

## LIVE!



Pic: PHIL NICHOLLS

**THE CRANBERRIES**

ROCK GARDEN, DUBLIN

HERE are they now, then. Those of you with attention spans might remember this bunch being the talk of the bunkhouse about a year ago. Peculiar case, they were: straight outta Limerick, presenting their beguiling noodlings like a frightfully decent young man brandishing a bouquet at his first date. We, being the music press, fell for them like a sawn-through oak, hyped them to the skies and ruined them forever. It says here.

Actually what happened was that lots was written about them being hyped without anyone noticing that no one was hyping them, just hyping their hype, which didn't exist anyway. Sam Beckett started out on the Maker, you know. Kind of explains some stuff. What was also odd was that the band meandered from the usual Next Big Thing career path. They started, traditionally, by sending round a rather Godstruck demo, continued, as is the custom, by surrendering to corporate wonga (Island's) and then disastrously rewrote the plot by releasing a debut single about as arresting as most City financial inquiries. From there, they Stone Rosed it for all they were worth: vanished from view and had a series of counter-productive rucks with their management. The Who The F\*\*\* Were They file looked very much like their forwarding address.

However. Happy middle. The Cranberries play their first gig in ages tonight and are a bridge of sighs. Dolores, though her sidelong stances and miffed expressions can be offputting, can, like, really sing. All the BjorkLizHarriet jibes that got tossed their way last year have foundation, sure, but pursuance of this angle as means of criticism makes about as much sense as insulting a young cricketer by saying he bats like Dean Jones, bowls like Curly Ambrose and is a demon off the penalty spot on weekends into the bargain. Let's just own up, shall we? *The girl can sing*. The bits tonight where she takes it up into the falsetto waterfalls and really gives it some on the eee-ooo-eee are really rather unforgettable.

They play forever, much of it apparently new. Dolores is perhaps not the most emphatic of orators (The Cranberries deal in allusion rather than instruction), and so song titles don't matter a whole pile of beans, but it strikes that calling one "Sunday" is perhaps inviting unnecessary opprobrium, and titling others "I Still Can't", "Nothing Left" and "What You Were" is promising stuff indeed from so wide-eyed a bunch of massacred innocents.

Tonight is a quiet revelation. Like they never went away, were never here in the first place. Get ready to fall in love again.

ANDREW MUELLER