

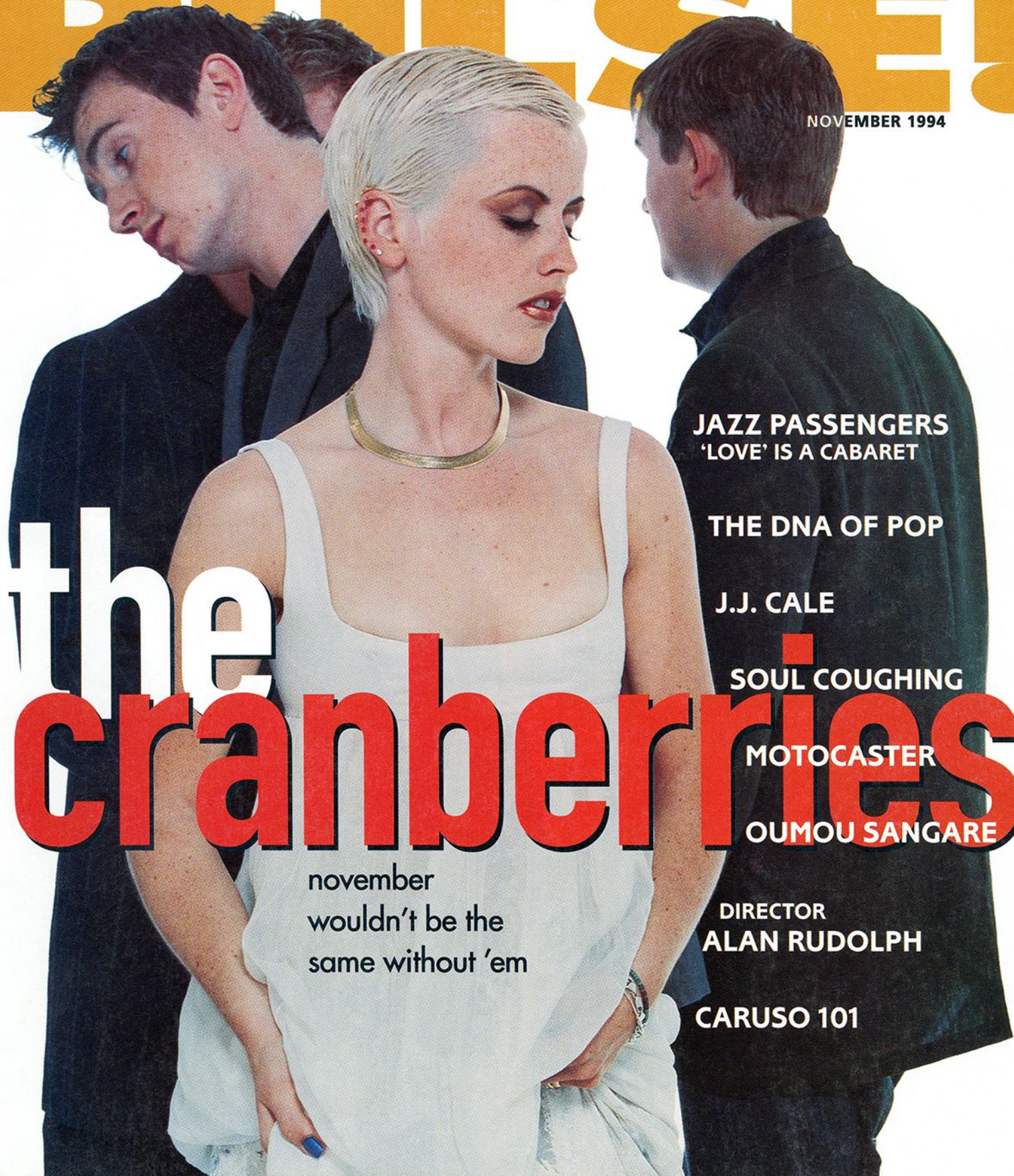
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NOVEMBER 1994



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Feargal Lawlor, Dolores O'Riordan, Mike Hogan, Noel Hogan

cranberries

the

by tom lanham

HOT ON THE SUCCESS
OF 'EVERYBODY ELSE IS
DOING IT, SO WHY CAN'T
WE?' AND THE JUST-
RELEASED FOLLOW-UP
'NO NEED TO ARGUE,'
THIS IRISH POP COMBO
FINDS TIME TO STRETCH
OUT AND FEEL THEIR OATS

