit me. For Larry, Edge and Bono – and this is projection – they all had stable home environments they went back to or kept ties with, and I'd never really held onto girlfriends for long periods. So I came back from tour wondering what I was supposed to do when I got home. It was very easy to go down the pub, then a club and end up back at somebody's apartment – and then it's seven in the morning again. Maybe I could have moderated my behaviour to the point I could continue drinking and the occasional recreational drug use, but by the time I came out the end of all that I needed to make some big changes.

Do you have any regrets?

AC: I don't actually. Obviously the one I would have is that I missed that Sydney show *[in 1993 on the Zoo TV tour: he was too worse for wear to play]*. But the strength of the relationships in the band was enough that we got over it and moved on.

U2 threw a small party in a hospitality tent backstage after their Glastonbury show. The mood was more subdued than celebratory. Bono and Edge both shuffled off at one point to watch footage of their set in a BBC truck, as if in need of reassurance about what they'd done.

It was left to Ali Hewson, Bono's wife, to be the life and soul of the party, announcing to anyone who happened to pass that, having turned 50 in March, she intended to celebrate for the rest of the year. My last sight of Bono was of his wife gently leading him off to a quiet corner, away from the driving rain outside and, maybe, from whatever storm might have been raging in his head.

Glastonbury was terribly disappointing. What happened?

B: There were a couple of things... There was a DJ under the stage, playing music in between sets, and he bumped into our keyboard computer. So we lost all the keyboards. I walked out and realised that the stage was like an ice rink and I was wearing the wrong shoes. I couldn't move – I was stuck on the spot. We were a bit freaked out. We had come in the middle of a US tour to do Glastonbury on our day off. That's a long shot.

AC: You can't blame the circumstances. But on a beautiful, clear summer's evening it would have been a different experience. But it wasn't that Live Aid moment, which would have been nice.

The distraction of the Spider-Man musical can't have helped...

AC: Um... I... I think it was a great thing for Bono and Edge to do. My reservation is that it made an already difficult year even more difficult.

E: Would I do it again? I don't know. It'd have to really feel like the right project.

LM: I haven't seen it yet.

No Line On The Horizon: how do you feel about it at this distance? I came along to the final sessions in London and they seemed chaotic: you had three different producers – Brian Eno, Steve Lillywhite and will.i.am – going full pelt in separate studios...

B: I know. I don't want to do that again.

AC: We were all working on different records, actually. It was difficult. I still think it's a strong record – I listened to it recently – but we were absolutely tripped up by the wrong single *[Get On Your Boots]*. We fooled ourselves.

LM: The songs on the record were unfinished. Still, it has some good tunes.

E: The hardest thing for any band to do is "joy"... actual joy. It's so rare in music and we had precious little of it in the end on that record. But it's powerful... Unknown Caller I still think is one of our great moments; Moment Of Surrender is a classic; Get On Your Boots – live, it's a stonker...

B: Somebody told me that it's going to have sold five million copies by Christmas and that it's the equivalent now of what All That You Can't Leave Behind sold in 2000. While numbers

REX, CORBIS, GETTY, PHOTOFEST, PHOTOSHOT, GEORGE CHIN/ICONPIX, PHIL SHEEHY

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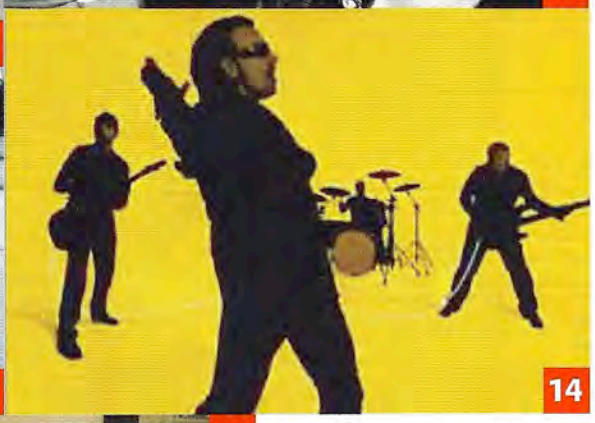
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1: Onstage band meeting from the Rattle And Hum film, 1988.
2: Bono performs in his homemade "Co-exist" blindfold, Madison Square Garden, New York, October 2005.
3: The video for The Fly, introducing the infamous bug-eyed shades.
4: One of the world's great spiritual leaders meets the Pope, 1999. John Paul II would, bizarrely, try on Bono's Fly sunglasses.
5: Bono joins in the finale at Live Aid, Wembley Stadium, 1985.
6: I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For video, Las Vegas, 1987.
7: Ready to take America – U2 in New York, 1987.
8: Protesting at the Sellafield nuclear plant with Greenpeace, 1992.
9: Posing in 1980 at Leixlip Castle, County Kildare.
10: The mammoth Zoo TV tour reaches Germany, May 1992.
11: Bono celebrating the joys of pedal power outside his childhood home in Dublin, 1980.
12: Bono supporting the virtues of "A better life for hardworking families" at the 2004 Labour Party conference in Brighton. Brown and Blair applaud.
13: Clayton takes a call while the Edge snaps the photographer, 1980.
14: The iPod television ad featuring U2 powering through Vertigo, 2004.
15: Bono at the Q Awards at London's Grosvenor House hotel, 2006. The band collected the 'Award of Awards' gong.
16: The group's first ever promo shot, having signed to CBS in Ireland, 1978.

aren't that interesting, when you don't have a hit song, which we didn't, that's kind of amazing. It's an album that's been taken to heart by a very particular audience and it hasn't popped the pop consciousness, so in that sense it didn't achieve what we wanted. Yet it's a great piece of work... it's complex, a big meal, and I'm very proud of it.

Have you really been working on three albums?

B: We have, yes. We've done some amazing work with RedOne... It's shocking. I just played the tracks to Michael Stipe. He was like, "What?! It doesn't sound like U2."

AC: At first we went into this next record with a bit of a sketchpad mentality. We thought there was more material left over from No Line... We now feel a long way from that material. We don't want to go back there. In and around the time Bono wasn't able to play live shows we experimented on working with RedOne – and some very good pop songs and club-y things came out of that. But our duty is to being the best we can be at what we're good at. That's sort of what we're getting out of the sessions with Danger Mouse. I think he's going to bring something out that is the essence of the band, but it'll be a different colour – as opposed to another collection of songs with a bit of echo-y guitar. I think we've played that one out.

