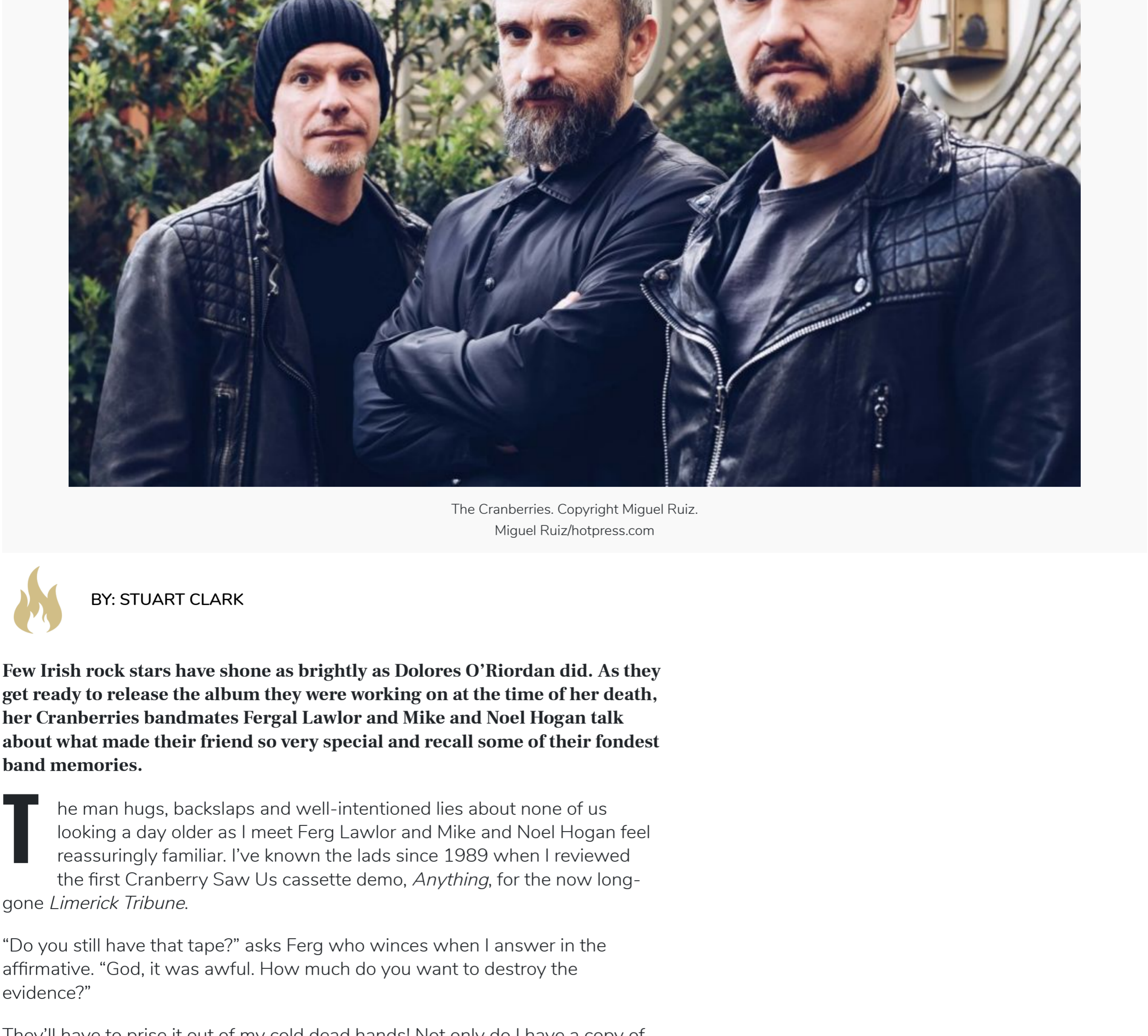
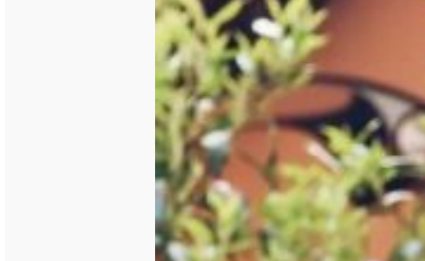


