

= Sunday Bloody Sunday =

" Sunday Bloody Sunday " is a song by the Irish rock band U2 . It is the opening track from their 1983 album War and was released as the album 's third single on 11 March 1983 in Germany and the Netherlands . " Sunday Bloody Sunday " is noted for its militaristic drumbeat , harsh guitar , and melodic harmonies . One of U2 's most overtly political songs , its lyrics describe the horror felt by an observer of the Troubles in Northern Ireland , mainly focusing on the Bloody Sunday incident in Derry where British troops shot and killed unarmed civil rights protesters and bystanders who were there to rally against Operation Demetrius @-@ related internment (imprisonment without trial) , while at the same time rejecting hate and revenge as a response noted in the lyrics , " There 's many lost , but tell me who has won . " Along with " New Year 's Day , " the song helped U2 reach a wider listening audience . It was generally well received by critics on the album 's release .

The song has remained a staple of U2 's live concerts . During its earliest performances , the song created controversy . Lead singer Bono reasserted the song 's anti @-@ sectarian @-@ violence message to his audience for many years . Today , it is considered one of U2 's signature songs , and is one of the band 's most performed tracks . Critics rate it among the best political protest songs , and it has been covered by over a dozen artists . It was named the 272nd @-@ greatest song by Rolling Stone on their list of " The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time . "

= = Writing and recording = =

" Sunday Bloody Sunday " grew from a guitar riff and lyric written by the Edge in 1982 . While newlyweds Bono and Ali Hewson honeymooned in Jamaica , the Edge worked in Ireland on music for the band 's upcoming album . Following an argument with his girlfriend , and a period of doubt in his own song @-@ writing abilities , the Edge ? " feeling depressed ... channelled [his] fear and frustration and self @-@ loathing into a piece of music . " This early draft did not yet have a title or chorus melody , but did contain a structural outline and theme . After Bono had reworked the lyrics , the band recorded the song at Windmill Lane Studios in Dublin . During the sessions , producer Steve Lillywhite encouraged drummer Larry Mullen , Jr. to use a click track , but Mullen was firmly against the idea . A chance meeting with Andy Newmark (of Sly & the Family Stone) ? a drummer who used a click track religiously ? changed Mullen 's mind . The opening drum pattern soon developed into the song 's hook . A local violinist , Steve Wickham , approached the Edge one morning at a bus stop and asked if U2 had any need for a violin on their next album . In the studio for only half a day , Wickham 's electric violin became the final instrumental contribution to the song .

Drummer Mullen said of the song in 1983 :

" We 're into the politics of people , we 're not into politics . Like you talk about Northern Ireland , ' Sunday Bloody Sunday , ' people sort of think , ' Oh , that time when 13 Catholics were shot by British soldiers ' ; that 's not what the song is about . That 's an incident , the most famous incident in Northern Ireland and it 's the strongest way of saying , ' How long ? How long do we have to put up with this ? ' I don 't care who 's who ? Catholics , Protestants , whatever . You know people are dying every single day through bitterness and hate , and we 're saying why ? What 's the point ? And you can move that into places like El Salvador and other similar situations ? people dying . Let 's forget the politics , let 's stop shooting each other and sit around the table and talk about it ... There are a lot of bands taking sides saying politics is crap , etc . Well , so what ! The real battle is people dying , that 's the real battle . "

= = Composition = =

" Sunday Bloody Sunday " is played at a tempo of 103 beats per minute in a 4 / 4 time signature . The song opens with a militaristic drumbeat and electric violin part ; the aggressive snare drum rhythm closely resembles a beat used to keep a military band in step . The distinctive drum sound was achieved by recording Mullen 's drumwork at the base of a staircase , producing a more natural

reverb . It is followed by the Edge 's repeating arpeggios (see notation at left) . The riff , which follows a Bm ? D ? G6 chord progression , establishes the minor chord territory of the piece . As the song progresses , the lyrics and guitar become more furious . The guitar riff has been described as the " bone @-@ crushing arena @-@ rock riff of the decade " by Rolling Stone . A bass drum kick on every beat provides the musical foundation until the first chorus , when Adam Clayton 's bass guitar enters .

