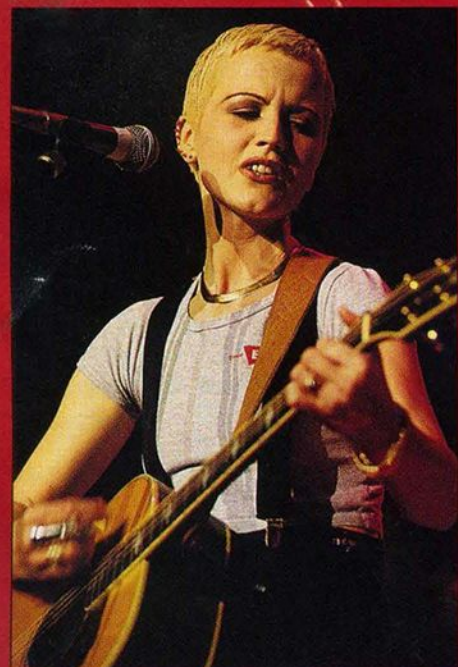


# RTE GUIDE



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## **EXCLUSIVE** **DANIEL** "THE SPECIAL PEOPLE IN MY LIFE"



## **EXCLUSIVE** **DOLORES** FAME AND THAT £3 MILLION FORTUNE



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# BLONDES HAVE MORE FUN?

*It's been a strange year for The Cranberries. But weddings, money, cruciate ligament injuries and rumours of breakup can't halt their unstoppable rise and rise.*

*This Sunday they pick up an award for Best Selling Irish Act at The World Music Awards.*

*Here Alan Corr talks exclusively to Dolores O'Riordan*

**T**HERE could be many reasons why Dolores O'Riordan sounds down. It could be road pressures, fear of talking to the press following this year's repeated media maulings, it could be the trials of getting used to fame, it could even be that she's homesick, not having laid eyes on her homeland for nearly five months. But the woman at the other end of the phone in Montreal speaks quietly and slowly, sometimes mum-

bling her answers and sometimes sounding distinctly distracted.

The Cranberries in mid-1995 are well into their world tour supporting their second album *No Need To Argue*. They're no longer an 'alternative' band but contemporaries of Pearl Jam, Live and REM. Four early twentysomethings who have become a multi-million-selling mini corporation (latest worldwide com-

bined sales figure for their two albums is 10,985,420 units) and a collective of musicians who have already sunk into the consciousness of the 1990s with songs such as *Linger*, *Dreams* and the powerful drama of *Zombie*.

Then there's the personal upheavals that go along with such success. The skiing accidents, that wedding day, the Irish concert cancellations, rumours and counter rumours and the over-

all conclusion that The Cranberries aren't like other bands. And that's not just because their extraordinary rise to fame and riches happened in jig time.

In Montreal, where the band are set to appear on Canada's biggest TV show, Dolores relays the story of how the current Canadian gigs very nearly didn't happen. "We cancelled Toronto four times before we made it," she says. "One of the reasons was that we were stopped at the border and the other was, I think, my skiing accident and then there was another time we were meant to go and Simon [Le Bon] was sick and the last time we were meant to go, I was sick. So by the time we got to play Toronto everybody was saying 'Yeah, sure'."

That wasn't the first time The Cranberries have been the band who cried wolf. In what many saw as a Sinéad-like pique of contrariness by Dolores, they cancelled all their Irish dates last Christmas. The backlash it provoked seems to have cooled, and Dolores speaks with some relish of their return to Ireland for three dates in early June.

"Em, I suppose it's a pretty big show because this year is the first time we've had our own production crew. We've got our own lights and PA. It used to be that we had all these great ideas but we couldn't put them into practice until we were big enough, you can get more elaborate. But at the same time it's down to kind of subtlety and creativity."

**T**he Cranberries live are certainly a subtle band but they're also a *quiet* band and it's testament to the power of Dolores' voice that they can fill a hall with 8,000 souls without relying on clichéd rock 'n' roll pyrotechnics. "I don't put myself in line with any other type of rock 'n' roll bands," Dolores says firmly. "This is what I do and obviously it's been the right choice for me because it's done pretty well. I just do what I do y'know? And I think The Cranberries' show has probably changed a little bit, everybody's come out of themselves a lot. The guys are rocking out a bit more on stage."

The besuited spectres who make up the rest of the band, brothers Noel and Mike Hogan and Fergal Lawlor, have of late come under fire themselves for their lack of presence. Their music has been described as plodding, and their policy of dressing in sombre suits (especially tailored in Limerick) invariably shoos the shifting limelight towards Dolores, whose own image changes are an important part of the makeup of the band.

She strongly resents any suggestions that Mike, Noel and Fergal (the drummer who was recently described in *Rolling Stone* as the only one with star potential) are mere ciphers: "There's a lot of things in the band that nobody knows and nobody gets to see, y'know? People get to see the musician-ship in the band but there's a lot of personalities involved too which are kind of really interesting."

"We're thinking of making a video for the lads to portray their personalities and stuff. It's important for us to communicate with our fans because they've got a lot on the song front and they want to know a little bit more about us. That's cool with me. A lot of times in interviews people ask you the most bizarre questions or they might have the most bizarre concept of what type of a person you are and you're kind of like 'Where are you comin' from?' y'know? Sometimes people think maybe I'm this red hot chick. Other times they'll think I'm a manic depressive who wants to slash my wrists."

"When you write songs," she continues. "You sit down and write a song but that doesn't mean you feel like that all the time. An album is a piece of work, a piece of music about different times when you're feeling a certain way but it doesn't really symbolise your complete personality 24 hours a day."

