

## Ways in Which Music Interacts with Society

One might say that even though people do not practice any music themselves, still they indeed are a part of the ways in which music changes or stays the same, and how genres and new music are created. Music is communication in a way, an expression of the heart and mind, and these expressions are in many ways a reflection on the environment in which the artist finds himself. In this report, we will look at two groups, U2 (rock) and Enya (celtic, classical) looking at their environment, backgrounds, listeners and more.

The first group we will look at is U2. U2 are originated from Dublin, Ireland, a city of which Bono describes as a city like all other cities; it has its good and it has its bad (Live Aid 1985). A good line to maybe describe to us the way this band expresses themselves through their music. Their lyrics, mostly written by Edge and Bono are political, religious and quite deep as well. They address issues such as war, drugs, love, poverty and many time the lyrics are poetic and contain a lot of figurative language. Some songs to mention are “Sunday, Bloody Sunday,” (a song about January 30, 1972, when agents from the British parachute regiment opened fire on a peaceful group of marchers at a civil rights parade in Derry, Ireland), Pride(in the name of love), Bad, Where the Streets Have No Name, Beautiful Day, Vertigo. Their lyrics are very important in communicating with society, they are about real life and some of them you could call protest lyrics. But even so, it’s probably not the case that U2 is trying hard to make protest songs, it’s more like something that comes from the inner being of these guys. Something that they just need to express.

U2 has come a long way since they released their first album, Boy, in 1980, they have been very versatile in their albums and have won several Grammys. From The Joshua Tree to Pop to Elevation they have always wanted to experience with different things besides rock, like blues, dance, electronics, and because of that they have also been criticized a lot. <sup>1</sup>“We knew the world was ready to receive the heirs to [The Who](#). All we had to do was to keep doing what we were doing and we would become the biggest band since [Led Zeppelin](#), without a doubt. But something just didn't feel right. We felt we had more dimension than just the next big anything, we had something unique to offer. The innovation was what would suffer if we went down the standard rock route. We were looking for another feeling. — [Bono](#) on ‘The Unforgettable Fire’s’ new direction.”

When U2 first started performing, Bono was noticed and described as being a charismatic and passionate performer. This certainly applies today as well. For example during a concert in Boston

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U2>

from U2's 'Elevation' Tour while they were doing the famous song "with or without you" Bono picks out a girl standing right up front of the heart shaped stage, takes her up to the stage, then he lies down and gestures her to lie down next to him and in the mean time he is singing and looking into her eyes. Why does he do that? Maybe it is a way, a strange way, but indeed a way for Bono to connect with the audience. U2 as a group have always been fond of being on stage and performing and connecting with their fans, especially Bono prefers being on stage singing together with his audience instead of doing multiple repetitional recordings in a studio.

U2 uses their star status to raise an awareness of social issues and have performed in live aid concerts, made songs of which the profit only went to charity work. They are active in organisations like Amnesty International, Make Poverty History, the ONE Campaign just to mention a few. In that way they do have a big influence on making a difference in society and also try to make people think about things that they in their stressed world might not think about or be aware of. Poverty and human rights for example.

Basically U2 is found everywhere, in concerts it is mostly arenas and stadiums, for example the Zoo TV and PopMart tours, which were huge shows and were used to kind of make fun of social trends like media overload and consumerism. They couldn't have done them like that if they were playing in a pub or something like that. They also perform in connection with organisational events. They are found in books, record shops, internet shops, dvd's and television.

U2 share their profits equally.

The other group (artist) we will look at is Enya. Enya was born in Ireland and started her solo career after working together with 'Clannad', a band formed by some of her siblings and uncles. She comes from a musical family with both parents having played in bands so from birth she was introduced to music. It was kind of in her genes to be involved in music in some way. Being involved with Clannad launched Enya into starting her solo career. Joining former manager of the group Nicky Ryan in 1982, she began her own recording studio.

Enya's songs are mostly written in English, but there are also several songs that are written in Gaelic, Latin, French, and even in an invented language. The lyrics are written by Roma Ryan and Enya writes all the music herself while Nicky Ryan is the producer of the albums. It was Nicky who came up with the idea to layer Enya's voice and that is what makes her sound so different. The lyrics are very simple and dreamy like, as is the music and affects the emotions, creating a relaxed atmosphere, influenced by Celtic tradition and ancient times. They are written in different

languages, especially old languages that no one really understands, it gives the songs a little bit of a mystery to them and that might attract an audience.

They do contain personal expressions and thoughts as well that can connect with the listener, for example “Storms in Africa” that is about finding hope during hard times, an “after the rain comes the sun” kind of thing. Enya has won Grammys for “Best New Age Album,” even though she has never acknowledged herself as a new age artist.

Enya’s music has frequently been used in films. One of which was *The Lord of The Rings* where Enya’s music really comes to good use. This film was huge all over the world and to use some of Enya’s songs was brilliant and so suitable for this kind of fairy tale. The song ‘May it be’ fits well in with the world that Tolkien created so brilliantly. When you listen to it, it kind of takes you back to Frodo and the rest of the gang, and creates this feeling of almost being there with him, on his quest of destroying this evil ring.

There is a song called “Only Time” that can demonstrate how Enya’s music interacts with society. In the States after 9/11 several songs were banned from radio stations, but this one was played over and over again. It was used as background music for television and radio programs about 9/11, and even though the song was not written in connection with the attacks, there was even made copies of it that had sounds from the attacks mixed into it.

Enya has given some small performances on television and at different events, but other than that she has never done a concert. Despite this, she has been able to sell about 70 million albums. Her way of performing is from the studio and into the home and ear of the listener. Her music can be found in spas, health centres, record shops, restaurants, meditation centres just to mention a few.

When you compare Enya and U2 there are a lot of things that you can point out. These artists are both from the same country and when Enya has her roots in more Celtic traditions, U2 was much more influenced by their present surroundings, even today you can see that U2 still has an interest in the present issues in the world and write their lyrics accordingly. Maybe that gives U2 a better advantage in reaching a larger crowd and more people are listening to their music, more people will have an interest in their music, because they can relate to it. While with Enya, she may have a smaller fan base than U2, because of her genre. U2 interacts with society by communicating a message about world issues, like poverty, human rights etc. Thus U2 uses their music as a stepping stone to make a physical difference in the world, where as Enya interacts with society in another dimension, namely by communicating directly with people’s emotions.

## Bibliography

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