

= Zoo Station ( song ) =

" Zoo Station " is a song by the rock band U2 . It is the opening track from their 1991 album Achtung Baby , a record on which the group reinvented themselves musically by incorporating influences from alternative rock , industrial , and electronic dance music . As the album 's opening track , " Zoo Station " introduces the band 's new sound , delivering industrial @-@ influenced percussion and several layers of distorted guitars and vocals . Similarly , the lyrics suggest the group 's new intents and anticipations . The introduction , featuring an " explosion " of percussion and a descending glissando for a guitar hook , was meant to make the listener think the album was mistakenly not U2 's latest record or that their music player was broken .

The song 's lyrics were inspired by a surrealistic story about Berlin from World War II that lead vocalist Bono heard , when overnight bombing damaged the zoo and allowed animals to escape and wander around the city 's rubble . Bono was also inspired by the city 's Berlin Zoologischer Garten railway station and used it as a metaphor for a reuniting Germany . " Zoo Station " was performed as the opening song at every concert on U2 's Zoo TV Tour . The song received positive reviews from critics , many of whom analysed the song as a representation of the band 's reinvention .

= = Writing and recording = =

Following difficult recording sessions at Hansa Studios in Berlin in late 1990 , U2 undertook the second phase of the recording sessions for Achtung Baby in Dublin . They struggled with the song " Lady With the Spinning Head " ( later released as a B @-@ side ) , but three separate tracks , " Zoo Station " , " Ultraviolet ( Light My Way ) " and " The Fly " , were derived from it . The band ultimately decided to take " Zoo Station " in a more industrial direction than " Lady With the Spinning Head " .

" Zoo Station " came together near the end of the recording sessions when audio engineer Flood was mixing the song and introduced distortion to the drums . The song 's direction was largely influenced by the production team of Daniel Lanois , Brian Eno , and Flood . Lead vocalist Bono had been disappointed with his vocals from early recording sessions for the album and told the production team , " Let 's just try something that 's gonna put me in a completely different place " . After they distorted his voice to make it sound as if it were coming from a megaphone , Bono was inspired to sing in a persona , as the effect gave his vocals a different " emotional feel " . Flood mixed the final track with the assistance of Shannon Strong . Along with Robbie Adams , Strong also assisted Flood with engineering . Lanois provided additional guitar during recording .

With Achtung Baby , the group sought to recover some of the Dadaist characters and stage antics they had dabbled with in the late 1970s as teenagers . U2 had abandoned these ideas for more literal themes in the 1980s . However , for the new album , the band was interested in no longer making obvious sense . Accordingly , the lyrics for " Zoo Station " were inspired by the surrealism of a story about Berlin during World War II that Bono heard . Animals escaped the city 's zoo after it was damaged in overnight bombing , and as a result , rhinoceroses , pelicans and flamingoes wandered around the next morning while people were sifting through the rubble . Bono was also inspired by Berlin Zoologischer Garten railway station , also known as " Zoo station " , previously the main railway station in West Berlin . The station was notorious as a haunt for drug dealers , prostitutes and pimps , pick @-@ pockets and transients , particularly prior to German reunification , when it was run by the East German railway . He compared the song to the station , saying " it was written as an opening track , the beasts breaking out of their cages " , and was interested in using the zoo as a metaphor and he took further inspiration from the subway station representing Europe at a crossroads .

During recording , Eno created several prototype mixes of the song . The Edge recalled how these different mixes assisted the band in creating the final version of the track . One of these early versions was later released under the title " Bottoms ( Watashitachi No Ookina Yume ) " as a bonus track on the UK and Japanese promotional releases of the experimental 1995 album Original Soundtracks 1 by Passengers , a side project by U2 and Eno , as well as a B @-@ side on some

versions of the " Miss Sarajevo " single . " Bottoms ( Watashitachi No Ookina Yume ) " is an instrumental track and was described by The Edge as a " crazy " mix . He added " ' Bottoms ' was done in Japan , and we just built on that mix . Sometimes you can end up with something completely distinctive . "

Although " Zoo Station " was not released as a single , it was included on a 12 @-@ inch promotional recording to promote U2 's Zoo TV Tour in North America , along with studio and remix versions of " Lady with the Spinning Head " .