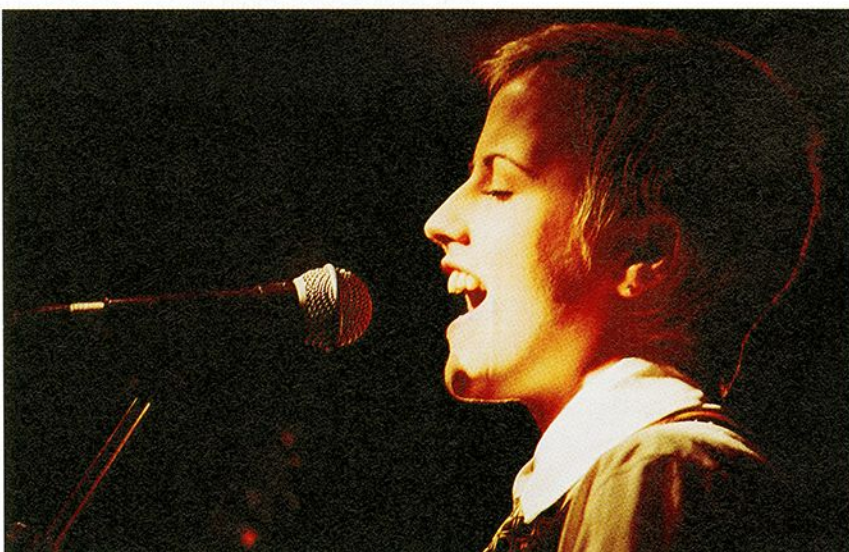


Dolores O'Riordan may have just turned 23, but she doles out sagacious advice with the authority of a wise old Dear Abby. It's probably only her blunt delivery that keeps her from starting an agony aunt column of her own.

"If you met a girl who had a

photograph by kate garner

JILL FURMANOVSKY



"I THINK I OWE MY OWN PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFIDENCE TO AMERICA, AND TO WHAT THE AMERICANS DID FOR MY BAND."

—DOLORES O'RIORDAN

great personality, who you thought was really beautiful and who was really sweet on you, and you knew for certain that she'd be faithful, why would you cheat on her?" the fluttery singer for Ireland's lower-case/high-art quartet, the Cranberries, rhetorically quizzes. Today, she's backstage at London's hip Ronnie Scott's jazz club, and bounding into the oft-covered topic of male sexuality and how advertising presents glossy, stiletto-heeled women as attainable objects of desire. "Everything you see in a magazine—a woman's nice ass with a pair of knickers on it—well, when those knickers come off and the lights go out, you're in the same situation. In bed with the lights out, the female body is pretty much the same, and it doesn't really matter what the exterior looks like.

"I mean, you can get a girlfriend who's really shy and not into *this*," she purses her lips into a stereotypically sexy pout and bats her long eyelashes, "but when you're in bed with her, and you get to that point in the relationship where you can bring out that beautiful, beautiful side of her that she doesn't show during the day, that's what's sacred. That's what's really worth it." The diminutive O'Riordan is herself attractive by any standard, even in the men's shirt, tie, trousers and suspenders she's worn for an afternoon press-only premiere of the Cranberries sophomore disc, *no need to argue* (Island); her pixie-cut blonde hair is moussed model-style to her head, and her alabaster complexion is offset by big, photogenic eyes, giving her a look of almost childlike I-didn't-do-it innocence. Still, she can't help throwing herself into the infidelity equation. "Look at me," she adds, slapping her hands on her chest. "I'm not exactly 20-foot boobs, L.A.-chick lookin', but I know that my man loves me in a way that he'd never want one of those big-boobed women that have nothing to say. Seeing the beautiful side of your lover is much better than picking a chick out of a magazine, thinking ..." and O'Riordan lecherously hisses the words "I like the way she pouts, I like the way she's bendin' over, and I like the shape of her anus." From time to time, the singer's "man"—tall, handsome tour manager Don Burton, who wed O'Riordan this June in a lavish abbey-held ceremony in Thurles, Ireland, complete with

horse-drawn carriage—pops his head into the dressing room to give his wife business-related signals or simply a couple of loving winks. It's clear he cares for her, and he ushers her through a postconcert meet-and-greet at the tiny Soho bar with both precision and concern for her fragile voice, a fine-tuned, Sinéad O'Connor-caliber instrument that can bellow like a bullhorn on *no need to argue's* electric first single, "Zombie," or trip delicately through a quiet, meadowy waltz like "Dreaming My Dreams With You." So where does this happily married lass with a double-platinum album to her credit (the Cranberries' creamy Celtic-threaded Island debut, *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?*) get off giving counsel to the brokenhearted? Listen closely to most of the *Everybody Else* material, even its chiming, charming hits like "Linger" and the jagged, vibratoed "Dreams"—O'Riordan has lived a lifetime of creepy, abusive relationships. And with the aptly-titled *no need to argue*, she's finally gotten the confidence to stand up and say, "Enough."

