

'U2' FROM PAGE 19

the guts or even the ability to present himself in any honest way.

"I'm sick of music that is just facade, you put it on and you know exactly what is happening, the guy is just writing off the top of his head, there's no commitment to his work or the ideas he's trying to present, it's just something he thinks is a good lyric, or what have you. It's just empty music."

Controversy always sells, although in a year when we were all meant to be reassessing our lives, the biggest stink raised has been over Frankie Goes To Hollywood. Sing if you're glad...

"Yeah, they're at least different," says the Edge. "We've seen it all before, though, with the Sex Pistols and Bowie. As well as some excellent production, though I may not agree with the ethics of that style of production, basically it's the same old 'creating a scandal through challenging the kind-of middle class values of England'. The really amusing thing is to see how successfully they've done it, how the same old techniques still work."

The slightly vexed issue of Christianity is not something U2 willingly discuss these days. Their beliefs have been misinterpreted, certain media endowing them with a 'squeaky clean' image which is quite inaccurate. But there is no doubting the strength of their faith (three out of four, Adam Clayton being the uncommitted one). Prior to the interview, the Edge questioned me in detail about the state of religion in this country. He is not greatly impressed with the 'born again' types, the Bible bashers with their conservative, often bigoted outlook. His religion is more broad-based, not aligned to any particular church. It is a true Christianity that comes from inside, does not need to be shouted from the rooftops, is both understanding and tolerant, and constantly seeks knowledge. The Edge was born in Wales and when his family shifted to Ireland, they found the Presbyterian church the closest to the Chapel. Bono is from a mixed Catholic-Protestant background.

For the record, we also discussed politics and nuclear weapons in some depth. U2 do not refuse to play concerts on Sundays and the Edge says, jokingly, that he hasn't seen 'Chariots of Fire'. It's actually the first time in two years that he's discussed religion with a journalist, because of the way it's been distorted.

"None of us are ashamed of our upbringings, which are actually about as different as you can get. But essentially, our beliefs are very personal, they don't relate to any organised religion whatsoever. In fact, I don't think any organised religion is up to it, because our beliefs are that Christianity, if it's to work at all, must work on two levels. It must work on an absolutely personal basis, but it must also work for everybody, you can't isolate it for a particular community or geographical location and mould it to suit that. This is what happens in most religions. It becomes small-minded and I just despise that side of church life and religion generally. I think it's so destructive, it's so untypical of God, Him being such a huge concept.

"It's something that is really very difficult to discuss through the media generally, because it's not something that lends itself to being analysed intellectually, or even articulated about, because it's a feeling, it's something that is instinctive.

"The one way that we've found of communicating this side of our lives is through the music, and I think that is one of the only legitimate ways that I have found of communicating it. This is because our music reflects us as individuals, it's something we've always wanted to do. We've never wanted to express ideas or concepts through our music, we've always just wanted to express our own beliefs and our own personalities. I think you can tell a lot about our beliefs by getting to know our music.

"A lot of people used to hope that they would, in an interview situation, learn about our music by understanding our beliefs, but I believe it's the other way round."

The religious references in your music have always seemed rather oblique.

"Yeah, I would hope that is the case. Again, we have never, ever felt in a position to tell people how to run their lives. This is one thing we've always been sure about. What works for us is great, but the idea of ramming it down other people's throats is just so anti-everything that we believe in. Yet at the same time we feel no compunction to hide this thing from people who are interested in our music.

"So the two have to be balanced, obviously, commercially speaking. Christianity is not something you want to promote, as everybody knows, and I'm sure Bob Dylan would back me on this. It just doesn't make good copy in the press. It doesn't sell your records, in fact it can be extremely damaging to a group. But we've never been a group that relies too much on what the press or other people think of our work. It's an extremely self-reliant thing, this group, we've always looked to ourselves for the judgement of whether what we're doing is working.

"We cater for ourselves first, artistically, because I think we're our most ardent critics. We're always extremely hard on ourselves, and if we think it's working, we're pretty accurate. If it's not happening, we'd be the first to say so."

Coming up next month: Meeting Brian Eno, recording in a castle, inspirations and influences, plus an encounter with the infamous Paul Morley.

Duncan Campbell

U2 PRIDE

(In the name of love)



THE NEW SINGLE

AVAILABLE ON 7" &
LIMITED EDITION 12"

'THE UNFORGETTABLE FIRE'

PRODUCED BY BRIAN ENO

DUE SOON

