

# U2 are

## "Seeking intimacy on a grand scale..."

By Sharon McLver

→ FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE GLOBAL ROCK AND ROLL CIRCUS THAT IS U2 HAVE BEEN ENTERING THE WORLD'S BIGGEST STADIUMS AND ERECTING GIANT CLAWS – the name given to the 30m stage that they are bringing to Auckland in November. And thanks to the claw's design, which not only gives the band a 360° view of the crowd, but allows for extra ticketing, prices for the 360° show at Mt. Smart Stadium start at only \$99. Assuming that these seats will be placed in the pit of the claw, the tickets will presumably include a great view of Bono's leather pants.

Whilst this will hardly be news to U2 followers – the tour, I mean, not the pants – I haven't bothered much with the Dubliners since the Zoo TV tour in 1993, when I and tens of thousand others stood in Lancaster Park and watched the biggest television show we'd ever seen. Looking back, I remember that Bono phoned someone important and harangued them about something important, and that for most of the show his face was fragmented into a thousand tellies – which I can now identify as being très postmodern. The only song I can remember however is "One", and I'm pretty sure that's when Bono got a girl up to dance. Of course, he did the same thing at the previous Lancaster Park concert. Then they had B. B. King supporting, who also played a blistering blues set with U2. That time the music was so good that I can't remember whether they even had screens.

Although I never would have admitted it at the time, I think the Zoo TV show kind of wrecked U2 for me. I still totally rate Achtung Baby as one of the 100 best albums ever, and will remain grateful to October for getting me through a sad teenage year, but there's a point where a band just gets too puffed up to bother with.

Which is why I knew nothing about U2 and the 360° Tour until the NZ leg of the claw was announced, and I saw the monstrosity on telly. It is certainly well named. Protruding high into the sky, the talons dominate the aerial views, whilst suspended between them is a giant metal cylindrical screen (that looks a bit like our own 'Chalice'), so that Bono's face can now be projected 30 metres above the ground. "Bloody hell, that thing's gotta be dumping a lot of carbon," I thought, and turned up the sound.

### 'U2, 360, carbon neutral'

Of course, I'm not the only one to whom this thought has occurred, and once I found the right combination of words for the Google machine – "U2, 360, carbon neutral" – I discovered that the claws had been out about U2's hypocritical status for some time.

The Belfast Telegraph reported that Carbonfootprint.com's environment consultant Helen Roberts had done the math: "The carbon footprint generated by U2's 44 concerts this year (2009) is equal to carbon created by the four band members travelling the 34.125 million miles from Earth to Mars in a passenger plane."

And that's without taking into account the carbon emissions for the same number of concerts in 2010. Of course, it doesn't help that Bono has been telling people that his "prayer is that we become better in looking after our planet."

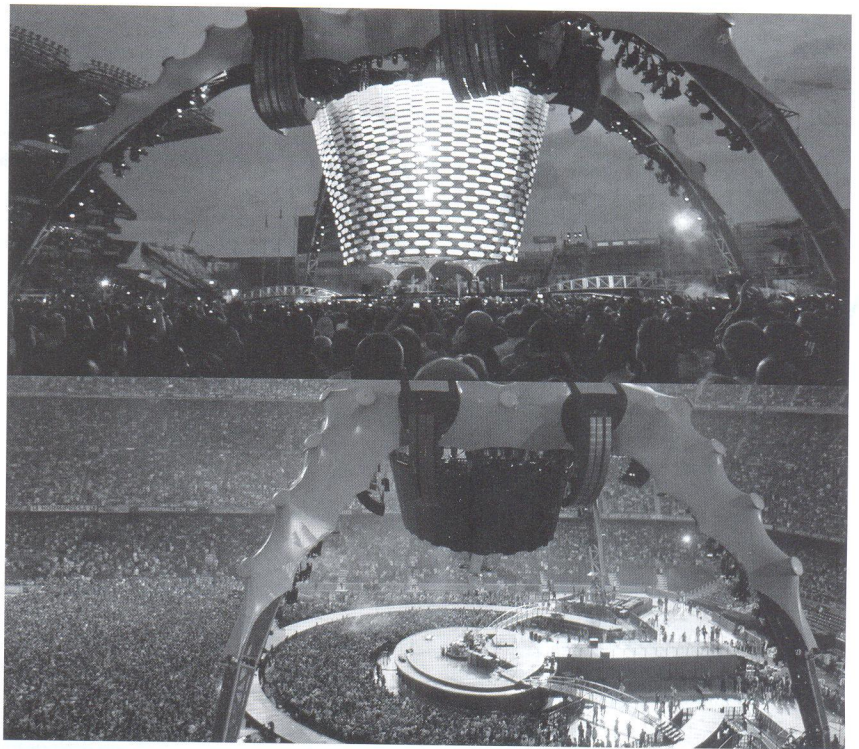
But before we go getting all environmental on Bono's generous arse, U2 have promised that at the end of the tour they will buy enough carbon offsets to make 360° carbon neutral. They are also offering fans the ability to buy their own offsets, and in doing so, are highlighting the "whole idea of carbon offsets with a totally new audience, literally and figuratively."

In addition, Live Nation, the producers of the U2 360° Tour have called on environmental consultancy company MusicMatters as official advisors. Their aim is to reduce the environmental impact of the tour without "compromising the quality of the fan experience." Initiatives include setting up recycling programs and encouraging crew and fans to use hydration stations at tour venues in an effort to reduce plastic bottled water waste.

Mmmmm... no mention of the fact that the tour comes with its own 50m pylon and a much celebrated "carpet" of electrical cables then.

Whilst I applaud U2's efforts towards making the tour carbon neutral, these schemes are the recycling bins of the ozone layer. Yes, planting more trees will help, but not creating it unnecessarily in the first place is still by far the smartest thing to do. And when did touring stop being about the music?

So as U2 attempt to claw their way back to the top, it is with regret that I must declare my relationship with them to be kaput. I'll no doubt drag out Achtung Baby occasionally and reminisce about the summer we spent on a tour bus in Western Europe, but in the words of a once-fine song-smith, "Well it's too late, tonight, to drag the past out into the light."



### Eco Survival Week – Thinking beyond carbon credits

There are hundreds of ways to reduce your carbon footprint without having to pay someone to do it for you, and during this week's **Eco Survival Week** at the UC, we're looking at some simple, practical changes you can make towards greater future-proofing, with gardening and vegetarian cooking workshops taking place on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

And, whether you're a hardcore eco-warrior, or someone who just likes free clothes, the **Clothes Swap** happening in the foyer of the Ballroom, on Wednesday 13 October from 4-6pm, will be a great way to clean out your wardrobe and update it with some hot new spring looks. All are welcome, and afterwards, we'll be celebrating our sartorial successes next door at the Foundry. ←

For more on Eco Survival week

please see: [www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/events/ecoweek.shtml](http://www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/events/ecoweek.shtml)