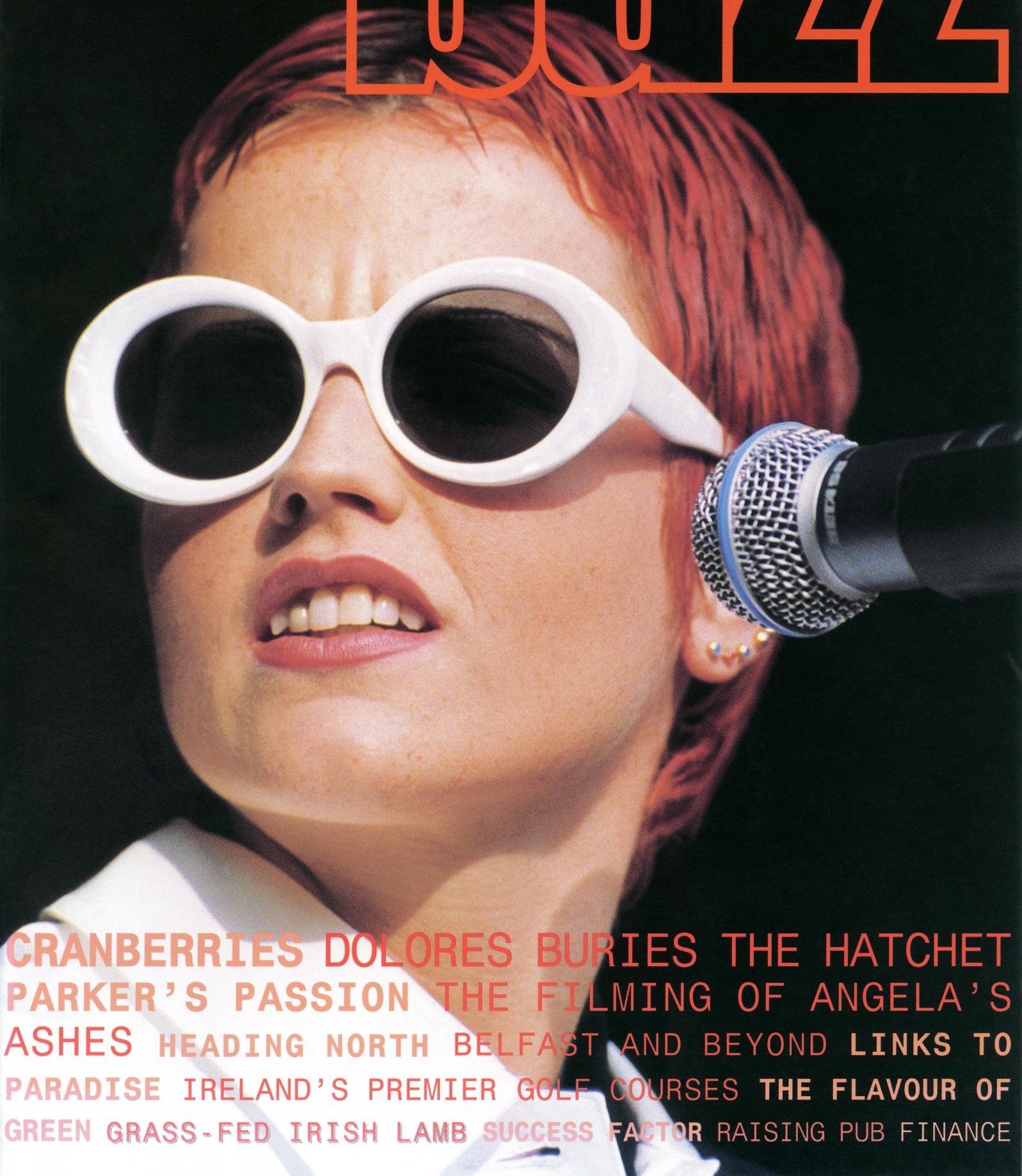


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CRANBERRIES DOLORES BURIES THE HATCHET
PARKER'S PASSION THE FILMING OF ANGELA'S
ASHES HEADING NORTH BELFAST AND BEYOND LINKS TO
PARADISE IRELAND'S PREMIER GOLF COURSES THE FLAVOUR OF
GREEN GRASS-FED IRISH LAMB SUCCESS FACTOR RAISING PUB FINANCE

