

Entertainment

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Pop details

The Cranberries are feeling the squeeze from critics

PREVIEW

The Cranberries with Cracker

When: Wednesday night, 7:30
Where: Edmonton Coliseum
Tickets: \$34.50 plus service charges at TicketMaster

SHAWN OHLER
Journal Music Writer

Edmonton

On their first two albums, Irish group The Cranberries built a huge worldwide fan base with loud singer Dolores O'Riordan and their surreal pop songs like *Linger and Dream*.

Many fans were enthralled, then when they heard the group's latest release, *To the Faithful Departed*.
Almost completely the musical opposite to *Everybody Else is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* and *No Need to Argue*, *Departed* sported a much noisier guitar and drum sound.

Lead singer Dolores O'Riordan had changed, too, moving from her winsome tales of obsessive love to bitter lyrics on subjects ranging from drug use to Bosnia to John Lennon's death.

So have The Cranberries gone sour? Not exactly, says Pargal Lawler, the group's drummer.
"Part of it is that we were that much older when we were writing the album, but I think it was mostly the case that we wanted to do something different this time," says Lawler, on the phone from his home in Limerick, Ireland.

"We figured there was no point in doing another album the same as *No Need to Argue*, because we've done that album before."

The Cranberries' beefed-up sound on the new record, which was produced by veteran rock producer Bruce Fairbairn (Aerosmith, Van Halen, Bon Jovi), is a natural extension of the group's live show, Lawler says.
The group, which plays Edmonton Wednesday night with American rockers Cracker, has toured the world constantly since 1983.

"We always have played live with more of an edge than might come across on our records," he says.
"People would come see us live, and they'd say, 'Oh my God, I didn't think it would be that energetic' or whatever. So we wanted to capture that."

As for O'Riordan's lyrical shift to politically-charged issues, Lawler says she's



The Cranberries took the Best Song award with Zombite at the MTV European Music Awards in Paris last November

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—Cranberries drummer Pargal Lawler on the harder-edged sound of the band's latest album

just speaking her mind.
"She has always been a very honest person. She isn't afraid to say, 'Bleep' what everybody else says. If you don't agree with this, that's your problem."
That attitude led many, if not most, North American music critics to wage *To the Faithful Departed*. O'Riordan's lyrics were labelled self-righteous, or worse.
"Just *Shot Lennon*, particularly, raised criticism," says Lawler, which ends with a series of recorded gunshots, examines Lennon's death

from the perspective of his fans and his killer, Mark David Chapman.
Writers wondered whether the 24-year-old O'Riordan, who was nine when Lennon was shot, could possibly have anything valid to add to the discussion of his death, or what she was trying to say at all.

All the controversy surrounding the song annoys Lawler, at 25 The Cranberries' oldest member.
"I don't see what all the fuss is about. The song is a tribute to the man himself and what a sad and sorry and sickening sight it was to lose someone who was a genius, really," Lawler explains.

"Let people say whatever they want about the lyrics but, at the end of the day, the message is that we have the greatest respect for the man."
"I don't think people are looking into it properly. I don't think they understand it. I would say to those people, open your eyes and (bleeping) read the lyrics, all right!"

Travis ends Big Valley with a lesson in class

Camrose

The finale to Big Valley Jamboree '96 began with sunshine and ended in a driving rain. And while the matinee tag team didn't necessarily parallel nature's ever bigger production, there were enough artistic squalls, sunny breaks and unsettled moments to make a musical weather report of sorts.

Resplendent in doekins, Edmonton's Laura Vinson and her band Free Spirit reminded us that the history of Western Canada isn't just about pioneer ranchers, cowboys and farmers, but very much about those who were here first.

Drawing on her Meris roots and family history, the veteran singer-songwriter sang a cycle of often tragic stories worth telling, if — notwithstanding some goodtimes zydeco and cowboy yodeling in the fest — performed on the sombre side for the occasion. Native dancers joined for the last time, which meant several dozen were to go home by their thin early afternoon gathering to stand and cheer.

Middle, Sask, hometown heroes Brad and Ken — the *Johnner Brothers* — have developed well beyond bar band syndrome and delivered a strong set of hook-laden country rock, underlined by tight, sophisticated vocal harmonies. Good players themselves, the brothers are blessed with a smart band capable of adding texture to the familiar turf they plow. Saskatchewan keyboard/cordician player Bart McKay deserves special mention for his jazzy, unobtrusive fills and a nice stride piano interlude — not something you hear a lot of in these circles.