This new self-assurance is readily visible as O'Riordan strides briskly onstage at Ronnie Scott's to play five new songs before a packed house of hard-sell British rock scribes, the same press who once dubbed her "The girl who stands sideways" for her shy habit of never facing a Cranberries concert crowd. Bespectacled drummer Feargal Lawlor keeps studious time, and guitarist Noel Hogan and his bassist brother Mike remain rooted in one place, carefully coaxing the band's gurgling waterfalls of translucent rhythm. It's up to O'Riordan to get things moving.

Strapping on an acoustic guitar almost as big as she is, the vocalist hints at her newfound operatic strength in the opening "Dreaming My Dreams," her love-at-long-last ballad that seeps into the senses like a sing-song nursery rhyme. She simply strums the six-string with her eyes closed, her thick Limerick brogue personalizing each line ("Dere's no udder place where I'd lay down my face/ Dreamin' my dreams witehew"), and she has the audience in the palm of her gentle hand. Switching to keyboards for the lazy, perambulating pop of "Ode to My Family," she warmly coos her solemn wish to return

HOME TAPING IS KILLING MUSIC:

Dolores O'Riordan's DIDs

I'd probably bring some Ennio Morricone. And, duh, I'd definitely bring *The Commitments*—that's called sarcasm. I might also bring some Elvis Presley with me, not the *Sun Sessions* but the more mellow stuff, like "In the Ghetto." I like Van Morrison, but I wouldn't necessarily bring his CDs along. Or I might bring a compilation with lots of brilliant songs, like Marty Robbins' "El Paso." And I'd put a lot of classical stuff on it, too, a bit of Chopin, a bit of Beethoven. But I'd be really clever, though, and I'd take a tape with loads of different things, because I've never heard a band where I loved their whole album. It's always one or two great songs and that's it. —T.L.

counterpoint:

By Johnny Angel

Meet the new dross (same as the old dross)

It doesn't take the ears of a musical maven to ascertain that so much of today's "modern rock" is merely old wine in new baubles. Above and beyond the obvious aural cops and robberies—Soundgarden as Led Zep nouveau, and the various Crows (Counting/Van Morrison, Sheryl/Rickie Lee Jones, Black/Humble Pie)—there are subtle reminders everywhere your ears may wander that the all-pervasive '70s stamp has impinged deeply on our landscape. For instance, don't Billy Corgan and Billy Squier croon in the same harsh, strangled tenor? Or, isn't Eddie Vedder's singing voice eerily reminiscent of the Guess Who's Burton Cummings? Think about it.

Admittedly, it was an easier task to break new ground way back when every nuance and angle was a fresh turn, when crossing new elements with basic boogies blew many a brainpan. Considering rock's limited melodics and rhythms, it's a miracle the old hag is still drawing breath, but it does. The saddest aspect of this so-called "alternative" thing is how mainstreamy it actually is. If one compares, say, an '80s bubble-gummy made-for-the-masses act like Adam and the Ants or A Flock of Seagulls to ground-breaking git-slingers of today like the all-purpose Stone Temple Pilots, one sees a real drop-off in imagination and humor, not to mention beats and sonics. And the former acts were held—even by their most fanatic acolytes (if there were any)—as silly and mellifluous, whereas the latter are regarded (why?) as profound and deep.

