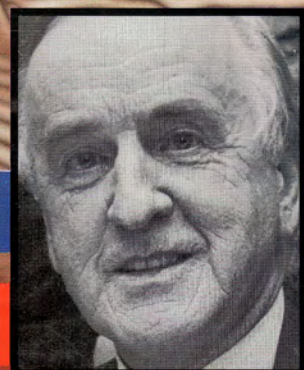
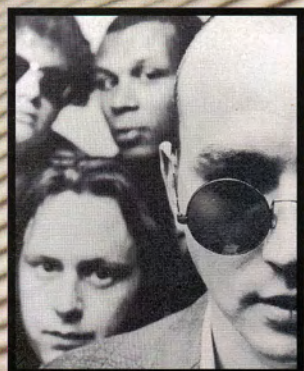


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HOT PRESS

THE CRANBERRIES' U.S. COUP i did it my way

JOE JACKSON TALKS TO
DOLORES O'RIORDAN



THE BOO RADLEYS GIANT LEAP FORWARD by LORRAINE FREENEY

ALBERT THE STATESMAN by EAMONN McCANN



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i did it my way



DOLORES O'RIORDAN smiles ironically, but she's not surprised. I've just been reading a Sunday Times article headlined "British Pop Music Slips Down The World Chart." In this obvious elegy for the one-time "British invasion" of '93 which has now become "the greatest disappearing act in the history of pop," it's claimed that the current American Top 30 features only one group that "represents the type of music that is attuned to the spirit of transatlantic youth in the mid '90s." That group is The Cranberries who are "from Limerick but signed up to a United Kingdom label."

"We're signed to an American label," says Dolores, laughing. "So, even that point is wrong. And isn't it pathetic that they should try to pretend our success is a victory for British pop!"

Pathetic and predictable, perhaps. And a telling indictment of the kind of colonialist mind-set that seems to be mobilised in Britain whenever Irish artists – whether it's The Cranberries, U2, Jim Sheridan, Enya or Seamus Heaney – make a major international impact. But then Dolores O' Riordan doesn't need to be told that, as British pop music does indeed slip down the world's charts, Irish music is on the rise.

The Cranberries are, after all, the act who started out co-headlining with the so-called Band of '93, Suede, on a U.S. tour last September and ended up stealing the show, selling more tickets and forcing Brett and the boys to abandon that particular attempted 'British Invasion' and retreat in defeat. Likewise, when they later toured as support for Duran Duran. By the time the tour reached New York's prestigious Radio City, The Cranberries were headlining and Duran Duran were playing support.

In 1993 The Cranberries also became the first Irish band to sell more than a million copies of their debut album in America, with

Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We, which peaked at no. 18 in the U.S. album charts. Their single, 'Linger', also made its debut in the American singles charts in December, entering at no. 19. But what was particularly ground-breaking was the fact that The Cranberries achieved all this while bypassing the traditional 'first-you-gotta-break-through-in-Britain' strategy employed by virtually every Irish rock act stretching back as far as Thin Lizzy.

Lead singer/writer Dolores O' Riordan also previously publicly stated that, as a Limerick band, The Cranberries made it without first needing to prove themselves in Dublin, describing the capital as "very clannish, so clannish that they believed that anything that didn't come out of Dublin, wasn't worth the effort." Does she still feel that's true?

"I don't feel it, I *know* it," she says, immediately displaying the irresistible self confidence that is the hallmark of this 22-year-old from Ballybricken, in Co. Limerick.

"I know they ignored us and I know they have a problem identifying anything outside Dublin. But, I wouldn't just say they are 'clannish', they're small-minded and though some may look beyond the pale, not enough do. But this isn't just true in terms of the music industry, it relates to all the arts.

"My boyfriend – that I used to live with – was a painter and his friend was a sculptor and, like many people who go to Art College and get diplomas, they found it very difficult to be recognised outside of Limerick. They'd come to Dublin and put on exhibitions and get no support at all. Artists who live outside Dublin also find it harder to get financial assistance from establishments like the Arts Council. It's the same thing in music, in terms of support. And a lot of that has to do with the fact that Dublin has the media

Twelve months ago The Cranberries were

unknown outside of the hippest rock circles,

now with the platinum success of

Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't

We? they stand as the first Irish band to

genuinely crack America since U2.

