



Delores
(left): gig,
amp, PA!!

The Cranberries: shifting
bone-deep pop

THE CRANBERRIES The Parkway, Limerick

Before the gig, Delores O'Riordan, The Cranberries' diminutive vocalist, loops more honey onto her index finger (to be taken internally, throat crisis) and, in a Limerick accent you could cut into slices, describes her passage into the *craaazy* world of rock.

"I didn't know what a 'gig' was until last year," she says. "I thought

they were all called concerts. Now I'm learning all these new words, like 'amp' and 'PA'. It's quite an education."

The same could be said of any Cranberries gig. Tonight, they play at The Parkway (once a hotel, now a disco) and the signs are bad. A few minutes before their set begins, the slow set is in progress (remember slow sets? *They still exist!*) and the couples on the floor show no sign of wanting to be disturbed by The

Cranberries' brand of shifting, bone-deep pop.

Sure enough, the first song, 'Them', is almost drowned out by the bored silence. They've applied the brakes to a midweek night out and people aren't happy. Things still look bad. But then Delores does something unusual – she looks at the audience. Normally The Cranberries are an exercise in immersion, so intense is their concentration on the

songs that they forget we're out here. Tonight they play to us, for us, and it's not long before the light showers of applause after each song turn into a torrent.

Their first single may show a little holding-back on their part but live they make the songs squirm under the weight of Noel Hogan's penetrating guitar and Ferg Lawler's precision snare shots. But at the centre of each song is Delores. Delores and her voice. Scrambling for reference points, observers have come up with the handy Cocteau/Sundays axis, but Delores claims not to have heard either.

Tonight she's ditched her Celtic dress in favour of black jeans and T-shirt (good move). She looks great. She looks like a handgun. Cranberries songs adhere to a simple formula: they begin, Delores' voice steps in and steals your breath, and they end. There is, however, nothing simple about that voice – it comes at you like a stiletto and sinks in deep. On 'Put Me Down' it shakes you to the point where you're reaching for a hand hold, on 'Uncertain' it passes over like a wave, on 'Nothing Left At All' it makes you want to lie down somewhere and, you know, *think about things...* and so on.

The Cranberries are very much the future. They're going to mean a hell of a lot. Tonight they do two encores and we're still hungry. And that, my friends, is what it's all about.

GRAHAM LINEHAN