BLACK DEER FESTIVAL - IRLAND'S MOST MUSIC WINNER - BEST NEW UK FESTIVAL 2018

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON **BILLY BRAGG** * **THE MAVERICKS** MORE THAN 70 ACTS ACROSS 7 STAGES BLUEGRASS - FOLK - BLUES - COUNTRY - GOSPEL

ERIDGE PARK, KENT 21st - 23rd JUNE 2019 [BLACKDEERFESTIVAL.COM](#)

The Cranberries: On Dolores, their fondest band memories and *In The End*



The Cranberries. Copyright Miguel Ruiz. Miguel Ruiz/hotpress.com

BY: **STUART CLARK**

Few Irish rock stars have shone as brightly as Dolores O'Riordan did. As they get ready to release the album they were working on at the time of her death, her Cranberries bandmates Fergal Lawlor and Mike and Noel Hogan talk about what made their friend so very special and recall some of their fondest band memories.

The man hugs, backslaps and well-intentioned lies about none of us looking a day older as I meet Ferg Lawlor and Mike and Noel Hogan feel reassuringly familiar. I've known the lads since 1989 when I reviewed the first Cranberry Saw Us cassette demo, *Anything*, for the now long-gone *Limerick Tribune*.

"Do you still have that tape?" asks Ferg who winces when I answer in the affirmative. "God, it was awful. How much do you want to destroy the evidence?"

They'll have to prise it out of my cold dead hands! Not only do I have a copy of the C45 in question – ask your grandparents – but courtesy of the *Cranberries World* fan site and their exhaustive archives, I was also recently reunited with the critical musings in question.

Contrary to what Mr. Lawlor would have you believe, the four-tracker showed great potential with the cub reporter me describing 'Throw Me Down A Big Stairs' as "a quivering song that smacks of good ideas"; 'How's It Going To Bleed' being praised for "its measured moodiness flowing nicely alongside a delicate refrain"; the "bright playful pop" of 'Storm In A Teacup' earning them a Monkees comparison; and 'Good Morning God' displaying "a Cure-ish guitar riff and a Stunning-type line in lyrics."

"If they give it a bit of time, who knows?" I concluded, which was sufficiently positive for their then lead singer Niall Quinn to buy me a pint of Bulmers after their November '89 gig in the Speakeasy with A Touch Of Oliver.

By the time they stuck another demo in my paw, Quinn had been replaced by Laurel Hill sixth former Dolores O'Riordan who'd promptly dashed out the lyrics for 'Sunday', 'Linger', 'Chrome Paint' and 'A Fast One'.

"A total newcomer to the local rock scene, the lass sounds for all the world like Kirsty MacColl's younger sister and has a deliciously unaffected, almost innocent style, which wouldn't seem out of place on an *All About Eve* album," I said in my *Limerick Tribune* review of what eventually became the *Water Circle* EP and, well, I wasn't a million miles wide of the mark.

The band asked me to write the accompanying press release, which this time earned me a bottle of Jack Daniel's. It was and remains the best afternoon's work I've ever done.

"I remember you were also doing the Saturday night rock show on Radio Limerick One, and invited us out for what was our first broadcast interview," Noel reminisces. "We were sitting ourselves with nerves. Dolores borrowed a pair of Doc Martens for the occasion. It was a radio interview but she wanted to look the part."

As Noel mentions Dolores' name for the first time, the mood instantly changes. Beneath the smiles and bonhomie, you can tell that Ferg, Mike and Noel are still grieving for their friend and bandmate who drowned in the bath of her London hotel room on January 18, 2018. Dolores had just finished recording her vocals for *In The End*, the Cranberries' prophetically-titled eighth album which, after much soul searching and consultation with the O'Riordan family, the guys decided to finish off with producer Stephen Street. Having kept it to themselves for the guts of six months – "We needed time to get our heads round the record, and what it represents," Noel reflects – they're now ready to share it with the world.

