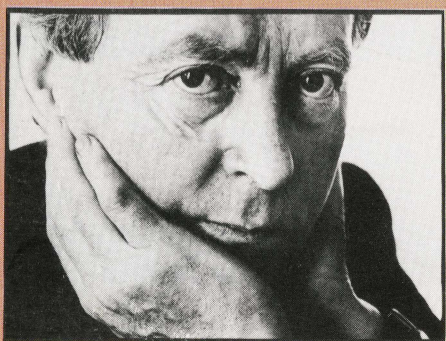


HOT PRESS



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**THE ART OF
DARKNESS**
THE JOHN MCGAHERN
INTERVIEW
BY JOE JACKSON



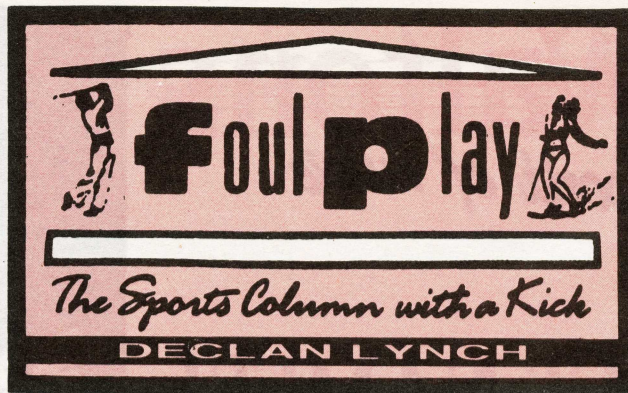
ENIYA

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
INTERVIEW BY MOLLY McANAILLY BURKE

sharon shannon • stiff little fingers •
john singletons boys 'n the hood •
talk talk • the

cranberries





ROUGH JUSTICE

Ireland's European Championship Group is a most enigmatic one. Watching the Turks spray it around the park against our implacable foes, the English recently, the mystery deepened as to how we managed to knock in five goals against them at Lansdowne Road.

The question which must be addressed is this: are they that good - or are England that bad? For traditional and sentimental reasons, we will plump for the later interpretation...

This was indeed an English performance straight out of the text-book of over-ambition being thwarted by grim reality. How often we have witnessed such *hubris*, and how loudly we have guffawed. In this chapter, the

commentators began in classic style by putting up their metaphorical feet, pulling the ring from the first can of Heineken, and settling down to enjoy a good, old-fashioned massacre.

According to the script, after an initial twenty minutes of Anglo-Saxon bombardment, the Turks would be weeping with fear and humiliation, and devoting much of their on-field activities to figuring out ways of being granted political asylum, rather than returning home to their doubtless murderous regime, where they would be summarily sent to work down the sewers for ten years.

Well, the script was misled in the familiar maw which has snaffled up many a pleasing English scenario, and they were lucky enough to survive with a one-goal advantage at the

finish. The distinct possibility of a Turkish equaliser must have sent the Wapping Contingent scouring the bottom drawer for elegant headlines like "Wot A Load Of Turkeys", or "A Squawking Great Balls-Up". But it was not to be.

The result did our boys a certain amount of good, but now - following our own bizarre 3-3 draw in Poznam - we will have to venture abroad in the fervent hope that Poland can do us a Big Favour.

Whether they are capable of it is another issue entirely. Our brightest hope probably rests on the prospect of two bad teams having an off day, with Poland managing to fluke a winner.

Theoretically, Poland are in the strongest situation - they have home advantage for their final match, after all. Or rather they would be if they had a side

of slightly more than average demeanour. This, unfortunately, they do not have.

Prejudice aside for one brief moment, the Republic have shown the best form in the group by far, and if there was even the merest scintilla of justice in this doomed planet, they would now be checking out copies of *In Stockholm* magazine with a view to disporting themselves in the most agreeable Nite Spots that the Swedish capital has to offer.

despised since that tragic afternoon in Gelsenkirchen. Poland, on all available evidence, do not deserve to be in Stockholm. England scarcely deserve to be there either, though they may well mooch their way through the side entrance. It is unthinkable.

The Republic now travel to Turkey for their final match knowing that even a win may not suffice. Turkey, incidentally, just for pig-iron and incorrigible spite, look like ten times the side they were at



Andy Townsend: his loss would represent a cruel blow indeed

Meanwhile their current unsatisfactory situation begs the question: are Jack and his squad now deeply in the red with their account at the Luck Bank.

When Gary Mackay scored that legendary goal for Scotland against Bulgaria, how big of an inroad did it make into the Republic's capital of Jammy Breaks? Quite a lot, it appears from the matches in this group, the results of which are starting to bring back disturbing visions of those horrendous days under Eoin Hand, when the baleful gods of fortune were using the Republic's aspirations as a kind of exclusive latrine.