One of The Cranberries' greatest achievements in negotiating the US rock scene was Dolores' appearance on the cover of *Rolling Stone* earlier this year. However, when a band fulfils Dr Hook's ultimate rock 'n' roll fantasy, the whole line-up is featured (vidé Pearl Jam, Soul Asylum, The Red Hot Chili



Peppers). In The Cranberries' case it was Dolores alone.

"Indeed," she says. "I'm not the editor of *Rolling Stone*. I cannot answer on his behalf. I have no idea. We did a band shoot and we did singles of everybody but that's the way it was. We kind of expected it to be the band but it wasn't. When I saw it, I thought maybe they'd do that and maybe they wouldn't, a lot of people do that, put my face on the cover."

Dolores seems constantly at pains to play down her success and the success of the band. "I mean, everybody goes up and down in life, y'know? Just because you're selling records it doesn't mean you're successful, to be successful means that in your heart and soul you feel you're a happy person with what you're doing in your life. I'm not any more successful than anybody else. Just 'cause I'm making more money that doesn't mean I'm a better person or I'm more successful. Some people are successful, they've got three kids and a job. They're looking after their kids and they're great Dads and great Mums. What really matters is that I'm a happy woman at the end of the day."

She exercises a forced humility that can come across as precious and devoid of the type of humour that, for example, Michael Stipe uses. But Dolores and The Cranberries have neither the outright irony of bands like Green Day and Blur nor the uptight seriousness of Pearl Jam and Radiohead.

"I am a normal person," she protests. "And I know that Eddie Vedder is a very nice person and I know personally from hanging around with Simon Le Bon and stuff that he's really sound, y'know? And that his wife and kids come first, y'know? I know from meeting these people that they're normal. They're famous but that's, like, so what? . . . If you start looking at yourself as this thing your fans see well then you're going to start kind of worrying about yourself, y'know? It's like your fans think you're great and they get all excited and everything, that's very fine but I mean you're just an ordinary person at the end of the day."

So she's not necessarily uncomfortable with fame. "No. It's grand. I'll be out shopping and I meet girls and they blush and they go all speechless and stuff and I say don't tell anyone else who I am because I don't want to make a scene. People are really nice generally y'know? As the band get bigger naturally you can protect yourself, you can go to the right places, when you're leaving a venue you're surrounded by security so you don't get mobbed, y'know? But our fans are nice in general, there's no psychos, it's not that scary."

What probably is scary is The Cranberries storylines of lost love, unrequited love and love gone wrong. Dolores' lyrical dexterity doesn't really stop you in your tracks, yet her band have become strange chartfellows with American bands who explore rock's dark side in a very depressive way.

"I think it's real," Dolores says. "The divorce situation isn't getting any better over here y'know? The amount of relationship and marriage breakdowns over here is high. You end up, like, kind of . . . if you have personal experiences of it you write songs about it and maybe that's why people buy and relate to our music because maybe they've experienced a lot of turmoil in their relationships over here."

The Cranberries' sales figures can sometimes make startling reading. In Greece, for example, they've sold 27,000 albums, in Australia 398,000, the UK 1.2,000,000, in Spain 213,000, in Indonesia 125,000, in Ireland 106,000 and in Venezuela, wait for it, 85. The royalty cheques are obviously pretty tasty right now, and along with concert receipts for a largely sold-out tour, Dolores is becoming a rich woman.

"I think they exaggerate it really," she says. "They go on about it all the time, like they must be bored or something hahaha. Writing about how much money Dolores O'Riordan has when there's, like, children starving all over the world and there's loads of other stuff happening and they choose to write about me and my money. It's kinda like 'Hello, find something else to write about.' But are you worth £3.25 million? 'I don't know. I'll have to ask my accountant.'"

The last time Dolores was in Ireland was at Christmas. She and husband Don Burton (she's said that one of the reasons she married was to protect herself from music industry chau-

vinism) are building a house in Kerry, but already international demands and good old rock 'n' roll capital investment means that the couple have also bought a house in Burton's home town of Toronto.

She reports this in a quiet voice as if her heart home is

vanishing in the clouds of career turbulence. Dolores gets on "very well" with Don's family but when asked further questions about her notoriously media-shy husband she pretty much clams up.

She talks to her five brothers and one sister about once a month on the phone and her mother, Eileen, once a week. "She tells me about the weather, my grandmother and . . ." Suddenly the high-pitched voice of Amy of Leftbank Management who look after The Cranberries as well as Duran Duran, Luther Vandross, Meatloaf and Dina Carter, crashes into our cyberspace to tell us we have to "Wrap up in a five-minute period". So we do and Dolores retreats for more press and to have her make-up done for tonight's TV appearance.

What is she like? The Cranberries have been catapulted into a world of flashlights, MTV Awards, video shoots, magazine covers and celebrity networking in a very short space of time. But refreshingly Dolores O'Riordan doesn't fit into the inherently sexist Women In Rock stories we've been burdened with recently. She's no Courtney Love, Patti Smith, Polly Harvey or Justine Frischmann. In fact, she's probably got more in common with Karen Carpenter.

And let's face it, she sings like an angel caught in a glass harp.

**The Cranberries play:**  
**Maysfield Centre, Belfast, Thursday June 1.**  
**The Point, Dublin, Friday June 2.**  
**Millstreet, Co Cork, Sunday June 4.**  
**Their new single *Ridiculous Thoughts* is out May 22. ■**

