

Grammy nomination 'personal validation' for London music producer

Dan Brodbeck worked on The Cranberries' final album, In the End, through his friendship with the late lead singer and principal songwriter Dolores O'Riordan

JOE BELANGER Updated: January 24, 2020



Dave Brodbeck, a London music producer and co-ordinator of Fanshawe College's music industry arts program, will be at the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles Sunday nominated for rock album of the year with The Cranberries for their final album, In the End. (Supplied)

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Just days before Dan Brodbeck is due to attend the Grammy Awards, he's still waiting for a pinch to wake up from a dream.

But it isn't a dream and Brodbeck will be among the other nominees at the Staples Center in Los Angeles for the 62nd annual Grammy Awards ceremony.

The Londoner is among the nominees for best rock album of the year for The Cranberries' final album, In the End. It was released about a year after the death of lead singer and principal songwriter Dolores O'Riordan. The band has since disbanded.

"It is extremely . . . It's a weird . . . It doesn't feel like it's real. It's just beginning to settle in," said Brodbeck, for whom the award is bittersweet because of O'Riordan's untimely death at 46. They had become friends through more than a decade of writing and recording together.

"I'm sure it's weird for the band, too. It came right out of the blue for them that, after 25 years making music without getting nominated, they're nominated for a Grammy.

"And after 30 years in the business, it's to me like personal validation. It's obviously an honour. For me, it's like winning an Olympic gold medal with the (recording) team."

Initially, Brodbeck didn't know whether he'd be invited to the ceremony along with others who worked on the album, although it should never have been in doubt given his fingers touched at least eight of the album's 11 songs, including recording work and a writing credit with O'Riordan for Summer Song.

The only question, now, is whether the 52-year-old married father of two grown daughters wins alongside the rest of the team on the album, including the surviving members of The Cranberries (Mike Hogan, Noel Hogan and Fergal Lawler) and other production members, led by producer Stephen Street.

Other albums up for the rock Grammy are Amo by British rockers Bring Me the Horizon, Social Cues by London, England-based American rockers Cage the Elephant, Trauma by Michigan rockers I Prevail, and Feral Roots by California's Rival Sons.

Brodbeck taught music production at Fanshawe College's music industry arts program in 2007-2008, then at the Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology in 2009 where he had been a student in the late 1980s, returning to Fanshawe the next year where he is now the program co-ordinator.

Music has been a major focus of his life since he first picked up a guitar at the age of six, influenced by his father, the late Rick Brodbeck, who owned the Music Mart store for years and played guitar "for fun." Dan Brodbeck's mother Leslie still lives in London.

"I've basically done nothing else since but play guitar," said Brodbeck, who rejected the idea of touring with bands in favour of submersing himself in the studio.

"I love performing, but I didn't love the idea of being in a band and touring. But I loved the studio, especially the creative side of it . . . and music. I love music and as long as I'm in music, I'm happy."

Brodbeck, a graduate of South secondary school, said he learned much of his trade from mentors in the business.

"My training was basically trial by fire and working with some mentors on records, such as David Bendeth, Andy Wallace, Jack Joseph Puig and Michael Brauer, all who mixed records I produced from 2000 to 2006," he said. "I learned so much from them in the short time I worked with them on those records."

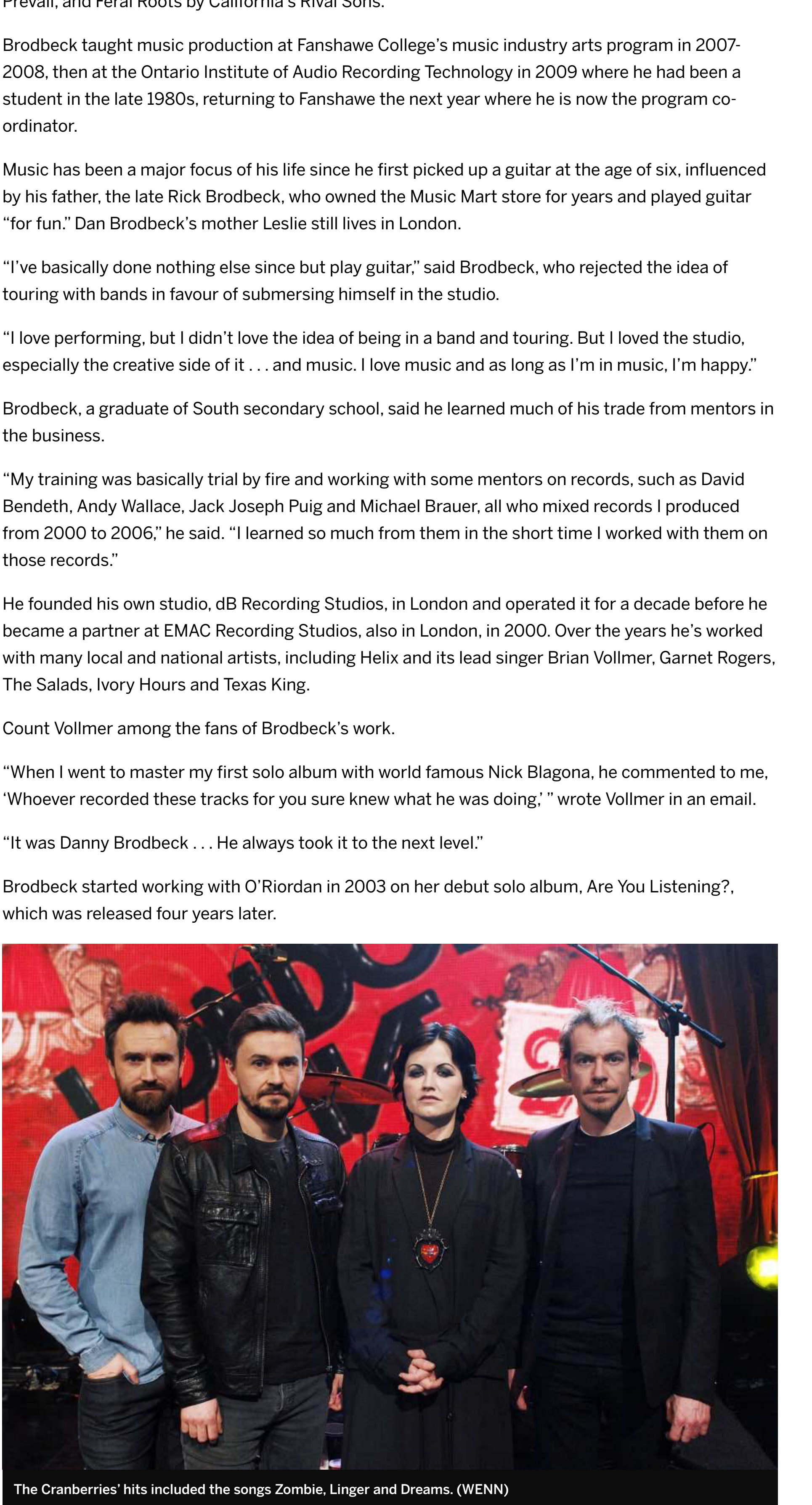
He founded his own studio, dB Recording Studios, in London and operated it for a decade before he became a partner at EMAC Recording Studios, also in London, in 2000. Over the years he's worked with many local and national artists, including Helix and its lead singer Brian Vollmer, Garnet Rogers, The Salads, Ivory Hours and Texas King.

