

Album reviewed by Moe Fujikawa

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Songs of Innocence

U2



Album photo, shot by Glen Luchford

Songs of Innocence was the 36th album and released in 38th year (in 2014) since the band U2 was formed. It was a surprise release that none of medias or fans knew about it...

Members:



Bono (Paul Hewson)
- lead vocal, guitar
(born May 10, 1960)



The Edge (Dave Evans)
- guitars, piano, keyboards, vocal
(born August 8, 1961)



Larry Mullen Jr.
- Drum
(born October 31, 1961)



Adam Clayton
- Bass guitar
(born March 13, 1960)

History:

U2 was formed in Dublin, Ireland in the fall of 1967. Everything has started by one note which Mullen posted on the bulletin board at Dublin secondary school where all members attended. The content of a note was seeking musicians for a new band and 4 boys eventually showed up at Mullen's house who were present U2 members plus Dick Evans who is The Edge's brother. These 5 boys formed

the band as “Feedback” and Dick played a guitar in this band for a while, but he left the band at early point to join another Dublin band named “the Virgin Prunes”.

The band’s name “Feedback” was changed to “The Hype” after Dick left and started rehearsing after school and on weekends as much as possible which made real friendships among members and developed brilliant skills as musicians. After nearly 18 months of rehearsing, a big turning point came to the band that U2 (at the time, they had changed their name from “The Hype” to “U2”) joined to a talent show in Limerick, Ireland in March, 1978 and U2 won the contest, earning a 500 pound prize and studio time to record their first demo.



After the talent show, the band convinced a Dublin businessman named Paul McGuinness to manage them and they officially started their musician lives.



Even though they struggled to get attention from music fans and critics in London when they travelled there after the band released its first single “U2:3” in 1979, it topped the national charts in Ireland and built up a local fan base. Also, the first album *Boy* (released 1980) was focused in UK as this album offered a fresh, new sound and in the U2’s first tour outside the UK helped developing new fan bases in other parts of Europe and in the United States. In 1983, U2 released its third album *War* and it became its first international success.

About the album *Songs of Innocence*:

The album *Songs of Innocence*, 11 songs set which took them five years in the making, was released on September 9th, 2014 to all the iTunes users as a surprise. It is the 36th album for U2 and with its latest album “ *Songs of Experience*”, these two albums have been awarded four Grammy Awards, for

Best Classical Album, Best Choral Performance, Best Classical Contemporary Composition and Producer of the Year, Classical.

The biggest fact about this album is, of course, that released it in iTunes for FREE! On September 9th, there were 2 really significant releases going to process. One is Apple's unveiled iPhone 6 and first announcement of the Apple Watch. Other is U2's new album release which wasn't known by any medias or fans. And what happened in Apple's event on Sep. 9 was that Apple presented a free copy of U2 album "Songs of Innocence" to everyone with an iTunes account, whether people wanted it or not!! It means everyone who has an iTunes account automatically get this album no matter if you want or not as a gift from Apple and U2. It was free for over one month and it finally went on sale through normal channels in October. Although millions of people have downloaded a free copy, they sold around 25,000 copies in the first week in the U.S.



Songs:

1 "The Miracle (Of Joey Ramone)":

This song portrays their gratitude to New York punk and the Ramones particularly. (Of Joey Ramone) was put after 'The Miracle' because Bono, lead singer, found "his own voice in Joey's tuneful sneer". It fits to be placed as first song in this album because it gives listeners good and positive impact as "The Miracle" is a catchy, bright song. My favorite part of the song is the first phrase of chorus of the song "I woke up" and the sound of drum sticks which you can hear right before the phrase "I woke up" and it makes you feel excited for sure.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LF0rKW1DEMo

2 "Every Breaking Wave":

The song starts with constant slow tempo of The Edge's guitar in low and it reminds us this is a quiet song, but once it reached to the chorus, Bono instantaneously brings his voice high and it is amazing how he immediately change his mood from quiet to high. When you listen to this song, you should focus on listening the guitar part The Edge plays as I think this is the best song to see how great his guitar technique is.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYVEik7Lvc4

3 "California (There is No End to Love)":

