

U2 3D

Bottom Line: Finally, a 3-D event that dispenses "Vertigo," not vertigo.

By Michael Rechtshaffen
Jan 7, 2008

This docu serves up prime U2 in a startlingly rendered fashion.

When U2 performed in South America in 2006 after an eight-year hiatus, they decided to bring some high-tech goodies along with them to mark the occasion. The resulting souvenir, "U2 3D," takes the well-traveled concert film to exhilarating new heights. Billed as the first digital 3-D, multicamera, real-time production, this feature-length feast for the eyes and ears (thanks to the all-enveloping 5.1 Surround Sound), re-creates the U2 live experience without interruptions by the intrusive, talky backstage filler that seems to have become obligatory in the recorded "live" genre. Instead, the docu serves up prime U2 in a startlingly rendered, state-of-the-art arena that truly raises the bar for headache-free 3-D technology.

Previewed last year at the Festival de Cannes in a version that was about a half-hour shorter, the finished edition will ensure both the fans of the band and the high-tech geeks will find what they are looking for when it follows its Jan. 19 Sundance screening with a limited release through National Geographic Entertainment starting Jan. 23, exclusively in 3-D digital and Imax theaters.

From the opening one-two punch of "Vertigo" and "It's a Beautiful Day," both the band and directors Catherine Owens and Mark Pellington effectively set the elevating tone.

Blending together performances from Vertigo Tour stops in Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo as well as Mexico City and Santiago, the filmmakers succeed in ripping down that wall between and stage and the audience, and, in the process, create a team atmosphere that's perfectly in keeping with the band's "we're all in this together" philosophy.

Even with those sky-high Jumbotron screens and those fully dimensional mike stands that appear to take on a life of their own here, the mood is remarkably intimate.

Co-directors Pellington (before he became a feature director, he helmed U2's "One" video) and Owens are careful not to overplay the 3-D card -- utilizing advanced technology developed by 3ality Digital -- too early in the game.

They reserve the best effect for what is arguably the film's centerpiece, in which the band's early hit, "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" becomes an impassioned prayer for world peace with Bono (in fine vocal form) extending an outstretched arm over the crowd and, seemingly, through the screen, hovering right in front of the theater viewer in a plea for Christians, Jews and Muslims to put aside their differences.

In lesser hands, what might have come across as overly theatrical, packs a quietly potent impact.

Somehow, after experiencing "U2 3D," the old iPod starts looking a little yellow around the edges.

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National Geographic Entertainment
A National Geographic Entertainment presentation of a 3ality Digital production