

Bono: 'More than a rock star' The unshaven diplomat

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Elvis Presley shook hands with Richard Nixon in 1970, but it wasn't much more than a fleeting photo op. When Bono got together with President Bush for lunch at the White House in October, however, they spoke for nearly two hours about debt relief, AIDS and other issues.

Bono fronts the megapopular Irish rock band U2. But these days the singer is just as famous for his spiritual declarations and extracurricular activism. He's the unshaven diplomat in the designer sunglasses who has been bending the ears of presidents, prime ministers and other world leaders about humanitarian causes.

Bono's faith-based humanitarian efforts reached a new level of recognition recently when he was named, along with Bill and Melinda Gates, *Time's* Person of the Year for 2005.

"I try to live it rather than talk about it because there are enough secondhand-car salesmen for God," Bono told the magazine. "But I cannot escape my conviction that God is interested in the progress of mankind, individually and collectively."

That message has connected far beyond fans of Bono's music. "People look at him as more than a rock star," says former Ohio congressman John Kasich, a Republican. "For a lot of people, he represents hope."

Three years ago Bono cofounded DATA, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group whose name stands for Debt AIDS Trade Africa. The organization is dedicated to fighting extreme poverty and AIDS in Africa. -*Religion News Service*