It is the song I think it's bit unbalanced to this album, but it is definitely my favorite song. Although this song doesn't sound like U2, for Bono usually doesn't sing like a pop musician, I love how the song starts with a rising sound of back singers and "California" lets me image driving in California town every times I listen to.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9T_DUv76o4

4 "Song for Someone"

However I really like this song, in some websites, it is said as "an awful song to choose for this album". As a reason, this song is too safe, ordinary and dull. But in my opinion, it doesn't matter if a song fits to its album, the importance is a song itself and I evaluate "Song For Someone" as one of the best songs in this album. It's played in slow tempo and the lyric is kind of simple, but I assume that the simple song is really catchy and attractive. I especially like the Edge's guitar sound you can hear behind Bono's voice. It is absolutely brilliant sound!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFjcd_d2PhY

5 "Iris (Hold Me Close)"

First, This song is for Bono's mother, who died when he was 14 years old. It sounds it would be a negative song, but it is not at all. This song implies Bono's strong emotion or spirit in a good way and it directly comes to the

audience's' heart. Also, the back singers (female) sing “u-hu-hu-huhu..” in the part after the chorus and I think it made “Iris” more unique and distinguishable.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePwrIIIxcag

6 “Volcano”

Some big fans of U2 assumed this is one of best songs in this album and I surely think so too. It starts with Mullan’s drum beat in low and adam’s bass guitar and I feel this song would be pretty good for the concert as these drum and bass guitar’s sound can be used to give the audience a sense of expectancy.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACjiBN61Tys

7 “Raised By Wolves”

This song is written “about Irish paramilitary car bombings, and disbelief in the religious and lay senses”. The key part in this song is that Bono’s high voice in chorus. It is just amazing and inspired me, for he can sing at high tone although he is already 58 years old. Also, another best part of this song is obviously The Edge’s high guitar technique. Before get into the chorus, Bono says the phrase “I don’t believe anymore” with echo and behind it, The Edge is playing a guitar at really high tempo, but accurate. That guitar sound helps rising part for the climax part and I recommend you to focus on that part when you listen!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fT6YG_2_eUw

8 “Cedarwood Road”

My first thought of this song was unique. The beginning of the song is at a bit slow tempo, but right before the chorus, it goes slower, and go to the chorus which the tone is pretty odd and it lets me imagine a world full of demons. But once I listened to it, I was attracted to this song and now I often listen to it.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFIJuM5HOpA

9 “Sleep Like a Baby Tonight”

Throughout the song, keyboard is used as a base music and which managed to feel fresh, and the Edge’s guitar occasionally disrupt at his “fuzziest-soundings” that it eventually brought balance to the song.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsEGFs_W_yA

10 “This is Where You Can Reach Me Now”

The song starts with drum beats and back singers which is pretty energetic. As it is rare, most of parts are sang by back-singers and Bono’s solo unusually occupies only a few parts, so when he sang a small part of solo, it stands out a lot like a main character finally says something important. I like this song because it is really energetic, hyper, and importantly not too rock’n roll and no doubt to say this is a pop song.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T0smT9tbFc

11 “The Troubles”

This is the only song which contains a lady back-singer in this album. It is slow tempo and Bono’s voice is soft touched. Even though I don’t think it fits as last song for this album (in my opinion, “This is where you can reach me now” would be good for the last.), I like how Bono and a lady back-singer’s voice match each other and by occupying most of the chorus by her voice, it became amazing chorus with soft, nice guitar sound and constant light drum beats.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKEta9NZC90

Summary:

I personally like this album as a variety of songs are contained and especially this album showed me how U2 members are still powerful and eager despite they are already over 50 years old. But I also agree some of fans who argue this

is the worst album for U2 because this album was being free for 1 month in iTunes as a gift from Apple and U2 and it is considered as an action to decreased the value of this album and also it is rude.

However, I knew this album because of their corporation and I actually appreciate what they have done as it possibly became a great chance to know U2 for the first time and I'm happy if more people became fans of them due to this album. So, I would give **4 out of 5 stars**. As a reason, I love this album, but I agree that selling such an important album for free wasn't the best way for U2.

