

ACHTUNG BABY- U2 (Island)

By Kirby Ferguson

Okay, this is it, the year's BIG release. I must admit I quivered with anticipation as I slid this one into my CD player. And what did I hear? Well, first a brief history of U2. With a guitarist who sounded alternately like a machine gun or twirling helicopter blades, a militant beat and a powerful lead singer U2 became the "biggest" and best thing to come out of the eighties. Without producing even one stinker in their career (I liked RATTLE AND HUM, especially the live stuff) U2 hit their prime on THE JOSHUA TREE, an album remarkable for its beautiful balance between the technological and the human. With RATTLE AND HUM they retreated into classic Americana leaving the field wide, wide open for their next move.

My expectations for their latest were sky-high for several reasons: it's U2, it's new U2 and it's produced by Daniel "Everything I Touch Turns To Gold" Lanois. ACHTUNG BABY immediately got on my bad side- I have an intense dislike of albums with cows on the cover- nonetheless, on their latest I expected to hear U2's new roots collide head-on with their more avant garde leanings with a little hard rock bombast thrown in for good measure. What I got was what I considered to be one of the most nihilistic works ever created in rock. Gone is the graceful, powerful melodicism of THE JOSHUA TREE, Bono's impassioned howls are replaced by subtlety, The Edge's guitar is at its most metallic and Larry Mullen sounds very much like C3PO. Also absent is their newly discovered rock 'n' roll heritage; Dylan, Hendrix, Lennon, B.B. King and the rest don't exist in this picture. What I heard was something that I believed to sound somewhat like Jesus Jones. I found myself suffocating, dying for a ray of light to cut through all this cold murk. It's pretty far removed from the dynamic display of rock mastery that I expected to hear from this band so high on principle.

But since this is U2, I listened and listened and listened. I listened to it loud, I listened to it quiet, I listened to it standing on my head, waiting for this sucker to come together. And indeed it did come together. The songs on ACHTUNG BABY take a few listenings for their form to become clear. Standouts are the graceful ballad "One", the gospel tinged "Mysterious Ways", another lovely ballad "Tryin' to Throw Your Arms Around the World", and of course, the grinding first single, "The Fly". The

lyric sheet is their strongest ever, filled with sharp truths and oblique imagery, shades of Elvis Costello methinks.

However, the album is definitely flawed. It's not as soul satisfying as their earlier work, and it's a bit on the cold side (I could really do without the computer-perfect drums). ACHTUNG BABY is a work of quiet intensity, and one that I'm sure will confuse a lot of people. Don't expect THE JOSHUA TREE, this may as well be a different band, but after a while you'll see what these guys were thinking. Personally I'd have preferred to hear the boys kick out the jams on this one. Nonetheless, the album's startling song quality, and sense of adventure marks it as a triumph.

By the way, my list of the top ten albums of the year is in the rag your holding someplace. You can throw this album in there some place.



Review of "SHATTERED"



"Shattered" is a mind blowing movie, in my opinion. Shattered is every bit as enjoyable as those blockbuster summer movies, maybe more so. Greta Sacchi, the Italian actress is new to North American audiences. I mean how many people saw "The Coca Cola Kid"? Probably not very many. Sacchi is a fine actress with nice looks. She reminds me a little of Michelle Pfeiffer only I like Sacchi a lot better. Shattered does what most movies seldom do. It leads you one way. Most movies turn around, flip over, and leave you scratching your head. Eventually the intriguing story is pieced together, hence the title "Shattered". At one point in the movie it seemed like the entire audience was discussing with their friends just what they thought was really going to occur next. Shattered had everyone thinking with its impressive effects, eerie scenes and the interesting characters. Thankfully, the effects weren't overplayed and over blown. Looks like Shattered is gone from town, so if you want to see it you'll have to rent it later. Hope this doesn't leave your life Shattered.