

Vertigo

VERTIGO

The band had been recording what was to become *How To Dismantle An Atomic Bomb* for a while when they called me. I saw my job as running the final leg of a relay race. I was known as 'the guy who makes singles', so I wasn't brought on to deal with every song, but as overall producer.

It was an intense time, working on borrowed energy. I'll never forget that tendency U2 have to rely on late-night craziness, with Bono throwing a grenade in whenever you felt you are done. Once, at 3am, they recorded a version of *Fast Cars* that only took 90 minutes. The lyrics gave the album its title.

For U2 to be great, there needs to be magic. Although I don't share Bono's faith, I firmly believe magic is what happens when four people come together and manage to transcend the average. These four musicians have an

amateurishness about them, in a good way, that comes out as a sense of wonder.

They knew they had something good with this album but I wondered if it was missing something of the joy a U2 record has. *Native Son*, which became *Vertigo*, was an example. There was something special within it, and I knew it as much as they did.

I remember once hearing a 'clunk' as Bono suddenly put the microphone down. He announced that the song wasn't good enough and that he wanted to rewrite it.

Bono still starts out by singing everything in what I call 'Bongolese', which doesn't always sound like words. He'll end up trying out 50 different sets of lyrics just for the verses alone. I could always tell when Bono wasn't sure about them. He's a great singer but he always has to believe

in what he's singing. He doesn't do 'fake it to make it'. He can't be the showman who just pretends.

It's not unusual for a song to live or die on a chorus. In this case, it was 'Hello, hello, I'm at a place called Vertigo...' You know the rest. And yet for a time no-one was sure about it.

Eventually, everyone realised we couldn't get a better chorus and when *Vertigo* came together, there was a feeling we had a hit single.

At their best, U2 always convey a sense of, 'We're not sure why this is so good, but it is.' That's the magic.

— Steve Lillywhite

