



U2 360 Tour Comes Full Circle: Band Returns to U.S. With Denver Blowout

A full report as the biggest tour of all time heads into the homestretch

by STEVE KNOPPER
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Fortunately, **U2** was prepared for the end of the world. "Sounds like fun to me!" **Bono** told a crowd of 70,000 at Denver's Invesco Field at Mile High, after breaking out, appropriately, "Until the End of the World." The Rapture was no match for opening night on the final leg of U2's 360 Tour – with its massive, metallic, green-and-orange claw structure and tornado-shaped video cylinder suspended above the band – which returned to the U.S. Saturday after a year-long delay. Even two years after the tour's debut, its sensory overload impact remains thrillingly undimmed, with lights everywhere, from LEDs flashing on U2's jackets to the neon-target microphone from which Bono swung during "Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me, Kill Me" and "With Or Without You."

The two-and-a-half-hour show was delayed gratification for the Denver crowd, which had bought tickets for the concert last summer, before Bono had emergency back surgery and had to postpone the entire last U.S. leg of U2's tour. "Things could have been very different. I was in a lot of trouble," he declared before "All I Want Is You." "Through the wonders of science, I'm not just fixed – I'm better." So is the 360 tour, which has sold 7 million tickets and grossed \$700 million since it began in Europe two years ago, making it the biggest-selling tour of all time.

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Musically, the show was stripped-down, minimalist U2. No machine could match the energy of Bono, dressed in black, who sprinted the elaborate maze of catwalks and rotating bridges, delivering Amnesty International speeches and cracking jokes about Judgment Day. He modulated his voice from hymnlike moaning (especially soulful on "Miss Sarajevo," an obscurity from 1995's *Passengers* album, and the Frank Sinatra tribute "Stay (Faraway, So Close!)") to sharp, anthemic vocals ("Beautiful Day," "Vertigo," "Sunday Bloody Sunday" and the opening "Even Better Than the Real Thing").

The Edge wordlessly provided texture, from his classic ringing melodies in "Where the Streets Have No Name" and "Pride (In the Name of Love)" and the slide solo on "Magnificent" to the soulful wah-wah licks on a downtempo version of "Mysterious Ways" and Pete Townshend-ish power chords on

a soaring "Beautiful Day." Bassist Adam Clayton and drummer Larry Mullen Jr., both in white, shifted easily from the electro-bombast of "Zooropa" to the more subtle rhythms of the closing "Moment of Surrender."

Photos: U2 Returns to the U.S. on 360 Tour

The show opened with an intense, amped sequence: "Even Better Than the Real Thing," "I Will Follow" and "Get On Your Boots" (one of four songs from 2009's *No Line On the Horizon*). A lean, tough "Vertigo" led into a reworked, bongo-spiced mash-up of "I'll Go Crazy If I Don't Go Crazy Tonight" and "Discotheque." "Sunday Bloody Sunday" – immortalized not far from Denver on 1983's *Live at Red Rocks* – was followed by "Scarlet," a deep track from 1981's *October*.

During his end-of-the-world spiel, Bono wryly suggested that it would be the Edge, not himself, Mullen or Clayton, who would ascend to the heavens during the rapture. "But then I'd be here with you," he said. Luckily for the rest of us, Edge decided to stick around.

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