

= Acrobat (song) =

" Acrobat " is a song by rock band U2 . It is the eleventh track on their 1991 album Achtung Baby . The critical failure of Rattle and Hum (1988) led the band to seek a harder sound in their music . The song developed from a riff created by guitarist The Edge , and is played in a 12 ? 8 time signature . Thematically the song contains elements of hypocrisy , alienation , and moral confusion . " Acrobat " has never been performed live , although it was rehearsed prior to the third leg of the Zoo TV Tour .

= = Inspiration , writing , and recording = =

Lead singer Bono was influenced by the work of Delmore Schwartz when writing the lyrics of " Acrobat " , to whom the song is dedicated . The title of one of his short stories , In Dreams Begin Responsibilities , is quoted in the final verse . Bono noted the book " was on my mind when I was writing the words ... It 's hard to wrap the book up in a few lines , but Delmore Schwartz is kind of a formalist ... I 'm the opposite . I 'm in the mud as a writer , so I could do with a bit of [Schwartz] , and that 's why I enjoy him . " The song was developed from a riff guitarist The Edge developed during a soundcheck in Auckland , New Zealand , on the Lovetown Tour in 1989 . He noted that the beat is unusual for a U2 song , saying it " was the jumping off point , to try and do something with an unusual beat . "

Producer Daniel Lanois became disoriented with the direction U2 took " Acrobat " during its recording . Bono noted " Daniel had such a hard time on that ... he was trying to get us to play to our strengths and I didn 't want to . I wanted to play to our weaknesses . I wanted to experiment . " Bono noted that the end product " doesn 't quite get off the ground the way I 'd hoped it would . " An early mix of the track was included on some versions of the 20th anniversary reissue of Achtung Baby . The mix , titled " ' Baby ' Acrobat " , contained lyrics that were later modified to a different perspective (" You know I 'd hit out if I only knew who to hit " instead of the final " I know you 'd hit out if you only knew who to hit ") or scrapped entirely (" If the sky turns to purple and the moon turns to blood / Will you dig me out when I 'm face down in the mud ") .

The song has never been performed live , although it was rehearsed extensively in an acoustic form prior to the third leg of the Zoo TV Tour in 1992 . The end of the song segued into the beginning of " Zoo Station " , leading concert historian Pimm Jal de la Parra to speculate that it was being considered to open the set . In 2006 , The Edge said " it never became a live favourite ... I don 't think that is what people come to U2 for . " In 2012 , Willie Williams , U2 's lighting designer and concert director , described the rehearsed version as " extremely dramatic " , saying " in a stadium situation it could be argued that it might have the same dramatic impact as walking out on stage and telling the audience to fuck off . "

= = Composition and theme = =

" Acrobat " is played in a 12 ? 8 time signature . The Edge noted " it 's a very Irish time signature , it 's used in a lot of traditional Irish music , but in rock and roll you don 't really hear it that much . "

U2 's 1987 album The Joshua Tree and the supporting Joshua Tree Tour brought them critical acclaim and commercial success . However , their 1988 album and motion picture Rattle and Hum precipitated a critical backlash . Although the record sold 14 million copies and performed well on music charts , critics were dismissive of it and the film . Hot Press editor Niall Stokes commented " having started out as a band in the slipstream of punk , U2 remembered what they had felt about the supergroups of the late ' 70s . Were they now about to become what they had despised ? " In the time leading up to the start of the Achtung Baby sessions , U2 listened to records which had a " hard @-@ edged industrial kind of sound " , including works by KMFDM and Sonic Youth , as well as artists such as Roy Orbison and Jacques Brel . These influences led the band to seek the creation of songs which were harder musically than their previous work , while remaining personal lyrically .

" Acrobat " is one of the most personal songs on Achtung Baby with Bono acknowledging personal

weakness , contradictions , and inadequacy . The Edge noted that the song contained " a bit of venom " , likening it to " the bitter , John Lennon tradition of ' Working Class Hero ' , slightly snarling and cynical . " Bono stated " as we moved from the eighties to the nineties , I stopped throwing rocks at the obvious symbols of power and the abuse of it . I started throwing rocks at my own hypocrisy ... ' Acrobat ' [goes] ' Don 't believe what you hear , don 't believe what you see / If you just close your eyes / You can feel the enemy ... ' I can 't remember it , but the point is : you start to see the world in a different way , and you 're part of the problem , not just part of the solution " . In 2006 , he noted it was " a song about being a hypocrite , and I think we all can be and I certainly have been . And you know , you exact very high standards on people in the world but then you don 't live them personally " , noting the theme was most evident in the lyric " I must be an acrobat to talk like this and act like that " . Hot Press editor Niall Stokes felt The Edge 's guitar playing combined elements of " Where the Streets Have No Name " with " Bullet the Blue Sky " . Speaking of its theme he said " at its heart is an awareness of the ravages of time , and what it does to people and to relationships . But beyond that , there is the self @-@ awareness that , itself , comes only with experience ... Bono acknowledges his own weakness and inadequacy . He is more conscious now than ever before of the contradictions in his own position . " Andy Greene of Rolling Stone believed the " aggressive and venomous " song reflected Bono 's thoughts during the album sessions , saying " Nearly every lyric brims with rage ... It was a new decade and it was quite possible they were about to be dismissed as a relic of the past . "