Count Vollmer among the fans of Brodbeck's work.

"When I went to master my first solo album with world famous Nick Blagona, he commented to me, 'Whoever recorded these tracks for you sure knew what he was doing,' " wrote Vollmer in an email.

"It was Danny Brodbeck . . . He always took it to the next level."

Brodbeck started working with O'Riordan in 2003 on her debut solo album, Are You Listening?, which was released four years later.



The Cranberries' hits included the songs Zombie, Linger and Dreams. (WENN)

"She had a holiday home in Buckhorn, north of Peterborough (the Irish-born O'Riordan was married at the time to Canadian Don Burton, the former tour manager of Duran Duran), and she was working on a solo project and needed someone to work with," recalled Brodbeck.

"I got a call and we met at her place in Buckhorn, had dinner and barely talked at all about music. It was about getting along personally and we just hit it off . . . A friendship was very important to her because her previous musical experience was obviously the band and they were very close friends, so if she didn't hit it off with someone personally, she would not work with them"

He continued working with O'Riordan in Canada and in Ireland, including on her second solo album, No Baggage, released in 2009. They continued to work on music and communicated right up until her death in 2018.

"It never stopped," said Brodbeck. "I became a partner, musically."

It was his work with O'Riordan that earned Brodbeck his lone Juno in 2010 for recording engineer of the year for one song on each of her solo albums: Apple of My Eye off Are You Listening? and Be Careful off No Baggage.

Brodbeck said he was "shocked" when informed of O'Riordan's death, then discovered she'd sent him an email hours before she died. They had just worked out each other's share of Summer Song.

"Her talent was incredible," said Brodbeck.

"I could come up with something musically and had an idea of how a vocal melody might go and every time she surprised me. It always went to a way different place . . . a place only she could take it to. She had an incredible voice and sense of unique melody."

He said writing with O'Riordan was a "very organic process. . . . For her it was a gut reaction and if (the lyric) didn't come, she'd throw it away. I remember she said, 'I have to feel it when I sing it: She only wanted to make music that she and I loved. It changed my view of recording music. A lot of people try to force things when they're in the studio. For her, it was all about the art."

In her last few years, it was known that O'Riordan suffered physically with a bad back and mentally from a bipolar disorder. At the time of her death, determined to be by accidental drowning in a hotel bathtub, O'Riordan had consumed alcohol but no drugs.

Brodbeck said O'Riordan "hated" celebrity.

"It's strange when you get to know someone outside the public glare," said Brodbeck. "Fans look at her as an icon, but she hated celebrity. She just wanted to write and sing songs and be an artist."

Brodbeck was contacted by the band after her death, since he and O'Riordan had worked on many songs over the years that were never recorded for an album. Those included Summer Song, which he gave to O'Riordan around 2014 with the description of the music as "a summer song." She wrote lyrics for it and recorded vocals.

"The band took what we had worked on and made it their own," said Brodbeck.

"If we actually won, it would be a pretty neat thing and a great way to commemorate (O'Riordan) and cap off the band's career and for me."

Brodbeck was in Los Angeles for a music industry trade show last week and has stayed an extra week to attend the awards on Sunday.

His wife Taryn and daughter Taylor, a well-known area tattoo artist, will be at Fanshawe's The Chef's Table restaurant on Sunday for a Grammy party where students, staff and friends of the music industry arts program will watch the afternoon Grammy award session when many of the award winners are announced.

"I'm humbled and a bit embarrassed that they're planning a party for me (and) I'm not going to be there," said Brodbeck.

"But I'm here and I'm going to the awards."

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