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# The Cranberries Say Goodbye Beautifully on ‘In the End’

Finality resounds on album standouts like “All Over Now,” “Lost” and “In the End” — all of which reflect the angst of Dolores O’Riordan & Co.’s classic works

★★★★☆

By KORY GROW



The Cranberries' 'In the End' album, Dolores O'Riordan's final album, reviewed by Rolling Stone.

Andy Earl

The Cranberries wrote the music for *In the End* in the year leading up to **Dolores O’Riordan’s death** and even though they had no way of knowing that this would be their parting statement, almost everything about it exudes finality. Many of the songs are about moving on or trying to move on from something, and O’Riordan’s voice is strong, but it suggests restlessness. She sounds both worn down by some of the subject matter (the liltingly beautiful “All Over Now” is about domestic violence, the grungy “Wake Me When It’s Over” finds O’Riordan “trying to exist/trying not to scream”) but her still youthful voice suggests hope.

What’s extraordinary about her performance is that all of her contributions were for demo recordings – sketches of songs that she and her bandmates expected to develop in the studio. The rest of the group got that chance, working with producer Stephen Street who helmed the Crans’ biggest Nineties hits, and made each song its own ornate, moving statement with layers of glassy guitar chords and moody textures. But O’Riordan didn’t get that chance. The reason she was an important voice in the Nineties was because of how she weighed sadness against hope, and when listening to the way she howled in “Zombie,” cooed on “Ode to My Family” and harmonized with herself on “Dreams” and the latter-day triumph “Tomorrow,” you can’t help but wonder how she would have perfected these new songs. Performances like the sullen “Lost” and its howling “Bring in the night” refrain and “Summer Song” with its playful yodels are brilliant, but your mind can’t help but try to fill in the blanks of O’Riordan’s style here and there.

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For much of the record, the angst of the Cranberries is still there, but this time it tips more toward feeling heartbreaking because it’s realer. When she sings of “loosening the mortal chain” on the aching “Catch Me If You Can” or “Thought that I’d got it/And then I lost it all” on “Got It” or “Ain’t it strange, when everything you wanted was nothing that you wanted in the end?” on the title track, you just want to crumple up in defeat. And then she hits you with the gently sung line, “This is my conclusion for now,” on “Illusion.” *In the End* is a moving album and a worthy epitaph for O’Riordan and the band’s legacy, but it leaves you wanting something more, something you’ll never get to hear: the comfort of knowing everything worked out OK. It’s a reminder that grief lingers.

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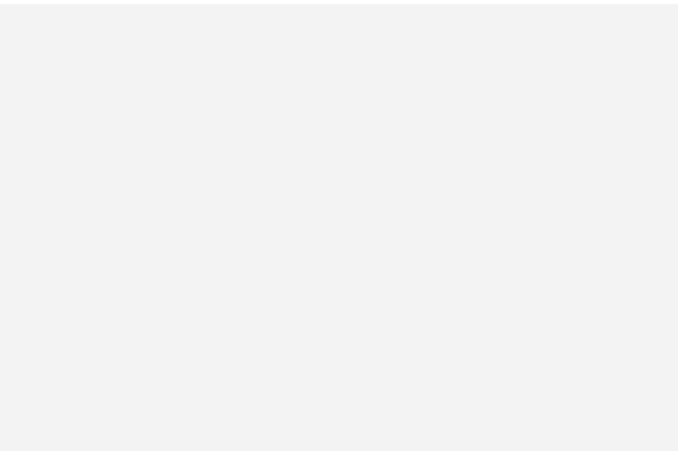
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