In contrast to the violent nature of the verses , the emergence of major chords creates a feeling of hope during Bono 's " How long , how long must we sing this song ? " refrain . During the chorus , the Edge 's backing vocals further develop this tread , using a harmonic imitative echo . The snare drum is absent from this section , and the guitar parts are muted . This part of the song deviates musically from the raw aggression seen in the song 's verses and gives the song a more uplifting structure . Bono once commented that " love is ... a central theme " of " Sunday Bloody Sunday "

The band have said the lyrics refer to the events of both Bloody Sunday and Bloody Sunday (in 1972 and 1920 , respectively) , but are not specifically about either event . The song takes the standpoint of someone horrified by the cycle of violence in the province . Bono rewrote the Edge 's initial lyrics , attempting to contrast the two events with Easter Sunday , but he has said that the band were too inexperienced at the time to fully realise that goal , noting that " it was a song whose eloquence lay in its harmonic power rather than its verbal strength . "

Early versions opened with the line " Don 't talk to me about the rights of the IRA , UDA . " U2 's bassist , Adam Clayton , recalls that better judgment led to the removal of such a politically charged line , and that the song 's " viewpoint became very humane and non @-@ sectarian ... which , is the only responsible position . " The chosen opening line , " I can 't believe the news today " crystallises the prevailing response , especially among young people , to the violence in Northern Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s . In successive stanzas , the lyrics paraphrase religious text from Matthew 10 : 35 (" mother 's children ; brothers , sisters torn apart ") and bring a twist to 1 Corinthians 15 : 32 (" we eat and drink while tomorrow they die " , instead of " let us eat and drink ; for tomorrow we die ") . The song finishes with a call for the Irish to stop fighting each other , and " claim the victory Jesus won ... on [a] Sunday bloody Sunday . "

= = Reception = =

U2 were aware when they decided to record " Sunday Bloody Sunday " that its lyrics could be misinterpreted as sectarian , and possibly place them in danger . Some of the Edge 's original lyrics explicitly spoke out against violent rebels , but were omitted to protect the group . Even without these lyrics , some listeners still considered it to be a rebel song ? even one which glorifies the events of the two Bloody Sundays to which the lyrics refer .

Commercially , the single had its biggest impact in the Netherlands , where it reached number 3 on the national charts . In the US , the song gained significant album @-@ oriented rock radio airplay , and together with the earlier " New Year 's Day " helped expose U2 to a mainstream American rock audience .

Critical reception to the song was positive . In the Irish magazine Hot Press , Liam Mackey wrote that " Sunday Bloody Sunday " " takes the widescreen view ... a powerful riff and machine @-@ gun drumming [is] crisscrossed by skipping violin . " Denise Sullivan commented for Allmusic that Mullen 's opening drumwork " helps set the tone for the unforgiving , take @-@ no @-@ prisoners feel of the song , as well as for the rest of the album . "

= = Live performances = =

" Sunday Bloody Sunday " has been performed more than 600 times by U2 . It was first heard by a live audience in December 1982 in Glasgow , Scotland , on a twenty @-@ one show " Pre @-@ War Tour . " The band were particularly nervous about playing the song in Belfast , Northern Ireland . Upon introducing the song there at the Maysfield Leisure Centre , Bono promised to " never play it again " if the crowd didn 't like it . The crowd overwhelmingly enjoyed the song ; the Edge recalls

that " the place went nuts , it drew a really positive reaction . " , also saying that " We thought a lot about the song before we played it in Belfast and Bono told the audience that if they didn 't like it then we 'd never play it again . Out of the 3 @,@ 000 people in the hall about three walked out . I think that says a lot about the audience 's trust in us . " The band remained apprehensive , however . Even by the song 's sixth performance , Bono was introducing the song with the statement " This song is not a rebel song . "