Much of the media attention given to them

has focussed on Dolores O'Riordan, a singer

whose unique approach to her craft under-

lines the defiantly independent path the

group has trodden all the way to the top of

the *Billboard* charts. Here she talks to JOE

JACKSON about what by any standards has

been a perfect year. Pix: MICHAEL QUINN.

on its side and it pumps out this notion that Dublin is the centre of the universe, which it obviously isn't. It definitely never was for us."

The success of bands like Therapy?, The Sultans of Ping F.C., Engine Alley, and The Frank and Walters has underlined that, shifting the focus to cities like Cork, Galway and Belfast.

"That's healthy not just for myself," Dolores says. "I always knew that The Cranberries had a far more international appeal than to be content just aiming for 'we're gonna play in this-particular Dublin venue for the next 20 years', and be happy to have made it in the capital city. No way was that for us. That's why a lot of journalists dismissed us as a second blah-blah-blah, with a female singer. That's all they could compare us to.

"One guy said we were like another band with three guys and a girl, even though our music wasn't like theirs at all. And when I cornered him and said 'why did you say that? Have you ever seen us play, even heard our album?' He said 'no, on both counts, but seeing as though your band has a girl singer and is not from Dublin, the comparison is good enough.' So it's great for anyone outside Dublin – not just in Limerick – to see we can make it despite that Dublin prejudice. But I would hope that artists in Limerick in particular – in any field – would take inspiration from our success on an international level. Look at Elvis Presley! He came from the arse-hole of nowhere and he was, and is, the biggest thing that ever happened in rock 'n' roll. So, to me it's not where you come from that matters, but what's in your soul."

Dolores O'Riordan admits nonetheless that while Limerick gleefully celebrated The Cranberries' homecoming at Christmas, she harbours mixed feelings about returning to her native city.

"It's strange, because I moved into Limerick city itself when I was 18 and joined the band," she muses. "But having spent most of this year on the road I then came back and found that so much has changed for me. All my friends have gone, in a sense. They're still there, but it's very hard to relate to them. And the point is that as you travel you make more and more new friends and they know exactly what you're going through and what is happening to you as you tour, whereas when you come back to Limerick people are talking to you about their exams or whatever.

"Or you're sitting in a pub with old friends and they're going 'look at him, isn't he lovely looking', and you're there thinking 'sure, but about a hundred lads a night now come up to me at gigs, so I can't look at men the way I used to, or the way youse do'. So it's kinda hard to go back to Limerick and relate to friends. That's part of the reason I could never see myself living there again."

However, at least one old friend from Limerick now travels with Dolores and remains one of the most important people in her life, she says.

"Breffni and I have been friends since I was four years old and she sees what I'm going through, because she's there all the time. She sees me getting mobbed by fans and understands exactly what I'm feeling at a time like that, which makes our relationship even closer. Whereas, back in Limerick people say 'God, isn't it great? All you did was sang the few out songs and you're famous!' What can you say to that? So you say nothing. You just go 'yeah, it's great, isn't it' and realise that you are all drifting apart."

What, exactly, does Dolores feel when she is being mobbed by fans? "It's kind of annoying at times," she says. "Sure, it's great to go on stage and hear the fans screaming and all that stuff but, after a gig, I'd be dying to go out to Breff and say 'How's it going?' and have a chat with her, but I can't. I can't go near the crowd after a gig. Because all it takes is for three of them to notice you and they run over and start screaming 'Dolores, I love you. Hug me, just one hug' and they forget I'm wrecked after a gig and just want to relax, especially if we've to journey overnight to the next gig. And those fans do take everything out of you, drain you in that way.

"So I stay backstage until the hall is empty then, sometimes, I go out. Or, other times, I stay behind the barriers and wave from a distance, which is fine. But I rarely go over and talk with them directly after a gig because physically it's draining, with sometimes ten people asking you questions at the same time. And you don't want to be rude to them because you do realise how much you could mean to them individually. Like, if you meet a teenager and they tell you that a song of yours totally redeemed their head that's lovely.