"I have to say I'm finding this part of the process – the interviews, which are obviously going to be mainly about Dolores – really difficult," Ferg says, visibly tearing up. Where were they when they heard the terrible news?

"At home in Limerick getting ready to go off on a promo trip to China in March," Noel says. "Her brother rang me and said, 'Will you tell the boys?' because obviously the family was devastated and they needed to be dealing with their own thing. So, um, I rang the lads... I can barely remember it. The shock is impossible to explain. That whole day is just a blur. It felt like somebody had made a mistake. It still does sometimes. You think you're going to get another call in a minute saying, 'Oh, there's been a mix up, she's fine.' It all feels so... unfair."

Talking to *Hot Press* last year at the time of the *Everybody Else Is Doing It...* 30th anniversary re-release, Noel said that having *In The End* to work on is what kept him from falling apart after Dolores died.

"It's hard to imagine what else I'd have done during that period other than get really down," he adds today. "It ended up being therapy for all of us. It was Steven who said, 'You're emotional about everything but, look, there's a momentum here that you might never regain if you put it on 'hold' for a year.' It was his faith in the songs and the work we'd already done that made us decide to continue with the album."

The bitter irony is that *In The End* sounds more like a rebirth than a full stop with a number of tracks that wouldn't have been out of place on *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* or *No Need To Argue*.

"Lyrically, Dolores had a lot to say again," Noel nods. "When you spoke to her, it was always, 'So much has happened to me over the last three years that I want to write about' – and a lot had happened. It felt like she did five times the living that the rest of us did. There was so much that needed to come out, to the point where I couldn't keep up with her. You'd mail Dolores a rough idea and she'd say, 'You got anything else?' I was like, 'Give me a chance!' She was working at the same furious pace as when she first joined the Cranberries, and was really, really excited about this album and everything that was going to happen as a result of it. Dolores was gutted that we'd had to cut short our tour in 2017 because of her bad back – the shows up till then had been brilliant – and was mad keen to start gigging again."

What was the cause of those back problems?

"It was a ruptured disc or a bulging disc, something like that," Mike answers. "At those last gigs you'd see Dolores being careful about how much she moved, and then forgetting and doing something really physical that left her in a lot of pain afterwards. She'd made a pretty much full recovery, though, and like Noel said, was up for touring."

One of *In The End*'s numerous standouts is 'Lost', which goes from the overblown whisper to a scream with Dolores sounding not unlike Sinéad O'Connor circa *The Lion And The Cobra*.

"She'd have been thrilled with the comparison; Sinéad was always a big hero of hers," Noel notes. "Dolores' tone changed from exercising her vocal cords so much, which is really evident if you play *Everybody Else...* and this record back to back. She was screaming over all of us for thirty years – and her brothers before that – so there was a real power to Dolores' voice."

With its opening "Do you remember? Remember the night? At a hotel in London" refrain, *In The End*'s lead single, 'All Over Now' is, like some of the songs on David Bowie's *Blackstar*, almost too painful to listen to.

There's a collective silence before Noel jumps into the void.

"I'd obviously heard it before she died but, yeah, it does take on a whole extra resonance," he half-whispers. "It speaks for itself in terms of how Dolores was feeling about everything. It's also the most old school Cranberries song on the record so, yeah, it's a bit of an emotional one."

Despite its flagrant disregard for health and safety regulations, the cover photo of kids throwing rock 'n' roll shapes in a junkyard couldn't be more striking.

"It was down the road from Dolan's in the docks," Mike explains. "We asked a couple of the managers and they were like, 'Work away'. There was all this heavy machinery driving around in the background. The kids are all family members, so it was nice to get them in on it."

While you could tell from talking to her down through the years that Dolores had her demons, I was shocked in 2013 when she revealed in a *Sunday Independent* interview that she'd been serially abused as a kid by a supposed friend of the family who's since died.

"What shocked me was that she started talking about it all in an interview," Ferg says.

"I've never read it," Noel takes over. "I have my own reasons for that. A lot of what I know was in there apparently. There isn't much that we didn't know about each other. We've been doing this so long. When Dolores wrote a song, I'd generally have known what it was about. You knew the period it was written in and what had been going on in her life. We never once in the thirty years sat down and said, 'What's that about?' She hated being asked to explain her lyrics. It was very much, 'You decide what it's about.'"