Throughout 1983 's War Tour , Bono continued to reassure audiences that " This song is not a rebel song , this song is ' Sunday Bloody Sunday ' " highlighting the non @-@ partisan intentions of the lyrics . The live performances on this tour featured a routine during which Bono would set a white flag in the front of the stage while the band vamped three chords ? B minor , D major , and G major . (though the band traditionally tune their instruments down a half step so the chords are B flat minor , D flat and G Flat) . As the band vamped , Bono would sing " no more ! " with the audience . These performances were highly effective with U2 's audience (at the time , U2 were most popular as a college rock act) . Live performances of the song subsequently appeared on their 1983 live album Under a Blood Red Sky and their concert film Live at Red Rocks : Under a Blood Red Sky . In the Unforgettable Fire Tour of 1984 and 1985 , " Sunday Bloody Sunday " continued to be a prominent midpoint of each U2 concert ? as did the " no more ! " interlude . Along with a performance of " Bad , " the song was performed at Live Aid in July 1985 .

As U2 reached new levels of fame in 1987 with The Joshua Tree , " Sunday Bloody Sunday " continued to be a focal point of concerts . Some performances featured slower , more contemplative versions of the song ; other concerts saw the wilder , more violent version . This tour marked the first time " Sunday Bloody Sunday " was played in Northern Ireland since 1982 , and it has not been performed there since .

The 1988 rockumentary Rattle and Hum includes a particularly renowned version of the song , recorded on 8 November 1987 at McNichols Sports Arena in Denver , Colorado . On this version Bono 's mid @-@ song rant angrily and emphatically condemns the Remembrance Day Bombing that had occurred earlier that same day in the Northern Irish town of Enniskillen :

After the Joshua Tree Tour , Bono was heard saying the band might never play the song again , because the song was " made real " with the performance in Denver , and it could never be matched again . Following their original intent , " Sunday Bloody Sunday " was not played during any of the forty @-@ seven shows on the Lovetown Tour in 1989 . The song reappeared for a brief period during the Zoo TV Tour , and late during the second half of PopMart Tour (1997 ? 1998) , U2 played an emotional concert in war @-@ ravaged Sarajevo that included a solo performance of the song by the Edge . " Sunday Bloody Sunday " was subsequently played live in this style until the end of the tour in March 1998 .

" Sunday Bloody Sunday " was played at every concert on the 2001 Elevation and 2005 ? 2006 Vertigo tours . Performances in 2001 frequently included parts of Bob Marley 's " Get Up , Stand Up " and " Johnny Was " . A memorable mid @-@ song message referencing the Omagh bombing of 1998 (" Turn this song into a prayer ! ") is captured on the live DVD U2 Go Home : Live from Slane Castle . In concerts in New York City after the September 11 , 2001 attacks , the " no more ! " interlude was replaced by Bono holding an American flag .

" Sunday Bloody Sunday " was used during the Vertigo Tour of 2005 and 2006 , often alongside " Bullet the Blue Sky " and " Love and Peace or Else " as a trio of politically driven songs performed during the middle part of the band 's set . Bono extended the " no more ! " interlude to explain a headband he had donned in the previous song . The headband depicted the word " coexist " (written to depict a crescent , a Star of David , and a Christian cross) . The Coexist symbol is trademarked in the United States by an LLP in Indiana , and the original artwork was created in 2001 by a Polish artist . As with the 2001 shows , the Vertigo tour saw the song applied to subjects further afield than The Troubles in Northern Ireland . During 2006 Australian shows , in Brisbane , Bono asked for Australian Terrorism suspect David Hicks to be brought home and tried under Australian laws . In subsequent Australian concerts he dedicated the song to the victims of the 2002 Bali bombings ? where 88 of the fatalities were Australians ? saying ' This is your song now ! ' . The song was also performed at every concert on the U2 360 ° Tour , paying tribute to the 2009 Iranian

election protests on each occasion by projecting scenes from the protests and Persian writing in green on the video screen .