At Wembley, a 3-1 victory would by no means have been a flattering outcome for Ireland. Against Poland at Lansdowne Road, the underfoot moon-rock masquerading as a soccer pitch put paid to anything going into the Polish net other than by fortuitous ricochet, or some such happy accident. And Ireland are currently on starvation rations as regards happy accidents.

They still might have won by at least two goals, but it was never to be.

The debacle in Poznam featured that old chestnut, the diabolical deflection, known and

Lansdowne, just when we need them to be sullen, depressed, and cruising for a bruising.

Their Wembley performance will have perked them up more than somewhat, and a narrow win for the Republic seems like the most optimistic possibility.

At the time of writing, it appears as though Andy Townsend may be missing from the fray - a loss which would represent a cruel blow indeed. This is the man, who, more than anyone else in the squad, on current form, we badly need to have inside the tent pee-ing out.

The prospect of relying on this Polish outfit for assistance is a rather gloomy one anyway. It isn't quite on a par with sending Normal Wisdom to take Khartoum, but it does not embolden the spirit with a warm glow of expectation.

Let us hope then that England produce a performance of such mind-bending awfulness in order to succumb to this dodgy outfit, who probably can't believe that they are still in with a shout, and may thus fool themselves into believing that this is their year...at least until they hear the result from Turkey.

Let justice reign even though the heavens fall!

Singles

REVIEWED BY LIAM FAY

SINGLE OF THE FOOTNIGHT

THE CRANBERRIES: "Uncertain" (Xeric) I HAVE to admit that up to now, I'd heard more about The Cranberries than of them. And even having gotten familiar with these four tracks, I'm not yet entirely convinced of the band's songwriting ability. But what I am sure about is the silver-seamed singularity of Dolores O'Riordan's voice. When she sings something

retain and whistle the next day, and their delivery is as simple as it is direct. This four track EP is yet another fiercely propelled volley. Songs like "Crawl" and "Good Time" strike you the way Boris Becker strikes a tennis ball and Shane Honey Thieve's raspy vocals have never seemed more untamed. Four big ticks in the yes box please, Bob.

THE BIG GERANIUMS: "Home Again" (Polygram) The Big Geraniums are well



The Cranberries: bringing the sky down

like "Nothing Left At All" you can almost feel the sky closing in tight above you, getting so close that you could reach up with a broomstick and touch it. She doesn't just carry a tune, she sends it by express mail and it seems to reach your spine long before your ears. It's too early to tell what lies in store for The Cranberries. There's still another shoe to drop on whether they can survive the maelstrom of pressures that they've just plunged into. But in the meantime, in a week when Irish singles appear to have been released by the crateload, the "Uncertain" EP is the real trophy.

THE HONEY THIEVES: "Crawl" (Solid)

In my more lucid moments, I often feel that this whole reviewing game would benefit by being reduced to the simple ticking of a box marked yes and this song has a catchy tune and a good beat, or alternatively one marked no, it

named. In fact, it's a term that could be aptly used to describe that whole flowery genre of catch-all fiddle-and-flute pop that has sprouted up in this country since Mike Scott first became an executive member of An Bord Iascaigh Mhara. Ireland: Home Of The Big Geranium Sound! Actually, as these things go, "Home Again" is one of the more pleasant spluges of effervescent leppin' and jumpin'. In particular Donal Lunny's assured production allows for moments of rain-washed clarity in what could've been a groggy hotchpotch. Bryan Adams saw this lot in action in The Olympia last weekend and was well impressed. He reckons the dog has got all the makings of a superstar. So there.

JELLYFISH: "I Wanna Stay Home" (Charisma)

Pop means never having to say you're sorry for liking such an obviously dispensable bangle as "I Wanna Stay Home". Catchy, happy, shiny, funny and packed with potassium and vitamins. What



Jellyfish: catchy, happy, shiny and funny

doesn't think of how many trees we could save. Think of the torturous metaphors and similes that the readers would be spared. The Honey Thieves are a band who would graduate with flying colours from such a straight-forward system of appraisal. They have long ago mastered the art of arranging musical notes into a pattern that the general public can

more can I say? "Bellybutton" is choc-a-bloc with gobstoppers like this and Jellyfish are one of the year's few reasons to be cheerful. Touch them and get stung.

