

d'Side

Fact, Fashion & Fiction

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Classic Cranberry

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VERY VERY CRAN- BERRY



*Colm O'Callaghan interviews Fergal Lawlor and Dolores O'Riordan.
Sort of.*

It seems really strange right now, years on. There was a time when some of us had so many more little energies and so many more strange ambitions, when we really were intent on making all of you actually listen for once, when we shot from the hip and sold attitude and arrogance by the bucketful. Some of us, see, remember a time when The Cranberries weren't on morning-time radio, when they didn't pose with Daniel O'Donnell, when they played with their heads bowed. When they didn't sell records, like. When everybody loved them. But you. And here we are, once more with feeling, and all of those years come reeling back and hey, The Cranberries are exactly like they were back when we always took the bus because we couldn't afford the train in and out of Limerick for all of those surprise and hastily-arranged live-shows.



Photography: David Keegen

Fame, fatal fame, plays hideous tricks on all of our brains and The Cranberries, a pop group with guitars, know this one backwards. It's just that they hide it better than most. They've sold truckloads of records in America, they're nothing at all back home and they've been lucky as hell. This much we know. But there was a time when The Cranberries didn't have a publicist, a time when they meant absolutely nothing at all. Even now, Dolores O'Riordan jokes about their home-town fans, "all eighty of them", and then apologises. Some things never change, apparently.

But yeah, strange as it may seem, The Cranberries have done what most other bands haven't. They've broken America on their first record and sure, so they play

down their successes, going on about being "just another band" and how that, in America, "one million records is nothing". But The Cranberries, unlike karaoke-pub rockers like The Stunning, are way more than just another band. "I always knew that I had a voice", Dolores states with a peculiar kind of half-arsed arrogance, "and I spent a very long time trying to convince people that I was serious about being a singer, I mean, when I was in sixth year at school, we had these mock interviews that were supposed to help us all get jobs after we'd left, and I refused to do an interview because all I ever wanted to do was to sing in a band and write songs and stuff. So the school-people brought in the guitarist from Tuesday Blue (a Limerick pomp-rock four-piece discovered, allegedly, by Adam

Clayton after a television piece, God love them) and got him to interview me. Everybody must have thought that I was completely mad of course, but here I am, three years later, and I'm not on the dole and I don't work in a supermarket and I'm not a secretary."

"But then we always knew that we had something special right from the start. We didn't know what it was, but it was all very pure and we didn't have any cliches and we didn't sing with an American accent like loads of other Irish bands did". Indeed, The Cranberries, from those legendary demo-cassettes onwards, have always oozed some sort of serenity and grace. They've also painted themselves up as unlikely popsters, shy as you like. But then shyness, funnily enough, has never stopped Dolores from saying and doing all of the things in life that she's wanted to. All right, so she's got into this habit of sometimes walking herself right into the mire, talking straight from the top of her head, but then she's also got all of the best escape routes too, and will follow the first available tangent at the drop of a pin. But The Cranberries have learned to hide and seek and, for a band so bloody well young, they've already been there, done that and they've got all of the most horrible scars on their bellies. "The lads and myself have grown to love each other utterly", Dolores claims. "We've been through so much at such an early age that we haven't really had a proper teenage life between us. And it's always been a big battle for us because the rock industry is filled with corrupt people who'll gladly rip-off a group of naive teenagers. The Cranberries have learned to become very dependent on each other as people, just as much as they have done as a band. "We're incredibly close now and nothing, nothing at all, can come between us now". Which is all very romantic and noble, of course, but then The Cranberries

really have seen the blades at close quarters. An entire band-life, through from those wonderful demo-tapes and record-company high-speed chases, to those first horrible steps into England and that dreadfully anti-climatic first EP, 'Uncertain', is side-stepped and only ever dead-vaguely referred to. "In England, people got really excited on the first listens", Dolores recalls, "and then The Cranberries went through a lot of technical difficulties, things that had absolutely nothing at all to do with music, and I'll be honest with you and admit that I got completely stressed out and lost complete interest in the music". The Cranberries refuse to elaborate, and then Dolores stares right through us once again and we move on. The Cranberries, the most honest and romantic band to ever sell one million records, deserve their secrets.

Even so, The Cranberries landed on their feet, however awkwardly. First time around, 'Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We' died and no-one really cared anymore. The Cranberries retreated into their own little world once again, sent out irregular and defiant postcards from the edge, played half-hearted shows in London and found a manager, Geoff Travis. He'd been around the block and over villages and towns as both head of the pioneering Rough Trade organisation and as a vital shaker in the rise and subsequent crossover of The Smiths, arguably the single most important British pop group of the eighties. Travis saw all of the obvious problems, understood a British market and industry in decline, and took The Cranberries to America.

