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Stuffed!



Live special: ELASTICA,
CRANBERRIES and
GREEN DAY on tour

The final KURT 'un:
NIRVANA
LP reviewed



OAKES' CUISINE

SUEDE scoff at the doubters

MADONNA ★ THE BLACK CROWES ★ SHED SEVEN
PET SHOP BOYS ★ PWEI ★ FULL MOON SCIENTIST
SHAMPOO ★ THESE ANIMAL MEN ★ μ-ZIQ ★ FLINCH



PHEW, DOLORES! MORE!

THE CRANBERRIES

GLASGOW
BARROWLANDS
LONDON SHEPHERDS
BUSH EMPIRE

SHE ASKS them how they're doing, and they roar. She performs a weird dance that makes her look like a clockwork doll, and they make a sound like an aircraft engine. She's worked on this trick where she flips back on her heels and flashes them a smile, and even that causes rapture.

So, when she holds out the microphone during a brilliantly energised reading of 'Wanted', they sing the "Wo-hoo-woah" bits as if they've crash-landed in Celtic Park. She lets 'Linger' ascend into a huge, love-drenched chant, during which she leaves the microphone behind and starts conducting the audience. On and on it goes, until she leads the charge into a giggle-ridden version of The Carpenters' 'Close To You' and strides into the wings... and 2,000 Glaswegians set about trying to put the floor through.

During all this, two things become clear: that given a spotlight that tracks Dolores' every step, and droves of beered-up disciples, The Cranberries take every one of your oven-ready suspicions – that they're a little too pasty-faced, that even their most cathartic moments aren't quite as heart-stopping as they'd like them to be – and make them irrelevant; and that Dolores O'Riordan has "star" written through her in indelible ink.

Put it down to the bleach bottle, the adoration of thousands of Americans and an ever-greater grasp of her own charisma. She's turned herself into a radiant she-alien and revealed a maternal, factory girl-turned-starlet persona that gives her the air of a latter-day Gracie Fields – and it's placed her on a rarefied podium alongside Björk, Tori Amos and Sinéad. She's beguiling, apparently sculpted from different stuff from the rest of us... a trainee icon, no less.

It carries her through moments that'd make anyone else look plain silly. When she plays 'Ode To My Family', plinking sheepishly at a keyboard, she sings "My mother, my mother she held me/My father, my father he liked me", and gets dangerously close to turning into Cilla

Black. There are times during 'Zombie' (not least the "With their tanks and their bombs/And their bombs and their guns" refrain) when we're pushed yet further into the pastel-coloured hinterland of Songs Of Praise, St Winifred's School Choir, ornamental plates with wounded puppies on them and Woman's Weekly: all 'to be sure, the world is full of evil and we need more love and understanding, really'.

She gets away with it, of course. It's all frighteningly heartfelt: once you've beheld the way she sings the most emotive lines (eyes closed, teeth clenched), sounding like someone hurling out distilled drops of angst-juice, you feel like a nobbo cynic for finding it all a bit cloying and have to salute her. Such is a crucial part of the Dolores O'Riordan mystique: the idea that she's the last angelic innocent in an encroaching world of nastiness. Thora Hird can have her when she's 50. Right now, she's a little too convincing.

