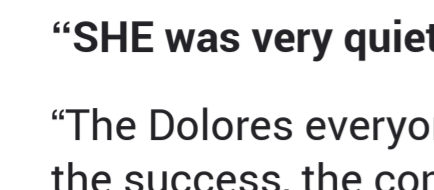


'SHE WANTED THIS' The Cranberries open up about life with Dolores O'Riordan ahead of Limerick rock legends' last ever album

In part one of a two part series, Something For The Weekend Music talks to The Cranberries about their career beginnings

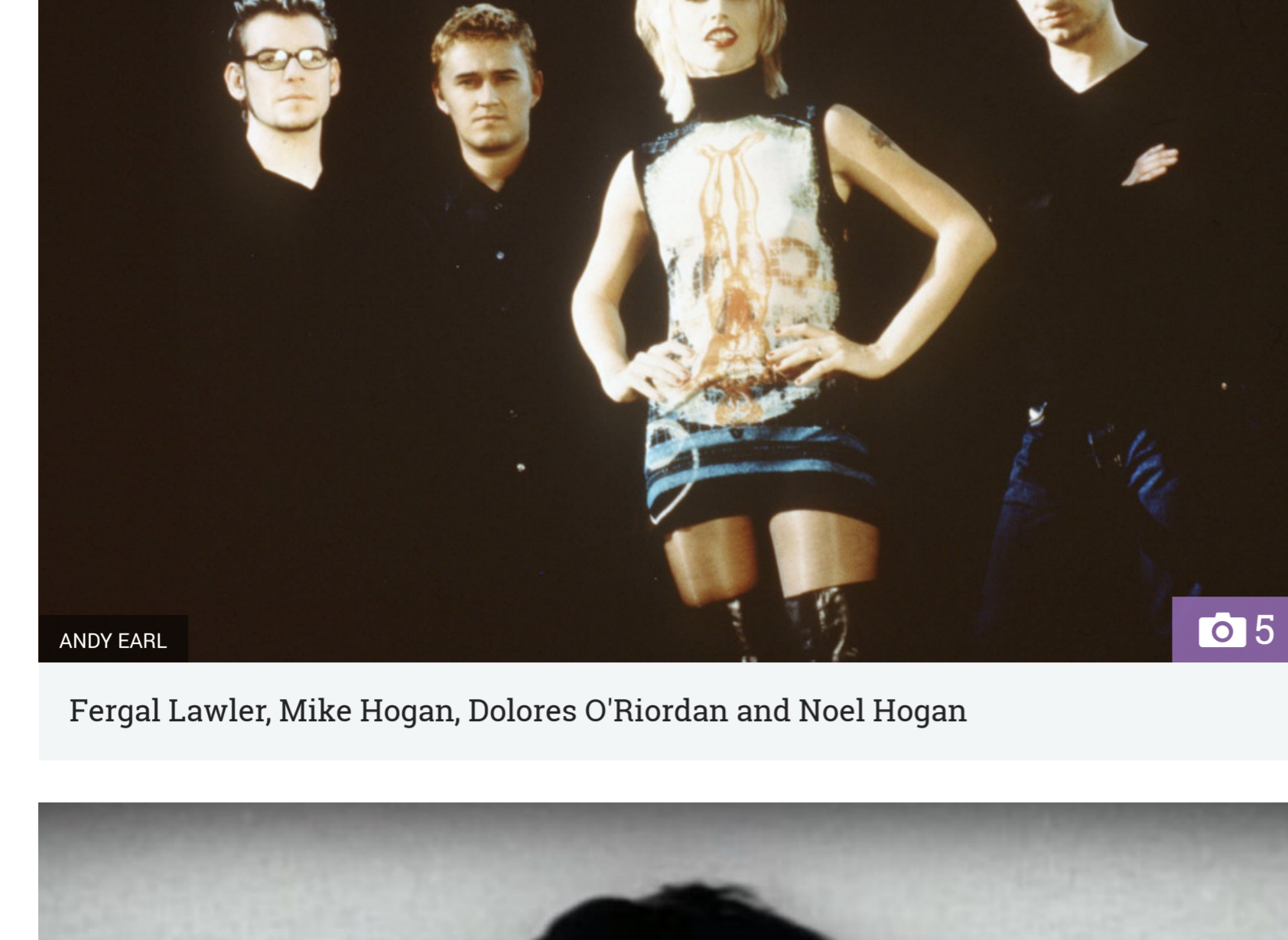
By **Dave Donnelly**

12th April 2019, 7:30 am | Updated: 12th April 2019, 7:30 am



"SHE was very quiet when we first met her, very shy," says Noel Hogan.