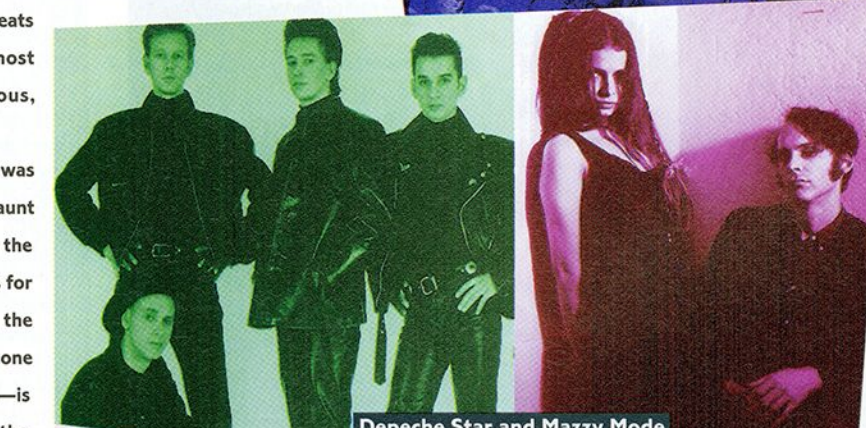
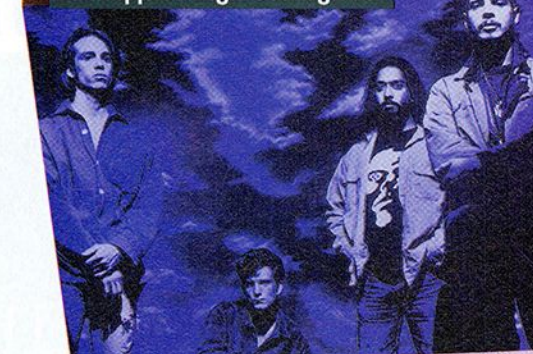
Must be that the currently aped '70s oeuvre is the one that was deemed dead and gone before its time and has come back to haunt the world. Now that Green Day and the Offspring are juicing up the familiar-to-first-time-punk-rockers chords and rapid-fire riddims for young fans who've never heard (or heard of) the Undertones, the Buzzcocks or TSOL, the latter half of that heinous decade—the one where the world was gonna turn day-glo, as X-Ray Spex put it—is now in some kinda vogue. Fine, as that music barely dented the American consciousness until watered down by the Cars (plotting a reunion as we speak, no doubt) and the Knack (coming to a roadhouse near you soon). Believe it or not, pure punk is a lot harder to mimic than the Zeppelinisms or Sab cops so beloved of our flannel-flyin' Northern buds. When rock is stripped down to the bare bones Ramones-style, the lack of tune and hook which is Pearl Jam and Co., stands naked and ugly. Either you got it or you don't, and as the tempos accelerate and the Spectorian/Blondified melodies return, it'll be interesting to see how today's guitar detuners cope with the pressure. Odds are they'll crap out, because it's a lot easier to change your stance when the meat of the matter is the recasting of basic metal, anyway. Anyone can fake sincerity, but tunes?

Nothing new under the sun, but isn't that the same as it ever was? (To mix Sting and Byrne, serves 'em both right.) It isn't the derivative nature of new music that makes it so disposable and inessential, it's the cowardice. Tune into MTV, and the new acts are interchangeable to the point of facelessness, which was the charge leveled, oddly enough, at so many of the '70s nightmare acts (e.g. Journey, Styx). More to the point: Wasn't the reason that the '80s hair-band brigade finally keeled over and croaked a painful death that was they were all the same, mining the same

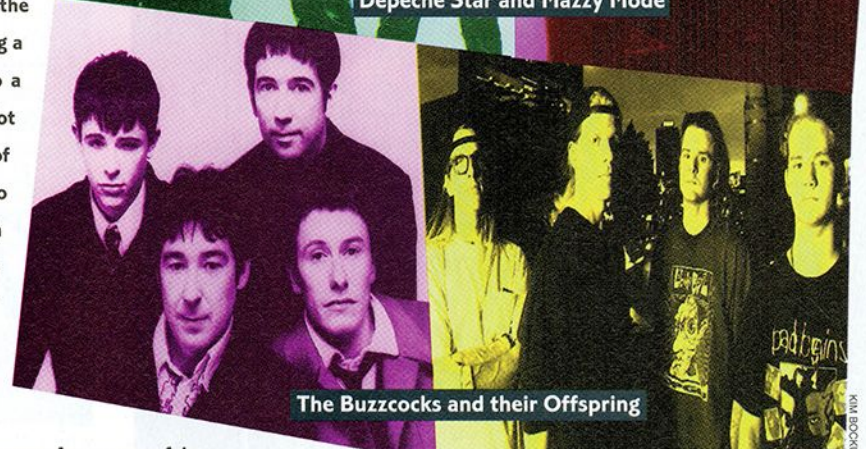
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Led Zeppelin begat Soundgarden



Depeche Star and Mazzy Mode



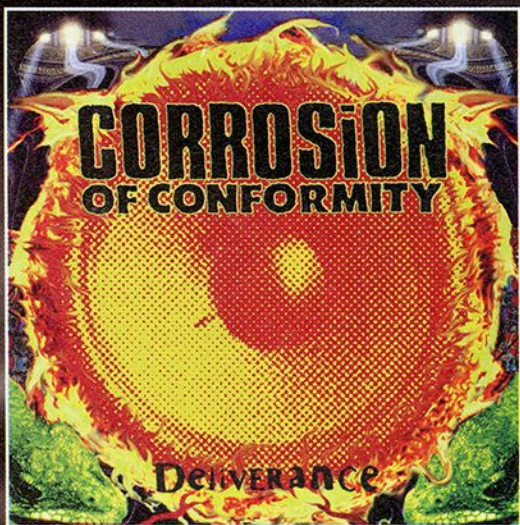
The Buzzcocks and their Offspring

The saddest aspect of this so-called "alternative" thing is how mainstreamy it actually is.