THROWING MUSES: "Not Too Soon" (4AD)

Like many Throwing Muses tracks "Not Too Soon" is an almost painfully introspective piece of writing yet it moves and shakes

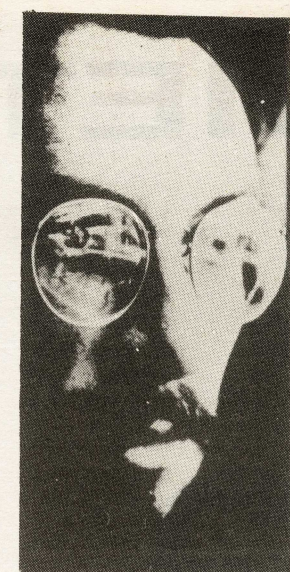
with all the swagger of glib pop. Trim, fit and tanned enough to flutter its eyelids and crack a plate-glass window, "Not Too Soon" is a veritable fusillade of passion, melody and intensity. Unfortunately, now that Tanya Donelly (who wrote it) is quitting the band, it could yet prove to be Throwing Muses swansong.

WILDER: "Can You Shake/Dark Heaven" (Danceline)

Two muscular and sinewy songs which prove that Wilder may just have something special after all. "Can You Shake" is pure sixties melody with the inevitable jangling guitars and wah-wahs but somehow it manages to dodge all the worst clichés that usually accompany this sort of workout. "Dark Heaven", however, is the real ear-opener: a genuinely affecting and infectious tale of romantic doom with a wiry, wired chorus and some neatly tapered strings. Put me on the guest list for your next gig, lads.

ELVIS COSTELLO: "So Like Candy" (WEA)

Probably the best song on "Mighty Like A Rose" and



Elvis: fist in glove

definitely the best of the Costello collaborations with Paul McCartney that we've heard so far. This is the archetypal steel fist in a velvet glove. A lulling orchestral accompaniment, some smoky crooning and an ingratiating

melody gatecrash your approval on first hearings and then slowly reveal the tumult of fury that seethes beneath the surface. The 12 inch and CD formats also feature excellent versions of "Couldn't Call It Unexpected", "Veronica" and "Hurricane Down Domsday (The Bugs Are Taking Over)". All further proof that Elvis' current Grizzly Adams guise may yet turn out to be one of his most interesting phases.

ASHANTI: "Real World" (Polydor)

The more of it I hear, the more I realise that metal music is unparadise. It parodies itself as it goes along, like a lawn-mower picking up its own clippings. "Spinal Tap" may have been the ultimate send up of the genre but "Spinal Tap" is most metal fans' favourite film. Ashanti are Ireland's latest voyagers into this strange twilight zone. They are undoubtedly accomplished metal workers, maestros of the soldering gun and welding iron, but their sense of the absurd is severely impaired. "Real World" is a forehead-furrowingly serious from of a song which tries to "deal" with

every "serious" "world" "issue" from homelessness to Star Wars to African famine. Between choruses of "Na-na-na-na-na" the singer howls out lines like "I've seen Britain defend The Falklands while old age pensioners freeze", (screaming guitar break, pounding blast of drums and, one assumes, fists in the air). DON'T LET THEM FREEZE! See what I mean about metal being unparadise? You couldn't invent stuff like this.

Confucius say: you cannot wear silver studs and a bleeding heart on the same sleeve.

MOODSWINGS (FEATURING CHRISIE HYNDE): "Spiritual High (State Of Independence)" (Arista)

Basically, this is just Chrissie singing Jon And Vangelis' "State Of Independence" over a trippy, drippy background of psychedelic knob twirling. After these Moodswings people had gotten Chrissie's agreement to appear on the record, it probably took no more than five minutes to make, but it's still great. The Jon And Vangelis revival starts here.

• Liam Fay

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MARKS & SPENCER

SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THIS

MICHAEL O'HARA MEETS THE CRANBERRIES, THE BEST THING TO COME OUT OF LIMERICK SINCE HIS GOOD SELF (IT SAYS HERE).



The Cranberries: knocking O'Hara off the 7,327,439th spot!

"I NEVER ever went to a gig or had even heard of the term 'gig' before I joined the band," says the little girl who owns pop's most exquisite voice. "Rock concerts, that's what I used to call them. I never went to one, I'd never seen a live band that actually wrote their own stuff. I'd seen pub bands, that was all. I played piano and took lessons for seven years. That was my kind of music."

So the first gig you attended was one that you were taking part in?

"We went to one beforehand just so I could see what it was like and what you did. I didn't even realise that these things took place or that these bands existed in Limerick."

So what did you used to do of an evening down at home?

"Oh, I'd go up and play the organ in the church."

