
SOUNDBYTE: "Zoo TV is a state of mind. It seems to describe the atmosphere of complete irresponsibility that surrounds this tour." — Paul McGuinness

BOOK REVIEW: U2: REVOLUTION

@U2 December 16, 2014 by Scott Calhoun

The latest addition to the coffee-table category of books about U2 is Mat Snow's *U2: Revolution*, a vibrantly illustrated jaunt from the 1970s to the early months of 2014. Bruce Springsteen contributed his speech inducting U2 into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2005 for the book's introduction, and two gatefold timelines further enhance the book. One gives a brief chronology of each band member's life; the other presents landmark moments in U2's career along with cultural highlights since the 1960s. *U2: Revolution* is a welcome addition to my library, and easily the best book on U2 to be published this year.

Each page is smartly designed to make learning the band's history a pleasure. While there are plenty of professional photographs throughout the book, a unique feature of *U2: Revolution* is that many images were provided in response to a call for fans to submit pictures of memorabilia, tickets, tour posters and unusual artifacts.

For example, remember that night in 1992 when Bono ordered pizza mid-concert for the 10,000-member audience in Detroit, Michigan? John Ballard did, and he had saved one of the Speedy Pizza boxes that was delivered to the show on the Zoo TV tour. He submitted a picture of it for the book along with his recollection of the event, which Snow used to round out his story of the antics The Fly was up to.

Although the book is visually appealing, the writing takes no back seat. Snow, who wrote for *New Musical Express* and *Q* in the 1980s and '90s, and is the former editor of *Mojo* magazine, keeps it crisp. He's a fan -- he first saw U2 as a support act at Manchester Polytechnic in 1980 -- but he's not writing to pay tribute.

"Whereas I revere musicians like Bob Dylan and The Beatles, who were part of my childhood in the '60s, U2 are different because we are the same age so I see them as peers rather than legends," Snow told me in an email. "I hope I have been able to give a sympathetic though not uncritical angle on their development over the decades, highlighting themes and events which I think are important in their story, presented in the context of an era in music and the wider world of gigantic changes that continue to transform music and the lives of young people over the last 40 years."

U2 By U2 is the obvious comparison with Snow's book. *U2: Revolution* lacks the first-person intimacy and revelatory experience that only *U2 By U2* can provide, and Snow accepts that. "*U2 By U2* is about the best band memoir there is. It is a must-read for all committed U2 fans who want to go deep," Snow said. "*U2: Revolution* is doing something different. Being pictorial and a faster read than *U2 By U2* -- it's about a quarter of the length -- it's a great place for U2 fans to start." It should be noted, too, that *U2: Revolution* has the advantage of covering seven more years of history than *U2 By U2*, which was published in 2006.

If you haven't spent all of your holiday cash on tickets and travel plans for the upcoming Innocence and Experience tour, get a copy of this book. Or put it on your wish list. Even if you are short on cash, you'll be glad you made a modest investment in this well-researched, well-written and picture-rich history as part of your prep plans for 2015.

U2: Revolution (Race Point Publishing, 2014; \$35) is available in large bookstores, such as Barnes and Noble, and from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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