

= Exit ( U2 song ) =

" Exit " is a song by rock band U2 . It is the tenth track on their 1987 album The Joshua Tree . " Exit " was developed from a lengthy jam that was recorded in a single take and edited down to a shorter arrangement . The lyrics , which portray the mind of a serial killer , were inspired by lead singer Bono 's reading of Norman Mailer 's 1980 novel The Executioner 's Song , and other related works . In his trial for the murder of Rebecca Schaeffer , Robert John Bardo used " Exit " as part of his defence , claiming the song had influenced his actions .

" Exit " was frequently played live on The Joshua Tree Tour , but has been performed on just one occasion since then . Live performances are depicted in the 1988 film Rattle and Hum and the 2007 video and live album Live from Paris .

= = Writing and recording = =

" Exit " was created on the final day of recording for The Joshua Tree . It developed from a lengthy jam that the band recorded in a single take . Producer Brian Eno edited the jam down to the end length . Guitarist the Edge said " it started off as an exercise in playing together with a kind of mood and a place in mind . And it really , for me , it brought me there , it really did succeed as an experiment . " Producer Daniel Lanois said " There 's something that happens when U2 bash it out in the band room ... and sometimes things get out of control , sonically , in a good way . Out of control in the sense that you don 't know what it is anymore , it just takes on a life of its own , and it makes people do things . " Speaking of the jam , he noted " it was a long jam , and there was just this one section of it that had some kind of magic to it , and we just decided to turn it into something . "

The lyrics were inspired by Norman Mailer 's 1980 Pulitzer Prize @-@ winning novel The Executioner 's Song , written about serial killer Gary Gilmore , and by Truman Capote 's 1966 novel In Cold Blood . Lead singer Bono had read both novels and wanted to try and write " a story in the mind of a killer " . Further reading of Flannery O 'Connor and Raymond Carver caused him to try and understand " the ordinary stock first and then the outsiders , the driftwood ? those on the fringes of the promised land , cut off from the American dream . " Bono described the lyrics as " just a short story really , except I left out a few of the verses because I liked it as a sketch . It 's just about a guy who gets an idea into his head . He picks it up off a preacher on the radio or something and goes out ... " . He noted that , although 30 songs were in contention for inclusion on the album , he " wanted a song with that sense of violence in it , especially before ' Mothers of the Disappeared ' . "

= = Composition and theme = =

" Exit " runs for 4 : 13 . It is played in common time at a tempo of 120 beats per minute .

" Exit " portrays the mind of a psychotic killer . Hot Press editor Niall Stokes stated the song " trawls the area occupied by either or both [ Gilmore and Manson ] , getting inside the head of a protagonist who 's careening into psychosis . " He added that the point of " Exit " was " to convey the state of mind of someone driven , by whatever powerful urges , to the very brink of desperation . " Stokes felt that " the undercurrent of religious imagery " in the song was a response to " the fanaticism implicit in faith " , and that the song allowed U2 to " [ purge their ] own demons , their own anger and fury at the vicissitudes fate had thrust upon them . Another Hot Press contributor , Bill Graham , said " Exit " allowed U2 to " finally confess their gradual recognition of the Anti @-@ Christ in everybody . "

Bassist Adam Clayton said the line " He saw the hands that build could also pull down " was a jab at the US government 's conflicting roles in international relations . Two songs from The Joshua Tree , " Bullet the Blue Sky " and " Mothers of the Disappeared " , focused on the foreign policy of the United States . In describing " Exit " , Bono said " It is all very well to address America and the violence that is an aggressive foreign policy but to really understand that you have to get under the skin of your own darkness , the violence we all contain within us . Violence is something I have quite

a bit about . I have a side of me which , in a corner , can be very violent . It 's the least attractive thing in anyone and I wanted to own up to that . "

Don McLeese of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times believed " Exit " " [ suggests ] the evil that can result from moral self @-@ righteousness . " Music journalist Bill Graham wrote " For the first time , [ Bono ] was owning up to the dangers of the dualism implicit in Christianity " , comparing the song 's spiritual and musical tone to that of the Virgin Prunes . David Werther , a faculty associate in Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin ? Madison , compared " Exit " with U2 's 1991 song " Until the End of the World " in an examination of the role music can play in catharsis . He noted that both were powerful songs , but that while " Until the End of the World " allowed the possibility of purification , which he described as the cleansing of the soul " through pity and fear " , by placing the listener in the position of Judas Iscariot , " Exit " was an example of purgation , a freeing from excess pity and fear . Werther noted " ' Exit ' evokes feelings of fear , fear of losing control , giving into one 's dark side , perhaps even taking one 's life " , contrasting it to the " waves of regret " experienced by Judas .

= = Reception = =

" Exit " received mixed to positive reception from critics . Colin Hogg of The New Zealand Herald described the song as a " decidedly scary ... guitar @-@ driven barrage " . Divina Infusino of The San Diego Union @-@ Tribune described it as " blistering " . Tony Perry of The Patriot @-@ News felt it was one of the low points of the album , stating " ' Exit ' ... crescendoes into little more than noise " , a sentiment echoed by Lennox Samuels of The Dallas Morning News who called it " a dull piece " . Writing for the Orange County Registrar , Jim Washburn and Noel Davis called it " a journey through a killer 's mind , made harrowing not so much by Hewson 's creepy @-@ religio lyrics as by the band 's ( still the Edge , drummer Larry Mullen and bassist Adam Clayton ) overdriven backing , which practically boils right out of the pot . " Thom Duffy of the Orlando Sentinel labelled the song 's atmosphere " eerie " .