"By the time that we got to America", Dolores sweeps, "We were all very strong simply because we had to be. At a very young age we had to get it together very quickly, but in America music isn't really such a fashion-led thing and there's no real

press-hype. Over there, they just like our music simply because of its honesty, I think. In America you can buy almost anything in a shop, but human emotion and honesty in music, well you can't really buy that, like. "When we started off getting reviews and getting noticed", she remembers, "people tried to pawn us off as an innocent band, as a naive band. People put all sorts of tags on us, which was very irritating because musically, we were never innocent or naive. Maybe we were naive in a business sense, but all we ever gave in the songs was complete honesty, and people seemed to have a problem with that".

But again, Dolores won't be drawn and she won't name names. Diplomatic as hell, and with a well-practiced body-swerve despite the fact that, nine months ago, The Cranberries, even in this pop-town, were nobodies on a meal-ticket to nowhere really in particular. No-one quite knew who they were, they pulled forty people to The Rock Garden, they didn't play pseudo-celebrity kids and they never quite knew, we imagine, how bloody well brilliant they were. Which set them apart from the dogs, of course, from these cabaret-with-attitude pub-rockers that win Hot Press awards and the like, but which hardly helped with any of the bills. "When we brought out our album in Ireland", Fergal Lawlor recalls, "there were lots of people who didn't want to know who we were, and it was only after we'd had some success in America that people wanted to have a piece of us, and that kind of bothers me, to be honest. But it's happened to lots of other bands before us and it will happen to plenty more bands after us I'm sure, which is a shame, but we know exactly who supported us when we needed

support most". "But Ireland is so small", Dolores interrupts, "that it's not worth harping on about things like that. All of that is in the past and if people want to talk to us now, then there's no reason why we can't talk back and be polite. Life's too short for grudges and stuff".

Rock industry is filled with corrupt people who'll gladly rip-off a group of naive teenagers.

So then, The Cranberries are still happily self-effacing, although there's this wonderful kind of pride in there too. This band has, after all, kicked successfully against far too many

pricks, but there's no ill-fitting arrogance. Fergal and Dolores will readily admit that their lives, in such a short time, have changed, which is fair enough, but even this is deftly under-played. They were never, see, an overly glitzy and flair band and there are, we imagine, few cliched excesses. Dolores goes on repeatedly about "keeping a clear head", as if she's almost convincing us of her ability to maintain complete career-control. These days she's discovered some gymnasium or other at a local hotel and is very much on a health and fitness kick. She's very definitely lost weight too and jeers at an old, windswept and unflattering publicity photograph that Sett, the band's dead-sprightly and only ever tour manager has pinned on one of the band office walls. "When we first went abroad and were playing away from home, we'd enjoy our few pints after a show and stuff", Fergal claims, "but we've never been ones for over-doing it, to be honest. When there's work to be done, then you can't over-do stuff like drink and drugs and still stay honest to yourself. In fairness, I'd personally prefer to be playing or rehearsing or whatever". "When we went to Holland for the first time", Dolores



Left to right: Fergal Lawlor, Mike Hogan, Noel Hogan and Dolores O'Riordan

adds, "I was just dying to see the red light areas, just so I could say that I'd been there and that I'd seen these places that I'd always read about. But you can kind of smell the evil there, you know, and I got kind of freaked-out really, especially with all of these people coming up to you and whatever. But at least I've experienced these things first-hand. At least I can say that I was there".

'Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We' is not, by any means, the most wonderfully important record ever made. It's a very typical debut album, filled up with all manner of restraint. Sometimes it smells like a pumped-out demo, but then The Cranberries have never, ever, been ham-fisted. And for all of its honesties and all of its curious wonderment, it's still very much undemanding and nonthreatening and white. 'Everybody Else Is Doing It' is MTV-safe just like Ice-T, Ice Cube and Yo MTV Raps (the music channel's single most popular programme that's been reduced from seven weekly shows to one) are MTV-unsafe. Rather like Belly and The Breeders and The Lemonheads, The Cranberries, if we can be cynical, provide a comfortable and stable soundtrack for music television's advertisers. MTV's been vital to The Cranberries, and they know it. But right now The Cranberries are restless and 'Everybody Else Is Doing It' seems like light-years away and the band has loads more to say and loads more ways to kick. "The second album", Dolores reckons, "will be more about being picked up from

one life and being put into another life and just leaving all of the things you once had. My life is completely different now, whether I like it or not. But that's a good thing in many ways because if

you keep changing, then your music will keep changing too. And if you can manage to keep your head together, and if you can react to the change as a human being, then that will see you through. I wrote an incredible amount in America. Just the idea of getting up and leaving your family, your home and all of the people you love and going on to become a big thing in America, well that really does affect your head. And I tend to write so much more when I'm emotionally imbalanced".