"ANOTHER COLLECTION OF SONGS WITH A BIT OF ECHO-Y GUITAR... I THINK WE'VE PLAYED THAT ONE OUT." ADAM CLAYTON

B: We could have put an album out last year but I went off the idea. Let's wait. Why do people need to hear a new U2 album? Let's just see: could we, possibly, begin again? I don't know. Can you?

When asked what he hopes is next for U2, Larry Mullen writes: "Total reinvention maybe, no compromise." Such is the mood around the band. For now, though, there is the prospect of an extended break. Reflecting on the year he took off following the Zoo TV tour, Edge suggests it was the happiest time of his life and one he plans to repeat. Bono says he's deriving pleasure from such simple domestic experiences as putting a kettle on.

Bono is already thinking one step ahead, however. While the band agree that they shouldn't attempt to go any bigger than The Claw, he talks of returning to indoor shows and of playing an entirely different set of songs each night.

He is still running over the possibilities of U2 being remade when our car arrives at Claridge's. He has an appointment to keep with his friend Damien Hirst and an evening function to attend but I ask him if we can extend our conversation. "OK," he says, looking at his watch, "come on up."

This allows one to experience the manner in which Bono arrives at a hotel. Which is >>>

to say, he sweeps through the line of uniformed staff waiting to greet him, cheerfully exchanging pleasantries, is not troubled by such trifles as checking in but heads instead to a private elevator – one replete with both a liveried attendant and an ornate chaise longue. From here he is whisked directly to his room – a sprawling, opulent suite that is, one can't help but note, many, many times bigger than the one Adam Clayton occupies.

Bono heads for the floor-to-ceiling window running the length of the sitting room, flings open the balcony doors and walks out to a panoramic view of the London skyline. "This is the Churchill Suite," he shouts back. "They'd evacuate him here from Downing Street during the war..."

He mimes puffing on an imaginary cigar, takes a deep breath of afternoon air and stomps back into the room. "Now, how about some tea?"

So why would anyone need a new U2 album?

B: Oh look... U2 has been on the verge of irrelevance for 20 years. We've ducked and dived and dodged it. We've made some great albums, some great songs; laid a few eggs, not that many. Turkeys, I mean. Lots of people have U2 albums – why they would want another one is a reasonable question. I don't know if it's possible for us to make something current that is meaningful, not just to our audience but to the times we live in. But that's kind of the job for me and I'm not ready to give it up. I think it's unlikely that we'll pull it off, but then so has the last 20 years been unlikely.

Still crazy: 'I have tolive with me too,' Bono sympathises.

"THE REASONS PEOPLE DON'T LIKE US – APART FROM MYSELF, WHICH I UNDERSTAND – ARE ACTUALLY WHAT MAKE US INTERESTING." BONO

You've often said U2 strive to be the biggest band in the world. Making interesting and challenging music might be at odds with that.

B: Oh, U2 will be playing in large places, if we want to, for the next 10 years. That's not the issue. Being a big band... the big music... that's what we do. I think what you're saying is: can you make the small music for the small speakers?

Well, not...

B: ...And it's the right question to ask. Getting songs played on the radio is very important to us. The only answer to that question is when I have the song that I can play you. It's the inarguable one. We didn't have that on the last album – we had everything else, but we didn't have that thing. I'm not sure we'll ever be Number 1 on the pop charts *[again]*, but we need songs that go outside of our audience. The age thing is not really where it's at – there are some of the most reactionary people you'll ever meet at 17 and some of the most radical at 70. It's about: can you make that compelling song? Can you write a lyric that people feel they haven't heard before? But I don't think there's any sense of entitlement in this band. For all the rewards they've... we've... been given, we know there's something magical about what we do.

How do you think people in general perceive U2 – and you?

B: We're the most loved and the most hated band on Earth. A lot of the reasons people don't like us – apart from myself, which I understand because I have to live with me too – are actually what make us interesting. It's the tangents, the explorations, the making mistakes in public. The audacity of thinking you can get involved in something like debt cancellation... and being slagged off by your mates. When we announced the Jubilee 2000 campaign with Muhammad Ali at the Brits there were boos. "Fuck off, you cunt!" One hundred billion dollars of debt cancelled for 32 developing nations later... The people going "fuck off", what have they pulled off? I don't mean them personally but whatever they're supporting, what did it achieve? If it achieved something – great. Our diversions make us interesting. You might think, "Get the singer out of my face!", and I understand all the projectile vomiting aspects to shaking hands with politicians and having an interest in religion. But U2, love or hate them, all the things that shape and form the time, maybe not the fashionista, but all the other things, we're right there. I hope that that makes it an interesting spectator sport.

What will a successfully remade U2 look like?

B: It all comes down to tunes. Can we find those tunes? I'll play them to Q as they're arriving, so you have a feeling of it – because we're working in a few directions. We've found this great collaborator in Brian Burton, but I'll always want to work with Brian Eno and Danny Lanois, too. There are lots of things for us to do. I'll keep you posted. Q

GO TO QTHEMUSIC.COM TO SEE AN EXCLUSIVE U2 COVER SHOOT VIDEO

Q THIS MONTH

Q RADIO

Available at Freeview 716, Virgin Media Channel 878, and online at Qthemusic.com

Q LIVE

The Kooks: one of them had serious height issues.

THE KOOKS
SATURDAY, 19 NOVEMBER, 5PM

Tune into Q Radio from 5pm on 19 November to hear platinum-selling four-piece The Kooks' rescheduled Q25 Live show at East London's Concrete club (reviewed on p155) – the latest in a series of essential gigs celebrating Q's 25th anniversary.

To win free tickets to future Q Live shows go to Qthemusic.com/musicclub and leave your details.

Q RADIO HIGHLIGHTS

EVERY WEEKNIGHT FROM 6PM

DJ Andy Westcott plays all the latest releases, plus your requests. Expect to hear new tracks from Snow Patrol and Florence & The Machine (right), plus classic oldies from The Beatles and The Stone Roses.

EVERY SUNDAY FROM 6PM

DJ Matthew Rudd plays a selection of forgotten gems and hits from the '80s, from the likes of the Pet Shop Boys, The Fall and Talk Talk. Repeated 6pm each Thursday.