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"WHEN YOU JOIN A BAND AND YOU'RE ON THE ROAD WITH ALL THESE GUYS, NATURALLY YOU'VE GOTTA FIND PEOPLE TO TRUST. AND, UNFORTUNATELY, I FOUND UNTRUSTWORTHY PEOPLE."

—DOLORES O'RIORDAN

to childhood, her throat scuttling up the scales a few emphatic notches on the chorus: "Unhappiness, where's when I was young/ And we didn't give a damn/ 'Cause we were raised to see life as fun/ And take it if we can." By the closing acoustic rendition of the ordinarily staccato, industrial-strength "Zombie"—an elegy for a London tot killed in a terrorist bomb explosion last year—O'Riordan is a snarling powerhouse. "This is our next single, and it's against violence, about man's inhumanity to man, and what's worse, to child," she murmurs. "And we want it to stop." Her fiercely barked lyrics—with a rafter-swooping refrain of "Zombie-hee-uh-hee, Zombie-uh-hee-hee"—stand as a stark message to the Irish Republican Army and all its splinter factions: "But you see it's not me, it's not my family/ In your head, in your head they are fighting." As is often the case these days, the cranberries received a standing ovation for this emotive effort; thanks to O'Riordan's powerful presence, the message had gotten through.

It's hard to fathom, but O'Riordan swears that—until bumping into future husband Burton on a Duran Duran tour—she'd experienced nothing but heartache in relationships which were "very psychologically abusive, and when it got to the point where they seemed to be heading in the direction of being physically threatening to me, then I just left. I completely left all those people just before Christmas—I broke every link I ever had with every man in Limerick city. And some guys back home don't like the fact that an Irish girl married a foreigner [Burton hails from Canada]. But to me it's like, sorry, guys—I searched all around Ireland and I

didn't experience anything like the men over in America. The way they treat women in America! They open doors for ya, they take ya out to dinner and bring ya flowers. I'd never had flowers before in me life! I'm a girl who likes footin' her own bills, but at the same time, it's lovely to know that if your guy had 20 pounds, he'd spend at least 10 of it on you."

As O'Riordan tells it, her love life was like one painfully long session of Mystery Date, where every door she opened revealed a dud, not a dreamboat. "When I was 18, I moved into Limerick and joined the band, and I started to meet loads of men. But at the end of the day, most of 'em were into me because of my voice, because of my career, and nobody really cared. And that's wrong, because at the end of the day, you want someone to love you because of who you are." She sighs, her brow furrowing over sad eyes, puppy-dog hurt. The look could melt the iciest heart, but it apparently did nothing for the lads in Eire, who, O'Riordan admits, were only following a traditional pattern.

"Where I grew up, the men are the heroes, and women are the ones who clean up after them, do their washing, and keep quiet and stay at home while they go out to the pub with the boys. Women in Ireland just don't see the stuff that goes on in America. So I don't think I ever experienced true love with someone until I met the guy I just married, and I think that's why I decided to get married now. You spend your time in all these relationships where you think it's love, but you find out when you travel that they're terrible, just terrible."

Track down some of the cranberries' earliest demos, back when the Hogans and Lawlor were calling



yes, but what about THE COUCH?

It won't take a genius to note the common theme running through *no need to argue's* playful portfolio of sleeve photos. Each shot—the cranberries reclining on a hilltop, the band lolling about by a factory, in front of a pub, in a grassy meadow or simply by the sea—features a brown, brocaded couch, the same one that adorns the disc itself, only sans musicians. The obsession started innocently enough, says O'Riordan, back when the group was searching for a down-to-earth image for its *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* cover. "We told our art director that we wanted a picture of the band sitting on the couch, watching TV," she recalls. The cranberries wanted a similar feel for *No Need*. "So we said 'Let's go back to the old sofa and sit on it again,' because this record isn't a statement—it's just the way we look now. We've proved that we're musicians, that we write great songs, that we aren't trendy England, we're just us. So the new album is, 'Here we are, back on the couch, and we're looking happy this time.' Plus we're wearing nicer clothes."