"But they also can get down on their knees, and stuff, crying and wanting more. And you can't say 'oh go away, I'm tired' even if you feel like doing it. So it all is pressure on me, in that way. And some guys come up and claim they know you intimately because of the songs and they get all intense and scary and I have to say to the guys in the band 'hey lads, watch him, will you?' That can be frightening at times."

It can be equally frightening when one person in an audience targets you, says Dolores. This happened when The Cranberries were gigging with Suede in San Francisco.

"Suede weren't popular on a widespread level in America, they didn't even sell one eighth of the records we sold. But their best markets were places like San Francisco, which is not surprising as San Francisco is the largest gay/lesbian settlement and Suede have that appeal. Their drummer is gay and is very open about it. But there was one gay in particular, behind all these bars and barriers and he started calling out 'Dolores, give this to Brett'.

"He was screaming out, with his face pressed against the barrier. So I'm going 'yeah, sure, I'll go backstage and look for Brett for you'. Then he said 'if you don't give this to him you'll prove your anti-homosexuality'. And I looked at him and said 'give us a break, will you?' So he started roaring 'I want to get her' and he was clawing at the barrier and I began to wonder exactly what he would have done if he could have gotten to me."

At one point Dolores O' Riordan also found that she was the object of desire for a group of lesbians, who did, however, display their emotions in a far less upfront manner than Brett's gay fan.

"My first major lesbian encounter took place in London, before we left to tour Europe," she reflects. "At the last gig we did in London, in The Underworld, a lesbian group came in to see us play after some meeting they'd had. And they just stood there bawling their eyes out, calling my name, saying 'please, touch me' as if I was some kind of saviour! And I couldn't handle it at all! I was saying to the band 'what's wrong with them?' But then I realised maybe it was the way I look or, moreso, the nature of the songs, which deal with intimacy and anger and emotions that, to me, are about men, but for them could just as much be about women. It's much the same thing, isn't it?"

That experience scared me initially, because I didn't know too much about lesbianism. Yet since then I've met lots of lesbians and most of them are lovely girls and I'm not afraid of them anymore. They live their life and I live mine."

Clearly, the popularity of the Cranberries is very much rooted in the potent power and appeal of Dolores O' Riordan. Listening to her speak in almost whispered tones one can't help but hear distinct echoes of the tenderness, and poeticism, that defines the music of the band. It is this, more than any form of rock 'n' roll macho swagger, which has made The Cranberries the first Irish group to successfully follow U2 into the all-important U.S. market.

However, although Dolores rejects comments by people who claim that The Cranberries have eclipsed U2 in the States, she will concede that the success of the band has finally proven that Ireland is more than just a one-band country.

"I don't agree with anyone who says we have eclipsed U2 in any way," she argues. "People kept coming up to me after we won that National Music Award last week, saying 'Dolores, U2 had that Best Band award for ages and now The Cranberries got it, youse beat U2!' That really sickened me, because U2 always have been a source of inspiration to a band like us.

"They came from Ireland and went off and broke inter-nationally and showed us all that an Irish band can do that, which is probably one of their greatest achievements. And what was really important to me was that they were just four, normal lads from ordinary backgrounds, like the rest of us. And they took on the world and won! They'll always be brilliant in my eyes. But what I've found is that Irish people, in the first place don't realise what talent there is in Ireland until it breaks internationally and then there is a lot of begrudging and bitching.

"But maybe that will all stop now, with the success of U2 in terms of what they're doing, and people like Jim Sheridan, Roddy Doyle and The Cranberries. People should realise we're all in this together, we're

not in competition with one another. Certainly The Cranberries aren't in competition with the likes of Sinead O' Connor and U2. But, definitely, The Cranberries have shown there is more to Ireland than just U2 and Sinead."