= = Composition = =

As the first track on an album that was a major reinvention for the band , " Zoo Station " was an introduction to U2 's new sound . The song features layers of distorted guitar and vocals , and industrial @-@ influenced percussion . Irish rock journalist Bill Graham cites David Bowie 's album , *Low* , as a major influence on " Zoo Station " , which he called a " new brand of glam rock " with " Spartan rhythms and sudden flurries of melody " .

The song is played at a tempo of 130 beats per minute in a 4 / 4 time signature , but only one element of the song 's introduction , a marimba @-@ like texture , is played in common time . This sound , which has been compared to that of a clock ticking , was achieved by picking the guitar 's D string behind the bridge and the stopbar . On the second half of the third beat , the song 's signature guitar riff , a distorted descending glissando , enters . The glissando descends past the octave it begins in by a major second before returning to it . After the second time it is played , an " explosion " of percussion is heard , playing on beat four of every second measure on two occasions . This percussion sound , played by Flood , enters early the third time , being played on beat two . The drums then enter , before stopping and starting again . Much like the song 's guitar sounds , the drums ' timbre is noticeably different from previous U2 songs as it exhibits a " cold , processed sound , something like beating on a tin can " . Amidst layers of various guitar sounds , the bass enters , the part played in the introduction and verses consisting of repeating G and A notes , mimicking the ascending portion of the guitar riff after the glissando overshoots the octave . After the bass begins , the song 's regular groove is established . At 0 : 45 , the chord progression changes . Fifteen seconds later , the song returns to the previous chord progression and the introduction ends .

Guitarist The Edge explained that some of the sounds in the introduction that resemble keyboards were actually created by him on guitar . Of the song 's introduction , bassist Adam Clayton says , " When people put on the record , we wanted their first reaction to be either ' this record is broken ' or ' this can 't be the new U2 record , there 's been a mistake . ' So there is quite a dramatic extended intro where you just don 't know what you are listening to . " Author Albin Zak , in his book *The Poetics of Rock* , says of the introduction , " Before any words are sung , the sounds alone alert the listener that the band has moved into new expressive territory . "

After the introduction , the song follows a conventional verse @-@ chorus form . The first verse begins one minute into the song , with Bono announcing , " I 'm ready , I 'm ready for the laughing gas " . During the verses , he sings primarily in a medium @-@ to @-@ low range and his vocals are treated with heavy processing , which takes out the bottom of the sound and " emasculate [ s ] " his voice . The processing also introduces a wavering quality to his vocals . The guitar glissando continues to be played during the verses . The first chorus begins at 1 : 44 , and the music mirrors the change in chord progression from the introduction 's last 15 seconds . During the chorus , the bassline becomes more dynamic , playing descending quarter notes of G ? F ? ? D ? C ? D ? C ? A ? G ? A , before resuming the previous G and A pattern . Bono 's vocals also become more dynamic in the chorus , featuring layers of both " open @-@ throatied " singing and monotone lyric recitation , as well as both processed and unprocessed vocals .

Along with introducing the band 's new sound , the song opens the album as a statement of intent . Lyrically , new anticipations and appetites are suggested ( " I 'm ready for what 's next " ) , as is a willingness to throw caution to the wind and take risks ( " I 'm ready to let go of the steering wheel " ) . Some of the lyrics , particularly those in the bridge before the final chorus , use the eponymous

subway station as a metaphor for time : " Time is a train / Makes the future the past / Leaves you standing in the station / Your face pressed up against the glass " . Bono cites the enjoyment of his first child born in 1989 as a major influence on Achtung Baby , as was his wife 's second pregnancy during the album 's 1991 recording . Bono says babies influenced the lines from the first verse , " I 'm ready to say I 'm glad to be alive / I 'm ready , I 'm ready for the push " .