There was one small problem. No one was quite certain who owned said sofa, or exactly where it was located. After the cranberries' art director tracked it down in America, the dauntless davenport travelled to the U.K. via ocean liner, and was airlifted all over Ireland to a variety of stunning locales. "We even took it out to a little island," adds O'Riordan. "And that day it rained while the sun shined, so we had the umbrellas out. On the shot of us sitting on the beach, the tide was coming in, coming up around my feet, and I was like, 'Can we go now? I'm really tired.' But the photographer kept saying, 'This'll look great—there's a rainbow behind you! A rainbow right behind the couch!' And I got my copy of the album yesterday, and I opened it up and I absolutely loved it. I don't care what anybody thinks about our sofa—I love it!"

For the *No Need* cover, the divan had an easier time of it, set up in a warm, white-draped Dublin studio. And what did this fine piece of furniture earn for its trouble? O'Riordan went on record as saying, "It's a nice couch, a very, very nice couch" before shamefully admitting, "Uh, actually it's for sale, folks ..." —T.L.

themselves the Cranberry Saw Us, and you'll hear a zany Commitments-style male singer named Niall, and goofy lyrics like "Throw me down a big stairs/ I want to bleed on a brand-new carpet." "That wasn't my band!" O'Riordan blurts defensively. "It had nothin' to do with me! It was like a load of teenage boys having fun after school.

Even when I was a teenager, I was still very serious about what I wrote." Indeed. As the fable goes (dutifully retold by Lawlor in a brief chat), the wee lass heard from a schoolmate that Hogan and company were looking for a singer. She showed up at a rehearsal, keyboard in tow, played a few of her originals while the *Continued on 118*

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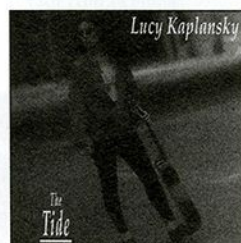
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Ireland, sold tens of thousands of unrepentant "pagan" Irish Celts into slavery in the West Indies, where they joined slaves from Africa. Observers recount that as late as the 1800s there were West Indian "black" slaves who spoke Gaelic. (Listen to the lilt of West Indian English. It's kin to how the Irish speak English. That accent didn't come from English crossed with French and/or Spanish.) Then listen to the music of the great Irish folk-harpist Turlough O'Carolan, who was born in 1670, in the brilliant recordings by Derek Bell of the Chieftains. The slower pieces, especially, are plaintive passages of what we now call blue-notes. So the Celts met the Africans in the West Indies: Celtic music based largely on melody, African music based largely on rhythm, but both sharing a complementary sense of tone—a strong means to link the two traditions.

Then there was Celtic and African dancing: In London in 1989, a Celtic dance troupe was performing not many doors away from an African drum group. The two got together, and found to their surprise that African drumming was a perfect accompaniment to Celtic dancing, and vice versa. In short, we have many indications of a deep musical affinity, and can imagine the Celtic "banshee" melodies absorbed in the West Indies by African tribal music to become, centuries later, the blues. (Play Derek Bell's slower O'Carolan tunes next to Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing" or Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Lenny," and for many bars at a time those electric guitars sound uncannily like Irish harps. Believe me. Listen.)

Dizzy Gillespie once said, "All of the music is out there in the first place, all of it. From the beginning of time, the music was there. All you have to do is try to get a little piece of it. ... I don't care how great you are, you only get a little piece of it." The music we know as American, and that increasingly we separate into sharply defined categories (often according to race and class), is in fact a tapestry of cultures and DNAs, "little pieces" that go back to the beginning of time, an amalgam of affinities bridging what some still claim cannot be bridged.

It's a music that transcends not only prejudices but intentions, bringing us together whether we like it or not, African, European, Celtic, Native American, urban, rural, country, jazz, rock, pop. We sing each other. We are each other. We make a music that, no matter how individually we feel it, could only have been created together. ■

Cranberries from 63

lads, in turn, played a few instrumentals, and the cranberries were born. The tone of the group changed almost overnight.