= = Music video = =

Although a promotional music video had not been produced for the original release , the band used footage from a 5 June 1983 live performance filmed for the concert film U2 Live at Red Rocks : Under a Blood Red Sky to promote the song . Directed by Gavin Taylor , the video displays Bono 's use of a white flag during performances of the song . The video highlights the intensity and emotion felt by many audience members during U2 's concerts , while the rainy , torch @-@ lit setting in Colorado 's Red Rocks Amphitheatre further adds to the atmosphere . In 2004 , Rolling Stone cited the performance as one " 50 Moments that Changed the History of Rock and Roll " and noted that " the sight of Bono singing the anti @-@ violence anthem ' Sunday Bloody Sunday ' while waving a white flag through crimson mist (created by a combination of wet weather , hot lights and the illumination of those crags) became the defining image of U2 's warrior @-@ rock spirit and ? shown in heavy rotation on MTV ? broke the band nationwide . "

= = Other releases = =

The album version of " Sunday Bloody Sunday " was originally included on War , but it can also be heard on a number of promotional releases , including the compilations The Best of 1980 @-@ 1990 and U218 Singles . Several live versions have been released ; the video available on Live at Red Rocks : Under a Blood Red Sky is from a performance at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in June 1983 , but the version on the live album Under a Blood Red Sky is from a performance in August 1983 . Audio from the Sarajevo concert of 1997 is featured as a b @-@ side on 1997 's single " If God Will Send His Angels . " The song also appears on Rattle and Hum , PopMart : Live from Mexico City , Elevation 2001 : Live from Boston , U2 Go Home : Live from Slane Castle , Vertigo 2005 : Live from Chicago , Live from Paris , U2 3D , U2 360 ° at the Rose Bowl and in the closing credits of the 2002 TV film Bloody Sunday . The only concert films that " Sunday Bloody Sunday " does not appear on are Zoo TV : Live from Sydney and Vertigo 05 : Live from Milan .

= = Legacy = =

The song appears in the closing credits of the 2002 biopic Bloody Sunday .

In 2010 , Rolling Stone ranked " Sunday Bloody Sunday " 272nd on its list of " The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time . " In 2006 , Q named " Sunday Bloody Sunday " the 18th @-@ greatest song of the 1980s . The staff of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame selected " Sunday Bloody Sunday " as one of 500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll . The New Statesman listed it as one of the Top 20 Political Songs , and similarly , Time named it one of the Top 10 Protest Songs .

In 2007 , The Roots covered " Sunday Bloody Sunday " in a medley with " Pride (In the Name of Love) " for an NAACP dinner honouring Bono . While the band played the song , Black Thought rapped lines from the band 's own " False Media " and bits of Edwin Starr 's " War " .

In 2008 , Jay @-@ Z sampled " Sunday Bloody Sunday " in a version of " Heart of the City " performed at the Glastonbury Festival . During a version of " Sunday Bloody Sunday " performed by the band at the 2009 MTV Europe Music Awards , Jay @-@ Z improvised lyrics over the breakdown in the song before including a snippet of " Get Up , Stand Up . "

= = Track listings = =

" Sunday Bloody Sunday " was commercially released throughout most of Europe in support of U2 's album War . Its cover art is the same as that of " Two Hearts Beat as One , " except on the Japan release . The B @-@ side on the single , " Endless Deep , " is one of the few U2 songs that features bassist Adam Clayton singing .

= = Personnel = =

Bono ? lead vocals

The Edge ? guitar , backing vocals

Adam Clayton ? bass guitar

Larry Mullen , Jr . ? drums

Steve Wickham ? electric violin

= = Chart positions = =