Dolores pauses, laughs lightly, pours more coffee and then continues. "To tell you the truth, I really love U2. Like when we're on tour in America and sitting, say, at a party where all these guys are into Black Sabbath, or whatever and haven't a clue about Ireland. Then, the next minute U2 come on TV and suddenly I'm saying 'there's U2, they're from Ireland, they're brilliant!' And I get really happy, shouting 'aboy lads, aboy Bono! Fair play to youse!'. And then someone usually says 'any more Black Sabbath?' and I'm going 'leave U2 alone, leave their song on'. But metallers really don't understand why I get patriotic and blissful when U2 come on. It's the same when Sinead comes on the TV."

That said, Dolores laughs at what she describes as "the laziness" of those who describe her as "a younger Sinead O' Connor."

"People in America don't say that, only people here in Ireland," she says, smiling impishly.

"So, I think I'll keep my hair short to make them look even more stupid, it's such an obvious comparison to make! But the only point of comparison I see between U2, Sinead and us is that we all broke in America. But U2 certainly didn't influence me musically. When I was growing up my brothers were really into their songs but I wasn't. I was more into dreamy music, whereas U2 were hard, more macho at the time."

It has been suggested that the success story of The Cranberries really began when the all-male band originally decided that their music was "feminine" and that they needed a female to capture this, a decision which led to Dolores joining the band. Is that true?

"In ways, yeah. In the beginning the bass player was 16 and the other two were 17 and 18 and the music was heavy, it was all 'we are the boys' stuff, with silly lyrics like '*I strangled my friend yesterday/and he choked on his vomit*'. They were into that and into just having a laugh. But, definitely, in time they did say that their music was softer than most, so maybe it'd be nice to have a female singer. And when I did go and hear them there was a lot of space in the music where I knew I wouldn't have to compete as a vocalist and I liked that idea.

"They were the only band in Limerick at the time who were leaving space for a singer to move around, vocally. All the other bands were into heavy, over-the-top noisy stuff – as too many bands are. The lads wrote chord sequences and the drummer was subtle, it wasn't a constant bass-drum vibe."

And so it remains, in most songs on *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* where dreamy, floating soundscapes dominate the album, which can indeed be described as highly feminine.

"That's the kind of stuff I was writing when I met the lads," Dolores recalls. "In the band the music is written by me and the guitar player, but I do most of the music writing. I write the lyrics and structures but most journalists in Ireland seem to get it wrong when they comment on that, so people think I write the words and the band writes the music. That's not how it is."

So what kind of 'dreamy' music, or poetry was Dolores O'Riordan into as a teenager?

"I was really into religious music, like Gregorian chants," she recalls. "One of the most amazing experiences of my life was to go into a monastery and see monks coming out at 6am and start chanting. I used to go to monasteries to get away from the whole world and all the crap that comes from teenage pressures. So that kind of raw, honest setting in a monastery was a real relief, especially listening to the music monks made.

"I also played a church organ for about a year and some of my family were in a choir. So that was the musical base. And I was really into Yeats' poetry, so much so that I wrote a song called *Yeats' Grave* the first time I went to Sligo and saw where he is buried. I loved his passion, the dreamer he was. And the fact that he looked beyond the material world to matters spiritual, which is really representative of the Irish people as a race. As with the native Americans and Jamaicans, I've found."

And yet the Irish can also be highly practical, as in parents telling their children to ground themselves in "a good trade, or profession" before they go pursuing their dreams. In this context, it is true that Dolores' parents wouldn't let her join a rock band until she finished the Leaving Cert?

"They didn't want me to, but I did," she says, laughing. "But that was the best thing I could have done because, in Ireland the attitude is really small-minded when it comes to Arts in schools. I'd be there and the

career teacher would say 'what do you want to do, Dolores?' And I'd say 'I want to be a rock singer and bring out albums and get a record deal'. Then she'd say 'yeah, but don't you think nursing would be a really nice career for you?' They'd just pick any subject off-hand, obviously believing that there is no future whatsoever in choosing a career in music. That really was small-minded of them."

Dolores hopes that this blinkered, archaic attitude to the arts, within educational institutions, will change as a result of the influence of Michael D. Higgins. She agrees with his controversial suggestion that the work of bands like U2 and The Cranberries should be studied in schools – and not just in an artistic sense.

