

U2 spectacular in high strung collection

|jASOn lYNES|

U2 need no introduction. Transcending countries, decades, genres, the Irish band have made more than a name for themselves. They've made history.

So how do you follow up history? How do you keep following up classics? How do you span generations?

Do it U2 style.

After countless, yet memorable, hit singles, albums and concerts, U2 pop back into synch with *Pop*, a slightly eclectic, surprisingly refreshing new album from the new kings of popular music.

What're forgotten here are rules. Rules that say you can't use synthesizers on a rock album. You can't have electronic music and ballads back to back. You can't party down in a supermarket.

With this new work, U2 instead make their own rules. Never afraid to do their own thing, U2 has put together a superb collection of musical genius - commonplace for a U2 album.

The collection is led by the *Pop* radio pioneer, "Discotheque." Complete with Village People references, hyped up guitars, wavy-gravy synth noise, and the typical Bono whine, "Disco" takes rock to level common in discotheques and dance clubs, but rarely heard on mainstream radio. But where U2 goes, everyone follows, as "Disco" was heard on strictly rock stations nationwide.

Next is the highly catchy and bright "Do You Feel Loved?" This is not unlike the other songs that head up *Pop* - twisty, shouty, and all together disco-funky. As I speak I'm singing the soft yet lingering chorus of "do you feel...loved? / do you feel loved?" Simple, styling, it's a song for both a late night chill session or a high powered drive down the Las Vegas strip.

Versatility is thrown out the window with the last of the synth-strong, "Mo-Fo." Obviously a slang abbreviation for a bad mouth slogan, "Mo-Fo" bites like a bad-ass and hurts like one too. Strong and random techno beats fill the air as insane air-raid sirens boom over a low lead rhythm. Bono's freaky, half-dead scratchy vocals limp along the high energy blast of a song. It's hard to keep up with how much ass this kicks.

The rest of the album is littered with slow, Tricky-like ballads and traditional U2 fun. "If God Will Send His Angels" and "Staring At the Sun," combine for a 1-2 punch, delivering a sunshine-filled flowery knockout.

"Last Night On Earth" and "Gone" remember *Achtung Baby* in a "Wild Horses" manner, like a whining, winding, jazzed-up freight train headed for everywhere.

"Miami," the album's only rotten spot, features a surprisingly uncatchy sound. The good parts take way too long to rear their beautiful heads and therefore ruin any relationship it may have achieved with your ears. It resembles U2's older, more primitive "Sunday Bloody Sunday" work.

"The Playboy Mansion" satirizes modern culture in a way only U2 can, with strategic references to plastic surgery, Coke, O.J., and of course Playboy, all behind a jazzy blues-like coffeehouse flavor.

"If You Wear That Velvet Dress" is perhaps the most genius song this year. Slow, subtle, and soft-spoken, "Dress" opens with Bono's eerily deep whispering hum, on top of a slight acoustic picking. Soon Bono's sweet vocals reach to escape the hole it's in, but is soon overshadowed by another nod to *Achtung Baby*, the chorus-effect guitar. For the candle-

lit lounge, "Dress" seeps on in and may never again seep out.

"Please" is a bit too hard to describe. Funky beats, a traditional Bono vocal track, and a lone Edge riff sprinkle the song, combining for < Surprise! > a good song. But there's something more. A bit too much soul inhabits "Please," making it a truly spiritual experience.

The collection retires with "Wake Up Dead Man," a deep, strong, and slug-like lighter-licker. Bono's synthed vocals whine, complementing and contrasting the clean, power-driven guitars. Bono's voice characterizes the obvious struggle that peaks and quickly dies, ending the song, the album, and U2's new chapter to pop history.

Pop is not breaking new ground. Many of these styles have been tried and adopted, used and abused. But U2 just does it better than everywhere else. Bono can go from the "Last Night On Earth" power-plug to whining pleadingly on "Velvet Dress" and singing valiantly on "Staring At the Sun." He could be a jazz singer, a disco dancer, a pop icon - he can be whatever he wants to be - and to add that to U2's awe-inspiring pop smarts and musical genius could bring any genre, any song, any lyric to life.

As if Pop didn't have its own thriving, breathing, pulsating, *pop*ping life.

"It's hard to keep up with how much ass this kicks."

pop

island records

★★★★★★☆☆

second opinions

marcus amaker,

staff writer

★★★★★★☆☆

rolling stone

★★★★☆

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earcandy
in fun and yummy easter pastels



the mighty mighty bosstones

let's face it

★★★★★★☆☆

|tom chaump|

Capitalizing on the rise in popularity of ska music, with bands like No Doubt and Goldfinger, the Mighty Mighty Bosstones have taken a step back from the hard rock of 1993's *Don't Know How to Party* with their new album, *Let's Face It*.

Songs like "The Rascal King" and "Royal Oil" show off the Bosstones' third-wave ska background. But others like "Another Drinking Song" and "The Impression That I Get," which has

received playtime on radio and MTV, blend ska and rock, creating a style that has mainstream appeal.

This blend of styles was visible on *Party*, with "Holy Smoke" and "Don't Know How to Party." It was overshadowed, however, by the hard-rock of "Our Only Weapon," "Tin Soldiers," and other songs. The toning down of their new album doesn't mean that the Bosstones can't still rock. The songs "Desensitized" and "1-2-8" exhibit the guitar-driven music style that made *Party* so popular.

Old fans of the Mighty Mighty Bosstones will probably be annoyed with the watered-down generic ska of *Let's Face It*. Fans of *Party* may be disappointed with the step back from hard rock. But *Let's Face It*, powered by ska-rock blends like "The Impression That I Get" and "Noise Brigade," has the potential for commercial success, putting the Mighty Mighty Bosstones at the forefront of the recent ska craze. ★