"The Dolores everyone knows was not the Dolores that walked in to us. Once we had the success, the confidence came for her."



Fergal Lawler, Mike Hogan, Dolores O'Riordan and Noel Hogan



Dolores in The Cranberries' video for Linger

The Dolores O'Riordan who auditioned for The Cranberries in 1990 was far from the fearless, boisterous character that shone through seven albums and two solo efforts.

O'Riordan's death last year, at the age of 46, was greeted with shock and widespread grief — not just in her native Limerick but worldwide.

She had only just left school when she was invited to audition for the band on the recommendation of former singer Niall Quinn.

Quinn's girlfriend at the time was a pal of Dolores' from Laurel Hill Colaiste in Limerick city, and she immediately stood out from what had been a fairly poor bunch of auditionees.

'SHE WANTED THIS LONG BEFORE WE EVER DID'

Guitarist and main songwriter Noel explains: "She wanted this long before we did. She wanted this since she was a child. She knew she was going to be a singer in some way — that was all she wanted to do.

"Then when we got to know her, she was a right laugh. She was wild. She'd be up for anything. We had a great laugh in those days."

Drummer Fergal Lawler adds: "[It was] the four of us and a couple of crew people in a van, driving around the country and then over to the UK doing tours for three or four weeks.

"We just grabbed the seats in the back of the van and had a great laugh. She had a load of brothers — five brothers I think."

Noel says: "And she never complained about being stuck with us. It's tough [for a woman on her own].

"I would have loved to have been there when she had the conversation with her mother to convince her to let her go with a bunch of guys she didn't know that long. She was 18 or 19 when we had that first tour of the UK."

RAW BEGINNINGS

Lawler and the brothers Noel and Mike Hogan were only teenagers themselves when they met O'Riordan, a native of Ballybricken in rural Limerick, and immediately hit it off.

They had struggled to replace Quinn when he left the band to focus on his main band The Hitchers, but they were struck immediately by the power and gravity of O'Riordan's voice.

"The fact she came in with that voice," says Noel on what first attracted the group to the shy and self-effacing O'Riordan.

"She'd been looking for a band that wanted to play originals. She had this great story that not long before she met us, someone had said, 'I know a band that needs a singer.'

And she went and met them and they asked her, 'Can you sing Born In The USA? We do weddings.' She was like, 'I'm out of here.' We had no interest in doing covers, and it was a perfect fit then."

The four teens bonded over a love of The Smiths, The Cure and Depeche Mode but, by their own admission, they were very raw in those early days.

They produced their first demo, still under the name The Cranberry Saw Us, shortly after Dolores joined which contained, among other tracks, the early version of Linger.

Still, they found it hard to attract much attention in Limerick, particularly from record labels, despite the fact the city had a fertile music scene at the time.

'SOMETHING CLICKED'

Without the luxury of Youtube and Soundcloud, their only option was to self-produce their own tapes and mail them to record companies in the UK.

"Coming from Limerick, you might as well be living on the moon for somebody to come and see you. We did the demo and we paid to get x amount printed up," says Noel.

Mike adds: "We recorded our first demo and it was friends of ours who said you should send it to record companies. We weren't going to, we just thought it was something on the side. But we got the response back."

Noel says: "And what we used to do was we'd chip in together for the phone calls. We'd rehearse on a Sunday and all give a pound each or something.

"Our neighbour had a phone and we didn't have one, so we'd go up there once a week and give her four pence and spend half an hour ringing such and such and saying 'did you listen to our demo?'