Dolores O'Riordan and three other blokes and me are sitting in a van that's parked in a yard behind Charlie's Bar where

later on The Cranberries will bring tears to the eyes of grown men and ensure that all present can say 'yes' when asked if their weekend was happy and filled with nice things.

The three other blokes are Noel, a guitarist, Mike, a bassist and Fergal, a drummer. I speak with them for forty minutes and generally have my socks charmed from my feet, the spring put in my step and all semblance of a chill factor taken from this typical October evening.

I mention this merely in an effort to chase any preconceptions, which may have been created by the opening paragraphs, firmly away. When I say that Dolores had never heard the term gig before joining the band I am not taking the piss or ridiculing her. The Cranberries in general, and Dolores in particular, bring new meaning to words like innocence and naive and are honest and open and unaffected to a degree that is positively thrilling.

Born in Limerick a year and a half ago as The Cranberry Saw Us (shudder) the three boys decided that they wanted a girl to call their own. "Myself, Ferg and Noel have been hanging around together since we were fairly young," says Mike. "We

just started a band going and put up a notice looking for a female singer so Dolores turned up."

"A girl in my class told me about it," adds Dolores. "She knew the lads and said they were very nice so that made it easier to audition for them."

And did the lads turn out to be very nice? She pauses for a moment and the van overflows with the sound of helpless male laughter.

"Well they were townies you know," she finally says, "and it looked to me that when townies hung out together they all dressed the same, did the same things, went to the same places and I was really different. I wasn't like them. Every single guy I saw had torn jeans and docs and they all had long hair."

"I met the lads and started talking to Ferg. I didn't like Mike," she says. "I strolled in and he didn't like me, he was at that age when he didn't like people if they didn't look cool so I hated him because he used to be really sarcastic and I didn't know him well enough to realise that he was only messing."

"So I auditioned for them and they auditioned for me and we got to like each other and at that stage we didn't give a shit what each other looked like, we just realised that there was talent there. I remember the audition really well. I walked in and there were twelve fellas sitting in this room and I had to sing in front of them all. It was so embarrassing." She winces visibly at the memory.

Are nerves a factor with The Cranberries? It's been written that you look absolutely terrified when you parade your songs in front of live audiences.

"That's definitely not true," says Fergal, the world's most talkative drummer.

"It's just that we're not a noise band," adds Mike. "we don't jump around the place but we're totally comfortable with going out on a stage."

And you're not at all nervous?

"No," they chorus, four voices speaking as one.

Even when you're playing to audiences that consist entirely of journalists, A&R men and general music biz types?

"I'm not nervous," says Dolores, "but I'm just not the type of person who goes out and can say (adopts hysterical Lita Ford persona, clenched fists raised to the sky etc.) 'ROCK ON BABES'. Everybody expects you to be really loud and if you're in any way quiet they think you're nervous but you mightn't be. I think all the lads are the same, they're all kind of into-themselves people, not loud or anything which I think is nice. At least it's a bit of a change."

So there aren't any plans to duet with Wendy James?

There is a stony silence. Dolores hides her head and turns away and it's left to Fergal to say in solemn tones:

"Don't even mention that woman's name in Dolores' presence."

Critical acclaim for The Cranberries has been immediate, enthusiastic and forced upon us not just in Ireland but in Britain too, in quantities so large that entire rain forests quake at the knees at the merest mention of this band's name.

And why not? Dolores' voice is truly extraordinary. She's been compared to everybody from Harriet Wheeler to Liz Cocteau to Madonna and sounds, not like a teenage girl from the wilds of rural Limerick, but like several teenage girls from the wilds of rural Limerick, a heavenly host of exultant angels and three hundred trembling divas singing their battered old hearts out. And all at the same time.

"We kind of take the acclaim for granted," says Fergal, much to my surprise. "I'm sure this is the way it happens for everyone and we definitely don't let it get to our heads. It's one thing that we're always really conscious of, that it must never affect us like that because no matter how big you become you must always be the same person."

"I think," continues Dolores, "that all this, everything that's happened to us makes you say what you want to say a lot more. Before I was in the band if I saw that something was happening that I didn't like I'd say nothing and go along with it. It makes you a lot more confident," she adds to an accompaniment of vigorous nods and affirmative uh-huhs.

The Cranberries have just released their debut EP. Acquaint yourselves with it as soon as is humanly possible. This band is a heart of glass, flags all a flutter in a gentle breeze, beautiful babies being born into the world. And their continued existence, damn them, means this writer can no longer fall back on one of his favourite lines.