"If career teachers really are interested in the prospect for jobs and for making money, they should realise that the music business is one of the richest industries in the world. The amount of money that can be made is incredible, believe me! And Michael D. Higgins should hammer people in the educational system over the heads until they realise that fact. Look at it this way, there are students in my school now who will spend maybe fifteen years working to earn anything like the



amount of money I've made in the past six months in the States. But then Irish schools also fail their students by not thinking enough of places outside Ireland, as in the market for music. I always realised our music had that global appeal – even financially."

As with most rock stars, Dolores is reluctant to put figures to the amount of money she has earned over the past six months.

"All I will say is that I probably have the biggest income of all members of the band, because I do most of the writing. Three of the tracks on the first album I wrote alone. And nine of the tracks, I co-wrote the music with Noel. But we have got a great understanding about that, among the lads in the band. For example, although the bass player and drummer don't actually write music, I don't tell them what to play so their input means they get a share in the composing royalties. We've been very aware of all this from the outset. And the lads do accept that they can't write a full song without me, but I can write a full song without them. They know that's just the way things are."

Is anyone pushing Dolores to ditch the band and go solo? "Loads of people, yeah," she says. "But I don't want to do that. Because the lads and I have got a great relationship going between the four of us. Nobody can come between us on that level."

Noel Hogan (guitar), Mike Hogan (bass) and Fergal Lawlor (drums) also share Dolores' interest in world music, are happy to accommodate her as she drifts off into, for example, an Arabic chant at the end of 'Dreams'.

"We're into exploring all that," she says. "Like in Santa Fe on Saturdays the Native Americans come into town and sit on the side of the road and sell their jewellery. But they also chant and listening to them I realised the chanting was exactly like the owl fellas out in the Aran Islands who chant intricate Irish songs and also work themselves into a kind of trance.

"That, to me, is what music is all about. In fact I believe the source was all the same to begin with. A lot of Arabic music, Egyptian, Africa – all the trilly stuff – does really link up with Irish music. And I've always been fascinated by questions of where music began."

The more she explores world music along these lines the more Dolores O' Riordan sees that U2 may have had just one negative influence on Irish rock bands in that they inspired most to follow an Anglo-American musical model.

“Well, as I said, their earlier music didn’t appeal to me because it wasn’t dreamy but maybe that’s partly because they did originally only tune into English and American rock music. That’s why I say our angle on music is totally different to U2. We see the future of music in that sense, not just in terms of where it all fits in relation to rock ‘n’ roll. And I really couldn’t imagine Bono sitting down and listening to Egyptian music. Or maybe Sinéad. But linking us all is that spiritual thing I talked about earlier, because the Irish are a really expressive race. That’s why it doesn’t really matter what forms of expression you take on, as long as they work for you. But all this is why I don’t really like The Cranberries being compared to U2 musically.”

The paradox, of course, is that although The Cranberries don’t necessarily present themselves as an Irish band abroad their sound is heavily influenced by the Limerick lilt in Dolores’ voice and by the Celtic longings at the soul of her songs.

“That’s true but there’s a difference between us trying to push that on people and just going with that because that’s how we are, or how the music is,” she says.” Some people in America have asked why does she sing ‘Linger’ with that funny sounding R? and when it’s explained that we are from Ireland and that’s the Limerick accent they go ‘oh, is Ireland in England?’ And on the John Stewart Show on MTV one night he introduced us as ‘The Cranberries from Limerick, England’. No doubt whoever wrote that *Sunday Times* article you referred to earlier, would love that introduction. We are Irish but it’s not something we ram down peoples’ throats – unless we feel we have to.”

On a more personal level, referring back to her last interview in HOT PRESS Dolores wishes to clarify one comment which made her appear to be sexist.

“When I said ‘all men suck’ I was quoting Tanya from Belly,” she says. “Stuart Clark asked did I get any tips from Tanya and I said ‘yeah, the one she gave me, was that all men suck, that’s my advice, she said. But that’s not my point of view. I love men.”

But does Dolores O’ Riordan really love men. Isn’t there a lot of anger, pain, betrayal in songs like ‘Not Sorry’ and ‘Still Can’t’?