Florence Welch: still undecided on which was her best side.

MICK HUTSON, STEVE SCHOFIELD

Q QTHEMUSIC.COM

U2 at the Q Awards: searching in vain for that autocue.

Q Awards extra – head to **Qthemusic.com** now to get an extra view of this year's awards. Not only do we have all the results, but we'll have exclusive video interviews shot backstage on the day with all of this year's movers and shakers, along with picture galleries, reports from all of this year's Q Awards shows and columns from the Q staff.

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Q TV

Available on Sky 364 and Virgin 338

THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER

U2: FROM BOY TO NOW

The biggest and best videos from this month's cover stars across their illustrious 30-year career. Expect a mullet, a beanie hat and a pair of bug-eyed shades to make an appearance or two...

RATED! THIS WEEK'S TOP 40 ALBUMS

The current Top 40 albums analysed and rated. Kasabian, Ed Sheeran (right) and, er, Joe McElderry all likely to be there or thereabouts.

Ed Sheeran: 'Anyone got the time? Oh...'

ACTIVE CHILD

You Are All I See

VAGRANT. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★★

Electronic hauteur from former choirboy.

Anyone already in thrall to Wild Beasts or Antony And The Johnsons should be receptive to Active Child's debut, but even so, there's something intimidating about 28-year-old Pat Grossi's songs. Evoking The Associates, Kraftwerk, Sigur Rós and Jean Michel Jarre, the Los Angeles-based musician creates a mood of icy drama, the harps, synths and ecclesiastical vocals of Way Too Fast and Ancient Eye tracing mysterious patterns in the electro-frost. Getting close to these chilly, inscrutable songs is like trying to hug statuary, but their marbled beauty is impressive all the same. ***VICTORIA SEGAL***

DOWNLOAD: You Are All I See // Way Too Fast Q 50 // Ancient Eye

AIRSHIP

Stuck In The Ocean

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM. CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★

Cheshire quartet's far-from-cheery debut.

Slowly building a diehard fanbase since forming in 2008, not for nothing have Airship supported Editors and Biffy Clyro. Unsurprisingly they uphold the noble tradition of grandiose, densely textured North-Westerners such as Doves (with whom they share a producer), with a hint of Joy Division-esque despair, albeit with more obvious titles such as This Is Hell. It works well enough when they luxuriate in the eight minutes of The Trial Of Mr Riddle, but for all their commitment and their kitchen-sink sound, they're clown-footed when they should be spring-heeled. There's potential, but they need re-enforcements on the songwriting front. ***JOHN AIZLEWOOD***

DOWNLOAD: The Trial Of Mr Riddle // Invertebrate // Algebra

ATLAS SOUND

Parallax

4AD. CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT 7 NOVEMBER

★★★★

Deerhunter mainman's solo third, in space.

He fronts Georgia's ambient garage-istes Deerhunter, but Bradford Cox doesn't consider Atlas Sound a side-project. Rather, it gives him an unexpurgated outlet for "sci-fi fever dreams". The description's apposite: within, traces of Joe Meek's cosmic fantasia I Hear A New World, Bowie flick The Man Who Fell To Earth and the songs of noted UFO-freak Frank Black can be heard, wrapped inside Cox's spectrally crooned psych-pop. Some tracks are more outré than others – compare the sub-aqua, chimeric lamenting of Doldrums to the sweetly Abbey Road-esque Mona Lisa – but throughout his sustained, idiosyncratic vision is as absorbing as a trip off-world should be. ***IAN HARRISON***

DOWNLOAD: Doldrums // Flagstaff Q 50 // Terra Incognita

AA BONDY

Believers

FAT POSSUM. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT 28 NOVEMBER

★★★★

Alabama's Auguste Arthur joins Americana's elite.

It's been a good year for stately singer-songwriters. New albums from Ryan Adams, Bon Iver and Cass McCombs (twice) have excelled and it's into their esteemed company that Believers, the third solo LP from Alabaman Auguste Arthur Bondy, now thrusts itself. There's Surfer King, its twinkling piano intro and ensuing alt-country eeriness recalling the more plaintive moments of New Morning-era Bob Dylan, while The Twist finds Bondy forlorn, his poetry laden with heavy-hearted imagery: "In ritual positions/I kneel before this love/Sometimes in valediction/Enough to sink a flood". Truly, Believers is nothing short of divine. ***JJ DUNNING***

DOWNLOAD: Skull & Bones // Surfer King // The Twist Q 50

THE BRANDT BRAUER FRICK ENSEMBLE

Mr Machine

!K7. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

It's techno, Jim, but not as we know it.

This German trio's 2010 debut album, You Make Me Real, fused classical instruments with synths and drum machines, resulting in a warm, organic take on techno. They've dispensed with the machines almost entirely on the follow-up, instead playing techno-like grooves live with the help of a 10-piece ensemble of classical musicians. Four tracks are carried over from the first album and remade, and there are three cover versions, the best being Pretend by Emika, a moody orchestration of timpani, wooden block percussion, rippling pianos and muted vocals. ***CHRIS COTTINGHAM***