The idea being that the truth becomes your own.

"Absolutely," Mike agrees. "That's why fans connected on such a personal level with Dolores – they'd hear her lyrics and apply them to what was going on in their own lives."

Did the lads hang out much with Dolores when they weren't recording or touring?

"We were all of doing our own things," Noel reflects. "You have family, you have kids. When you're away for nine months out of a year, there's a lot of catching up to be done when you get home. There'd be texts and emails and phone calls, but not a whole lot of hanging out. We were able to sit in Tom Collins' and have a pint without anyone being bothered that we were there, but Dolores didn't have that luxury. Even when she was off she had to be careful because people everybody expected her to be 'Dolores, the Rock Star'. People say, 'What are you complaining about; it's what you wanted' but not being able to do normal stuff like that can be difficult."

It's important to remember that Dolores was also – I'm going to use a technical term here – as funny as fuck.

"A lot of people don't get that," Ferg nods. "The thing we remember the most about Dolores is the craic we had. She'd be sat on the bus ripping the piss out of you."

"What Dolores also had," Noel chuckles, "was a very low boredom threshold. Two days into rehearsals, Noel looked over and see that look on her face. She mightn't have said anything there and then but at seven in the evening you'd get a call from her asking, 'What did you think of today?' and before you could answer she'd go, 'It wasn't rock enough.' She was always the metallar in the band."

Tell us more about that look of hers...

"You'd see it and think: 'There's going to be trouble here now; she's going to kick off any second!'" Noel smiles. "If you were doing an interview and somebody asked a stupid question you'd see it. Initially, Dolores was very shy around us because we were strangers, but as we got to know each other better we realised that, 'She's well able to stand up for herself.' She was never the 'innocent colleen' that the British music press made her out to be. She was a very smart person."

I should really be referring to both Mike and Noel as 'Dr. Hogan' following January's bestowing of honorary degrees on them by the University of Limerick. Dolores' force of nature mum Eileen was also there to collect the robes and scroll that would've been presented to her daughter who, but for joining the Cranberries, probably would have gone to UL.

"Force of nature" is right," Noel says. "She's a rock, you know? She's amazing. You look at her and think, 'Okay, you better get your shit together now.' It's hard for us but, can you imagine; it's her daughter. It's got to be incredibly hard. And yet she shakes herself off and does all that kind of stuff. Especially that day at UL when the press were asking her about Dolores."

I thought the lads rocked the robes very well.

"I wear mine round the house all the time," Noel deadpans. "Saturday mornings reading the paper with that outfit on. Somebody out at UL said to me, 'You fly a lot, don't you? Well, when you're booking a ticket make sure to put in 'Dr. Hogan' because if there's ever upgrades they always give them to the doctors first."

"Which is fine until they ask, 'Is there a doctor on board?' and you're expected to perform mouth to mouth resuscitation on a sick passenger," Mike cracks.

"Ah, if that happens, I'll just wing it," Noel replies.

The lads aren't sure whether Dolores got to see *Derry Girls*, the first episode of which went out on January 4, 2018 and starts with a blast of 'Dreams'.

"Then you see Erin's bedroom and there's a picture of the Cranberries on the wall," Noel beams. "*Derry Girls* is like an advert for The Cranberries, they've also used 'Zombie', 'I Can't Be With You' and 'Ode To My Family', which has done wonders for our Spotify plays! *Derry Girls* is absolutely Dolores' sense of humor. She'd have loved it, especially Sister Michael. That episode where she was on the bus reading *The Exorcist*; Dolores would have been howling."

Their bandmate definitely was aware that Eminem had sampled 'Zombie' on the album that returned him to the US top spot last year, *Kamikaze*.

"She always thought Eminem was cool so, yeah, that was a massive deal for Dolores," Noel says. "She knew about it, but forgot to tell me until just beforehand, so my first time hearing it was the day of release on Spotify. I was expecting a snippet, but it's the whole song. It's almost more of a cover than a sample, which is cool because he did a great job of it."