Singing along to the likes of *One Horse Town*, *My Life* and the signature *My Brother and Me*, the already-converted hardcore fans up front stood up, satisfied. But it was left to the Ottawa Valley's Charlie Major to pick up the baton in the last leg of the night, bringing home the gold for the home and native land.

A fine silver anyway, Gibson flat-top strung on his back, harmonica holder in place, clad in your basic blue work shirt and jeans, Major has about an unpretentious sardonic side, just steps up and gets the job done. Remain timeless in his understated, understated, understated onstage pandering that wears thin after four days, Major leaves no doubt that the show's the thing here.

That makes sense, because he's got the goods. *Tunes like It Can't Happen To Me*, *Tell Me Something (Don't Know) Waiting For You*, *Other Side*, *Running In The Rain* and the anthem *I Do It For The Money* (I thought of it several times over the weekend watching other acts on the stage) are pocket gems, stories with heart and authenticity.

A fine band Edmonton keyboard player Bob King is a standout provides just the right support. Charlie's not perfect quite yet, but "The Cowboy Train" and "Major" should be kept on the shelf for another 20 years — but he's a serious act in the best sense.

If Big Valley didn't snap him up for next year, the folk festivals in Edmonton and Calgary should. No doubt he'll blow away the audience as he did on Saturday.

To quote Randy Travis — on the other hand, we have Paulette Carlson and Highway 101, recently reunited after band and solo careers

Alan Kellogg
Arts and Entertainment

BIG VALLEY JAMBOREE

VALLEY HIGHS & LOWS

BEST ONSTAGE QUOTE: "After last year's show, I've been on my knees for 361 days."
WORST ONSTAGE PATTERN: *Vinnet Paulette Carlson*
WORST CONTINUING ACT: *Nitty Gritty Dirt Band*
BEST CONFESSION: *PIRIBO* ribs and sandwiches;
WORST CONFESSION: *George Fox*, whose show was cancelled due to a weather scare.

BEST COMPLAINER: Mark Chouinard
WORST COMPLAINER: *Cherie Major* (lifetime achievement award)
BEST WATERSHED MOMENT: *Chris LaDoux* (lifetime achievement award)

BEST WATERSHED STATION: *CFCW*
CROWD PLEASERS: Tom Clark, Michelle Wright, Randy Travis
UP AND COMING: Jason McCoy
A REAL COWBOY: *Chris LaDoux*
QUETTEST ACT: *George Fox*, whose show was cancelled due to a weather scare.

WORST SOUND: *Randy Travis*
BEST SOUND: *Michelle Wright*, *Cherie Major*
WORST BEVERAGE: *Vine Orchard* *Berry Cider*

deep-sixed on both sides.
At one point during one of Carlson's relentless, coquettish-little-girl spaced-out monotones, bassist Curtis Stone suggested: "Why don't we just do a song."
Always listen to the bass player.

When they ran over hits like *Cry, Cry, Cry*, *Roger Miller's* terrific *Walkin'*, *Tallie's* *Original*, *Bobby's* *Heart*, and *Wiskey If You Were A Woman*, things were fine. Minnesota farmer's daughter Carlson has an unmistakable, even classic country voice, especially suited to swing tunes and honky tonk material. The band is solid and, heaven knows, experienced. And thankfully, it doesn't include the obnoxious original drummer, who mysteriously always thought he was cuter and blonder than Paulette.



Randy Travis: just the straight deal

Never material from the (yes) new *Reunited* CD fared much less well. A particular low spot was a sappy Bryan Adams/*Mutt Lange* ballad. To add insult, its only decent line was (secondarily) directly lifted from *The Dutchman*, a truly wonderful song made famous by the late Steve Goodman.

And although they received the requisite Big Valley standing "O" after the set, it seemed to some of us that the band had put the crowd — energized after Major — completely to sleep. Maybe Paulette too, as she thanked the crowd for "sharing their afternoon." It was 8:20 p.m. at the time.

A band that never reached its potential, the result was often a combination of feedback and joke shop whoopee cushion.

Not that you'd hear a complaint from Travis, neatly attired (he "wore a suit do appreciate it") and pleasant throughout. In a realm that gets more stupid every year — in direct proportion to its success as the pop music of the 90s — Travis provides a degree of dignity and steadfastness to tradition. No screaming guitars here, no fancy posturing, no extended talk.