“Well, I do think that males have a problem with being open, emotionally,” she explains. “Macho-ism I despise and there’s an awful lot of it around. A lot of men, when they get together with the boys, find it difficult to even hold your hand or say things they’d normally say to you if the lads weren’t around. But that doesn’t make me dismiss the whole male sex. Because I believe that underneath it all men are just as emotional as women, and just as soft, once you strip away the crappy macho stuff.

“It’s easy for a woman to hold her baby or say ‘I love you’ to her husband in public but men are afraid things like that might make them ‘wimp-ish’ in the eyes of their mates - which is nonsense. And yet I work with men on the road and they’re all ‘big men’ when they’re together, saying “look at that babe over there, look at those tits’ yet when you get them alone in a room you find they’re far more sensitive than that underneath.

“I’m going out with this guy at the moment and he’s into American hard rock, Metallica and Guns N’ Roses and all that but behind it all he’s a real softie! And all those guys, I’ve found, are like little babies, in ways. That’s why I’d never be angry at all men, because I see that they’re under a lot of pressure to present one image to their mates and to the world, while trying to come to terms with the fact that they are like children underneath.”

Dolores believes this particularly true of young, teenage guys. “I often think many of them are into groups like Megadeth just to prove their masculinity to their peers, afraid the opposite will be read into them liking, say, more sensitive music, or ‘feminine’ music” she suggests. “Or art, or theatre. ‘Real’ men are not supposed to be into such things. Whereas the men I’m really interested in are those who are ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ in equal measures. But things are changing for the better, fortunately.”

One could suggest that the success of groups like The Cranberries also suggests that this form of balancing act in rock music is exactly what’s needed to prepare it for the next millennium.

“I think so,” says Dolores. “Because cock-rock has ruled since the beginning. But, having said that, I wouldn’t exactly go as far as the Riot Grrrl movement because I’m not into the battle of the sexes in the way that the battle is all that seems to matter. I don’t write songs for the same political reasons they do. I grew up with five brothers and I’ve always tried to understand men, not just put them down. That’s what I wrote about for ages, though I’ve obviously branched off in other directions over the past while.

“When you’re 18 you’re just going to write about your boyfriend and your broken heart and how he betrayed you but, despite having had that experience I wasn’t turned off all men, as some women are. In fact, as I get older, I realise there is a strong, honest, admirable side to the male race so I’d never say ‘all men suck’.”

Dolores pauses. “This is another way in which being on the road, and away from Limerick over the past year, has broadened my horizons. During the tours I see many men who are into visiting the titty bars and hiring out women but there also are those who look at the women selling themselves and say, ‘she’s lovely – but I can’t wait to get home to my woman, and child’ – whatever. And, as I say, they’re the men that appeal to me – those that see beyond the obvious boring, physical thing and are into a woman with a strong mind and heart and more than sex to offer.”

Dolores O’ Riordan believes that her own male fans respond to her in this way, rather than see her as another “rock chick”.

“That’s what makes it more difficult in ways, though,” she says, contemptively. “They’re into your head, and want to get in further. They’re not going, ‘wow, look at her arse’. But then our male fans aren’t the bimbo men. Bimbo men aren’t into us at all, they’re into bimbo women. Our fans think about things, probe beneath the surface and respond to the band’s music, and to my songs, on those levels instead. There’s no doubt about that.”

How would Dolores respond if she noticed a fan focusing more on her body?

“I’m really not into the female bimbo thing of letting your strap slip or teasing fans that way but if someone makes a remark along those lines I tend to become the mammy, wag my finger and say ‘now, you watch yourself, there’ and they don’t know what to say. There was this fella one night and I had a little skirt on, singing, and suddenly I felt this hand on my leg and I just slapped his hand and said ‘stop!’

“But that doesn’t often happen because I think our fans really do have respect for me, as a woman. I’ve never gone ‘here I am, lads’ and all the boys that come to see us really do seem to be more into my mind. And I know the difference because I have seen fellas screaming at Tanya, or PJ Harvey ‘get them off, get your tits out’ but nobody’s ever said that to me. Maybe once or twice a little 15 year old says something

“I’m mad into the

idea of being a

mother and I’ve

been putting it off

since I was at least

18.”

like that to impress his friends. But that’s easy to deal with. I just stare into their faces or point at them till they nearly die with embarrassment!”