DOWNLOAD: Bop // Pretend // You Make Me Real

KATE BUSH

50 Words For Snow

FISH PEOPLE. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

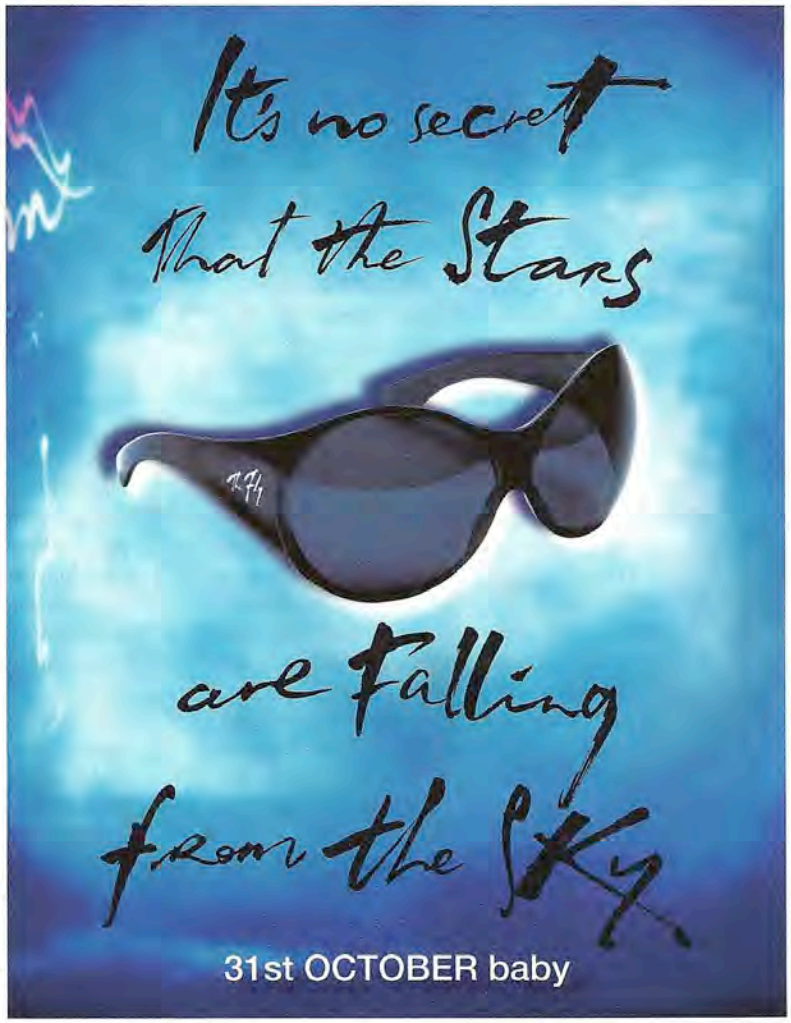
OUT 21 NOVEMBER

★★★★

Elusive heroine finally returns with new material.

Given her glacial work rate, it's fitting that Kate Bush's 10th album should be snow-themed. Recorded at the same time as this year's catalogue-tinkering Director's Cut, the follow-up to 2005's Aerial is no jolly Christmas album. Bush's husky vocals rise through an ominous piano fog, generating a silvery chill even as the lyrics of Snowflake, reminiscent of The Red Shoes' Moments Of Pleasure, or Misty's strange snowman love song, yearn for human warmth. There's only one real slip – Stephen Fry's mood-shattering appearance on the title track – but in the universe Bush has created, the occasional eccentric choice is hardly likely to raise eyebrows. ***VICTORIA SEGAL***

DOWNLOAD: Misty Q 50 // Snowman // Wild Man



DJ CAM

Seven

INFLAMMABLE. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Parisian trip-hop pioneer rolls back the years.

DJ Cam is 38-year-old Frenchman Laurent Daumail, a big draw in the early days of trip-hop and who, back in 1997, curated an album for the influential DJ-Kicks series. Seven leans heavily on the sonic palette from that era: downtempo electronica, replete with filmic piano and strings, underpinned by minimalist beeps and clicks. Massive Attack collaborator Nicolette Suwoton guests on the blissed-out Love, while Swim features a glacial, Thom Yorke-esque vocal from Stateless's Chris James. Sure, Daumail's brought nothing new to the table here – but as a counterpoint to today's shiny, glitchy dubstep it's most welcome. ***MATT YATES***

DOWNLOAD: Love (ft. Nicolette) // California Dreaming // Seven // Swim (ft. Chris James)

CASE HARDIN

Every Dirty Mirror

CLUBHOUSE. CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Berkshire country-rockers chase down Gram's dream.

If you're going to be a country rock band then there are worse templates to work from than those of The Jayhawks and Black Crowes. Although a five-piece band, Case Hardin is essentially all about Pete Gow, a singer and songwriter intimate with the classic tricks of his chosen genre: songs about broken loves, broken bottles and broken fists cosy up to the spirit of Gram Parsons's white man's soul music. Case Hardin aren't just rocking swagger and bluster here, however – with Champeen, the ballad of an ageing prizefighter, and closing piano lament Tiano Sands, they more than make up for the Start Me Up-lite of Old Wooden Pews. ***ANDY FYFE***

DOWNLOAD: A Lullaby (Of Sorts) // Champeen

CLASS ACTRESS

Rapprocher

CARPARK. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Former singer-songwriter's stylish synth-pop makeover.

In 2005 Elizabeth Harper experienced a revelation: "I realised that I just wanted to dance." A discarding of her winsome Americana in favour of an electronic makeover followed, Harper reinventing herself as a sultry electro diva located somewhere between Caroline Polachek of fellow Brooklyn outfit Chairlift and Alison Goldfrapp. It's a role she plays with panache on this full-length debut, trilling airily over jerky drum-machine beats, Love Me Like You Used To recalling late-'90s electroclash and the louche glide of Limousine giving a nod to both Ladytron and William DeVaughn's vintage soul classic Be Thankful For What You Got. ***RUPERT HOWE***

DOWNLOAD: Love Me Like You Used To // Weekend // Limousine

COWBOY JUNKIES

Sing In My Meadow

PROPER. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Veteran Toronto family band go psych-blues.

They came to international notice with 1988's beauteous Trinity Sessions album, but Cowboy Junkies' 12 subsequent LPs enjoyed more selective acclaim. As this third volume in the four-album Nomad Series proves, however, their creative instincts remain sharp. Built around live extemporising of a psychedelic blues-rock nature, Led Zeppelin IV, Ry Cooder and PJ Harvey are touchstones. Margo Timmins gives haunting, basilisk voice to the songs – see how 3rd Crusade draws out the parallels between medieval and modern war in the Middle East – meaning even familiar listeners will be intrigued. ***IAN HARRISON***

DOWNLOAD: Continental Drift // 3rd Crusade // A Bride's Place

BOSCO DELREY

Everybody Wah

MAD DECENT. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT 14 NOVEMBER

★★★

Rockabilly with an electro twist. Surprisingly addictive.