= = Reception and legacy = =

Upon the release of Achtung Baby , " Zoo Station " was praised by many critics . Steve Morse of The Boston Globe said the song was one on which " sonic assaults are teamed with dreamily processed vocals that recall Beatles psychedelia " . The Orlando Sentinel called it " blistering " and praised the low mixing of Bono 's vocals , which allowed The Edge 's " new versatility " on guitar to draw more attention . BBC Music enjoyed " The Edge 's guitar squall and electronics " creating a " dense sound [ that ] is irresistible " , noting that " Zoo Station " was one track where the strategy " creates moods rather than hummable tunes " . Jon Pareles of The New York Times stated that the song " announces a change , starting with a metallic clank , a buzzing guitar slide and a repeated electronic crunch ? nothing ethereal " . He also noted that Bono 's voice was " electronically masked and the band 's old style traded for a pushy bassline and a percussive stomp , although U2 can 't resist some sweeter interludes " .

Rolling Stone was complimentary of The Edge , comparing his style of guitar playing on the song to using a rhythm instrument by " repeating a dark , buzzing phrase that drives the beat " . Allmusic reviewed the track favourably , saying " there are layers to Bono 's lyrics " and that by the end of the track , the song and the band are " soaring " . Greg Kot of the Chicago Tribune likened the song 's introduction to " trying to out @-@ demolish Ministry " with " grating metal @-@ on @-@ metal percussion and a belching guitar " . He commented that the " rude awakening " that the song provides on the album as the opening track could only compare with the " fingernails @-@ on @-@ chalkboard guitar scuzz " of Neil Young 's " Hey Hey , My My ( Into the Black ) " from Rust Never Sleeps . The song subsequently appeared as one of seven U2 songs in the 2006 music reference book 1001 Songs : The Great Songs of All Time and the Artists , Stories , and Secrets .

" Zoo Station " is featured in the 2002 British comedy @-@ drama film About a Boy . In one scene , the main character , Will ( Hugh Grant ) , turns up the volume of the song as a " childless effort " to ignore Marcus ( Nicholas Hoult ) , a boy ringing Will 's doorbell , prompting Marcus to ring it in unison with the beat of the song .

The song was covered by American industrial rock band Nine Inch Nails on the 2011 cover album AHK @-@ toong BAY @-@ bi Covered .

= = Live performances = =

" Zoo Station " made its live debut on the opening night of the Zoo TV Tour on 29 February 1992 in Lakeland , Florida , and was performed as the opening song at each of the 156 Zoo TV concerts . During performances of " Zoo Station " , Bono appeared on @-@ stage silhouetted against a giant screen of blue and white video noise , making his entrance as his leather @-@ clad stage persona " The Fly " , often goose @-@ stepping his way onto the stage . The Edge described the visual imagery displayed for the song in the context of Zoo TV 's " sensory overload " that was intended as a commentary on mass media : " ' Zoo Station ' is four minutes of a television that 's not tuned in to any station , but giving you interference and ' shash ' and almost a TV picture . "

" Zoo Station " was not played during the subsequent PopMart and Elevation Tours , but it returned to the group 's setlists on the Vertigo Tour . The song was most often performed during the first encore , along with other Achtung Baby / Zoo TV @-@ era songs , as part of a mini @-@ Zoo TV set paying homage to the band 's 1990s era . It made its last appearance in November 2006 and was not played live again until the September 24 , 2015 concert on the Innocence + Experience Tour .

Live performances of the song appear on the video releases Zoo TV : Live from Sydney and

Vertigo 2005 : Live from Chicago . A live version of " Zoo Station " from the Vertigo Tour also appears as a B @-@ side on the maxi single for " Window in the Skies " .