

THE WORLD'S LEADING MEN'S MAGAZINE

BRITISH

**New Balls
please!**

The reinvention
of Labour's
other Ed

By Matthew, of Ancona

Our 14th Annual
**MEN OF THE
YEAR ISSUE!**

[starring]

U2

Band Of The Year

Photographed for British GQ by Vincent Peters

Holy Land FC

Palestine's
epic battle for
World Cup
qualification

By James Montague

Also starring!

Keith Richards • Rob Brydon • Tinie Tempah • Rory McIlroy • Professor Brian Cox • Bradley Cooper



Men Of The Year
iPad exclusive

Watch! U2 on the set of their GQ cover shoot

U2

Band ◀

This was the year the record-breaking mega-group grew even more colossal, their '360' tour becoming the highest-grossing in history and their Glastonbury set redefining the word 'debut'. So, with no end on the horizon, they take to GQ's main stage

By **Elvis Costello**

Photographs by **Vincent Peters**
Styling by **Sharon Blankson**

One, but not the same: U2, from left - Larry Mullen Jr, Bono, the Edge and Adam Clayton on the road, as ever, Northwest First Place, Wynwood Art District, Miami, 28 June 2011

'The greatest, biggest, baddest band in the world' ELVIS COSTELLO

**Men
Of
The
Year
2011**

Men Of The Year 2011



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hat part of the story do you not know by now? The white flags flown in the smoke of red rocks, the telephone calls from Sarajevo or some other distant orbit, the obsolete cars hung from the rafters, a city constructed on a nightly basis, the deliberately contradictory messages flashing and flickering like a riot of neon and megapixels in a hot Shinjuku night?

Then there is the music.

Glorious early records usually described as anthemic, spiritually aware and even a little earnest. Curious lengths of invention brought into existence by the force of personality.

Like nearly every notable European rock'n'roll band, U2 are less a collective of complementary talents than a collision of misfits, blasting past technical limitations with sheer will. Then, in one mighty bound, they really were the greatest, biggest, baddest band in the world. And they were suddenly funny, heartfelt and big hearted all at the same time.

This is the point at which enters the shallowest observation of the least-enduring quality ascribed to their work: irony. In fact, it was simply the time to go overground with an evolving sense of humour that had bound together a group of friends from the cusp of boyhood to being family men.

So, what is there to say about these individuals?

Well, in the words of Sly Stone, "All we need is a drummer..." And, after all, it was his band, originally...

Larry Mullen Jr is a relentless motor and the necessary sceptic of the group, while the most underrated player in the ensemble, Adam Clayton, proves that good-humoured languor, sobriety and rock'n'roll may not be mutually exclusive. U2 now have songs with indelible melodies and mighty choruses, but even at the outset their sound could always instantly be identified by one element: the Edge's guitar playing. It is ingenious and orchestral but utterly without the self-regarding histrionics of less originally "heroic" players. In fact, his approach to the instrument might even be called a "church" or a "school", were it not too pious a term for one of the finest fellows and most deadpan straight men in music.

Then there's the singer.

Bono's talent as a showman and storyteller is there for all to see, but there are raw and personal moments of songwriting like "Kite" among the hands thrown in the air to soaring cadences amid strobe-lit, skyscraping sets. He has also found a way to use this giant stage to get things done. He is a better man than I, in that he can share the air and shoot the breeze with those who I could cheerfully stab through the heart; to embarrass, persuade, cajole and sometimes get them to do what they should have been doing all along.

Now, there is no more hobbled hobbyhorse than the one that feeds on the old chestnut that the artist abuses a privilege of the stage if they sing a song of conviction or conscience. Pundits will have to stand on a soapbox in order to lob joke-shop arrows at that imagined pulpit. Thankfully, those old devils don't have all the good tunes.

The last time I attended this event, the top table was given over to a gaggle of ladies-in-waiting, being fêted as the political champions of the year. Soon, they made up half the government, the semi-statesmen who dismantle things. I hope U2 enjoy better company.