Described by Mad Decent founder Diplo as a "garbage-can Elvis", on this exuberant debut New Jersey one-man band Bosco Delrey pulls off an unlikely fusion of twanging rock'n'roll guitar riffs and souped-up, techno-savvy production. When the rhythms are rocking, as on opener Baby's Got A Blue Flame and the irrepressible jive of Don Haps, the result is like hearing The Strokes remixed by Major Lazer. When the tempo drops, holes can start to appear in Delrey's songwriting, as on the lacklustre Archebold Ivy. But he's more than just a novelty act, with the Suicide-esque electro-reggae of 20 Flight Dub making for an intriguing finale. ***RUPERT HOWE***

DOWNLOAD: Baby's Got A Blue Flame // Don Haps

THE DØ

Both Ways Open Jaws

VILLAGE GREEN. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

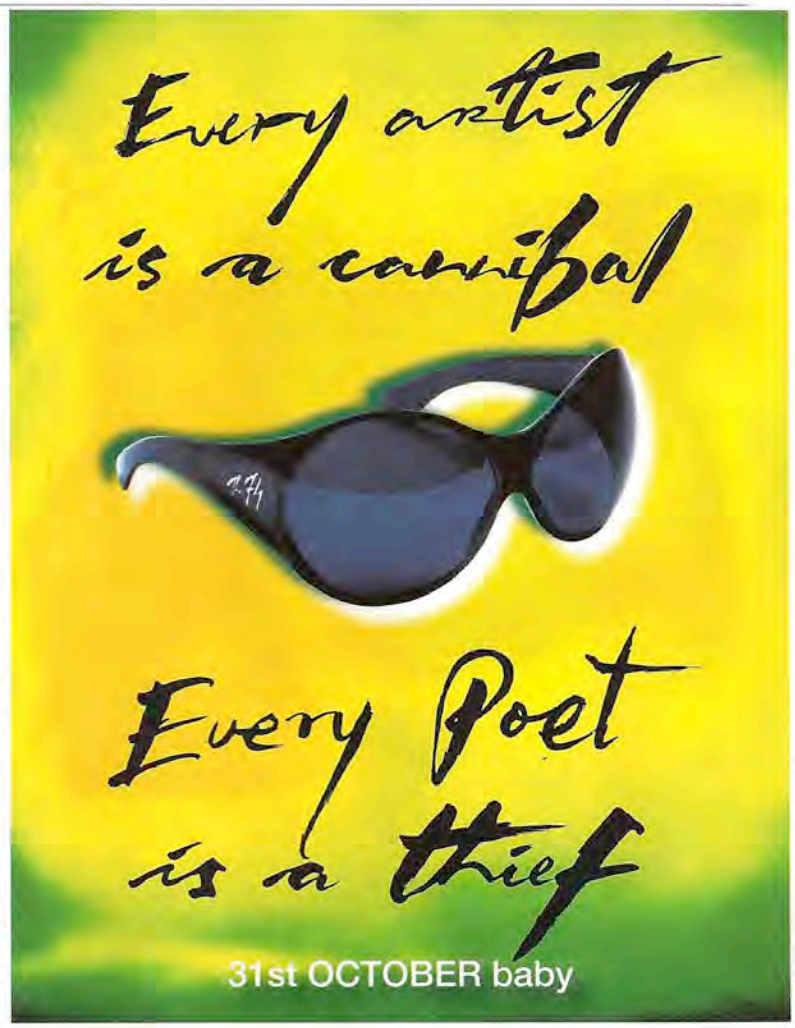
OUT 14 NOVEMBER

★★

Finnish/French duo's too-smart second effort.

Unquestionably, The Dø have a huge cache of ideas. Opener Dust It Off, with its deliberate glitches in singer Olivia Bouyssou Merilahti's yearning vocals, is an early signal of the clever-cleverness at large throughout, while Too Insistent is a billowy'n'breezy pop song akin to The Bridge Is Broken, their last album's marvellous stand-out. Too often, though, they meander, relying heavily on Dan Levy's kitsch instrumentation. Slippery Slope hovers indecisively between a twee M.I.A. and sub-CSS, and while The Calendar's junkyard orchestra of flutes and horns manages to be charming, Both Ways Open Jaws is just smug enough for you to wish it was wired shut. ***JJ DUNNING***

DOWNLOAD: Dust It Off



GAUNTLET HAIR

Gauntlet Hair

DEAD OCEANS. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Euphoric first effort from Denver-based noise-pop duo.

Evidently not fond of writing simple A-to-B songs, Chicagoans-transplanted-to-Denver Andy R and Craig Nice choose instead to construct intricate mosaics of sound. Mixing chiming guitars with subtly shifting rhythms, euphorically chanted vocals and lashings of tinny distortion could prove disorienting, but on the likes of Top Bunk and Keep Time they display a genuine pop nous. Indeed, at times things sound so life-affirmingly ecstatic, it's only afterwards it becomes clear there is barely an intelligible lyric on the whole album. They don't sustain the quality of songwriting throughout, but this is a promising start. ***PHIL MONGREDIEN***

DOWNLOAD: Top Bunk // Keep Time // Mop It Up

LIZ GREEN

O, Devotion!

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT 14 NOVEMBER

★★★★

Unsettling debut from time-travelling singer-songwriter.

It's fitting that Liz Green's first album is named after a song that appeared to her in a dream; O, Devotion! exists between worlds, poised on the cusp of the earthy and the ethereal. There's nothing wispy about the Wirral-born singer, though: while Hey Joe and Ostrich Song echo the woodfolk wyrdness of Devendra Banhart, Green's gin-steeped voice, bone-rattle brass and dyspeptic piano pitch Gallows and Bad Medicine back to a night listening to The Threepenny Opera in a disreputable speakeasy. Yet with their creeping unease, these songs have a knack for burrowing into the moment, too. ***VICTORIA SEGAL***

DOWNLOAD: Luis Q 50 // Bad Medicine // Ostrich Song

LISA HANNIGAN

Passenger

ATO. CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Kilcloon chanteuse eyes mainstream breakthrough.

Erstwhile foil for Irish folkie Damien Rice, singer/songwriter Lisa Hannigan follows up her Mercury-nominated debut with a bright and breezy sophomore that occasionally hints at darker themes. She's more captivating the sparser the backing; the delicate but tough Little Bird – a kiss-off to an ex where she asserts that, "the 'little bird' is every bit as handy in a fight" – being a case in point. Elsewhere, the KT Tunstall-esque stomp of Knots and the swoonsome Ray LaMontagne duet O Sleep show Hannigan's not afraid to embrace a more populist mantle either. She's already made waves in the US; there's enough here to raise her profile – on both sides of the pond – no end. ***MATT YATES***

DOWNLOAD: Little Bird // A Sail // Knots // O Sleep

JANE'S ADDICTION

The Great Escape Artist

CAPITOL. CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

LA alt-rockers reunite – with added Guns N'Roses.