Just the straight deal, from *Better Class of Loner* to the latest album, *Are We In Trouble Now*, with *Doggy 'n' Roses*, *I Told You So* and half a dozen others.

SPOT LIGHT

Mac puts career on hold

Macauley Culkin is so upset about his parents' custody battle for him and his siblings that he's given up on his career. The situation is resolved, the *New York Daily News* reported Monday.

According to court papers, Macauley's estimated fortune of \$17 million US and to save his parents from financial ruin, the newspaper said, suing lawyers and financial advisers for the *Home Alone* star.

Father Christopher (Kit) Culkin and mother Patricia Breenfar have spent so much on their bitter legal squabbles that they're near bankruptcy, the *News* said.

According to court papers, Macauley's lawyer Kenneth Weirbub also wants the judge to remove the parents as their son's legal guardians, because their fights have made the arrangement "unworkable," the lawyer said. Kit Culkin, 51, opposes the gambit because he believes it is an attempt by Breenfar, 40, to gain "de facto" custody of their children, he told the *News* said.
The couple has never married.
The Associated Press

Hope backs Clinton

Bob Hope, an intimate of 11 American presidents, dating back to Franklin Roosevelt, says he thinks Bill Clinton will win re-election in November: "I go for Clinton," Hope, 85, says in his Aug. 10 issue of the *U.S. TV Guide*. "I like him. I think he's gonna have a second term."
The legendary comedian recently finished taping an NBC special on his memories of presidents, to air early next year.

The Associated Press

'Safe Haven' in Scientology

John Travolta, having a phenomenal year with the success of films like *Phenomenon* and *Broken Arrow*, turned out to celebrate Scientology, the religious group he credits for much of his success.
Travolta and his wife, Kelly Preston, went to a Hollywood party Saturday night to mark the 27th anniversary of the Scientology Celebrity Center.
"It's always been a safe haven for me in a town like Hollywood," Travolta said.

The Associated Press

Bruce takes on bootleggers

Bruce Springsteen took legal action in Britain on Monday against two alleged bootleggers attempting to release an album he's never lifted (ironically).
Springsteen issued a British High Court writ against Platteau Entertainment, London, England and Robert Tringham of Hertfordshire, England, seeking damages.

Reuter

Jamboree a go again in '97

VICKI HALL
Journal Staff Writer

Camrose

Anything for a good night's sleep and a refreshing shower.

That's what 23-year-old Derek Klesner of Irvineville wanted Monday after spending the weekend in a tent at the Big Valley Jamboree.

"It was so cold in that tent last night," he said. "But I wouldn't mind staying here for a while longer. It's totally cool out here."
Bitterly cold with a spotty rain, the weekend in a tent at the Big Valley Jamboree was a far cry from the weather that greeted the weekend in a tent at the Big Valley Jamboree.

Most people left first thing Monday morning. Only a few diehards like Klesner remained packed up Monday afternoon.

Almost everyone seemed impressed with the '96 jamboree, which included performers by Alabamians Clark and Michelle Wright.

And some campers seemed relieved that the '97 Jamboree seems to be a go. With attendance down, rumors about the demise of the event persisted all weekend.

Organizers say there were about 14,000 fans at this year's event, down from 16,000 in 1995 and 25,000 in 1994.

The Big Valley Jamboree in Craven, Sask., was shut down this winter after organizers blamed lousy ticket sales in 1985.

Camrose Jamboree promoter Glen Vink was finally seen laughing and smiling back Sunday night after a long winter of being annoyed.

"There was a bit of concern because our '97 tickets didn't sell as fast," he said. "But I picked up in the last three days so that's great."

Most expected attendance to be down because of the pouring rain at last year's event — and sure, a few drunken yahoos in Edmonton also made Vink think attendance might be way down. But the damage didn't appear to be as bad as it could have been.

By the time a torrent of cold rain brought the show down just after *Forever* and *Ever* Amen, everyone got a little lesson in class, always a nice way to end a festival.

With smaller crowds than last year, it remains to be seen what Big Valley will look like in '97. Here's hoping it continues on, with more rain — and sure, a few drunken yahoos in Edmonton also made Vink think attendance might be way down. But the damage didn't appear to be as bad as it could have been.

Not that anyone would want Big Valley is all about, whatever the critics may think. It's also a gathering where family, friends, kids, old and young, everyone gets a little lesson in class, always a nice way to end a festival.

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