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The Cranberries hit the jackpot

THE CRANBERRIES are taking America by storm! Yes, that Cranberries – the band we've variously described as 'the indie Deacon Blue' and 'a Gaelic Sundays' – are currently doing ethereal things to the US public. **SIMON PRICE** (words) and **PHIL NICHOLLS** (pics) report from Vegas

Juice Sorry Now?

YESSS!!!" DOLORES O'RIORDAN crashes through the doors of the tour bus, punching the air. "We sold more T-shirts than Suede! *Gigolo Aunts* sold more T-shirts than Suede! I mean, I like 'em and everything, but . . ."

She takes me aside. "I like men to be a bit more . . . a bit less girly-girly, you know? Because I'm a bit of a tomboy and I challenged him to a fight, but I don't think he was up to it."

With that, she punches my arm (hard), snatches Phil Nicholls' camera, drags her drummer, Fergal, outside, and vanishes. Nicholls later tells me his film contains inexplicable shots of a man's arse against a steel radiator grill.

So much for the blushing faerie princess of music press myth.

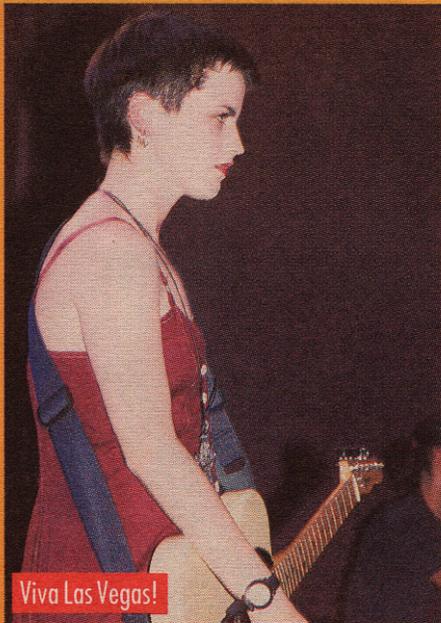
AH, Vegas, my old friend. Vegas, where everything is bigger, especially food. Must be something to do with the nuclear tests out in the Nevada desert. Dolores, however, has a conspiracy theory that goes like this: restaurateurs are in collusion with Health Clubs, giving you enormous helpings, turning you into a fat bastard, thereby forcing you to work out at an expensive fitness centre.

Here, everything is bigger. Not least The Cranberries. Since their debut LP, "Everybody Else Is Doing It So Why Can't We?", was released in May, it's sold 320,000 copies.

The breakthrough came when the single, "Dreams", spread like word-of-mouth wildfire through Modern Rock Radio (a weird American programming concept spanning Pearl Jam/Belly/Faith No More to Big Country/Tom Petty/The Beat), then Mainstream FM stations. The follow-up, "Linger", is poised on the edge of the Billboard Top 40.

They've already toured with The The, and when Suede (their current co-headliners) pulled the first three gigs of the tour, The Cranberries sold out 1,000-seater theatres on their own. Next month, they'll be filling stadia with Duran Duran.

Yes, I'm talking about the same Cranberries: pleasant, ethereal types from Limerick who were briefly hip in 1991. Remember them? (This particular media perception, I soon discover, is a sore point). So how in God's name have they, of all people (and ahead of Britpop's more happening stars), struck Yankee Dollars?



Viva Las Vegas!

I'M hiding from the 102 degrees midday sun – so hot you have to run from it, as if it were a hailstorm – in one of the many cafes in the 2,400-room (about average for Las Vegas) Sahara hotel with bassist Mike Hogan, whose reticence is only rivalled by his brother, the near-silent guitarist Noel,

and the far more loquacious drummer, Fergal Lawler.

So what do the Americans see in you? "A lot of them seem to be into the Irish thing," says Fergal, "but I don't see our music as very Irish."

Not all of it, sure, but stuff like "Waltzing Back" is very Celtic and it's been a while since Sinead had a record out . . .

"Dolores can't help her accent when she sings: it's only natural. But they seem to notice it more over here."

Do you get a large Irish-American following?

"We get all sorts, from college guys, with the baseball caps and the shorts, to thirty-fortysomethings. But we do get a lot of shamrock tattoos and Irish flags. Nearly every second American we meet says, 'Oh, I'm half-Irish'. Yeah, tell me something I don't know. They have some weird preconceptions, too. A lot of them say,

'What's it like there? Is there a war going on?' Well, maybe in the North there is, but they seem to think it's like Bosnia or Lebanon. Either that or they think we're quaint little leprechauns who live in cottages, drive donkeys and carts and have never

heard of television."

I tell him about the largely Polish/Italian House Of Pain, whose mainman, DJ Everlast, has "Sinn Fein" tattooed on his chest.

"Jesus! Most of these people haven't got a clue what's going on. But a lot of people back home told us, 'Oh, these Americans aren't well', but a lot of people we've met have been grand."

Does it bother you that bands like Radiohead and yourselves have to succeed over here before anyone takes notice back home?

"Yeah, it's a shame. If we can do it here," he says, paraphrasing his album title, "why can't we do it there?" Still, are you homesick yet?

"Oh Christ, yes. It's nice to visit . . ."

A waitress brings us Cokes, and barks "Enjoy!" in a tone which bears the unmistakable sub-text: "Obey!"

Fergal sighs: "But I wouldn't live here, though . . ."

THE gig at the Huntridge Theater is another effortless Cranberries conquest: mass singalongs, handclaps in the air, showers of flowers, rosaries, and marriage proposals. The girl with the Peruvian pipes wedged in her throat has done it again.

The night having gone so well, Dolores consents to a quick interview. Why does she think the Americans love her so much?

"Because our music has a lot of culture in it. Not necessarily Irish culture: a lot of people think we're English anyway. But Americans desire culture, because their own culture is so new.

"They see us as a genuine thing – regardless of whether we're trendy in England," she pointedly adds.

"And they don't have a big indie scene here, so we must sound pretty unique on the radio next to Madonna and all that AOR crap".

Despite the passion of her words, and her new boisterous, grrrlish confidence (see the first paragraph), her voice is barely audible above the air-conditioning.

What has America taught you?

"I'm amazed by the materialism of it all. And I was fascinated by New Orleans, all that voodoo stuff. It's helped my songwriting. We're trying to write songs during soundchecks for an album in January, and they're a lot more mature than the old ones, which were . . ."

Well, they all described the cruel games that lovers play. "Exactly. Teenager talk. But, when you get older," continues the 20-year-old Dolores, "you've seen a bit more, and the relationship side of your life calms down. We've learned to rock as well.

"What did you expect us to be like? More restrained?"

The Cranberries' debut album, 'Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?', already available on CD and cassette, is finally released on vinyl this week by Island



Dolores gets flowered up