"After a few weeks, just to get rid of you, they'd listen to it. Just to stop you ringing every week. It paid off. The first ever letter was Rough Trade. We got a letter from them saying they liked it but could we come to London to play? We were kids and couldn't afford to do that.

"On the back of that letter, we got more letters and it snowballed then. Some of them I think didn't even know what they were coming to hear, or give the gigs.

"They're going 'the guy over at Sony is listening to this so I better come here'. You could tell straight away when you meet them that this guy doesn't have a notion what he's on about.

"And eventually we met this guy Denny Cordell, who was the head of the New York office of Island and there was something that clicked with him, and we ended up going with them."

'IT'S NOT WORKING'

It remained hard going for the band who, arguably, never got half the acclaim in their native country that they did abroad, particularly in the States, where MTV picked up on their appeal early on.

Before Linger became a worldwide smash, on the back of its US success, the band were ready to call it a day after their debut album bombed at home.

Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We? has sold more than five million copies in the States alone, but it made little impact on its release.

"We thought it was over," says Noel. "You heard all the horror stories of bands where an album came out and didn't do well and they got dropped. It was the general feeling around the camp."

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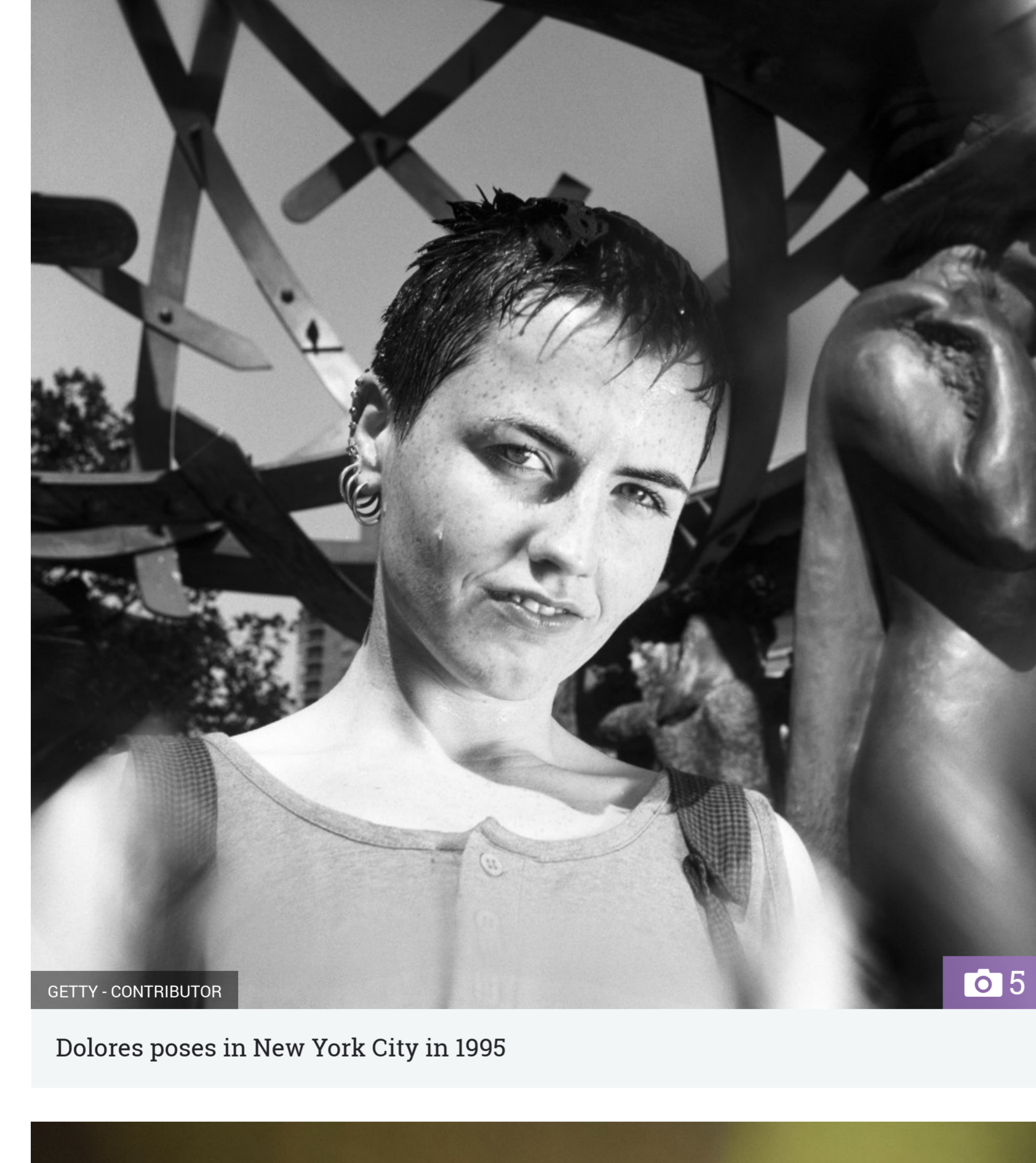
Mike concludes: "It got reviewed and it wasn't released, and then it got released six months later and the press were like 'we had this already' so there wasn't really much written about it.