There are times when we imagine The Cranberries to be the most vulnerable band in the whole world, times when Dolores' words come over so bloody well frail that we see the band falling right apart at the very next seam. And yeah, so there are times when Dolores' unrequited love words fly like some rather horrible school-poetry, but then there are those moments, like on 'Put Me Down' and 'Nothing Left At All' and 'Pretty' when we wonder, like Morrissey, how someone so young can sing words so sad. "Geoff Travis says that he's never experienced such a reaction to any set of lyrics since *The Smiths*", Dolores beams, "which is all very flattering, of course. But then when you're writing about intensely personal things, then you have to expect some sort of obsession. I mean, when I was fifteen or sixteen, Morrissey was the only person I would have gone up to and said "Marry me now, I want to have all of your babies", because his words meant so much to me and I always felt like he was talking to me

personally through his songs. And our fans seem to be into that whole honesty thing. They're sick of all those sampled machines, particularly in America. They like the real thing, and what we're doing is completely different to what they're used to hearing. There's a lot more emotion and honesty in this music".

And so they go on and on and on and on. Even now they're completely unfazed by all of this pop thing and, consequently, they're leagues away from the dregs. The Cranberries have simple needs, a handful of bargaining power and are, we imagine quite easily pleased. And we never really could imagine Dolores out and about with Barry Egan. But we can never, ever, make light of what they're doing and of what they've done. Yeah, so they got lucky, but what exactly is all of this luck thing anyway, eh? They've been stretched on the racks and they've been burned and they've almost been broken in half, but they're still very much with us, and that alone counts for loads. They're still as romantic as hell, of course, still as shy and reserved and far too polite. "There's this huge trust thing that's developed since we started the band", Dolores assures us, "and if that trust wasn't there, then there wouldn't really be any point in going on with this thing. And together, well, we have loads more ideas and this is only the very start. Even now I know that the second album is going to be really, really strong, really really good, because there's no possible way that it can't be".

And, for some reason or other, we daren't doubt. The Cranberries have already done more than any of us, if we were to be honest, ever imagined. They don't talk, they do. And they still don't hang about. The Cranberries are absolutely nothing like The Stunning, and hopefully never will.

Colm O'Callaghan

d'Frock



Thongs for the memory...

Modern medallion men outstrip their collared competition... Leather, beads, bone and wood are for the particularly well hung. Men with mettle go for Stussy silver, £45 from Radair, Stephen's Green Centre, Dublin.



Hello day-glow!

It's official, pastels are for pale imitators. Get the look going with eyes, nails and lips covered in Make Up Forever's wild colours. Available from their Clarendon Street HQ or through mail order. Catch up with Chanel's mega-pink via the more accessible fluoro-bodies, £3.99 from Dunnes Stores nationwide.

Skirt the issue.

Announcing the birth of the bandage. *How short will you be caught* following the leads of Westwood, Bella Freud and Helmut Lang? Try Ms Selfridge in Clerys for competitive crotch covers in both skirt and dress form. Or slip into a chiffon shift by John Rocha at Brown Thomas & A Wear.

Stockist of the Issue

Thigh-high, vinyl lace-up stiletto boots, available in red and black from Utopia, Camden Street Dublin. Sizes 10 and 12 only.

By Melanie Morris & Suzie Coen

Suicide blondes take to the bottle...

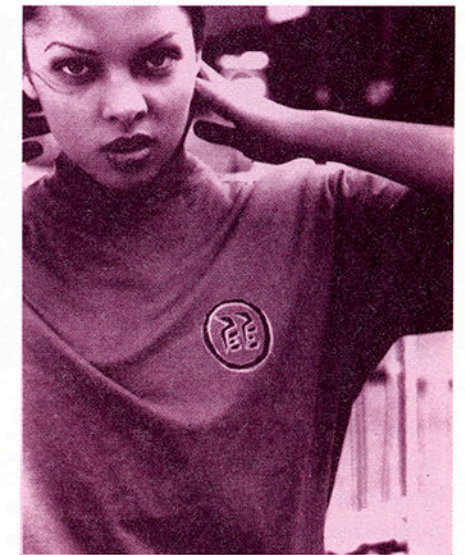
DIY jobs are a must. Get to the root of things and let the growth go. The bravest brighten up at home with Recital's Super Blonde Hair Lightener £4.45. Other peroxide people dash into Peter Mark's nationwide.



Popsocks

94's unlikely and unliked style contender...our top five knee highs...

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| 1. White lace popsocks | £1.99 | Dunnes Stores |
| 2. Black over-the-knee socks | £3.99 | Sock Shop |
| 3. Opaque popsocks | £1.25 | Marks & Spencer |
| 4. Pretty Polly knee-highs | £1.99 | Switzers |
| 5. Own brand popsocks | 75p | Dunnes Stores |



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