As with PJ Harvey, Dolores O’ Riordan is challenging stereotypes when it comes to concepts of female beauty in the rock business.

“That song was all about how messed up some women are by following ideas of ‘ideal’ beauty,” she says. “Like, some women don’t want to have hips even though they may have beautiful, female, womanly hips. So they have the operation or have silicon implants or reshape their faces and all I’m saying to those women is ‘accept how you are.’ Part of the problem is that young women look at someone like Naomi Campbell and think that’s the only perfect image of female beauty, when it’s obviously not.”

Was Dolores herself ever tyrannised by such thoughts about beauty, when she was a teenager?

“No. Not even at 14, 15 because I never look up to such people,” she says. “Anyway, at 14, I wasn’t sexually aware at all. I didn’t become sexually aware until I was 19, so it wasn’t really an issue. But, at the same time, a lot of the guys in Limerick did give me a hard time because, y’know, they’d say ‘she doesn’t go’. There were those girls who went out and became sexually active in their early teens. I didn’t. And because that time was difficult for me, maybe that’s why I bore the grudges against guys that did come out in my early songs. I was angry with that type of man, those macho idiots who’d judge a woman on whether she has sex with men, or not- even at 14, 15, whatever.”

Nevertheless, Dolores has admitted that she fell in love at 18 and left home to live with one particular man, despite the protests of her parents.

“That case of falling in love really was just a matter of two kisses,” she says, smiling. “The song ‘Linger’ was written about that and it’s lovely because it captures that time of innocence for me, but I’d never want to go back to those days. If I hadn’t moved on, in terms of relationships, I’d probably still be travelling back to that first relationship, in my mind. But I believe I had to move on. Yet slowly and gradually, rather than just jumping into bed with someone else, when you’re not ready for that and you can’t even understand why you did it, or who this person really is. But I only had one relationship since then. I don’t have many relationships.”

Why is that? “Because I get very attached to one person,” she explains.” I was in that one relationship for a long time and that changed when I started to go away on tours, I suppose. It became a struggle between me and him, y’know? Particularly my moving from being with someone for breakfast, dinner and supper to ‘see you in three months’. The fact that I was going away, and wasn’t his girl anymore obviously upset him.

“I also had two flings and I found I’m really not into that because it’s all just so meaningless. I fall in love with minds and I have to love the

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they’re into bimbo

women.”

mind of a man before I can really want to make love with him. You meet someone and go so much into their mind and then as you travel deeper in there you know if you really like them, or really want to be any deeper involved- sexually. That’s how it works for me. I can sit down, have a conversation with a guy for seven hours and love it and can’t wait to see him again, so we can talk some more. And everything else follows from that. So, when you make physical contact after all that, it’s so much better than just a fling. At least it is to me. The other way, if you rush into physical contact you sometimes find you can’t even talk to that person the following day, which is horrible.”

Dolores claims that many of the songs on the second album from The Cranberries will explore her own transition from reflecting on that first, lost love affair to finding love again. And on what she describes as the corrupt side of the music industry.

“You wouldn’t believe how many men there are in the music industry who look at a woman in a sexual sense and just want to try it on, to get you into bed. Even people that you once respected and that you thought valued you because of your mind, your soul, your talent, end up wanting you for only one thing and that really can be disappointing. You know that they’re secretly saying ‘she’s a great head, and a powerful figure, I wonder have I any chance?’ And worse some of them want to possess you, which is even more frightening.

“One song on the new album, ‘Ridiculous Thoughts’, is about people you once thought were people you respected, until you realised their minds were filled with trivia. But other songs will be about finally meeting someone else who does break through all those barriers.”

Does Dolores O’ Riordan really have time for a serious relationship or will it end up being broken by her career as her first love affair was?