The re-formed Jane's Addiction managed one album, 2003's Strays, before disintegrating. After regrouping with Duff McKagan, the wheels almost came off a third time when the ex-Guns N'Roses bassist stormed out before completing The Great Escape Artist. Despite its difficult birth, the album sounds oddly timid, with subtle textures taking precedence over the gothic funk-metal of old. At times, this fresh approach works, but the results are occasionally too rarefied, with Broken People almost pastiching modern-day U2. Imagination and maturity abound, energy less so, although it bodes well for the next album – intra-band tantrums notwithstanding. ***MARK BLAKE***

DOWNLOAD: Underground // End To The Lies // Twisted Tales

JAPE

Ocean Of Frequency

MUSIC/IS/FOR/LOSERS

VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Dublin synth-poppers reinvent '80s wheel.

The fact Jape comfortably straddle the worlds of The Raconteurs (who play their 2004 single Floating live), Soulwax (who use it in their DJ set) and David Kitt (who uses main Jape Richie Egan as his touring bass player) suggests there is more to them than revivalism. Reminiscent of a less geeky Hot Chip or early Talk Talk, the likes of An Hallucination, propulsive Too Many People and Borrowed Time With Peace show a fine grasp of the difference between pastiche and genuine reinvention, while Egan's lyrics vaguely explore the relationship between science and religion. ***ANDY FYFE***

DOWNLOAD: An Hallucination // Too Many People // Borrowed Time With Peace

JOKER

The Vision

4AD. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

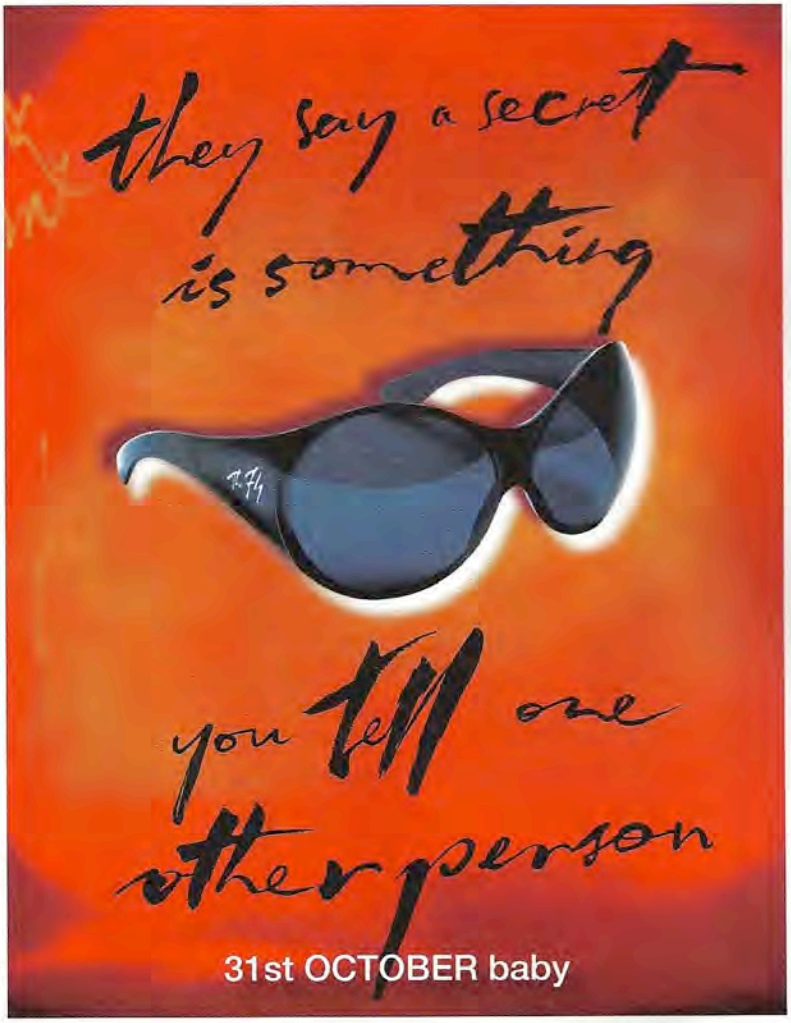
OUT 7 NOVEMBER

★★★★

Bristol producer injects some melody into dubstep.

Liam McLean has synaesthesia, a condition that means he hears music as colours: purple, to be exact. In terms everyone can understand, his debut combines melodic dubstep with a dose of Timbaland-style R&B. Eighties synth sounds ebb and flow on Tron before a saw-toothed bassline drops into the mix with a crash; the bubbling bleeps and glassy keys on Milky Way are an echo of Detroit techno; while on The Vision (Let Me Breathe) Jessie Ware's poppy vocal lightens the slugs of belligerent digital bass. Electrifying, whether you hear it in colour or not. ***CHRIS COTTINGHAM***

DOWNLOAD: Tron Q 50 // Milky Way // The Vision (Let Me Breathe) // My Trance Girl



SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS

Soul Time!

DAPTONE. VINYL/CD

OUT NOW

★★★

New old soul gangshow present platter number five.

Most famously heard on Amy Winehouse's Back To Black, Brooklyn revue The Dap-Kings plus mighty voice Sharon Jones have been channelling vintage soul for a decade. Soul Time! suggests the well's in no danger of drying up any time soon. To hard-hitting R&B and funk akin to Good Foot-era James Brown, Jones can strip paint and soothe with equal aplomb, with the gutbucket, polyrhythmic two-part opener Genuine demanding authenticity and weeper Without A Trace cathartically cleansing romantic pain. In an age when notions of realness are under such assault, they sound like voices of reason. ***IAN HARRISON***

DOWNLOAD: Genuine // New Shoes // Without A Trace

THE KENNETH BAGER EXPERIENCE

The Sound Of...

DECONSTRUCTION

VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

★★★

Nordic dance king's adventure in cosmic pop.

