

Monthly MUSIC Matters

Issue six

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Nothing dirty, you understand. **THE CRANBERRIES** are nice people and seem likely to fulfill everyone requirements of sweet indiedom looming large. With an innocence that is quite beguiling they are all messed up with everywhere to glow.

Interview: Ngaire.

Photos: Greg Freeman.



LUST FOR LIFE

"I love Church music. I think Latin is such a beautiful language. I could just be superstitious but I think what's happening now is kind of a reward."

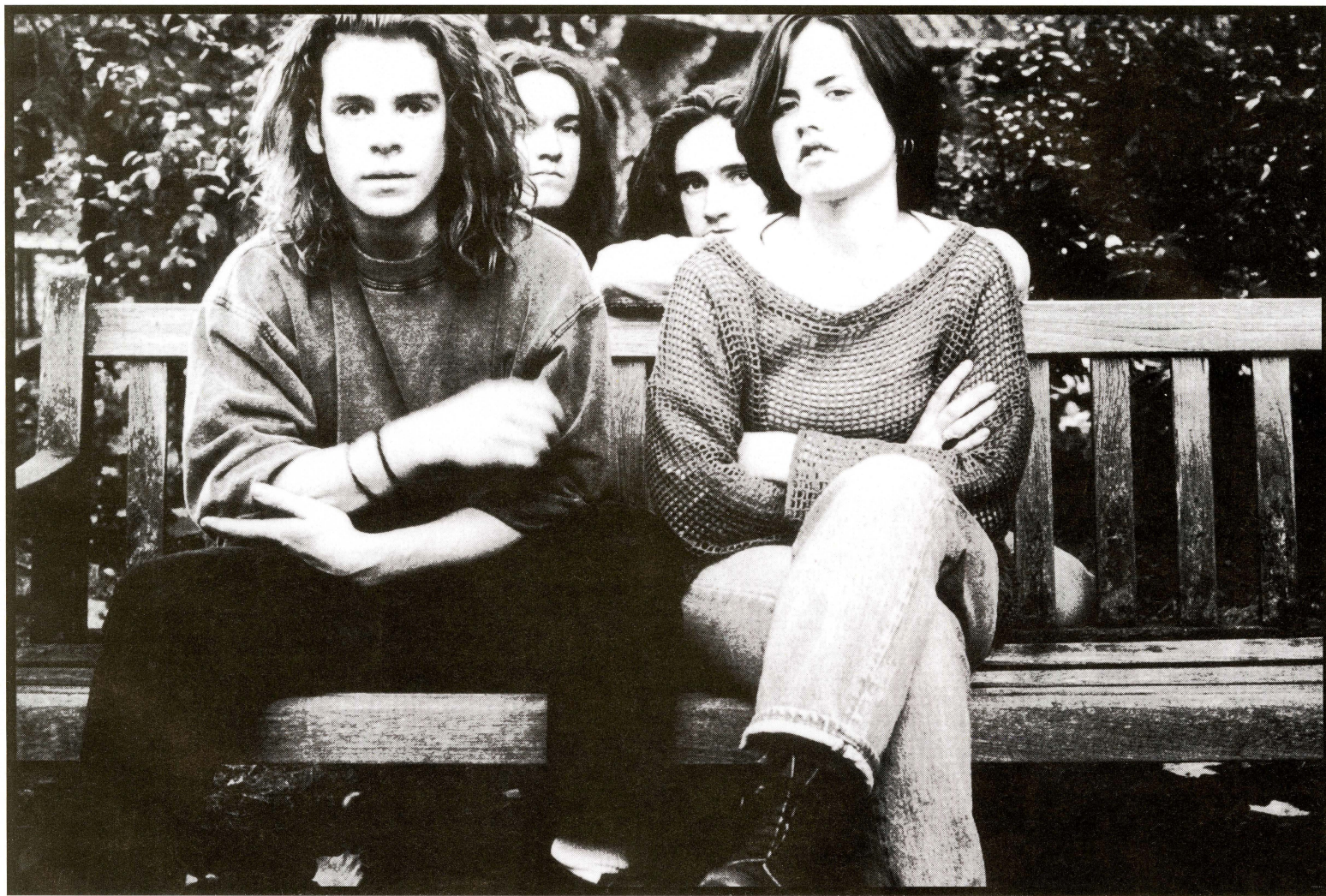
THE CRANBERRIES only came into our lives during the second half of last year (1991), but singer Dolores is already proclaimed to evoke both sad and splendid things in the listener. The combination of her voice and the rest of the band's hypnotic yet powerful electric melodies, make you feel that it's OK to be lonely, uncertain, or to dream.

"It's like a dream," says Dolores. "When you come from a little place in Ireland you don't go around saying that you're going to be a singer, just that you'd love to be

one. It's something I love to do. I really love it. It just gets me."

Their latest EP is called 'Dreams' - "My life is changing every day/In every possible way/ Although my dreams are never quite what they seem".

"The first time I wrote a song, (about a year ago), I was sure that everybody was going to think that the words were really girlie girlie," says Dolores. "The music was so emotional I found that I could only write about ▶



“The way I see it is that a boy will tell you how mad he is about you and when you start telling them how you feel they start to act differently.”



personal things. Things that were troubling me, in relationships. I was sure that it would be considered soppy teenage crap, especially in Limerick, because most bands are really young (men), and their lyrics are humorous or mad. They don't go pouring their hearts out. But the next thing I knew, people were telling me that they liked it. I guess everybody feels the same about things. Really.”

