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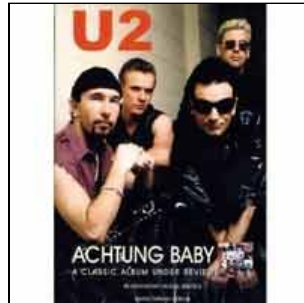
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U2

Achtung Baby: A Classic Album Under Review

Chrome Dreams

Pivotal U2 album goes under the microscope

Here's another from the successful Under Review series, that collectable string of DV retrospectives on classic albums and "heritage" artists.

Achtung Baby was the point at which U2 rebooted their career. Though the press and the fanbase faithful alike had loved *The Joshua Tree*, its follow-up *Rattle and Hum* left many impatient. The band had been growing steadily more pompous and flatulent, riding on a cushion of self-generated hot air as they searched America for their music roots.

But they still couldn't find what they were looking for, and having announced to a Dub crowd that they were off to "dream it all up again", they disappeared for a while amid rumours of a permanent breakup. They returned with a new direction on *Achtung Baby* in '91, leaving behind their old faithful certainties (and some of their old faithful fans) with an album chock full of irony, doubt, unreliable narrators and postmodern persona. As Bono himself said, it was "the sound of four men trying to chop down *The Joshua Tree*".

On this DVD, top rock scribes - from U2 biographer Stuart Baillie to ex-Mojo editor Maureen Snopcewicz, Uncut's Nigel Williamson and The Guardian's Andrew Mueller - dissect the album track-by-track with the help of rare footage, anecdotes and photographs. They set it within the context of intra-band feuds, wavering religious faith and The Edge's disintegrating marriage, and explore influences from Bowie to Television to the Stone Roses. You can't help feel that the success of the album was partly due to it having given the press something to write about; by presenting them with an enigma instead of a statement, it guaranteed itself a serious reception from writers who felt validated by the very need to deconstruct it.

As several speakers point out, U2 grew up in the shadow of David Bowie - once reassembled why they chose to make this album in Berlin under the watchful supervision of Brian Eno. The influence of that sublime chameleon fuelled U2's desire to reinvent and question themselves and probably saved their career.

By Clare O'Brien

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