

Adoring press, a voice of towering beauty and more connections than a circuit board. Sounds like a dream come true for any band. But for Limerick's Cranberries it was all too much too soon



The cranberries

WHOM the Gods wish to destroy they first call promising. Limerick band The Cranberries may have become the most feted Irish band in years largely by dint of a fawning English press and the pressures put on the band by acres of purple prose.

They were formed in Limerick two years ago. Then labouring under the winsomely punsome name The Cranberry Saw Us, guitarist Noel Hogan, his brother Mike on bass and drummer Fergal Lawler recruited a female vocalist, Dolores O'Riordan, via an ad in the local press. Their debut single (released on cassette only) *Nothing Left at All* left people reeling.

Before you could say Suede are The Best New Band in Britain, The Cranberries had a deal with Island Records, a manager and the attention of every hack in the UK. "No band since The Smiths have sounded quite so spectacularly vulnerable"; "These are the most beautiful high notes you'll ever get to hear outside of La Scala," were some of the gushing quotes thrown their way.

The adulation and the resulting pressure obviously made a low-key entry into the wicked world of rock 'n' roll impossible. Noel Hogan, the band's quietly spoken guitarist, is a different man to the one who played in Limerick two years ago. He reckons he's learnt a lot since the band's small-town dawning in 1990.

He's realising that too-much-too-soon can break a band's heart as much as propel them to the top. "We've grown up a bit since the last time we were in the spotlight in

England," says Noel. "We've been through an awful lot. We really had to cop on or it would have been the end of us. You have to stand your ground and say: 'No, we're not going to do this'. It's great making everybody happy but you're not happy yourself because you're doing things you don't want to do."

The Cranberries recent UK tour saw them play venues ranging from seventy to four hundred ca-

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capacity, many flocking on the basis of their first single for Island Records *Dreams*. This time round Noel reckons the success of their present UK tour isn't based on the press hype in the pages of *NME* and *Melody Maker* that left them naked and dazed last year. "About a year ago that would have been true. There was a mad hype and we even believed some of it. They were calling us the best band in years. People were coming to the gigs because of that and they'd be disappointed because they'd be expecting the new Smiths."

The purple prose was flattering at first but in time The Cranberries found the journalistic excesses ridiculous. "They think we're children from the bogland of Ireland

and we hadn't got a clue about what was going on. That may have been true a year ago but now I think we are a lot wiser. Some papers still think we're the innocent Cranberries who write innocent songs. After a while we ignored all the great press we were getting. We stopped reading it. Those papers have great influence and people go by what they say and not by finding out for themselves. The real fans are the ones who'll come to the gigs regardless of what the papers say. After what we've been through, I wouldn't believe anything I read."

The shake-up came after their debut EP *Uncertain* failed to ignite the same critics who had built them up. Progress was re-evaluated and in the past nine months The Cranberries split with their manager — Pierce Gilmore of Limerick's Xeric Studios — and began working with highly respected English producer Stephen *The Queen is Dead* Street. They've also become the first band ever managed by Rough Trade head, Geoff Travis.

"We could control things when we started, we lost that and now we're in control again," says Noel. "We got too much too soon. We didn't know what it was like to get a bad review and in the beginning that was great and then all of a sudden we realised that it was a really bad thing to be known this much this quick. There was a real danger of us becoming big for six months and then being gone forever. We want to build it up slowly."

This is a second chance for The Cranberries. The stunning debut

album *Everybody's Doing It, Why Can't We* has been put back to a February release, giving the band more time to recoup from the press honeymoon and contemplate why they wanted to be in a band in the first place. "What happened last year taught us to cop on to ourselves," reflects Noel. "It gave us a chance to disappear for a while and then come back and start anew again."

Built up, buffeted, disillusioned and now renewed, The Cranberries have a clearer picture than ever of what they're all about. They've also got some hard-nosed advice for Irish bands who may find themselves in a similar position. "The main thing is be yourself don't try to be something you're not," asserts Noel. "Don't wake up one day, wanting to be The Cure: write your own music in your own time — don't say yes to everything that people want you to do. Don't trust anybody. People twist everything unbelievably. So many people we've known have been really nice to us when we meet them first but as soon as they can, they'll just turn on you."

FREEBIE RESULTS

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