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Toronto.com Music Cranberries on their reunion after 11 years

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Cranberries on their reunion after 11 years

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Dolores O'Riordan and the rest of the Cranberries - from left, Noel Hogan, Fergal Lawler, and Michael Hogan are back to play Sound Academy in May.

Although there was a moment during the mid-1990s when the Cranberries were completely inescapable, the band had somewhat lost its way artistically — and, in turn, a large segment of its once millions-strong audience — by the turn of the millennium. To the Irish quartet's credit, it knew it was running out of steam and got out of the game while the getting was good. Save a short reunion tour in 2010, it hasn't been heard from again.

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Until now, anyway. This Tuesday sees the release of the Cranberries' first new album in 11 years, *Roses*. A rather more mild-mannered affair than the arena-baiting rock records with which it closed the first chapter of its career a decade ago, it plays a bit like a grown-up version of the band's highly likeable 1993 debut, *Everybody Else is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* — which makes perfect sense, according to the Crans themselves, since it was recorded in much the same headspace.

"Nobody even knew we were up to this," says singer Dolores O'Riordan, still pixie-ish at 40, whilst conducting a day of interviews at a Yorkville hotel with guitarist and co-songwriter Noel Hogan earlier this week. "We went in the studio just to see what would happen. There was no record company, so we weren't under any obligation to do this . . . We thought 'No one's ever going to listen to this, so let's have a right laugh.'"

O'Riordan — who's married to a Canadian and lives part-time in southern Ontario — and Hogan candidly admit that they were dissatisfied with the last couple of Cranberries albums, conceding that burnout and the pressure to maintain the multimillion sales of *Everybody Else* (and its indelible hit "Linger") and its mega-hit 1994 follow-up, *No Need to Argue*, eventually got the best of the band.

Making *Roses*, however, brought back memories of how it was back in the days before "Linger" and "Dreams" propelled the group out of its hometown of Limerick to sudden global notoriety. With no one watching, the band was able to tap into "the freedom within that we had lost," says O'Riordan, and just be itself with no concessions to record-label boardrooms or radio formats. No one, in fact, was even sure they were making a record.

Hogan and O'Riordan had been knocking song ideas back and forth via email since 2005 with no particular intent of reviving the Cranberries, although O'Riordan laughs that the idea "was always subliminally there." The chemistry on the 2010 tour proved too powerful to ignore, however, so it was decided to head into Toronto's Metalworks studio a year ago "more just for fun than anything."

"The vibe was so good," recalls Hogan. "We were all getting along and there was a lot of laughing, so we started to think maybe there was an album there to be made."

Turns out there was, and now the band is gearing up for a good 12 months of globetrotting in support of *Roses*, including a May 9 date at Sound Academy.

It feels right to do it, both band members agree, otherwise they wouldn't be getting back on the treadmill again.

"It just got to the point where, creatively, we were not doing anything that great," says O'Riordan, who released two solo albums during the hiatus despite playing mom to three children. "I had a kid and went back on tour and then had a kid and went back on tour. I just felt like I wanted to stay home with my kids. So in 2003, I was, like: 'Yeah, I'm gonna stay home and just take a break.' I said to the lads, 'What do you think?' And they were feeling the same way, that maybe we should take a break.

"I just wanted to experience life not being in the Cranberries. I wanted to switch off, get the hell away and be human. Not be in a band, not have any contractual obligations, not have anyone breathing down your neck waiting for the next flippin' thing that you do. So it was a nice feeling."

Adds Hogan: "It didn't really feel like a big decision at the time. It felt like a weight off our shoulders more than anything. It wasn't like 'If we leave, is that the end?' It was more like 'We have to get the hell out of here.'

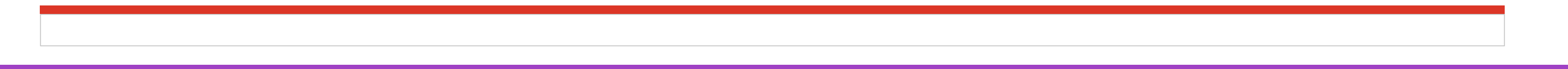
"People find it hard to understand why you would walk away from that. From the outside, you look like you have everything a band would want. But actually, we just wanted normality in our lives, to be able to go home and do what everybody else does."

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