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Dishing up The Cranberries in Las Vegas



ANDY EARL

The Cranberries, from left, Noel Hogan, Dolores O'Riordan, Mike Hogan and Fergal Lawlor.

By Deanna Rilling

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The lingering is over. Rising to international fame in the mid-'90s, Irish rock band The Cranberries have returned after taking a self-imposed hiatus and are back on the road for a North American tour. Before stopping in Vegas for their concert at The Pearl on Thursday, guitarist and co-songwriter Noel Hogan discussed the reunion, the infamous couch featured on their early albums and if he even likes cranberries as a food.

How is the tour going?

It's been brilliant, really, really good. After being away for seven years, I guess you kind of wonder, "Will anyone remember you? Is there still an interest there?" Every gig so far has been sold out and the reaction from the crowd has been amazing.

What can concertgoers look forward to as far as new material versus old favorites?

At the moment, it's all the singles mixed with old albums and tracks that a lot of the fans would know. We are writing and we do have some new stuff already, but it's still a bit rough to be putting in the set. I would imagine it would be another few weeks before we actually start adding new stuff.

Does that mean a new Cranberries album is on the way?

Yeah, we're hoping to have it in the bag by the summer of next year.

To dispel speculation, what prompted the band's hiatus and then reuniting?

I guess it was around 2003 and we went in to start what would have been the sixth album at the time. We started it, but it was a case that I don't think any of us really wanted to do it. We had done The Cranberries non-stop for 13 years and I think, individually, we'd all grown interests in other directions... We decided, "Maybe now before we go off and do another album that we don't really want to do and then tour it, let's everybody go off and do what they actually want to do."

Also, we all around that time had kids, little babies that were just born so it was a case of we maybe need to spend some time at home for a while as well... So then obviously six, seven years have passed and back in January of this year, [singer] Dolores [O'Riordan] called me and [bassist] Mike [Hogan] about doing an acoustic thing with her in Dublin... We went up; we did it, and it felt really good to be playing the old songs again. Before you know it, here you are, back on tour again.

What was up with the sofa featured on the earlier album covers?

We had this photographer we used to use, Andy Earl. We were at his studio in London doing the first album cover and we had spent the whole day doing tons and tons of shots. This is a true story, honestly, the couch was just in his studio, it was just part of the furniture there and he just said, "Oh, look, let's pull that across." ... We dragged it across, he took a whole bunch of photos on there and when they sent us everything... that was the one to us that felt the most natural. When we went to do the photo shoot that wasn't the concept at all, and it just from there grew to be on the second album cover because Andy did that as well, and it lived on for a while on a few different covers and it became kind of a thing really until I think it was the third album where we set it on fire and destroyed it.

Was it the actual sofa that was sacrificed?

I don't think so. I actually saw it in a video once later on because, apparently, it was sold to some company that supplies props to TV shows. I saw this video ["Alright"] by a band, Supergrass, and they're all sitting on a couch that's being driven around. It's a really quick shot, but you can see it's the same couch. Where it is now I don't know. I know that a replica got made and set that on fire for the third album.

You've said the name The Cranberries, originally The Cranberry Saw Us, came about because you couldn't think of anything else. Do you ever wish you had come up with a different name for the band?

No, it was just one of those things. There was so little time spent getting that name, that it's not something we gave a second thought to again. ... Everybody around Limerick [Ireland] where we grew up used to just call us The Cranberries anyway, even then.

Do you like cranberries as a food?

I had actually never tried them until I think when we first came here [to the U.S.], because it's not really a big thing in Ireland. But here you get turkey and cranberry sandwiches. ... It was one of the first times I tried it and, thankfully, liked it.

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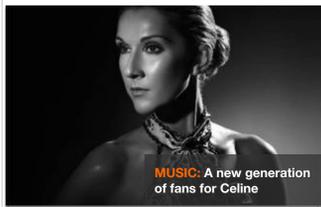
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