DIWA DOLORES

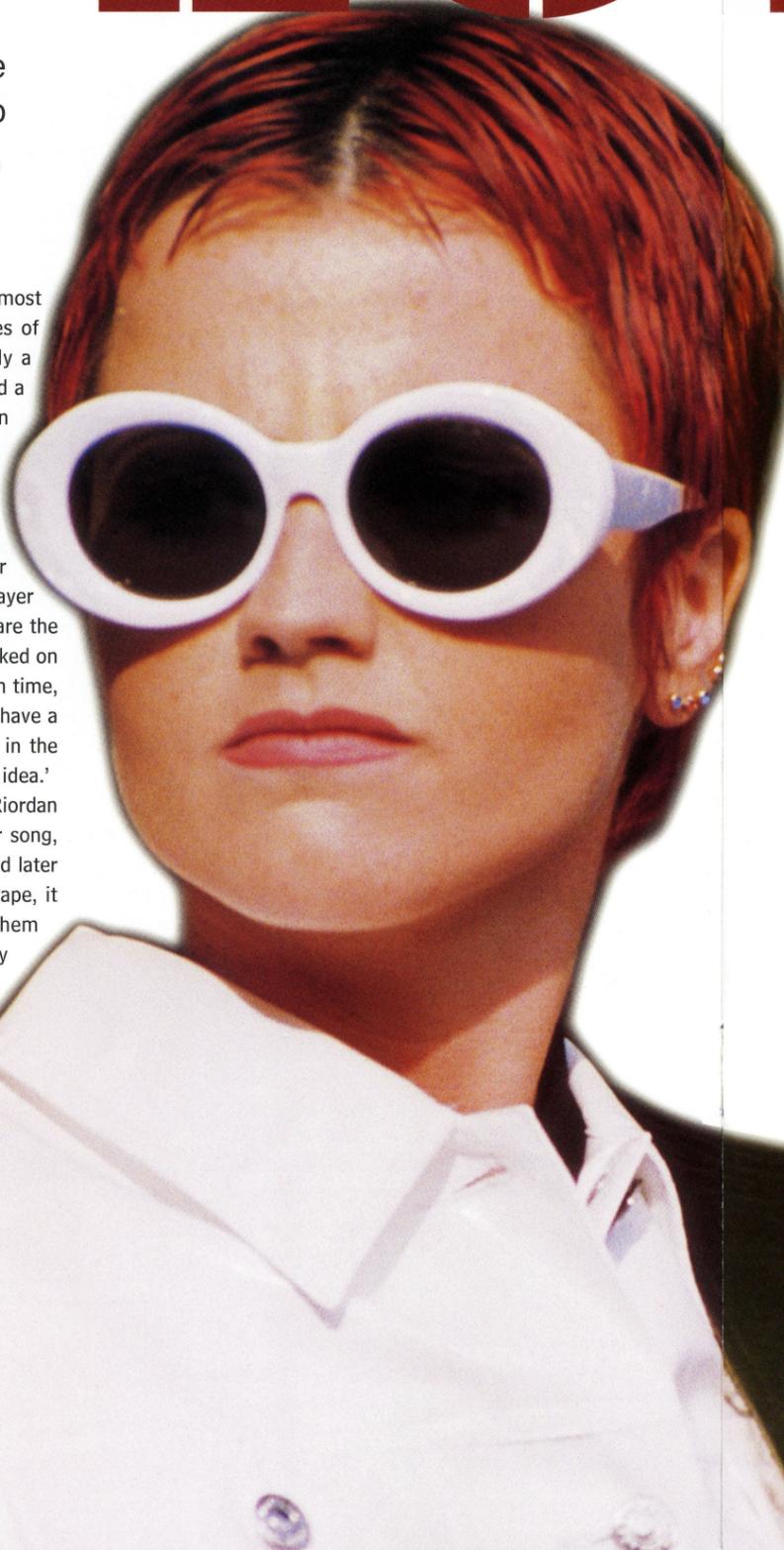
Dolores O'Riordan, lead singer of The Cranberries, has been no stranger to controversy on her way to the top, reports **Joe Jackson**

Let's go back to the beginning. To before The Cranberries became the most successful of the post-U2 Irish bands, amassing global record sales of over 30 million. To 1990, when 'The Cranberry Saw Us' was simply a Limerick band who realised their music was 'feminine' and that they needed a female singer to capture that feeling. Enter 18-year-old Dolores Mary Eileen O'Riordan, a local girl who had played church organ, sung in the school choir, 'loved Gregorian chants' and the poetry of William Butler Yeats.

So legend has it, at their first meeting the slight but forthright O'Riordan introduced herself to the band – bassist Mike Hogan, his brother, guitarist Noel Hogan and drummer Feargal Lawlor – saying: 'OK boys, show me your stuff.' Clearly, she was not entirely impressed. 'In the beginning the bass player was 16 and the other two were 17 and 18 and the music was heavy... "we are the boys" stuff with silly lyrics like, "I strangled my friend yesterday/And he choked on his vomit". They were into that and into just having a laugh. But definitely, in time, they did say that their music was softer than most so maybe it'd be nice to have a female singer. And when I did go and hear them there was a lot of space in the music where I knew I wouldn't have to compete as a vocalist and I liked that idea.'