Does Noel ever get sick of his own songs?

"They're always playing 'Dreams' in the gym I go to," he grimaces, "which is a bit off-putting when you're working out. Otherwise, no. I don't dive for the 'off' switch when one of our songs comes on the radio. It's amazing the places 'Dreams' ends up. The Chinese Olympic team had it as their official walking out music. There's a version of it on YouTube in Cantonese."

In The End promotion duties completed, the lads will be turning their attentions to a major Cranberries documentary.

"You'll be getting a call, Stuart," Noel informs me. "We had done a few small interviews three years ago individually, the idea being that we didn't know about it," Noel reveals. "Those interviews, which of course include Dolores, were never used so there's lots of great footage we're going to develop. The original idea was to have it about the first album, how that all came about, but since Dolores passed away we've been in talks with different people who've approached us about doing a full start to finish documentary. You've the bones of thirty years there. If we don't do it somebody else will, and probably badly. We'll do it properly."

From serenading Pope John Paul and appearing on the cover of Rolling Stone to collaborating with Angelo Badalamenti and simultaneously blowing Pavarotti and Princess Diana away with her singing, Dolores' career was one of extraordinary highs. What are the lads' own 'wouldn't swap em for anything' Cranberries' moments?

"You'll have to wait for the documentary," Ferg laughs. "We opened up for the Stones in the San Siro. I remember looking around and thinking, 'Jayyyyysssssssss!' During 'New New York', I could hear Dolores' vocal just swirling around. It was fucking unreal. Mick does his own thing, but the others came and said 'hello'. I was totally starstruck meeting Charlie Watts. Someone said he hasn't changed his bass drum skin since the '60s; he's afraid the sound will be different."

"We were on the same Milton Keynes bill as Oasis, Radiohead and R.E.M. who were headlining," says Noel. "Even now thinking back, it was mental to be in that company. When we did the 'Linger' video, Michael Stipe turned up on the set because he was friends with the director, Melodie McDaniel, who'd also done the 'Losing My Religion' video. This was our first time in America – we hadn't long been signed – and this legend just pops in. You never forget stuff like that."

As for what the future holds, the only thing the lads are 100% certain of is that they won't be recording again as The Cranberries.

"It can't be The Cranberries without Dolores," Noel concludes. "I'm just glad that we had the adventures together that we did, and have an album we're all immensely proud of to say 'goodbye' with."

The Cranberries' *In The End* album is out now. See our review [here](#).

Share This Article: [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Pinterest](#) [Email](#)

RELATED

DROGHEDA ARTS FESTIVAL 2019
www.droghedaartsfestival.ie
30 APRIL - 6 MAY

MUSIC | 04 MAY 19
Drogheda Arts Festival: Here's what's happening across the weekend

MUSIC | 02 MAY 19
Tyler, The Creator Teases New Music After Album Rumors

MUSIC | 30 APR 19
Soaibex: Ian Doyle Of The Man Whom On The Decline Of Song Clubs

MUSIC | 30 APR 19
Enda Walsh is adapting Sing Street into a stage musical

MUSIC | 30 APR 19
Keith Richards And The Case For Talk Is Cheap

MUSIC | 20 FEB 19
In The New Hot Press: Hozier - Let's Talk About Everything

MUSIC | 20 FEB 19
The Full Hot Press Interview with Tom Dunne

MUSIC | 08 FEB 19
Susie Blue: On The Fight For Marriage Equality in the North

HOT PRESS Login Subscribe

Additional Sites: [MIX - Music Industry Explained](#), [Lets Talk About Sex: A special Hot Press report on Sex, Sexuality & Contraception](#), [Best of Ireland](#), [Best of Dublin](#), [The Big Break](#), [Hot Press Video Archive](#), [Jameson Bow St Sessions](#), [Craft Beer](#)

Contact Us: Hot Press, 100 Capel St, Dublin 1, Rep. Of Ireland. Tel: +353 (1) 241 1500, info@hotpress.ie. Advertise With Us: For more details on how to advertise with Hot Press click here or call us on +353 (1) 241 1500.