

U2

Politics, passion and soul blend to make it all 'Hum'

U2
Rattle and Hum

There's a lot more rattle than hum on U2's latest release, a companion piece to their film of the same name that will be released on November 4th.

It's a sprawling, loose-limbed collection of nine new songs and six live numbers recorded at three concerts and six studios. Adding to the confusion are guest musicians like Bob Dylan, B.B. King, Brian Eno, the Memphis

Horns and the New Voices of Freedom gospel choir.

Despite their varied sources, the tunes mesh remarkably well. The crucial reason is the raw power and energy that simmers throughout the studio tracks.

Even on U2's best efforts — such as *War* and *The Joshua Tree* — there is the feeling some of the songs haven't quite gelled yet. *Under A Blood Red Sky* and *Wide Awake In America*, their two live albums, confirmed this. Now, more effectively than ever, U2 has harnessed its formidable skills in the studio.

Perhaps this is because of U2's recent stadium tour. Their jump in popularity made such a step inevitable, but usually neither the artist nor the audience is satisfied with the results.

The band did a good job of keeping the crowds happy — as long as they kept it noisy. But apparently the experience has toughened them up, in the same way that performing in the rough and tumble German bars honed the Beatles to



Bono and the boys reach another plateau with their sixth album *Rattle and Hum*.

a fine edge.

The result is that U2's playing on *Rattle and Hum* is more muscular and authoritative than ever before — the only way to distinguish thunderous live tracks like "Bullet the Blue Sky" from studio tunes like "Desire" and "Hawkmoon 269" is the roar of the crowd.

Only "Heartland" fails to live up to *Rattle and Hum*'s high standards by reverting to the vague moodiness of *The Unforgettable Fire*.

Taken separately, the new songs mark quite a departure for the band. The titles "All I Want Is You," "When Love Comes To Town," and "Desire" say it all.

They focus almost exclusively on romantic passion, a far cry from the social commentary and philosophical musings that dominated earlier efforts.

But scattered among these are politically-charged live numbers. On "Silver and Gold," Bono begins to talk about Artists United Against Apartheid and brings his point home by sarcastically asking, "Am I bugging you? I don't mean to bug you."

On "Bullet the Blue Sky" he launches into a melodramatic description of conditions in El Salvador that's worthy of Jim Morrison at his best.

This combination of the personal and the political creates music that is more passionate, more powerful and more *immediate* than anything U2 has done before. There's even "God Part II," a topical slam against Albert Goldman's biography of John Lennon which was thrown in at the last minute.

That spontaneity is the hallmark of the entire album. U2 has always been an earnest band, but now its intensity is leavened by a casual, raucous air. *Rattle and Hum* is lively and rowdy and reveals the dour Irishmen to be on top of the world...and actually enjoying it.

By Michael Giltz