“I don’t think so,” she says, smiling like a true romantic in the throes of the earliest stage of love. “He worked on the road and used to be in a band once and they sold three million records and had two number ones so he’s been through all this. And you do really need someone who understands the kind of work you do. Besides, I’m always optimistic about relationships. I always go in there hoping for the best. People come up to me and say ‘but, Dolores, what if it gets to the same stage as before, with this person, because you are going to be on the road a lot?’ Yet I really believe we can work it out.

“Over the last year, at times, I was really worried because that first relationship was gone and I was thinking ‘I’ll never again be able to fall in love and when these hundred guys a night come up and say they love me how am I supposed to know if it’s really for me myself or because of the songs?’ But I do believe in this relationship, even though he lives in one city and I’m over here, and travelling around the world. But I was able to spend Christmas with him, in Canada, so at the moment things are fine!”

So much so that Dolores is seriously thinking of having a child. “I’m mad into the idea of being a mother and I’ve been putting it off since I was at least 18,” she says.”My sister had her first child at 17 and I really do love children. I’ve even written a song called ‘The Liverpool Child’, about that child that was abducted. I was so moved by that case. And though I know having a child would change my career, that doesn’t matter. The problem with a lot of artists is that they say they can’t have children because their career is more important.

“I wouldn’t let my career dictate how I live in that respect. Okay, if my boyfriend said ‘Dolores, I don’t want you to go off and gig next week’ I’d probably go, because the band will always be a priority to me. But I don’t want to wake up at 35, have all the money I made yet not have a family, or whatever. So I am seriously thinking of having a child.”

Surely, as a so-called sex-symbol, there is pressure on Dolores not to have a child?

“There is but anyone who tells me I can’t have a child because of that can shag off. I’d kick anyone in the head, who told me that. It’s my life,” she says, angrily. “And fans who don’t accept me for what I am – that’s their problem, not mine. But the band would never say anything like that. They don’t care, they say, ‘if you have a baby you can bring it on the road with us. We’ll be uncles Noel, Mike and Ferg!’ And maybe that will happen. Whatever I feel like doing, I’m going to do, whether we’re famous or not. And I’ll continue to write songs about those experiences and if they don’t sell, so what? I’d be happy in myself and, at the end of the day, that’s what matters.

“So if I fall in love and want to settle down and have children I’ll do it,” she adds. “Happiness and contentment aren’t always in record sales. I know countless women who sold so many records and have become amazingly famous but who are totally unhappy, I don’t want to end up like that. And men. Look at Elvis Presley and James Dean. They gave their lives for what they believed in and ended up with nothing. That’s not for me.”

Is Sinéad O’ Connor a role model in relation to Dolores having a child?

“In a way, yeah” she says. “But the difference is that Sinéad hasn’t written anything new since her second album. Her third album was covers. So I wouldn’t be surprised to see her coming back with killer of an album on subjects like being a mother and she could well do that. I’d love her to, because she has been so sneered at, and spat at by so many people. America is great for us but, at the same time, I’m not forgetting that they can turn on a person as quickly as they turned on Sinéad.

“Although I think Sinéad is a great woman to speak out on things as she did, I think most people didn’t look beyond her tearing up a picture of the Pope at the reasons why she felt she had to do that, for example. So I do think she would have been better off writing a song about those feelings. That’s what I’d do. And I certainly wouldn’t go on television telling people all about my personal life, or my past in the way she does. There are things that have happened to me that I’ll never discuss with any journalist because I must hold onto a part of my life the public doesn’t own.

“I’ll write personal songs but not talk about such things. But then the difference between Sinéad and I is that I come from a secure background, something I celebrate in a new song entitled ‘Ode To My Family’. And, at the end of the day I really, really do think what makes people tune into The Cranberries is the honesty of the music. Some fans say say ‘aren’t you embarrassed singing about such things?’ and I say ‘that’s what makes me what I am’. And people will see that I’ll do exactly the same thing on our second album. I’m not going to change that for anyone.

“The best thing anyone ever said about us was when Geoff Travis – our manager, who was also involved with the Smiths – said: “people react to your songs exactly the same way they did to Morrissey’s songs’. I think that’s the most wonderful compliment I ever got. And I hope it’s true.”