Richard Harrington of The Washington Post called it " metaphorically ambivalent " . Barbara Jaeger of The Bergen Record called Clayton 's bassline " ominous " . Stokes described it as " the antithesis of [ U2 's ] bright , ringing , optimistic , inspirational selves , it was dirty , loud , discordant , repetitive , noisy , black . If the intention was to invoke a sense of evil abroad , then it was effective " . Graham said " ' Exit ' should have exploded the myth of U2 as the nice guys of rock . Never had they shown such a vicious streak or produced such a withering track .... Far more than even ' Bullet the Blue Sky ' , [ the Edge 's ] playing is scratching at the prison bars of polished good taste " , describing it as the wild card of the album . Author John Luerksen contrasted it to the rest of the band 's catalogue , saying " Unlike most of the songs U2 had written up to this point , ' Exit ' lacked any optimism . " Hot Press contributor Colm O 'Hare felt the claims by Bardo evoked memories of Charles Manson 's use of " Helter Skelter " , and contained " even more sinister shades " of the death of John Lennon . In Rolling Stone , Steve Pond argued it was " awkward enough to remind you that not even Patti Smith could regularly pull off this sort of thing . "

Although " Exit " was not released as a single it charted in the Netherlands , peaking at number 46 after two weeks .

= = Live performances = =

U2 debuted " Exit " on 8 March 1987 for a broadcast of The Old Grey Whistle Test . Bono introduced it as " a song about a religious man , a fanatic , who gets into his head the idea he calls ' the hands of love ' . " It was next performed on 2 April 1987 in Tempe , Arizona , during the first concert of The Joshua Tree Tour . Clayton noted that the manner in which they created the song inadvertently caused a problem for U2 , saying " when you 're in a touring situation you have to learn numbers that were never actually written so much as spontaneously created . " " Exit " was played at all 109 concerts on the tour , and was frequently followed by a snippet of the Them song " Gloria " , which was written by Van Morrison Following the conclusion of the Joshua Tree Tour , U2

performed " Exit " on only one more occasion ; 14 October 1989 in Melbourne , Australia , on the Lovetown Tour , almost two years after the previous performance of the song . In 2007 , U2 's manager Paul McGuinness said that the song had been " slightly tainted " after the trial of Robert John Bardo , speculating that it had fallen out of favour with the band following the incident .

In 2006 , Bono stated " When things aren 't going right and I 'm feeling like we 're not communicating , I go through terrible things on stage . " He likened his emotions on those occasions to " a big blackness " , and found that performing the song helped him to purge them from his mind on some occasions . Several scenes in the 1988 film Rattle and Hum depict Bono with his arm in a sling , a result of his falling and dislocating his shoulder during a performance of " Exit " on 20 September 1987 in Washington . The concert was being filmed for the movie , and the Edge stated that " the show was not going well " . Bono fell while running across the stage " in an attempt to try and get something going " . Recalling the incident , Bono said " [ ' Exit ' ] had taken me to some ugly place ... but it was rage that caused it . That was when I realized rage is an expensive thing for your general well @-@ being . " On another occasion he said " I just want to take a bath after we do that . I just want to wash it off my skin . " Graham wrote that " performances of ' Exit ' would grow ever more fraught and purgative . "

David Zimmerman of USA Today believed the live performance of " Exit " helped to showcase Mullen 's drumming skills , which he described as " more assertive than ever " . McLeese described the live rendition as " harder , more aggressive and more explosive than much of the band 's earlier music . " Jon Bream of the Star Tribune said " it galvanized the crowd in much the same way that U2 had in its legendary performances at Live Aid in 1985 " , believing that it helped to focus the band 's energy .

A live performance of " Exit " , recorded on 8 November 1987 in Denver , Colorado , appears as the fourth song in the 1988 film Rattle and Hum . Another live performance of the song , played on 4 July 1987 at the Hippodrome de Vincennes in Paris , was broadcast live on television . It was later released on the video and live album Live from Paris in 2007 .

= = Trial of Robert John Bardo = =

Robert John Bardo , an American from Tucson , Arizona , became obsessed with actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1986 after sending her a letter that same year . After witnessing her in a love scene in the 1989 film Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills , Bardo stated that the film " ruined this innocent image of her . " He paid a private investigator to find out her home address and began to stalk her , and on 18 July 1989 , he travelled to Schaeffer 's home and murdered her .

Park Elliott Dietz , a psychiatrist who had worked on the case of John Hinckley , Jr. following his assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan , was assigned to work with Bardo . He told that court that Bardo claimed " Exit " had influenced his actions . According to the Associated Press , when the song was played in court " Bardo , who had sat motionless through the trial , sprang to life ... He grinned , bobbed to the music , pounded his knee like a drum and mouthed the lyrics . " Bardo was convicted of first @-@ degree murder .

Bono said he did not feel responsible that a U2 song was used in a murder defence , but stated " I still feel that you have to go down those streets in your music . If that 's where the subject is taking you , you have to follow . At least in the imagination . I 'm not sure I want to get down there to live . I 'll take a walk occasionally , and have a drink with the devil , but I 'm not moving in with him . " The Edge said that the song 's defence in the trial was " very heavy " , stating " Should any artist hold back from putting out something because he 's afraid of what somebody else might do as a result of his work ? I would hate to see censorship come in , whether from the government or , from my point of view , personal . "

= = Personnel = =