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**An interview with The Cranberries' Noel Hogan**

After the sudden passing of adored vocalist Dolores O'Riordan last year, The Cranberries found that their particular method of writing meant they had enough material – including O'Riordan's parts – to assemble their final album: this month's *In The End*. Primary songwriter Noel Hogan explained to us how it unfolded.



Let's begin with a bit of history. Fergal got his drumkit first, and then you were gifted a guitar?

Yeah, that was it: Ferg got a kit, and he was playing away, and then Mike got a bass for his birthday, and then a few months went by and my parents bought me a guitar because I was kind of just hanging around with the two of them. I didn't really want to be in a band; I had no ambitions to play anything. We were dreadful, obviously. We didn't have a clue. We had no singer, and we weren't really good enough to play cover versions. So I decided to make up my own songs, which is a lot of what the first album became.

That seems backwards to the way most bands start; I think it's very brave to say, "I can't play the ones that already exist so I'll make my own"!

Well I kind of thought, if I make up my own, it'll just be easier! Like, *Linger* was one of the first songs – and *Linger* is so simple, written by a kid that really knew very little about music. Every week with no vocalist we'd play through these things, in the hope that one day we'd find somebody. And I think it was a good six months before we met Dolores.



You've built these new songs around Dolores' original demo vocals – how is it that her draft vocals are so polished?

From that very first day when I gave Dolores a cassette and she took off to work on it, that's how Dolores and I wrote for 29 years. Technology got better, we became better musicians. But I would build guitar lines and string ideas [in Logic], and I would send Dolores those ideas. It was very much a finished, produced version of a song that Dolores would work around. Then she'd chop it around a bit – we weren't precious like that. We would advance the demos quite a bit before we went in to record. We were big believers in that: you get a new song and you're on a roll with it, you want to keep that feeling. So kind of unknowingly, Dolores and I – especially on this album – were recording her [final] vocals without even knowing it.

In [new track] *A Place I Know*, she's not singing forcibly, but I like it because she sounds unguarded and spontaneous and a little uncertain. Did you think 'I wonder what she would have changed'?

That's it. I think there's a few songs like that where she'd have gone back in, maybe she would have sung them a bit more aggressively. But then we started to feel that we were actually capturing a sound that's very close to the first two albums, when Dolores was more timid-sounding; there wasn't yet the confidence there that she built from playing live, and having the success we did. Dolores became more of a strong [singer] – she could be very aggressive with her vocal if she wanted to be.