"We were still playing small clubs and we were nearly at the stage where we were all nearly going to go, 'It's not working.' Then we got the call to go to the States."

- **IN The End, the final album recorded by Dolores O'Riordan, is set for release on Friday, April 26.**



The Limerick rockers pose in 2012



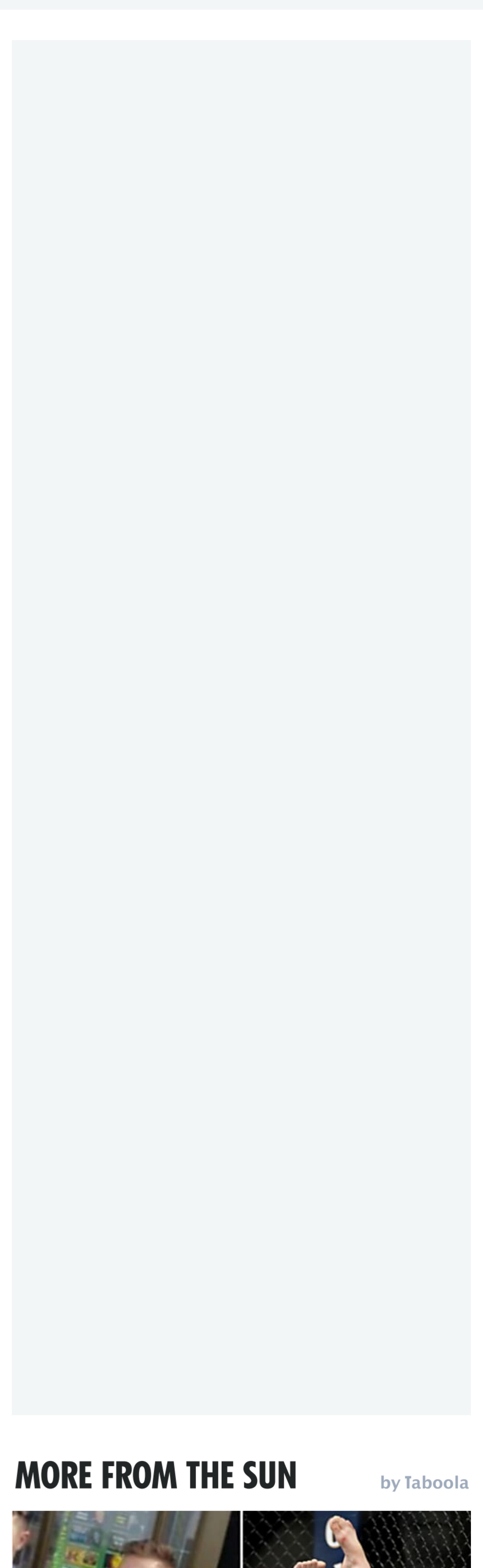
Dolores poses in New York City in 1995



The Cranberries perform in Paris in 2017

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