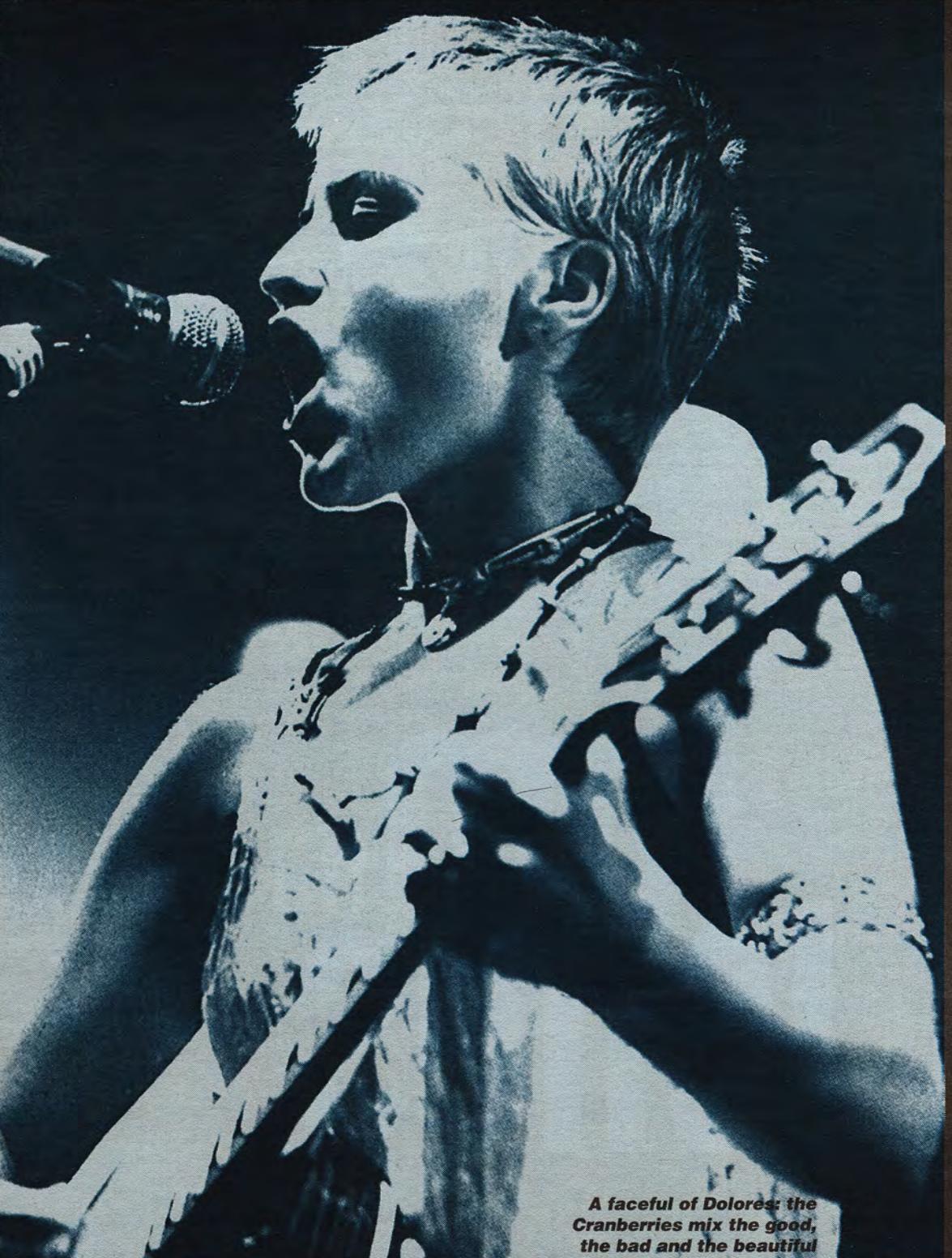
That's why, 72 hours after she's left Glasgow, she can put on a ludicrous white tutu, tell a far more genteel crowd (thermal his-and-hers jackets, beige polo shirts) to prepare themselves for another bit of soul-baring by shutting up – and whisper 'No Need To Argue' against a backcloth of absolute silence. It's why 'Dreams' remains a chunk of fizzed-up euphoria that simply sounds fantastic. And it's why she can act all gooey and "blimey, I'm famous" and make people melt.

There are lessons in all of this, too. If The Cranberries can flip between either extreme on the emotional slide-rule (roughly, from mewling despair to saucer-eyed *joi de vivre*) in front of thousands of people, they should be able to let rip a little more in the studio: to be a bit more ragged and impassioned and not sound quite so polite. It later transpires they've got a scary rock-pig itinerary that takes them far into next year. It'll probably happen.

Two nights at either end of the country bring the following revelation: The Cranberries are three affable, wised-up fellers and an astro-fairy in metallic Doc Martens who sings like an angel. And that, if you think about it hard enough and cheat a bit, is an anagram of a "group who are likely to end up as deservedly vast members of the international aristocracy".

John Harris

PICTURE: ROGER SARGENT



A faceful of Dolores: the Cranberries mix the good, the bad and the beautiful

THE SPIN DOCTORS

MANCHESTER APOLLO

"DO YOU like the blues?" enquires The Most Hated Man In Rock... It's Chris Barron's last trick as he winds up tonight's feverish set. He's twisted his insect limbs into hideously warped poses, jiggled around the stage like a half-empty sack of loose bones and told Manchester they're a "Hey! Great crowd". And they are too: 2,000 young marries perspiring politely into their River Island casualwear and remarking how energetic tonight's show is compared to their last musical excursion. Crowded House might have the tunes, they agree, but the Spin Doctors are completely out of control! Phew!