U2 biographer Bill Flanagan credits Bono 's habit of keeping his lyrics " in flux until the last minute " with providing a narrative coherence to the album . Flanagan interpreted Achtung Baby as using the moon as a metaphor for a dark woman seducing the singer away from his virtuous love , the sun ; he is tempted away from domestic life by an exciting nightlife and tests how far he can go before returning home . For Flanagan , the final three songs on Achtung Baby ? " Ultraviolet (Light My Way) " , " Acrobat " , and " Love Is Blindness " ? are about how the couple deal with the suffering they have forced on each other . Hot Press writer Joe Jackson felt that the song was dominated by a theme of moral confusion . Author John Luerksen believed the song was about " the fight to persevere " . He added it " was long on piss and vinegar , as evidenced by its snarling , cynical approach . "

Craig Delancey , an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York , cited the conclusion of " Acrobat " as an example of how rock music can be " profoundly successful at evoking the mixture of anger and contempt that can keep you going in the face of seemingly overwhelming opposition . " He noted that " the powerful closing sentiments of Achtung Baby 's ' Acrobat ' can help us feel motivated and empowered in the face of powers that want us to feel powerless . " Timothy Cleveland , the Head of the Philosophy Department at New Mexico State University , wrote that the opening lyric was an introspection of the self . He noted " here feeling is contrasted with perceptual states that make one aware of the world around them . The ' enemy ' that one can feel is oneself . ' To feel ' in this case refers to a kind of awareness one has of oneself independent of the sensations of the outside world ... Like perceptual feeling it is a kind of direct awareness and so a kind of knowledge by acquaintance . "

Robyn Brothers felt the line " I 'd break bread and wine / If there was a church I could receive in " referenced feelings of spiritual alienation . She compared the song to " Zooropa " , stating that both reference a response to uncertainty and an unavoidable feeling of alienation . Writing for Uncut , Gavin Martin wondered if the lyric " What are going to do now it 's all been said ? / No new ideas in the house , and every book has been read " was an examination of the band 's longevity , stating " Bono sounded fragile , wounded , seeming even to ponder the band 's usefulness . " He noted that it contained references to both Holy Communion and oral sex , and compared it to " The Fly " , noting that both songs were " delivered in an amoral voice " and helped to deconstruct the prevailing image of the band . Artist Gavin Friday , a childhood friend of Bono , thought the chorus line " Don 't let the bastards grind you down " was a retaliation to the criticism of the press . Elizabeth Wurtzel of The New Yorker felt the line gave the song a political , martyr @-@ complex . She noted that it eventually " unfurls as a song about love facing the long run . It comes as a relief to discover , after all this time , that the guys in U2 are as hormonally charged and concerned with love as the rest of

us . "

== Reception ==

" Acrobat " received mixed reception from critics . The Kitchener Record felt that the song added to the band 's " tremendous presence " , saying that it showed the band 's commitment to each individual song and that it " indicates a very clear evolution in Bono 's lyricism and the band 's clear artistic focus . " Bono named it one of his favourite U2 songs , a sentiment that The Edge agreed with . Stokes said " For most writers , ' Acrobat ' would have been a slow song ... it was a brave attempt by a rock ' n ' roll band to find a distinctive , hard edge , for what was essentially another love song . " Martin rated the track 4 stars , describing it as " deliciously dark " . Steve Morse of the Boston Globe felt it was one of the album 's " exceptional love songs " . Greg Potter of The Vancouver Sun believed it " sums up Bono 's lyrical direction and mindset better than any song on the album ... alluding to the theory that true contentment must begin from within . " Jon Pareles of the New York Times had a more negative opinion of the song , calling the lyrics " pompous " . Bill Wyman of Entertainment Weekly was similarly dissenting , stating " ' Acrobat ' ? formless and overwrought ? is just a mess . "

The theme of moral confusion cited by Jackson was later used in U2 's song " Zooropa " , from the 1993 album of the same name . The coda in " Zooropa " features the lyric " dream out loud " , which Bono included as a reference to " Acrobat " . The phrase " dream out loud " was first used by Bono during the Lovetown Tour in 1989 , and has appeared several times in U2 's work since then , including the song " Always " ? a B @-@ side to the " Beautiful Day " single released in 2000 ? and being spoken by Bono in the PopMart : Live from Mexico City concert release .

During the fifth episode of the fifteenth series of Top Gear , presenter Jeremy Clarkson used " Acrobat " in his film commemorating the life of the late Formula One champion Ayrton Senna . The piece was set against a montage of Senna duelling with Nigel Mansell , including their close battle in the final laps of the 1992 Monaco Grand Prix . The song was covered by the Dutch band Kane on their 2000 live album With or Without You . A rendition by Glasvegas appears on the 2011 tribute album AHK @-@ toong BAY @-@ bi Covered .

== Covers ==

Glasvegas reworked the song for the 2011 tribute album AHK @-@ toong BAY @-@ bi Covered . " Doing this , I was fantasising I was Bono , shades and all , " remarked singer James Allan . " I was singing the line , ' Don 't let the bastards drag you down , ' feeling determined rather than angry . Before we started , Rab (Allan , guitarist) said , ' What are you thinking about this U2 cover ? ' I said , ' Ach , it 'll be easy : just make it sound bigger than U2 . ' .

== Personnel ==