The next set of demos feature Noel Hogan's inky, nocturnal guitar thrum—soon to be a cranberries staple—and O'Riordan's supple but often clumsy operatics on self-deprecating dirges like "Pathetic Sense," "Nothing Left At All," and "Put Me Down" ("You're always putting me down/ Can't take this anymore/ I decided to leave, walk to the door"). The bitterness was just beginning. The tracks that made it onto *Everybody Else* took the singer/lyricist even closer to the flame, and it was easy to hear the violet, string-cushioned melody of the band's breakthrough hit "Linger" and completely miss the sense of helplessness O'Riordan was feeling: "So why are you holding her hand? ... I'm such a fool for you/ You've got me wrapped around your finger/ Do you have to let it linger?" Yes, apparently our malevolent Mr. X did. "I cried and I cried and I tried again," she sobs on the disc's skeletal thumper "Not Sorry," her quavering soprano flying low over the punch line: "Now I'm not sorry and I do detest you."

No Need to Argue might easily be scripted into a Hollywood tragedy called *All About Dolores*. Fasten your seat belts before sitting down with it, because you're in for a bumpy ride. The scene opens with "21," a deceptively hushed lullaby the artist penned on her birthday two years ago—"I don't think it's going to happen anymore/ You took my thoughts from me now I want nothing more," she whispers, her first defiant stance. Although some of the numbers find her overreaching her vocal grasp (there's definitely an experimental, barrier-testing aura to this sophomore outing), there's no denying the fact that O'Riordan has put her foot down in "Empty," "Disappointment," "Daffodil's Lament" ("I have decided to leave you forever/ I have decided to start things from here") and the gorgeous but final title cut: "There's no need to argue anymore/ I gave all I had but it left me so sore," she softly trills over a spooky organ passage. The song ends the record. The song ends a lot of things.

"My whole protest to my personal life began at 21," elaborates O'Riordan, who had begun feeling abused and manipulated a few years earlier. "When you join a band and you're on the road with all these guys, naturally you've gotta find people to trust. And, unfortunately, I found untrustworthy people. Not the people that

are with us now," she quickly corrects, as Lawlor shoots her a catty glance. "But the people who got lost along the way who caused a lot of hurt to me and probably made me a harder person than I was. When I was 18, I had people telling me, 'You have to do this' and 'That's not you, this is you' and even, 'I love you, OK, so you have to do this.' And in reality, the guy's a prick and he doesn't love you—he's another wanker who wants to make money out of you."

"No Need to Argue" wraps up the sordid drama, she believes. "That was written last Christmas, sitting on my bed at home, and I'll never forget how hard it was to do that. It had taken me a long time to get out from that whole situation, one whole year alone to get away from the last link that I had, and this was the final song. That's why I called the album that." One of the jettisoned was a former manager, but the band is legally forbidden to discuss particulars. When the dust settled, O'Riordan left the big city for the peace of her original home—the countryside. Where, though, did this mouse learn how to roar?

O'Riordan giggles girlishly, starts to answer. But a hearty guffaw from the next room drowns out her remarkably soft speaking voice. Declan, the cranberries' guitar technician, is loudly telling a joke, and O'Riordan squints her eyes and yells in a shocking gale force, "Deee-clan! We're tryin' to do an interview in here! Can you keep it down, puh-leeze!" "Uh, sorry" a now-tiny voice responds.

"As I was sayin'," she continues, unruffled, "I think I owe my own psychological confidence to America, as well, and to what the Americans did for my band. Over here, people ignored our first album. But then we went to the States, and the Americans loved our music, really latched onto it. Here in England, people tend to look down their nose at Americans, saying 'Oh, they're too this' or 'They're too that.' But to me, they were all really open, and I met a lot of nice people who'd actually have a conversation with you and not talk about you afterwards."

By the enthusiastic concert response she received, the Girl Who Stands Sideways was encouraged to loosen up onstage, even dance a jig or two: "America seemed to be a place where people loved to see you express yourself. So my expression got better, the confidence got much better, because I felt like the crowd really wanted it, so I wasn't being an egotist. Since so many people were enjoying it, I thought, 'OK, well I

might as well enjoy it too.'"

Britain did eventually catch on; *Everybody Else* just went double platinum in the U.K., as well. "But that never would've happened if we hadn't gone double platinum in America first," O'Riordan insists, continuing to wave the old red, white and blue. She even performed onstage in London last year, draped in an American flag. The press asked her why. She countered, simply, "Cause I want ta—they're the ones who bought our record." And again, there's a transatlantic dividing line in how the cranberries are perceived: The hard-hitting video for "Zombie," which uses grim footage from Belfast to underscore the song's anti-violent intent, was just banned by the BBC, who demanded the group edit all shots of armed men from the clip. American alternative radio, however, is taking to the track in a big way, and—despite its screeching guitars and grim theme—"Zombie" shows every sign of being the band's next smash hit. The cranberries also contributed a whimsical version of "(They Long to Be) Close to You" to A&M's campy new Carpenters tribute, *If I Were a Carpenter*.

