



The Cranberries: In the End review – Dolores O’Riordan’s remarkable swansong

Eamon Sweeney

★★★★★

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Album:	In the End
Artist:	The Cranberries
Label:	BMG
Genre:	Rock

Thirty years ago in Limerick city, brothers Noel and Mike Hogan, and drummer Fergal Lawlor, auditioned a young singer from Ballybricken called Dolores O’Riordan. She went away with a tape of a song called Linger, that the boys had written. What O’Riordan brought back made their jaws drop. The rest is history; 40 million album sales and, of course, tragedy.

The Cranberries will split up after the release of In the End, which is their eighth album. Musical history is littered with posthumous albums, from the good to the bad to the outright ugly. We live in an era where holograms of Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison are billed to play the 3Arena to entice people to pay their hard-earned cash as if they were still alive.

With the very honourable exception of the sepulchral second Joy Division album, Closer, raking over the coals of the dead is not a good look, or seldom unearths anything by the way of truly great music.

For grim examples, look how the back catalogues of The Beatles and Nirvana have been elongated beyond all proportion and reason. Rest assured there is plenty more in the vaults where those came from.

Excited

In the End is an unexpected late career high and a remarkable swan song for O’Riordan that should ensure the band are remembered for their singular music rather than any celebrity soap opera. Before O’Riordan’s death, she was reportedly very excited about this project. Little wonder, as these songs are among some of the best they’ve done.



Dolores O’Riordan was reportedly very excited about recording In the End. Photograph: Cathal Burke

The opening track, All Over Now, crystallises the classic Cranberries guitar sound with a strong whiff of The Cure. It features an opening lyric that is poignant for all the wrong reasons, as O’Riordan sings, “Do you remember the night? In a hotel in London they started to fight”. With song titles such as Wake Me When It’s Over, The Pressure, or In the End, there is a slight compulsion to dissect the lyrics and songs through the lens of dying young.

Curiously uplifting

Noel Hogan recently credited long-term producer Stephen Street as the fifth member of the band. This close relationship also corresponds to Street’s career trajectory with Blur and The Smiths, as neither worked with anyone else after producing some magic in the studio together (except when William Orbit produced Blur’s 13). Street always worked with the lads during the day, while Dolores recorded her vocals by night.

It is sad that O’Riordan isn’t around to see this album reach fruition and to tour some of the best songs they’ve done in years. There is, however, a curiously uplifting spirit to In the End; a sense of properly finished business and a smart and stylish farewell.

We’ll never see the likes of O’Riordan and The Cranberries again, but at least In the End is another time capsule of immortality in a world where life is fragile and painfully transient. There is a light that never goes out.

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