I may no longer be the best thing that Limerick has yet produced. That's why. ■

STUDIO UPDATE '91

HIGH HOPES-SILVER LINING

JACKIE HAYDEN TAKES A LOOK AT THE BLACK CLOUD CURRENTLY OVER THE MUSIC INDUSTRY HERE, BUT OFFERS HOPE OF A BRIGHTER FUTURE.

IT'S DIFFICULT to come up with a definitive explanation as to why, but the music industry is currently going through its worst trough in over a decade.

It could be that the recession is biting, and that people just don't have the kind of money to spend on records that they used to. Alternatively the dominance of one-off dance and rap records in the charts could be having a damaging effect on business as a whole — generally success in the singles chart promotes album sales but dance artists seldom shine in the album format. Or maybe, overall, it's a creatively fallow period, and that fact is simply reflected by people's lack of interest.

Whatever the cause, so far in 1991 record sales in the U.S.A. are down by 20% on last year's figures — and that wasn't a great year either. Things are little better here, and it isn't only record sales which have been affected. You'd have to go back years to find a sequence of gigs as poorly attended as we've seen recently: Frank Sinatra, Chesney Hawkes, Morrissey, Chris Rea, Lloyd Cole and Alice Cooper all played to empty rows in Dublin. And then there was the disastrous failure of the Sofia National Opera's performances of 'Madame Butterfly' and 'Nabucco' to draw crowds to the RDS, resulting in a deficit for the show of some £700,000.

As a background against which the Irish recording industry is attempting to develop, it's less than inspiring. Thus we have witnessed recently the end of an era here, with the closure of the studio complex in Windmill Lane, which for so long had set the trends. In a constantly shifting scene it must go down as the most important symbolic change imaginable.



The Commitments: turning the tide

Certainly there are many difficulties facing Irish studios — but we have long believed that the wholehearted support of local musicians when it comes to making albums would make an enormous, positive difference. With that thought in mind we have

produced a chart which reveals the extent to which business involving the recording of Irish bands and artists has gone abroad in recent years.

In some cases this may, of course, be a good thing creatively. But more often than not these decisions are made for reasons which have little or nothing to do with creativity. The message for Irish artists, bands and managers, therefore, is: if you can, record in Ireland.

Why shouldn't the producer come here, rather than the band travelling over there? In the majority of cases it'd make far more economic sense anyway. And don't forget that the money it costs to go to LA and to live there is eventually going to come out of your royalties, not the record company's. So be prepared to take a stand.

It would be wrong to paint a gloomy picture. With the album of 'The Commitments' defying the odds and selling by the truckload in the States in particular, and new albums by major stars like Enya and U2 on the way, the profile of Irish music on the world stage over the coming months will be exceptionally high.

There are a lot of excellent bands coming through here, and the interest of the international A&R community in what's going on is still high. In the context there is much to be optimistic about. The planned amalgamation of Windmill Lane Studios and Ringsend Road Studios under the direction of Brian Masterson and Andrew Boland may produce a facility of world-beating sophistication, while there are others working creatively to expand their potential — notably Sulan, MTS, Lansdowne, Xeric Studios in Limerick and Nine Stone Studios in Carlow.

At the recent Hot Press Seminar, there was a widespread call to have a quota of Irish recordings made mandatory on Irish radio stations. It shouldn't be necessary, of course, but there are stations which currently criminally neglect records by Irish artists, and especially those produced locally.

The usual retort that such a mandatory quota would be against EC regulations is a red herring. French radio already does it, and there are numerous other examples of countries assuming a derogation from EC law.

What's missing is a genuinely creative interest in local talent, it's as simple as that.

• Jackie Hayden

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Each Sunday, Rock 104's chart programme Rock 40 (3-6pm) will give a second play to one of the 'Make It Or Break It' records featured during that week.

HMV continue to support the promotion by carrying copies of all 'Make It Or Break It' singles in their shops and Hot Press will list the upcoming selection in every issue.

Records to be considered for selection should be sent to 'Make It Or Break It', Rock 104 FM, O'Connell Bridge, Dublin 2.

If your record is selected and you don't have a distribution deal, send six copies on S.O.R. to Jackie Hayden, at Hot Press.

NB: DO NOT SEND RECORDS DIRECT TO HMV



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Mon 4 PBR Streetgang — This City
Tues 5 The Commitments — Try A Little Tenderness
Wed 6 Swim — Inspiration
Thurs 7 The Golden Horde — Friends In Time
Fri 8 ... The Dubliners & The Hothouse Flowers — The Rose
Mon 11 The Forget-Me-Nots — So Good
Tues 12 The 4 Of Us — Baby Jesus
Wed 13 Freddie White — Slowhand
Thurs 14 A House — Slipping Away
Fri 15 The Floors — Another Fool