Nevertheless, just when you're beginning to trust O'Riordan's advice, just when you think she's some mountaintop sage who's unlocked the secrets of the universe (or at least love, American style), she says something that reminds you that she is, after all, only 23, with a lifetime of learning still ahead of her. She thinks that "American men aren't frustrated—sex for them is a nice, lovely thing. If you meet someone in America and you have sex with them, you're really into each other and maybe you'll fall in love." Sure. And the Lucky Charms leprechaun will finally get to sample his stolen cereal.

OK, OK, O'Riordan recants. "I've found spiritual love beyond sex," she postscripts. "If you're really spiritually in love with someone, nothing will pull your psyche like the one you love. There's a big difference"—and now she's sounding like Dear Abby again—"between spiritual love and sex, and some people can never tell them apart."

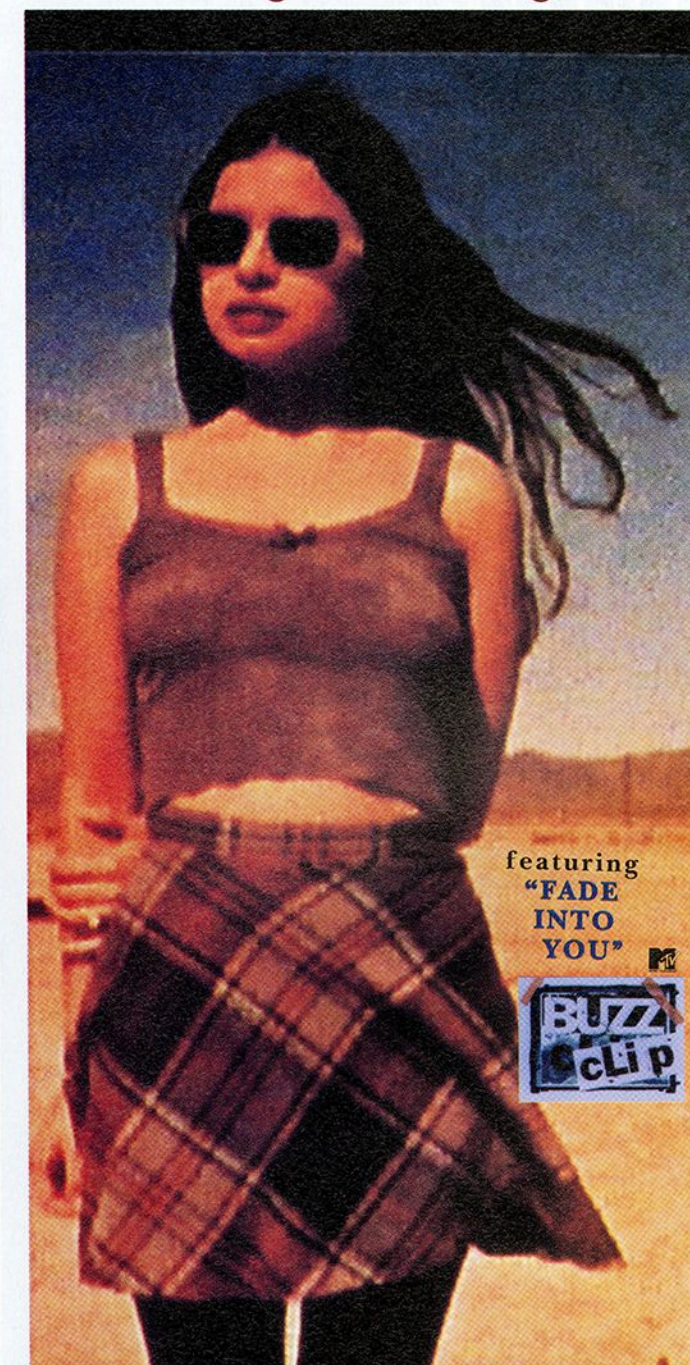
And what are her seasoned words of wisdom for such folks?

"Why don'tcha just get a machine," is O'Riordan's reply, unprintable in most family newspapers. "Just get a machine, and shove a tub of Vaseline up it!" ■

San Francisco-based freelance writer Tom Canham, oops, Lanham knows a thing or two about machines.

Mazzy Star

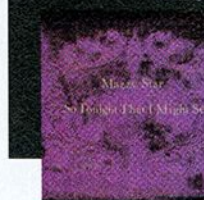
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