

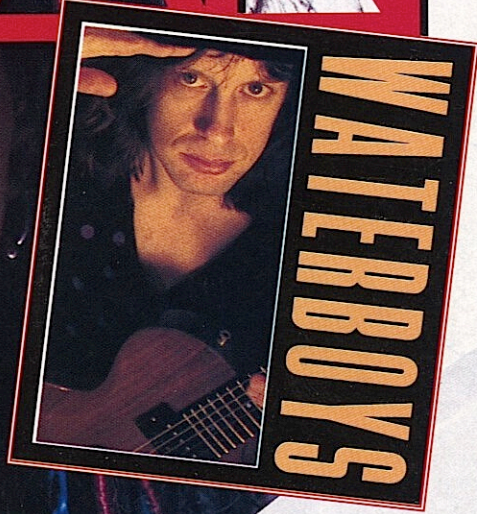


BONO ON U2'S NEW ALBUM

MUSICIAN

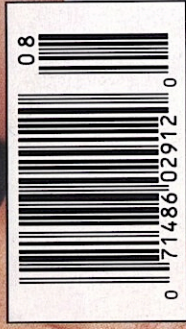
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STEVE VAI'S MAGIC LICKS



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U2 surprised everyone by writing and recording a new album during the break between the U.S. and European legs of the ZOO TV tour. Bono sits down and talks us through *Zooropa*, a report from the far reaches of the journey begun on *Achtung Baby*. BY JOE JACKSON

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Photograph of Steve Vai by Jeff Katz; Bono by Frederic Garcia/Retna

PHOTOGRAPH: (THIS PAGE) FREDERIC GARCIA/RETNA; ILLUSTRATION: JONATHAN ROSEN

ON STAGE



THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

WE'RE THE VELVET UNDERGROUND, we want no part of this/That's because we think it is pretentious shit," Lou Reed rhymes awkwardly, as John Cale pounds jauntily on electric piano.

"Straight from soundcheck to you," Reed concludes, beaming as his self-mocking ditty delivered mid-show achieves the desired round of applause.

And straight from that to a blinding take of "White Light/White Heat," as hot white lights strafe the crowd and Reed, Cale, Sterling Morrison and Moe Tucker recreate the proto-punk roar of the 1960s New York band that was revered more in memory than in its heyday, for its pioneering fusion of art and rock, noise and melody.

Judged least likely to succeed from the moment they left Andy Warhol's Factory in 1965, the Velvets were also long considered to be the least likely group to hit the reunion trail.

Reed and Cale had sworn it would never happen, since Reed fired Cale from the band in '68 after their egos clashed once too often, while Morrison fought Reed over songwriting royalties until well into the 1980s. And the soft-spoken Tucker, a rarity then and now as the female drummer for a male-dominated rock band, had opted for motherhood five times over, and occasional solo albums for cult fans.

But here they are together on stage, two nights into their first public performances in 25 years and their first-ever European tour, working hard to dispel the thin pall of cynicism hanging over the event.

The marquee outside the 3100-seat Edinburgh Playhouse reads "VELVET UNDERGROUND—SOLD OUT." The statement can be read positively or negatively—and first-night reviews by the local press choose the latter—but the band members insist they're in it neither for money nor nostalgia, but simply for the fun of being together again.

The sentiment holds true both nights, as the band kicks into "We're Gonna Have a Real Good Time Together" with an enthusiasm that makes up for guitarist Morrison's less-than-stellar timing, Tucker's [cont'd next page]

JONI MITCHELL

FOR HER FIRST PUBLIC PERFORMANCE in several years, Joni Mitchell found a way to affirm her spiritual ties to the folk music community whence she came, while showcasing songs whose intentions ranged



far beyond that music's traditional boundaries.

The occasion was a two-day "Troubadours of Folk" festival in the open air of UCLA's Drake Stadium, featuring an impressive lineup of '60s-generation acoustic warriors (John Prine, Roger McGuinn, Judy Collins, Arlo Guthrie, Richie Havens, et cetera) and a middle-aging audience similarly uncertain whether such gatherings symbolized nostalgia or renewal. Most seemed content to let the matter ride and have a good time.

But when Mitchell finally appeared toting her guitar, the crowd in front of the stage became palpably attentive—this, after all, was an *event*—while several of the day's other performers formed a thick crescent around the stage rear. As if sensing a collective hunger for Something Different, she launched an unfamiliar composition, "Last Chance Lost," by bending long phrases around the languid, jazz-inflected melody in a way that brought to mind Betty Carter—a sultry sound masking spiky sentiment. Next up was a slower, chunkier version of "Big Yellow Taxi"—the song's original whimsy perhaps flattened by two decades' worth of witnessing its truths—and

a wistful "Amelia," its succession of visual images seeming to hover and then dissolve like Mitchell's frosted breath in the cool evening air.

Technically, the show was far from perfect. The years have ripened her voice into a rich, dusky instrument as commanding as her personality, and heavy-stroked guitar rhythms provided a sturdy, propulsive bottom for Mitchell's intricate compositions. But on this night she was clearly nervous—just before she went on, you could see her puffing cancer sticks in the wings—and almost every song was saddled with a false start, missed chords or some such glitch. "I gotta practice more," she chided herself at one point, and you got the idea she wasn't kidding.

All of which could have been a recipe for disaster in front of a less supportive crowd—anyone remember Amnesty International? Instead, Mitchell's wit and disarming candor transformed this into an event of uncommon charm. At one point, she forgot the words to "Hejira" and had to stop in mid-song and ask the front-row listeners to prompt her memory. They did. Sobering new songs like "Sunny Sunday"—"about a woman waiting for a break," as she put it—and "Borderlines," a kind of kaddish for a culture that

keeps ripping its own seams apart, were received warmly. By the time she closed with "Night Ride Home," the rapport between singer and audience seemed to mirror that song's hard-won serenity.

"Thank you very much," she said before exiting. "You've been wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!" Lawrence Welk couldn't have put it any better.

—MARK ROWLAND

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

minimalist drumming and a 20-song set list that largely favors traditional arrangements over innovation.

"Hello, thank you," Reed tells the cheering house. "We haven't seen you in a while. But it just seems like yesterday."

As always, the black-T-shirted Reed is the center of attention as he rips lead breaks with a series of sawed-off guitars and tosses off wry asides to the audience.

"Nico!" a fan shouts, recalling the late, star-crossed Warhol acolyte who sang on the Velvets' first album.

"That will take some doing," Reed dryly shoots back.

But Nico's ghost doesn't make an appear-

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