But still, despite this charged atmosphere, there is disappointment on

these clean-cut, newlywed faces. Where are the precision-tooled pop hits like 'Two Princes', the quite unreasonably catchy tune which single-handedly catapulted the modest-selling debut Docs album up beyond the six-million mark? Why all these unwieldy blues jams and laboured rock-sludge workouts from their new metalhead guitarist? Why play the slower, sloppier stuff from their patchy new album instead of the shiny funk-pop of the first?

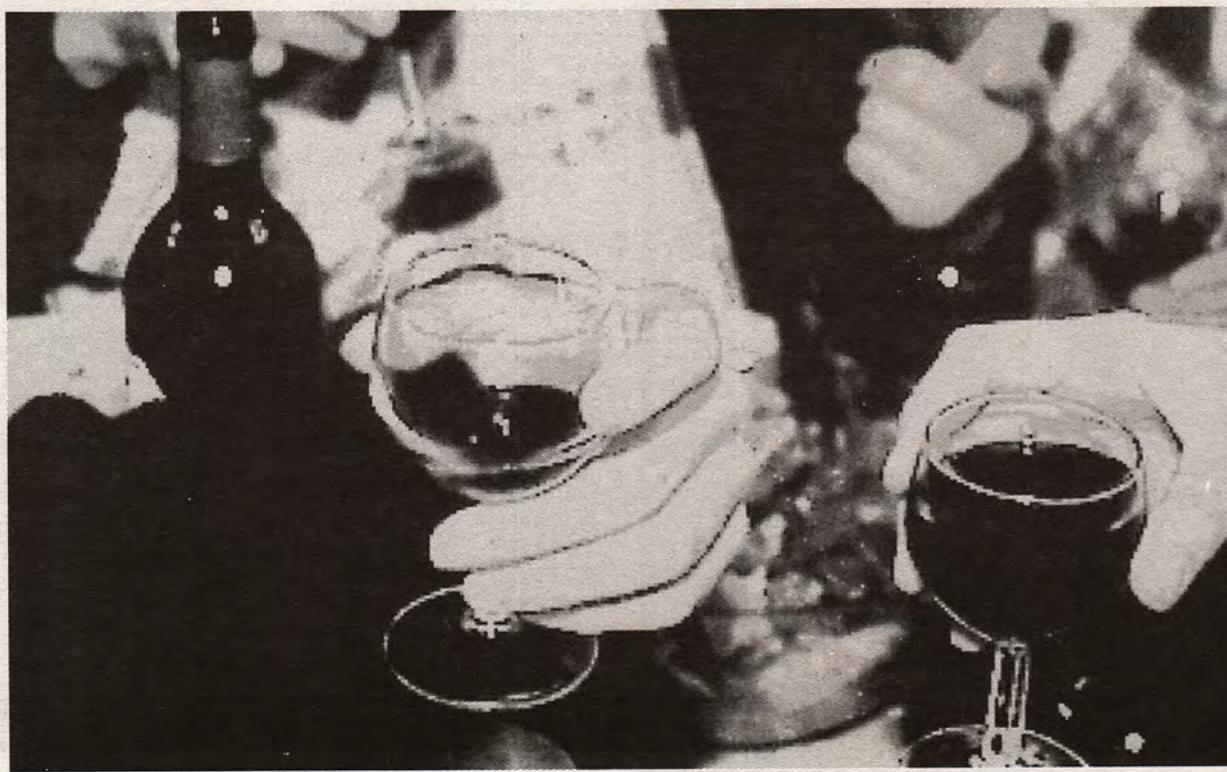
Love them or hate them, The Spin Doctors are an astonishing success story who also happen to be competent songwriters and performers. But they're fooling only themselves if they really believe their fans are neo-hippy Deadheads reliving Woodstock 25 years later. There's only one reason this hall is packed tonight: 'Two Princes', dismissively bashed out as a slightly flat encore. All the rest, the rhythm'n'rits bar-

room boho stuff, is an indulgence most people here could happily live without.

So the Spin Doctors are balanced on a precarious precipice: the gulf between what they are and what they *think* they are grows wider by the minute, and if they're not careful they might just fall into it. The River Island brigade have stayed loyal so far – they're a pretty monogamous bunch, after all – but they may not give Barron's gang the benefit of the doubt next time around. The more months that pass between 'Two Princes' and an equally poppy follow-up, the more likely this crowd is to skip future shows in favour of late-night shopping at B&Q.

And no, that's not a snide dig at suburban taste, just at blinkered hippies who think they're above it.

Stephen Dalton



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