

THE CRANBERRIES

OLD TROUT, WINDSOR
 ONE day, quite soon maybe, you'll get to hear the whole story. Part of it will be about how one sophisticated London gent took it upon himself to fete the wide-eyed Cranberries with an expensive Italian meal; hardly exotic stuff, but, to use his own words, he "may as well have asked them to eat a bat!" Unspoilt, brilliant and deeply distrustful, The Cranberries really are wild young things.

Singer Dolores hasn't yet learnt to banish hurt and bewilderment from her clean-cut face. Regrettably, she keeps her head in profile for most of the gig, trying desperately to hide what most singers try to replicate all the time. And let's take a stab at that voice. She has the voice of a saint stuck in a glass harp while being pelted with ice cubes by vicious Clangers... no? Okay, she sings like an escapee from Les Voix Bulgares, grazed, brave and wounded.

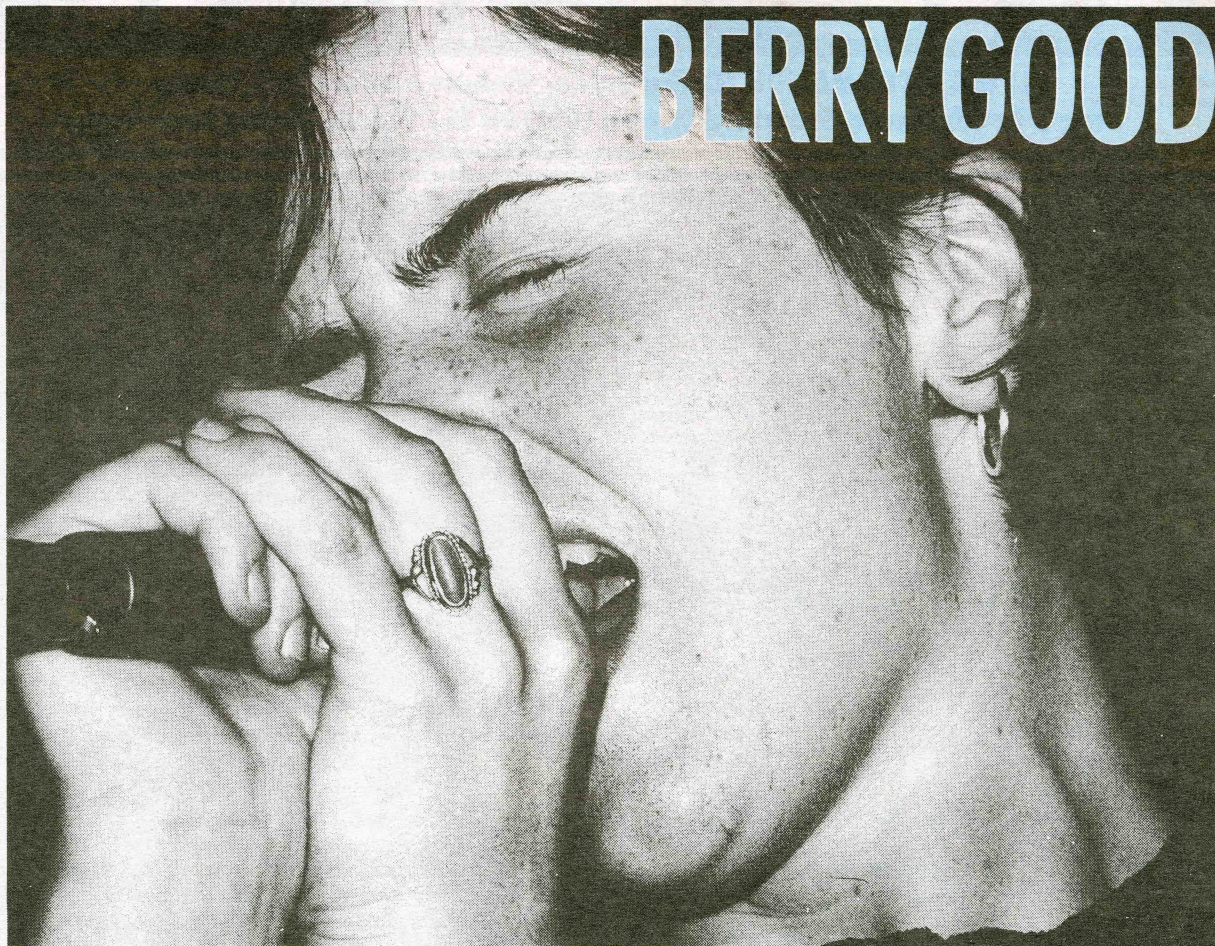
Their shyness is not only painful, but infectious too. We can hardly bear to look until the first four songs have shot by. And then it's even more embarrassing to watch because they're so shamefully perfect! Just for a minute, "Put Me Down" recalls The Undertones at their most poignant, and then suddenly there's a break where the cymbals crash and Dolores sings down what must be the whole of her Irish ancestry in one glorious descent. These are the most beautiful high notes you'll ever get to hear outside of La Scala, except they're untrained and unglutinous.

What about lyrics, then? Well, there are some buttock-clenching moments like one song where "the world's an illusion" and Dolores swears "I'm on your side", but who cares? Dolores means it and we happen to be living in times when "Can you dig it? Ugh eugh ooh" passes for lyrics! Pah, we'll forgive The Cranberries anything. When Dolores sings "So why are you holding her hand?", you catch yourself mumbling, I'll get her for you, under your breath. You can't for the life of you remember what the word "jaded" means.

Halfway through their set they've overtaken Curve and The Sundays. The indie world will prove too small for them. They're not knock-kneed, they're not inept and they're not transparent yellow. "Dreams" rumbles ahead, a giant pop song, ordinary until Dolores' voice shoots up like a lift that's suddenly decided it wants to take you to the top floor. Pop's penthouse suite awaits The Cranberries.

SALLY MARGARET JOY

BERRY GOOD



PG: PETE GRANT