‘Dreams’ is a happy song. Yet even when Dolores’ words are ridden with anger and regret (power-driven by that voice), as in ‘Them’, off the first EP, (“Don’t listen to what they say/Make up your mind/Walk away/Don’t even give them the time of day/They’ve all got that attitude.”), there is a refreshing sense of lightness in her voice, and enchantment in the music.

“That’s funny because I like ‘Them’ too, but some people, like my mum, have told us that they think it’s too sad and negative. If you have really intense songs not everyone’s going to feel it, and therefore understand it. We have purposefully chosen average tracks for the leads on our singles, firstly because we want to progress steadily, so that people trust us. But also just because not everyone’s going to appreciate the really intense songs. Besides, I like to write about all the feelings I have”

Dolores was born in Limerick, southern Ireland, 19 years ago. She has five brothers and two sisters. They weren’t spoilt, but they never starved.

When she was five years old the headmistress of her nursery school called her to her side, lifted her up, sat her on top of the big grand piano and told her to sing.

In her teens Dolores began to write music for piano and sing, for the love of singing and sound, many aspects of

traditional and classical music. She went to church every Sunday, even played the organ. Life as the good catholic girl seemed easy.

“At about 16 or 17 I think you either go against your background or go with it. I stayed with it because I personally met some nice people, and I love Church music. I think Latin is such a beautiful language. I could be just superstitious, but I think what’s happening now is a kind of a reward. That if it hadn’t of been for the church I wouldn’t have thought of music as a career in the first place.”

As the story goes, Dolores, now in her late teens, began to discover relationships. Consequently, life became less fulfilling, more frustrating.

“The way I see it is that a boy will tell you how mad he is about you and when you start telling them how you feel they start to act differently. They can’t take anything seriously really.”

She heard from a friend that a rock band were looking for a female singer. (They’d decided that their music was too feminine for anything else.) The first thing Dolores did when she joined was to make them change their name from Cranberry Sauce to The Cranberries.

So at 19 Dolores is writing lyrics and singing for a rock band, and finds herself entertaining a music journalist in a well known trash and crash rock ‘n’ roll hotel, while the rest of the band sleep the all-night toils of travel off.

Does she feel strange with all these people suddenly looking to her to whisk them off their feet?

“Well it’s strange to hear things like that said about my own voice. It’s strange when one minute I’m on the piano

at home singing and my brother’s telling me to shut up, and the next thing people are saying that I sound like an angel.”

Do you feel that people expect you to be, or behave beautifully on stage. Do you feel tempted to paint yourself a new face to face them, or find yourself posing far away distant expressions.

“I can honestly say that I’m not aware of it. I’m lucky in that I’ve learnt to accept myself so young, probably since my first relationship. But it’s also because I was never into feminine things. I think I was more of a tomboy. In fact I used to hate being female if I remember. If I think about it I was insecure about the way I looked because I used to smother myself in layers of clothes to cover up my figure.”

Dolores possesses an abstract quality (acceptance and optimism) which is making me feel more and more like a mad bad rock chick the longer I remain in her presence. Has she considered the fact that even relative indie success will offer a lifestyle which may threaten values which she believes important, and along with it, we will loose the refreshing innocence unique to The Cranberries?

“To be honest I didn’t even know about record companies or what a deal even entailed six months ago, so when it happened it didn’t mean much to me at all. I thought about what the rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle would mean to me, at first. But I decided that if you’ve spent 19 years of your life with the same family living the same way of life it will always play a big part. It’s a good influence that will always be there.

“The band and I protect each other too. They aren’t aspiring to the sex and the drugs of rock ‘n’ roll, just the music. I find them really understanding. In fact we found

it really easy to get over our initial male/female barriers, probably because we’ve all got lots of brothers and sisters. My gran took to Fergal (the drummer) especially. All the girls take to Fergal. Although she teases him about his long hair.”

The Limerick lifestyle has many connotations: wild green country and fresh mornings. Happy go lucky people singing witty tunes with a knowing sparkle in their eye. Very healthy old people and innocent young people.

“That’s not far from it,” laughs Dolores. “It’s very relaxed. I couldn’t possibly live in a city like London and I know the rest of the band feel the same. Perhaps for different reasons. For myself, there’s just too much to learn. Say if I was in the street and a guy walked up to talk to me, meaning to harm me, I wouldn’t know. I’d think it

was perfectly okay to talk back to him and encourage him without knowing it. I’m not afraid, I just don’t see why I shouldn’t escape the hassle if I can.

“It’s good to have a place like Limerick to go back to because you have to laugh all the attention off. Of course it’s great to be heard and it’s great fun touring, but when you return home you still have the same problems or ideas in your head. I still feel no different.”

Are the band aware of an Irish influence in their music? Although they are far from the slapdash description of a girlie Irish folk band, songs like ‘Nothing At All’ or ‘Pathetic Senses’ certainly hint of the traditional ballad.

“When I joined this band I thought the last thing we would be touching was traditional Irish music, but funnily enough people can sense it. I can’t, mind, but maybe there

is a feel there. It’s nice.”

In this dirty horrible world, there is a great need for niceties. For a sense of something faintly fantastic which will smooth life’s rough edges. The church and classical music are no longer the main communicator or provider of such beauty, or culture. Culture is motivated, worldwide, by pop music. There are ambient house acts such as The Orb or System 7. There are bands like The Cocteau’s, (whose music, these days, accompanies television adverts for the ever so pure Aqua Libra product) and Slowdive. More recently, The Cranberries, set for credible and commercial success. They all have a place and purpose in the nineties.