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DANGEROUS LIAISONS

the rock 'n' roll/brat pack
love affair turns sour...



The unrepentant Delores O'Riordan: "The people that think I'm innocent, they're the ones sitting in their little nine-to-five jobs, scrounging to save a few bob." Look at me. Who's laughing now? Who sold all the records?"

THE CRANBERRIES

What's it like to be pop's best kept secret? In America The Cranberries sell as many LPs as Nirvana. They dwarf Suede and tower over Moz. MTV has Cranberries Days. But over here, their bittersweet pop perfection can't get arrested. Come on...

everybody else is buying it, why aren't you?

story by DAVID CAVANAGH photos by NEIL COOPER

IT WAS THE FIRST SONG THEY EVER WROTE. Well, that is, it was the first song they wrote with Delores O'Riordan. Prior to that they had a singer called Niall, who wrote jokey, boisterous songs full of sentiments akin to Billy Connolly's 'My Granny Drowned In A Fountain At Lourdes' that somewhat obscured their one true influence, The Smiths. Guitarist Noel Hogan, moved to intervene, came up with four gentle, reflective chords one day that would — that could — that should change all their lives forever, if only they would let them.

The song was called 'Linger'.

Back then in 1990 they were called The Cranberry Saw Us, one of the worst names for a band ever. After Niall exited the scene, the remaining three, anxious to document at least something, had considered going into a studio to record instrumentals. Instead they killed time in a Limerick rehearsal room. They wanted a soft-voiced singer, a female singer, but they never expected one like Delores O'Riordan.

Before The Cranberries, two famous people had come out of Limerick. One is Terry Wogan. The other is Richard Harris. In fact, Richard Harris is an uncle through marriage of the band's drummer, Fergal Lawler.

If you wanted to catch up with Delores O'Riordan in those days, the place to go was

church. Not only did she sing in the choir, she also played the organ. Delores had been writing since she was about 12. In her class at school was the sister of the girlfriend of their old singer Niall, and she suggested that the two sides meet. One of Delores' first jobs was to write lyrics for Noel's four chords.

"I thought they were four nice chords," says Delores. "I didn't really think much. I just thought they were nice chords. And I took them home and I just wrote about me."

'Linger' was released as a single in the UK in February 1993. It reached number 74. Two weeks later The Cranberries' debut album, 'Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?' followed it into the shops. It didn't chart.

THE CRANBERRIES WERE ON TOUR IN EUROPE IN THE spring of 1993 when someone told them that 'Linger' was starting to get a serious amount of college radio play in America. Wheels were already turning that would see them sell more records in the US than Morrissey.

"Nobody expected it," says Noel Hogan, blinking. "Especially us."

They'd actually been thinking of going to Australia, which was taking off for them, but it seemed sensible to wing over to the States and "do a small tour", possibly returning in '94 to consolidate. The minute they arrived, it was clear this would be no small tour. MTV had picked →

'Linger' for their Buzzbin sequence (five or so videos played repeatedly, over and over, day-in day-out, ad infinitum, ceaselessly, are you getting the message yet) for a month. Word of mouth soon became a roar.

"We kind of ignored it," says Noel.

'Linger' is a bittersweet song with great singing and it was earmarked for success by business types as long ago as the band's first demo. What it sounds like is all America had to go on, until MTV played the video. It's a fair bet that only a fraction of those who bought it knew where The Cranberries were from. In many ways, the surprise is that it wasn't a hit over here – it was on a *Select* tape, but CIN rarely count those when computing chart placings – as it's immediately pretty and was always so and hasn't suddenly improved or anything.

They toured the States anyway, on a bill that's since become semi-legendary, with Suede and The Gigolo Aunts. Officially, Suede were The Cranberries' co-headliners, but since The Cranberries are so easy-going, Suede played last at every gig but one, in Atlanta. They may have wished they hadn't; many people left immediately after seeing The Cranberries.

Mad. When they played Salt Lake City they were given a demo tape by a local band who did versions of 'Linger' and 'Dreams'. Madder. When they hit LA, the four of them sat in a hotel room, watching in awe as MTV played all The Cranberries footage they could get their hands on. It was Cranberries Day.

"At the end of the day," says Fergal, "it's like, who cares if you're famous? It's the music that's important to me."

Then the Buzzbin held them over for another month. More Cranberries Days.

"You don't let yourself get too freaked out and get too into the rock 'n' roll side of it," says Fergal. "That's the sick part of it."

Everyone was caught on the hop, not least Island Records who had only printed a few thousand copies of 'Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?', an album that, in the UK, had been delayed for a year, reviewed four months early and then ignored. Island printed up more copies of 'Everybody Else', then more, then more still.

"I'm happy with my life," says Noel. "It's just another job."

Fergal: "It just happens to be one that we enjoy."

The Cranberries played more US shows, with Duran Duran – whose album theirs was easily out-selling. They were big, big gigs.

"I'd rather play small, shitty clubs than an arena anyway," says Fergal.

Each time, they would play 'Linger' third in the set. The album kept selling. Six hundred thousand. Eight hundred thousand. A million.

"At the end of the day," concludes Fergal, "as long as you've got a good batch of songs there behind you, there's nothing else you have to worry about, if you ask me."

