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Bloom back on the rose for the Cranberries

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Dolores O'Riordan was 16 when she started The Cranberries and 18 when she became one of the biggest pop stars in the world. The youngest of seven, O'Riordan was raised in Limerick, Ireland, and was entirely unprepared for dealing with fame.

"I remember when MTV first put Linger in heavy rotation, every time I walked into a diner or a hotel lobby, it was like, 'Jesus, man, here I am again,'" O'Riordan says. "It was trippy, like Jacob's Ladder. I didn't even have to take drugs."

The Cranberries would go on to sell nearly 40 million records and their albums Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We? and No Need to Argue would help introduce alternative music to the mainstream. However, O'Riordan says the adulation brought on insecurity and pressure and that, just seven years after forming, the Cranberries felt paralyzed.

"It's fun and games for a while, but then you're burned out and it's like, 'Can we turn it off?' But you can't and when you want to go back to normalcy, that's impossible," says O'Riordan, who adds that the last straw was drawn when she was photographed, while pregnant, at her grandmother's funeral in Ireland.

"In 1997, we took time off and that's when Oasis broke and Princess Diana died and I was home with my baby hating the music industry. People asked what I thought about the Spice Girls and, honestly, I was so happy to tell them I couldn't be bothered to care."

O'Riordan is now a 40-year-old mother of three who lives about two hours north of Toronto on a farm. (Her husband, Duran Duran's former manager, is Canadian.) She never stopped writing music, though, and in an interview alongside original Cranberries guitarist Noel Hogan to promote Roses -- the group's first new record in 11 years, which came out Feb. 28 -- O'Riordan says the reunion was the band's idea.

"We didn't even have a record company, but after getting back together to play a couple of shows, you begin to once again feel that buzz," says Hogan, who still calls Ireland home.

"We'd had enough of the Cranberries and wanted to experience new things, but what's great about this record is that we brought those things back with us -- there's a freshness to the music."

The new disc, recorded in Toronto and produced by Stephen Street, who originally produced the Smiths and helmed the first Cranberries albums as well as the defining records by Blur, captures the vintage Cranberries sound. With its mixture of Celtic music and pop arrangements, crescendoing choruses and irresistible melodies -- not to mention O'Riordan's distinctive voice -- the album captures the Irish rockers at their peak.

"You see the old smiles as the boys begin playing and it's just cracking -- that Cranberries sound," says Hogan, adding that the band won't wait so long between Roses and their next record.

The new album is dedicated to O'Riordan's father, who passed away last November after battling cancer for seven years. It's an experience that seems to have rejuvenated the singer's will to return to a business that once seemed like a horror film.

"You get older and come to the conclusion that it's a great gig making music," O'Riordan says. "Even if you turn into an old gnarly fart, no one cares what you look like if you write good songs -- the only gig is to sing well and perform."

-- Postmedia News

Do you have

to let it linger?

WHAT did the world of music look like back in 1993, when the Cranberries ruled the airwaves? Well, I Will Always Love You by Whitney Houston was the year's biggest song, Guns N' Roses' original lineup played their last gig and the Wu-Tang Clan released their first disc.

It was an era in which music was splintering: Nirvana played their unplugged concert and Ace of Bass released The Sign.

At the Junos, Céline Dion was named best female vocalist and Leonard Cohen edged out Corey Hart for male vocalist of the year. In Canada, it was the dawn of the Barenaked Ladies and the Tragically Hip, and Blue Rodeo released their popular album Five Days in July. Alanis Morissette was two years away from releasing Jagged Little Pill. Justin Bieber wasn't yet born.

In the United States, meanwhile, Snoop Dogg released his first solo album and Janet Jackson appeared topless on the cover of Rolling Stone. The Smashing Pumpkins also released their second album, Siamese Dream.

"I still listen to that record when I go out for a run," Cranberries guitarist Noel Hogan says of the classic Pumpkins album, which features the singles Disarm and Today. "That, Nirvana and the Pearl Jam album with the sheep's head? Vs.? I can't help it, I still listen to a lot of '90s rock."

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