



PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLAND RECORDS

U2 is (from left to right) The Edge, Larry Mullen, Bono and Adam Clayton.

**U2**  
**"Pop"**  
 Island Records  
 Grade: B+

Since the 1960s, the widely accepted route of aging rock stars has been to either get fat, get rich and perform over-the-top concerts for equally fat and balding fans (also known as the "Elvis concept"), or to break up the band, pursue half-assed solo careers and then regroup for a "long-awaited" reunion tour (also known as the "Eagles concept").

But for U2, a rock band that is steadily creeping toward two decades of existence, neither of these approaches seems to be particularly comforting.

For U2, the band that conquered

the world with albums such as 1983's "War" and 1987's huger-than-huge "The Joshua Tree," the solution was to reinvent themselves.

They started along that path with "Achtung Baby," a dark and pseudo-electronic album that was about as radical a departure from the generally light sounding and highly Americanized "The Joshua Tree" as possible.

Rather than alienating old fans with this sudden shift, U2 won new ones and continued to progress deeper into European-influenced instrumentations with "Zooropa."

Four years later, "Pop" has arrived.

U2's latest album treads paths similar to those found in "Achtung Baby" and "Zooropa," but delves

even deeper into the electronic world of sampling, sonic manipulation and beat-heavy composition than either of those releases.

The traditional four-piece band that sold out arenas and moved millions of albums is now buried beneath a barrage of technical wizardry and studio effects.

And the best part about all of this is — it's still U2.

Bono's passionate vocals are still anchored by a driving rhythm section and an incomparable melodic flow that shine through even the most manipulated production values.

Songs such as "If God Will Send His Angels," "If You Wear that Velvet Dress" and "Wake Up

Please see POP on 13

## Surf's up at Zoo; band plays tonight

BY ANN STACK  
 Senior Reporter

Don't be afraid of the masks — these guys are harmless. Unless, of course, you're talking about their music.

Los Straitjackets, a surf-instrumental band from Nashville, Tenn., will play tonight at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St. Although the surf's not up most of the time in Nashville, it's a pretty safe bet the tide will be high when they take the stage.

Los Straitjackets formed nearly three years ago, and now the quartet of 30-somethings can boast a video on MTV, a strong fan base and a write-up in College Music Journal.

Although pure instrumental music doesn't get picked up by most radio stations, it translates easily in front of audiences, Los Straitjackets guitarist Danny Amis said.

"People really like it live," he said. "Sometimes it's hard to get on the air with all-instrumental. But live audiences don't have a problem with it. They can make up their own minds on what to like."

"It's been a challenge, but we've been doing it for years."

Amis said he grew up on surf music, and has been playing it in different bands and as a solo artist for years.

Surf music evolved along the West Coast during the 1960s. Its fast, frenetic pacing and heavy use of reverb-effected guitars was popularized by artists such as Dick Dale (whose work

was featured recently on the "Pulp Fiction" soundtrack) and the Surfaris, who scored surf rock's most enduring hit with the drum-laden "Wipe Out."

In recent years, several gimmick-driven surf rock bands, such as Man or Astro Man? (whose members wear sci-fi space gear) and the Phantom Surfers (whose members perform in matching suits and Lone Ranger-style masks) have emerged on independent record labels across the country.

Los Straitjackets have followed this trend, performing in Mexican wrestling masks.

"It looks cool when we put the band together. We wanted a unique way to present the band onstage," Amis said. "We're a very visual band. We try to keep the energy at a high level so people will get up and dance."

If people are curious about the music behind the masks, they can check out the band's CDs. They have two out: 1995's "The Utterly Fantastic and Totally Unbelievable Sound of Los Straitjackets" and last year's "Viva Los Straitjackets."

The members of Los Straitjackets are Amis, guitarist Eddie Angel, bassist Scott Esbeck and drummer Jimmy Lester.

Los Straitjackets have played the Zoo Bar one other time — and broke an attendance record on a Tuesday night.

"Lincoln's definitely one of our favorite places," Amis said. "We're looking forward to returning."

Tonight's show begins at 9:30. There is a \$6 cover charge.

## Despite band's new name, Fastball's success sweet

BY CLIFF HICKS  
 Staff Reporter

Originally called Magneto USA, the band known as Fastball has several reasons for its new name.

"So that journalists could torment us with their endless baseball analogies," guitarist/vocalist Miles Zuniga said.

The real story is a little more involved.

"There's a band called Magneto

from Mexico," Zuniga said, "and they've sold a lot of records, so we tagged on the USA."

"When we signed with Hollywood (Records), they told us we wouldn't be able to play down there," Zuniga said. "And we really want to play South America and Mexico eventually, so we changed our name."

Fastball is currently opening for Matthew Sweet, who is playing a small "warm-up tour" to precede the

Please see FASTBALL on 13

## Movie reveals man's turmoil with loyalty to family, mob

BY BRET SCHULTE  
 Film Critic

Based on the autobiography of FBI agent Joseph D. Pistone, "Donnie Brasco" sets itself apart from the gangster genre, shining a deeper light on the dark figures of the Italian mob.

Hollywood recluse Johnny Depp plays the undercover operative Donnie Brasco. In his first release from a major studio since the largely ignored "Nick of Time," Depp unleashes an unquestionable performance of a man trapped between friendship, duty and family.

Donnie Brasco, after more than two years trying to penetrate the Italian underground, is befriended by a local "wiseguy" named Lefty, played by mobster movie mainstay Al Pacino.

But Lefty has problems of his own. His criminal career has stalled, and he is left standing on the fringes of the inner circle as other guys work their way up. Seeing Brasco as a means to propel his own career, Lefty tutors Brasco on the subtleties of the ways of the wiseguy.

Brasco gradually works his way into the local mob headed by the ruthless "Sonny Black," chillingly played by Michael Madsen.

### The Facts

**Movie:** "Donnie Brasco"  
**Director:** Mike Newell  
**Stars:** Al Pacino, Johnny Depp, Michael Madsen, Anne Heche, Bruno Kirby  
**Rating:** R (violence, language)  
**Grade:** B  
**Five Words:** The gangster genre grows up

Meanwhile his friendship with Lefty continues to strengthen as he is gradually distanced from both his family and the FBI.

Rather than the typical grandiose Hollywood portrayal of a reckless and indulgent sprawling mafia family, the film documents a less glamorous reality of simple, local mobsters desperately trying to make a buck. They meet in a seedy bar, rather than an enclosed estate, where they smash open parking meters and rework old scams.

The realism of the mobsters strengthens the credibility of the film, as it becomes plain that the group is as callous as they are distrustful. This constant doubt places Brasco at a disad-

Please see BRASCO on 13



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRISTAR PICTURES

AL PACINO (left) stars as Lefty, a down-on-his-luck mobster who unknowingly befriends undercover FBI agent Donnie Brasco, played by Johnny Depp.