Indeed, Noel Hogan, the other main composer in the band, also gave O'Riordan space to compose. For example, he had the chord sequence to a particular song, gave the music to O'Riordan and within a week she came up with what would later become one of their first major hits, LINGER. One of five songs on a demo tape, it started a bidding war among the big record companies, and resulted in them signing to Island Records. Tellingly, it was also the first of the many deeply autobiographical tunes penned by O'Riordan, based on her first experience of falling in love at the age of 18. The 'dreamy, floating soundscapes' which would dominate the band's first album EVERYBODY ELSE IS DOING IT, SO WHY CAN'T WE? 'were the kind of stuff I was writing when I met the lads.'

The rest, as they say, is pop history. Despite the disappointment of the poor reception of the first single, UNCERTAIN, intensive touring, particularly in the US, eventually led to The Cranberries becoming the first Irish band to sell more than a million copies of their debut album in America. They have since released three more big-selling albums, NO NEED TO ARGUE, TO THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED and BURY THE HATCHET. The latter, claims O'Riordan, is a return to roots.



Reflecting on her more political songs such as the anti-war song ZOMBIE and the bulk of the material on the TO THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED album, she says: 'In the early days we used to write more funny, freaky songs. But by the third album we were too much in the limelight so the writing got a little bit sensible there... Now it's sort of silly again, with a sense of humour and a little bit of piss-taking, that kind of thing.' Perhaps. But the general consensus is that The Cranberries' first album remains their best, even though on BURY THE HATCHET, in songs like DYING IN THE SUN, the purity of O'Riordan's vocals is given space to breathe and her songwriting skills, if still derivative, do come

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to the fore. It must be said, however, that in their homeland The Cranberries' popularity had been adversely affected by O'Riordan's reputation as 'the mouth of the Shannon.' There may have been some truth in her claims that the band 'made it' without needing to prove themselves in Dublin and that the music industry 'types' there were 'clannish' and 'small-minded'. More open to debate were her claims, made in a Canadian magazine, that Irish people drank too much, that Irish men were 'unchivalrous' and that she'd 'searched high and low for a decent one before eventually marrying a Canadian.' How to win friends and influence people? Not exactly.

O'Riordan has always been a plain speaker. In her first major HOT PRESS interview, published in January 1994, she stated: 'I'm mad into the idea of being a mother. I've been putting it off since I was at least 18.' When I asked if there was pressure on her not to have a child she replied, 'there is but anyone who tells me I can't have a child can shag off. I'd kick anyone in the head who told me that. It's my life. And fans who don't accept me for what I am, that's their problem, not mine.'

Six years later, Dolores says she's been 'tamed' by the birth of her son, Taylor Baxtor Burton, born in Toronto in November 1997. Critics

and fans alike, however, often argue that what's really been changed by O'Riordan's 1994 marriage to ex-Duran Duran road manager, Don Burton, is The Cranberries' music. That does seem to be true.

O'Riordan also offended many people when she said that those who criticised her wedding dress 'were mostly in the press and fat women who were probably jealous.' As for the claim that she has been 'tamed' by the birth of her child? Tell that to The Corrs, who were told by Diva Dolores that they don't have what it takes to 'make it' in America, and that their music is too 'nice' and 'soulless', and Boyzone, to whom she directed similar barbs.

Despite saying they are 'taking it easy for a time' after last year's major tour, the band kicks off a series of appearances at European festivals on 29 April in the grounds of Dublin castle – for more information visit their official Web site at www.cranberries.ie.

As for the future, Dolores herself says she's 'not really thinking forward that much,' and that one day she's thinking 'maybe I'll record another album,' and the next 'maybe I'll have another child.' Whatever Dolores O'Riordan decides, one suspects she will – as she said in that first HOT PRESS interview – continue to do it 'her way'. ■

Buzz giveaway

The Buzz has five copies of The Cranberries' Bury The Hatchet CD to give away. Send a postcard with your name and address to: CD Draw, The Buzz, Guinness Ltd, Irish Pub Concept, St James's Gate, Dublin 8, Ireland or you can e-mail us at thebuzz@guinness.com

MAIN PICTURE: DOLORES O'RIORDAN; ABOVE: ON HER WEDDING DAY WITH HUSBAND DON BURTON IN THAT DRESS; BELOW: WITH HER FELLOW CRANBERRIES