A veteran of Europe's late-'80s dance explosion, Bager's most recently specialised in wilfully eclectic Balearic compilations. Equally hard to pin down as a solo artist, here the Dane darts from the playful dance-pop of I Can't Wait to The Sound Of Swing (Oh Na Na)'s exuberant electro-jazz, topped off with a turn from US soul man Aloe Blacc. Even the forays into ambient dub exude a seductive warmth, though there's no forgiving his dire techno "cover" of Ravel's Bolero. ***RUPERT HOWE***

DOWNLOAD: I Can't Wait // The Sound Of Swing (Oh Na Na) // Rabbits In Russia

LOS CAMPESINOS!

Hello Sadness

WICHITA. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT 14 NOVEMBER

★★★★

Cardiff twee-poppers turn a corner.

Break-ups suck, but in Gareth Campesinos!'s case the split with his girlfriend, just two weeks before recording this fourth offering, has resulted in 10 compelling tracks of thundering, confessional pop. The once-bouncy Welsh seven-piece are virtually unrecognisable as fraught vocals mix with roaring riffs, brass, heart-wrenching strings and pounding drums to staggering effect. The anguish at the heart of Hello Sadness really hits home on its title track – "this dripping from my broken heart is never running dry" – but it's never self-indulgent; it's focused, punchy and beautifully poetic. ***CAMILLA PIA***

DOWNLOAD: Hello Sadness Q 50 // Life Is A Long Time // Baby I Got The Death Rattle

SHELBY LYNNE

Revelation Road

EVERSO. CD

OUT NOW

★★★★

Self-sufficient country singer-songwriter still going it alone.

Shelby Lynne rejected mainstream Nashville's taste-makers in the mid-'90s, and scored a Grammy at the end of the decade. Since then, though, her career has zig-zagged wildly between labels and producers, with a brief stopover to play Johnny Cash's mother in Walk The Line. Revelation Road is the second release on her own imprint with Lynne writing and producing these 11 self-analytical songs herself. With echoes of Bobbie Gentry and Dusty Springfield on Lead Me Love and The Thief, there's a welcome '60s pop feel to the material, proof that Lynne still doesn't need anyone else to show her how it should be done. ***MARK BLAKE***

DOWNLOAD: Revelation Road Q 50 // The Thief // Woebegone

DAVID LYNCH

Crazy Clown Time

SUNDAY BEST. VINYL/CD

OUT NOW

★★★

Trademark surreal unease on the cult director's debut.

The surprise with David Lynch's first album is how predictable it is. Dense swirls of electronic noise, baleful, twanging gothic country guitars, lyrics that never quite reveal some horrifying secret – fans of Lynch's films will find themselves on familiar ground. But this doesn't necessarily lessen the record's impact: Speed Roadster is an icily effective stalker's monologue; These Are My Friends, a Grandaddy-like account of small-town life that hovers beautifully between hope and loneliness. Only on the self-consciously nightmarish title track does he drift into self-parody. ***ALLY CARNWATH***

DOWNLOAD: These Are My Friends Q 50 // Speed Roadster // Good Day Today

STEPHIN MERRITT

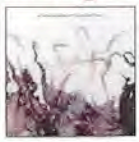
Obscurities

DOMINO. VINYL/CD/DOWNLOAD

OUT NOW

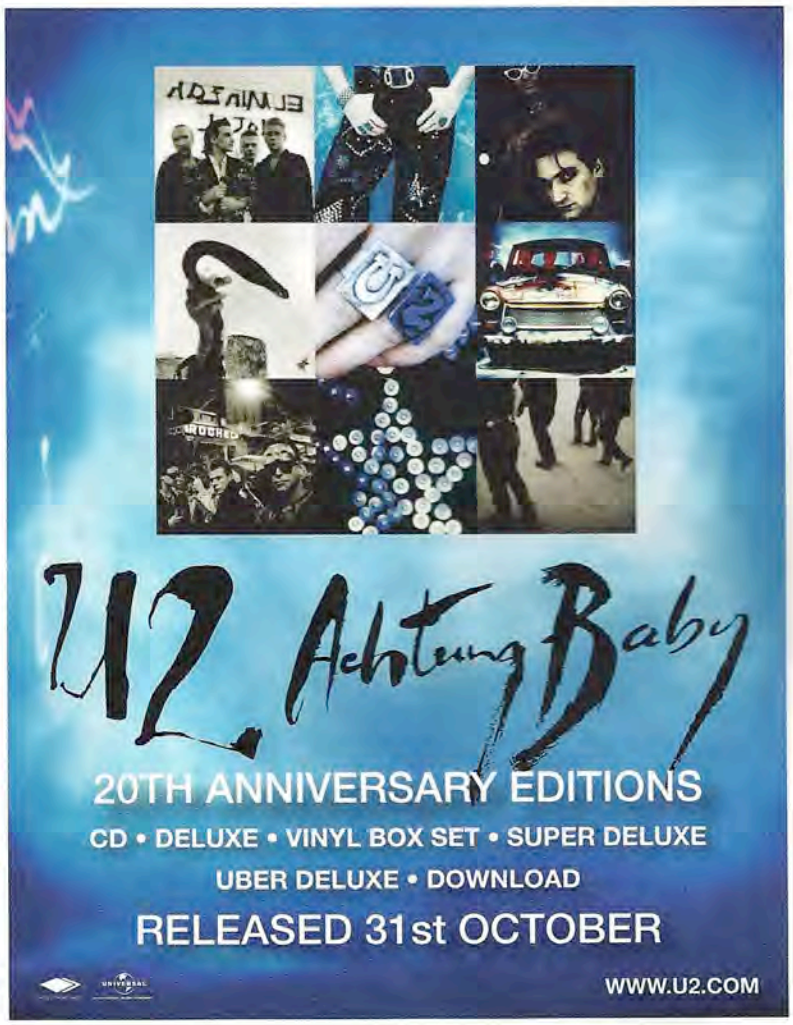
★★★

Early recordings from Mr Magnetic Fields.



Given the riches displayed on The Magnetic Fields' 1999 album 69 Love Songs, a collection of "obscurities" by Stephin Merritt seems enticing and, sure enough, a handful of the songs included here would sit happily on 69 Love Songs. Forever And A Day combines baritone croon and bone-dry wit to typically heart-melting effect, while When You're Young And In Love cheerfully imagines love as a mere distraction from existential despair. Elsewhere, electronic whimsy such as You Are Not My Mother... are of limited interest, but there's enough to help fans rekindle the love affair. ***ALLY CARNWATH***

DOWNLOAD: Forever And A Day // When You're Young And In Love // Yet Another Girl



U2, 1991: the operation to remove hair from Adam's chest and put it on the Edge's head had failed.