As of January '94, Island expect 'Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?' to sell two million copies in the States. It's already sold 1.3m. On January 31, 'Linger' was re-released in the UK.

The band are not in any great hurry, but they are up with the clock. They begin recording the



Straight outta Limerick... The Cranberries: (from left) Fergal, Delores, Mike, Noel

"Money? Up to now I'm just going to our accountant, Take it away. Put it in my bank account..."

next album on March 1, again with Stephen Street. It'll come out this summer; they don't know when.

"We'll have it finished by May, definitely," predicts Fergal, "and then it's up to the record company to release it as quickly as they can."

Yes. They probably will, won't they?
"I'm sure they will."

WHEN THEY AREN'T PLAYING TO ADORING AUDIENCES IN Atlanta, Seattle or Los Angeles, The Cranberries live with their parents in Limerick. They don't think about their 1.3m album sales and they don't like the music press. This is the condensed version. You'd think they might find other sections of the population to blame for their lack of UK success – the 56 million people who had the option to buy their records and elected not to, for instance – but either way The Cranberries took a year off, came back and were ignored. They blame 'hype' – being overpraised in their earlier stages – and can really go on about this if they're forced to.

So here's Delores O'Riordan, the band's 22-year-old singer, visual presence and wild card. She has been presumed innocent because she did not know what an 'amp' was. Don't ask her about this. You really wouldn't like her answer.

"The people that think I'm innocent – they're the ones that are innocent, they're the ones that are still sitting in their little nine-to-five jobs, they're the ones that are still trying to scrounge to save up a few bob. And look at me. Who's laughing now? Who sold the records?"

There's something taunting in her voice, too. She's bizarre company, at first apologetic for being late, then friendly and wistful, then intense and sarcastic, then defiant and edgy.

Recently – this is still in the friendly and wistful stages – Ireland's silver-haired TV potentate Gay Byrne had her on his show singing with church choirs from all over the country.

"I really, really enjoyed it," she grins. "There's an intensity that you don't get with a gig. Well, you *do* get that intensity, but a different one. You've to stand up with no microphone in your hand and you've to stand like this (*completely motionless*) in front of thousands of people and just sing. It's a good laugh."

There's an old Delores quote from January 1992: "I think what's happening now is a kind of reward. That if it hadn't been for the church I wouldn't have thought of music as a career in the first place." That was before all this. Is she now more convinced it's a big reward?

"I always have believed in karma," she says. "I've always believed that if you did good as a child you'll receive good as an adult. If you were hurt as a child you won't be hurt as an adult. If you were spoilt as a child you mightn't have the best adulthood. I believe in karma."

It was quite some religious upbringing. As a child she went to church every day. Her week went: go to school, go to music lessons (piano), go to choir practice. For escapism she went to Slogadh, a coming together of Irish-speaking schools for a traditional music session. Pop music was available on 2FM in Ireland, but she had never heard of Liz Fraser or The Sundays or anyone vaguely alternative, apart from The Smiths.

"Pop music's a combination of so many different musics," she claims. "Every kind of music; you name it. Pop music's not pure, it's popular. It's what you want it to be. It's anything. Pop comes from roots. It comes from Chondos in Ireland, that's where pop comes from. It comes from the old Egyptian, the old Arabian, you know, Arabic. African. Catholic religion. Protestant. Everything. That's what pop is, if you ask me."

And The Cranberries?

"The Cranberries are about more than music, as far as I'm concerned. The lyrics are very important. The psychology, the message – whether people understand it or not – it's a *message* that The Cranberries are getting across. Beginning – a young person, saying: this person thinks, blah, blah, blah. And as you travel around the world your messages are changing. It's getting broader. It's like if you take a book, this is chapter two."

You are a star now, of course.

"No, I'm still Delores O'Riordan. People call me a pop star, that's fine. I don't. I'm doing the same thing that I was doing when I was 12 years old, except people play the songs on the radio. Big deal. I'm still an artist, I'm still a songwriter. It's not going to change my world. Like, as far as I'm concerned – money? Up to now I'm just like going to our accountant, Take it away. Put it in my bank account."

Towards the end of the interview Delores starts to really come out fighting. She rails against journalists, protests that people in Limerick won't leave her alone, slanders the band's old manager, lays into journalists some more, saying they're all failures and jealous of her, and finishes five minutes later by saying that she just laughs at these people.

"I was told when I was 18 years old," she says thoughtfully, "by some people I really trusted, that what was happening in London with The Cranberries was absolutely peanuts compared to what was going to happen in the States."

She looks across.

"Do you still think I'm innocent?"

MAGS

12-PAGE PHOTO PULL-OUT FREE WITH SELECT

From left: **1** Pulp Kevin Westenberg 1993 **2** Johnny Marr Steve Pyke 1993 **3** The Divine Comedy (Neil Hannon) Kevin Westenberg 1993 **4** Polly Harvey Colin Bell 1993 **5** Brett Anderson Phil Williams 1993 **6** Bernard Butler Phil Williams 1993 **7** Galen (Roddy McDowall) of Planet Of The Apes Kobal Collection 1968 **8** Miles Hunt Kevin Westenberg 1993 **9** Björk Juergen Teller 1993 **10** One Dove Chris Clunn 1993 **11** Cypress Hill Jenny Acheson 1993

