



# THE TICKET

IRELAND'S  
GOING-OUT  
GUIDE



**Strange attractor** How did Michael O'Shea woo Cannes with his first film?

**The Clint in his eye** Scott Eastwood on stepping out of his dad's shadow and into Paul Walker's film



## STRANGE FRUIT

The Cranberries on making up their own rules for success in the music industry





**The Cranberries** Noel Hogan, Dolores O'Riordan  
Mike Hogan and Fergal Lawler

# Another bite of the berry

The Cranberries had phenomenal success but a fragile heart, and an approach that was unsustainable. Dolores O'Riordan and Noel Hogan tell **Tony Clayton-Lea** why they're taking another shot and why they couldn't walk away

If there is a successful Irish rock band as beleaguered as The Cranberries, then we have yet to make their acquaintance. The Limerick band arrived just over 25 years ago with a few delicate songs (some of which have stood the test of time – *Linger* and *Dreams*, in particular, continue to weave spells), but it took some years for the quartet to fully engage with their sudden, rapid rise to international success.

The initial road to victory was unsteady. The band formed in 1989 and within a year original vocalist Niall Quinn left, with his position filled by slip-of-a-girl singer Dolores O'Riordan, who developed several of the band's early demos (including *Linger* and *Dreams*) into songs that seemed good enough to send to UK-based record companies. Such instincts proved correct –

Island Records signed them, but complications quickly arose when the band fired their manager (and early producer of tracks for their debut album), Pearse Gilmore.

New management in the experienced shape of Rough Trade's Geoff Travis followed, as did a new producer (the acclaimed Stephen Street), and by early 1993 the refurbished debut album arrived. Despite the sense of expectation, *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* didn't set the world alight. Indeed, not much of anything happened.

Amid murmurs of varying states of bewilderment, not even sharp-witted music industry people knew what to do with a band that had some fine songs but little experience in the art of performing. Factor in a female sing-

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er who was so shy that she often faced the stage backdrop instead of the audience, and you had problems.

Within a year, however, all was to change: in the US as sup-

port to (the then much better gamble) Suede, MTV put the videos for *Linger* and *Dreams* into, as they said back then, "heavy rotation". The Cranberries quickly became the most successful Irish band since U2. The level of achievement, O'Riordan admits, came much too quickly.

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#### Problems were brewing

Outwardly, the band could do no wrong, but problems were brewing. It seems you could take the band out of provincial Limerick but never the other way around.

"It was a very dramatic change from living in a country area outside Limerick to sudden-

## 'I'd say yes, yes, yes to everything, and then get burned out' Dolores O'Riordan on mental health

"What's important is to be in control of your own schedule, and not to lose charge of it. Also, you need to know your boundaries, such as when you're getting tired, when you need to stop talking, stop singing, stop running, to stay in one place for a certain amount of time.

"Once you get to establish those, then you're strong enough."



remember when I was much younger I'd say yes, yes, yes to everything, and then I'd get burned out. There was no one there to help, though. When you're doing really well, everyone is there to help out, but when you get sick you wind up on your own. So looking after your health, your mental health, is very important."

ly being dropped into cities such as London and New York. That was a huge leap from one life to another."

For O'Riordan, the leap eventually became too wide to complete. "For as long as I could, I held on to those years like I was gripping a rollercoaster ride."

By the third album, *To the Faithful Departed* (1996), she says had to let go. "I got sick, had a meltdown – it was too much work that caused it."

The on-hiatus approach the band has undertaken since then provided some relief from the pressures of what to them was a relentless treadmill of touring. Various solo projects were offered for public consumption, but indifference greeted all of them. Gradually, they realised that every road led back to The Cranberries.

"For the foreseeable future that's the plan," says guitarist Noel Hogan, adding that any conversations presently being had by the band members involve the forthcoming album, *Something Else* (a "Best Of" collection prettified by musical backing from the Irish Chamber Orchestra) and a further album.

#### A defining thing

"We all know that every time we leave The Cranberries to do something else that the band itself is still there in the background – I've never heard any member walk away to do something and say they're finished with it. For most of our lives – I'm speaking for myself, obviously, but I'm sure the rest will agree – The Cranberries has been such a defining thing. We have a career from it, we make a living from it; it's something that we know we're very lucky to have. Most importantly, when we come back from wherever it was we were, there's a demand for us. A lot of bands go away, come back and nobody cares."

It's still stop-start, however, and even recently there was trouble in the house when, in October 2013, O'Riordan filed a High Court case against Hogan (for reasons not disclosed). Interestingly, in April 2015 the pair signed a publishing partnership with Warner/Chappell Music UK Publishing. Less than three months later, the High Court case was struck out. It's all happy families now, then?

"We've had our ups and downs over the years, like many



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been for a long time."

Both Hogan and O'Riordan see *Something Else* as a stepping-stone or a stopgap between old and new material. An album of new material, he admits, is where their real interests lay.

#### Do better stuff

"We have little pieces that need work done on them, so that's definitely the next step forward. It's great having such a weighty back catalogue, but what makes it really exciting is to keep on writing, to do better stuff than you've done before."

O'Riordan is similarly enthused, but not at any price, which seems fair enough considering her previous experience at being on the top while feeling rock bottom.

"Hopefully, after this tour we'll write new material, but at the same token I genuinely don't expect to be as successful as we once were. The 1990s was our time for that, I think – we were hungry and on fire. Now, we're older, we have kids, and I know we'll never get those earlier moments back again. Not that I want them."

**Something Else** is released April 28th through BMG. The Cranberries play Waterfront Hall, Belfast on May 17th, and Bord Gais Energy Theatre, Dublin, May 18th