U2

Achtung Baby: 20th Anniversary Edition

ISLAND. VINYL BOXSET/CD/DELUXE EDITION/SUPER DELUXE EDITION/UBER DELUXE EDITION. OUT 31 OCTOBER

★★★★★

Bono and co discover beats and irony to hit career-saving high.

It was autumn 1990 and U2 had decamped to Hansa Studios in Berlin in order to rip things up and start again. This was proving much more gruelling than expected. Bono was in the middle of another hyperactive monologue about CNN and MTV, hip hop and house music, junk culture and celebrity, when Larry Mullen, Jr finally snapped: "What the *fuck* are you talking about?" According to Bill Flanagan's riveting fly-on-the-wall book U2 At The End Of The World, the drummer's diagnosis was simple: "You haven't written any songs! Where are the *songs*?"

This reissue, as lavish as a dictator's palace, exists because U2 turned it around and made their best album, but it might not have worked at all. Reeling from the backlash to Rattle And Hum's ancestor worship, U2 could have sunk their career as easily as saved it, because 18 million people don't buy an album for entertaining rhetoric alone. Nonetheless, the rhetoric mattered. Achtung Baby is an extravagant feat of misdirection, wrapping the darkest, most searching lyrics of U2's career in a title taken from Mel Brooks's The Producers and all manner of audiovisual hoopla. "Underneath that thin layer of trash it's blood and guts," Bono told Flanagan.

History, at least, was on U2's side in 1990. The Berlin they visited was a very different place to the divided Cold War metropolis once prowled by Bowie. It was a city with an identity crisis. The wall was down, reunification sparked both joy and neurosis, and political elites were chattering about the "end of history" and the "new world order". During U2's final Berlin session, Bono was glued to CNN's rolling coverage of the Gulf War, a new kind of hi-tech, media-filtered conflict. (One working title was Cruise Down Main Street, a triple pun on The Rolling Stones, club hopping and cruise missiles.) Add to that the musical aftershocks of acid house and hip hop, and only someone with Bono's gluttonous, join-the-dots intellect and reckless confidence would try so self-consciously to capture the mood of the nascent decade: to try, as one song has it, to throw your arms around the world.

You could argue that only a band as incapable of irony and glitz thus far could make such a meal of it when they finally discovered it, but overkill is fundamental to both Achtung Baby and its era. "You miss too much these days if you stop to think," advises Until The End Of The World, which retells the Judas story as a drunken, homoerotic encounter in a club. The synchronicity between U2's aims and the broader culture was fortuitous: witness the way the distorted, quick-fire aphorisms of The Fly (described by Bono as "a crank call from Hell") parallel those in Douglas Coupland's Generation X. By shedding his earnest '80s skin and trying on some new ones, Bono became a creature of the times.

While the Zoo TV tour interrogated this thirst for sensation on a macro level, the songs told a similar story in micro. Many are about nocturnal thrill-seeking: Bono is "ready for the rush" (Zoo Station), hungry to "slide down the surface of things" (Even Better Than The Real Thing). But then comes the hungover question: "How far you gonna go/Before you lose your way back home?" (Tryin' To Throw Your Arms Around The World). He stumbles home to find that damage is done and "nothing makes sense" (Acrobat), making a hypocrite's bleak dawn confession: "I must be an acrobat to talk like this and act like that." The expected consolation and forgiveness is withheld, sending the listener back to the unresolved conflicts in the superficially healing One. The song that redeemed the Berlin sessions is the finished album's ambiguous heart.

Given the project's commitment to sensory blitzkrieg, the full reissue's packaging bonanza, right down to the replica Fly shades, feels conceptually apt. Each bonus feature expands on a different facet of Achtung Baby: the videos and Zoo TV footage ramp up the semiotic chatter; the remixes plunge further into dance music; 1993's Zooropa (included in the boxsets) boldly pursues the road to Enotopia. Achtung Baby's relatively conventional songcraft is highlighted by the straighter "Kindergarten" mixes, which variously resemble Tom Petty (Tryin' To Throw...), Smashing Pumpkins (Love Is Blindness) and Coldplay (Who's Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses). You're reminded how much of U2's break with the past was in the sound rather than the songwriting, with mixer Flood the unsung hero who, more than Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois, gives the album its filthy-yet-shiny allure. Among the out-takes, Heaven And Hell is a gorgeous country-soul throwback, Down All The Days a dreamy, Bono-sung prototype Numb, Blow Your House Down a thematically blunt rocker ("Why if it's so wrong does it feel so right?"), and Oh Berlin a painful, navel-gazing ramble about the Hansa sessions. "Chasing the ghosts of our heroes," Bono solemnly intones. "Lou Reed, David Bowie, Iggy, Wim Wenders, Rilke..." Mein gott, baby.

> *"Overkill is fundamental to both Achtung Baby and its era."*

But U2 got it right in the end, which seems even more remarkable given that such stadium-sized mixed messages failed R.E.M. on Monster and U2 themselves on 1997's Pop. This reissue underlines how much Achtung Baby's high-wire triumph owed to an era in flux and it's as excessive as it needs to be. As Adam Clayton said at the time, "We used to think in the '80s that less is more. In the '90s we've discovered that more is even more." ***DORIAN LYNSKEY***

DOWNLOAD: One // Down All The Days // Even Better Than The Real Thing (Fish Out Of Water Mix) Q50

ANTON CORBIJN

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

DEPECHE MODE
Songs Of Faith And Devotion
MUTE, 1993
★★★★
Achtung Baby in reverse: a synth group living out its rock dreams in LA. Religious guilt and night owl sleaze, overseen by producer Flood.

COLDPLAY
Viva La Vida Or Death And All His Friends
PARLOPHONE, 2008
★★★★
Unfeasibly successful? Bored of your lucrative sound? Call Brian Eno. Like Achtung Baby, a self-interrogating exercise that ended up being huge anyway.

THE KILLERS
Sam's Town
VERTIGO, 2006
★★★★
The Killers' valiant attempt to fuse sincerity with kitsch on a grand scale proved that, often, it's harder than it looks.