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BY MIKE GALLAGHER / MUSIC, MUSIC REVIEWS / MAY 12, 2012

# THE CRANBERRIES AT SOUND ACADEMY – 05/09/12



Photographs by Stephen McGill

The last time I saw The Cranberries was 19 years ago in their native Ireland. The band had just released their debut as they played the afternoon slot on the second stage at the Feile Festival in Tipperary.

At that point I knew nothing of the band, but they did manage to play a set that put them on my radar. Since then, The Cranberries have shot to the top of the charts with songs that were inescapable through the 90s. Gradually diminished returns led to the eventual hiatus while members got married, had kids, moved to Canada, and reconnected with their everyday lives.

A re-ignited Cranberry played a sold out show at the Sound Academy on Wednesday night. The venue is my least favourite in the city and I swore I would never go back after my first gig there many years ago. Last night was my second time there in a week, so I'm always willing to cut any band some slack when booked at that cavernous venue.

Opening with a one-two shot of the songs that put them on a map was an easy way to get everyone onside. An energetic "Dreams" opened the show welcomed by raised arms and beers. Attempting to find a comfortable vantage point proved difficult with the density of the crowd.

The crowd was surprisingly predictable, transporting me back to my university days. A mix of frat boys and sorority girls 15 years later celebrated the nostalgia with abandon, probably not executed since those days. Aside from two rude women who complained about people standing in front of them, (they were at the back and the place was crammed) this was the most polite crowd I've been with in a long time... which was quite refreshing.

Second song "Linger", had couples swaying even though the song packed some extra muscle in the live setting. From there, the band ran through songs through the course of their career. I was surprised at how many songs I did know and the beer slicked crowd loved every bit of it.

Touring for the recently released Roses, the set list wasn't overwhelmed with new and unfamiliar material. Instead, peppering a greatest hits package with the stronger material from the new album fit perfectly with what was being offered. The stage was a simple set up with lighting that didn't overpower the band or the venue, unless the strobe-heavy set closer "Zombie" was too much and judging by the reaction, it wasn't. Frontwoman Dolores O'Riordan was an interesting focal point. I've thought through her videos she was an awkward presence. She is far more comfortable with her guitar rather than having to dance around the stage like Seinfeld's Elaine, which crossed my mind a few times over the course of the evening. But the woman was trying and the band put on exactly the show everyone came to see!

I didn't stay for the encore because the Sound Academy is such a nightmare to get home from, no matter what your transportation is. For a gig with no expectations on my part, I was entertained and taken back to the years when I had a lot less grey hair.



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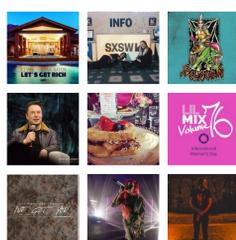
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