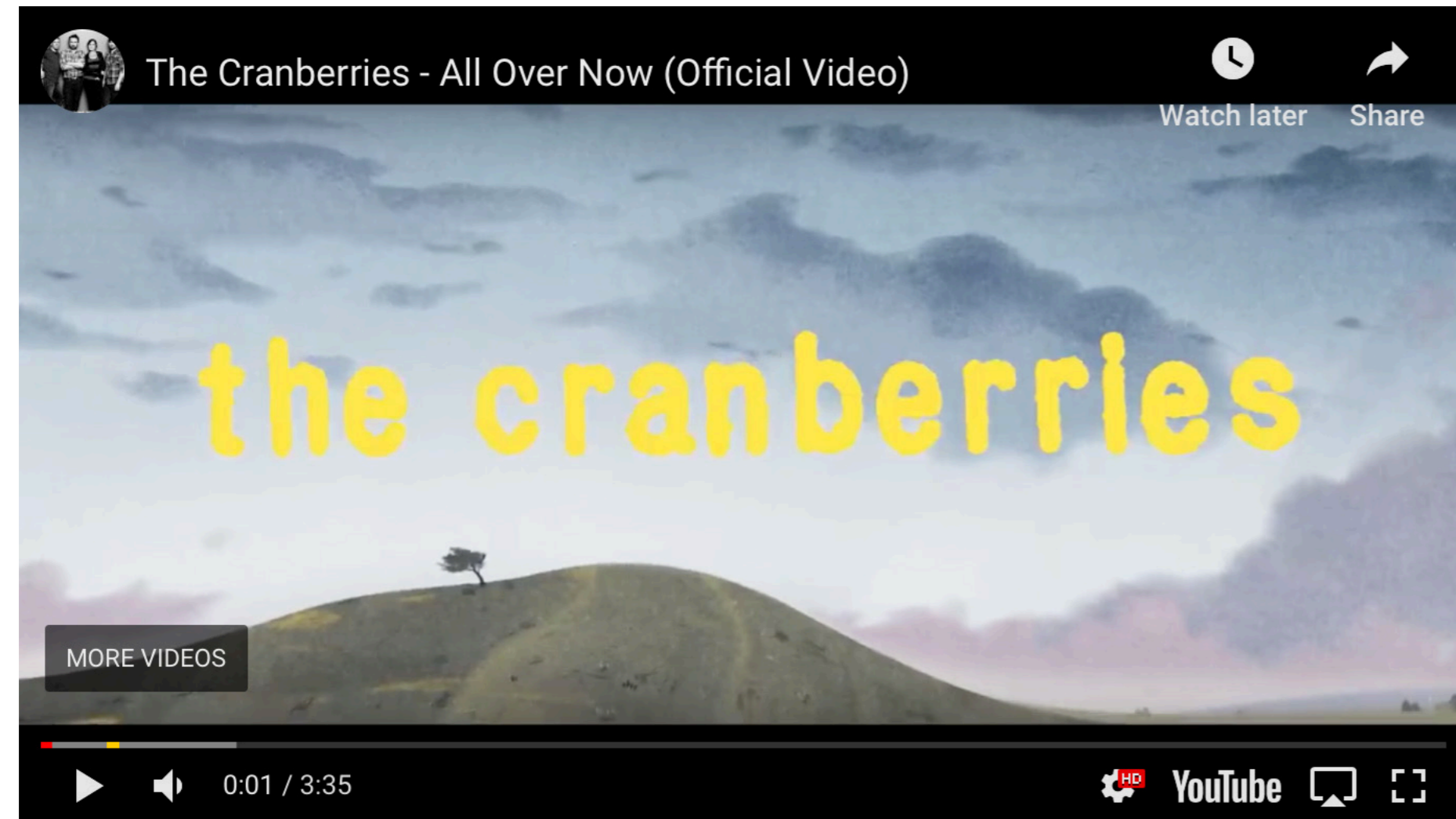
Which of these songs do you think Dolores would have most enjoyed live?

*All Over Now* is a very Cranberries song – it's like The Cranberries trying to be The Cure I think at points in there, you know? And honestly, it was a deliberate attempt. At one of the last gigs I did with Dolores, we were talking afterwards and she was going, "My throat's wrecked." She had seen The Cure on some live concert on TV a few nights before, and she said to me, "You know, I noticed that they play these long, long intros, like where Robert Smith doesn't have to sing for ages, and he gets a good break. Is there any chance you might write something like that so I can take a break?" I was like, "Yeah, alright." When I started *All Over Now* and I got that riff, I was like, "Oh yeah, this could be actually exactly what she's looking for."

*In The End* is out April 26 via BMG.

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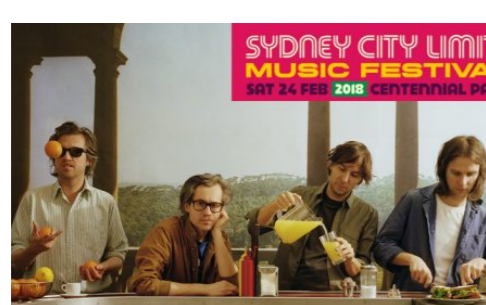
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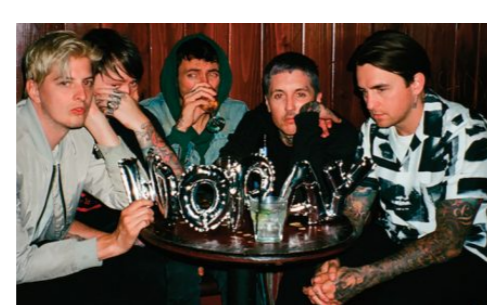
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