Because when the manifestos are shredded and the faces on "Wanted" posters, songs will still be sung. You might say that's no big thing, but if 50,000 people are going to shout out a response to a call, then that word had better be "love". There is no better reason to deviate, elevate or celebrate.

My Lord, ladies and gentlemen, charge your glasses and your phone cameras.

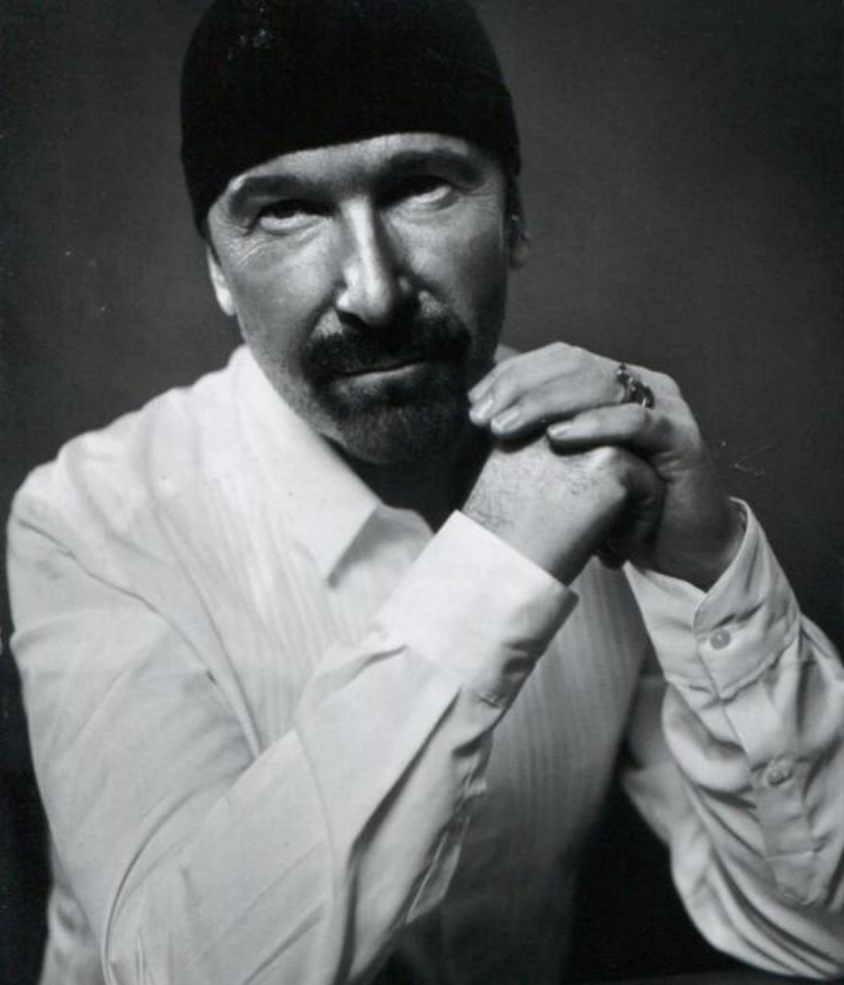
The toast is "U2". **GO**

Opposite, clockwise from top left:

The Edge wears shirt by Dolce & Gabbana, from £180. dolcegabbana.com. Hat, the Edge's own.

Bono wears custom suit by Edun, from £710. edun.com. Shirt by Martin Margiela, from £190. maisonmartinmargiela.com. Tie by Hermès, £100. hermes.com. Sunglasses by Giorgio Armani For Red Campaign. **Larry wears** shirt by Lanvin, £185. lanvin.com. Tie by Hermès, £100.

Adam wears suit by Hermès, £2,500. Shirt by Givenchy By Riccardo Tisci. givenchy.com. Tie by Lanvin, £125.



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