

Song Exploder
The Cranberries - All Over Now
Episode 158

Thao: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Thao Nguyen.

("All Over Now" by THE CRANBERRIES)

Thao: The Cranberries formed in Limerick, Ireland in 1989. Singer Dolores O'Riordan joined a year later, and the group went on to become one of the defining bands of the '90s, eventually selling over 40 million records worldwide. In January 2018, while the band was working on their eighth album, Dolores O'Riordan passed away unexpectedly. Later that year, remaining members Noel Hogan, Mike Hogan, and Fergal Lawler announced that they would end the band, and that this would be their final album. It's called *In The End*. It was released in April 2019, and in this episode, guitarist and songwriter Noel Hogan breaks down a song from the album called "All Over Now." You'll hear how Hogan and O'Riordan first started the song, and how the remaining members worked to finish it without her. Also, after the full song plays, we've got more with Noel for another installment of our segment, This is Instrumental. So stick around for that. Here's The Cranberries on Song Exploder.

("All Over Now" by THE CRANBERRIES)

Noel: I'm Noel Hogan from The Cranberries. Guitarist and co-songwriter with Dolores O'Riordan.

(Music fades out)

Noel: We've always written separately from day one. Very first day I met Dolores, gave her a cassette that had "Linger" on it.

("Linger" by THE CRANBERRIES)

Noel: And she took it away, and came back a week later with the version that everybody knows.

("Linger" by THE CRANBERRIES)

Noel: And really from that point on, that's how we wrote. It was cassettes for years and years, even when we lived in different countries. I would courier cassettes over to her and she'd work on them. And it was a kind of a mutual respect in that way, writing-wise that you kind of knew what the other one was thinking without having to say it.

(Music fades out)

Noel: So "All Over Now" came about is actually a conversation Dolores and I had. It was about the third last gig we ever did and we were just chatting outside of the stage. And Dolores had mentioned to me a couple of nights earlier, she'd seen The Cure live in concert. And she said to me that they play for so long. And half the time, it's like these musical interludes, and some of the intros would be like 20 minutes long sometimes even. She kind of liked that idea, and she was kind of half joking but half serious. She said to me, would it be possible for me to look at that and come up with a song that had this kind of long intro. So when we did the song live, she would get a break for a while from singing, and rest her voice. So then the tour ended and we went on our separate ways, but a few weeks later, Dolores and I began the writing process for this album. I went to France on my own to write. That was the plan, was I was going to spend three weeks alone down in the South of France. And I had that conversation we had with The Cure stuck in my head. And as much as a Cure fan that I was, I'd never really tried to write a song that would sound like them. The Cure song that stuck out the most at the time was "Pictures of You."

("Pictures of You" by THE CURE)

Noel: And I had kind of forgotten about how great that song was, especially that intro.

("Pictures of You" by THE CURE)

Noel: Now "All Over Now" and "Pictures of You" are completely different songs, but as in structure-wise, that was kind of what I was thinking at the time. So I kind of leaned very much in towards that idea.

(Music fades out)

Noel: It was like really, really late at night and I came up with this chord sequence.

(Demo guitar chords)

Noel: It was just 4 chords that just seemed to glue very well together.

(Demo guitar chords)

Noel: So I looped that and from that set of chords, worked on the guitar line, the main line that runs through the song.

(Demo guitar line)

Noel: I really loved it, it was a real hook. And no matter what else was going on in the song, I thought, "That's going to stick in your head."

(Demo guitar line ends)

Noel: Then I needed to start working on other parts. I just found what I considered to be a kind of an aggressive-y programmed drum beat.

(Demo beat)

Noel: Knowing that when we got in the studio, Fergal would add in his drums, and then there's a lot of layered guitars.

(Demo layered guitars)

Noel: When I was putting the demos together, I would usually try and throw everything I can think of at it knowing that Dolores would kind of edit it up and take out what she feels won't work with her vocal.

(Demo programmed beat joins layered guitars)

Noel: It was kind of a process of maybe a three nights where I went to it and came back. And once I got the main parts, it just seemed to kind of fall into place then everything else came about very easily. And that was the kind of genesis of the song.

(Music ends)

Noel: I sent the song to Dolores straightaway. And I'd said to her about the conversation we had with The Cure thing and she'd remembered that, and she

was really, really excited about it. And normally when Dolores got excited by a song, she would work on it straightaway no matter what time of the day or night it was. And this was one of those songs. So within 48 hours, she sent me back a full vocal for the first verse and all of the chorus. And she had slightly changed the drum beat a little bit as well.

(Demo first verse: "Do you remember, remember the night? / At a hotel in London, they started to fight / She told the man that she fell on the ground / She was afraid that the truth would be found")

Noel: Dolores lyrically would write about a lot of things that went down in her own life. But every now and again, she'd write a song about a subject that she felt strongly about. And in particular with this song, it's really about domestic abuse. And that's not something that she went through herself, but it was something she felt strong enough about that she put herself in that position acting it out in her mind, how it would feel, how it would be.

(Music ends)

Noel: So Dolores sent the first verse and the chorus. And for a long time that's all I had. You know and I thought, "That's fine, she'll work on the rest of it at some point." That was the first week of June, and then we wrote away all the way up until Christmas, but then Dolores passed away early January.

(Guitar)

(Irish News broadcast audio)

(Irish News broadcast audio and guitar fades)

Noel: It had been months since I had visited this song. So I went out to the studio and started going through the hard drive of everything. And I started listening to it and I went, "We have a verse and a chorus. It's a pity I don't have the rest of it, we would've been able to finish it." I had been in touch with Dolores' brother, and he was telling me that Dolores' boyfriend had a hard drive in New York with a whole bunch of stuff in it that they weren't really sure what it was, and they would try and get me the drive. So I get the hard drive delivered to me, and

(Guitar)

Noel: suddenly all the bits I was missing, from the songs and the rough ideas she'd sent me, were all there. She had actually finished them but just never got round to sending them to me. I kind of pieced together the other half the vocal with the one I had already and suddenly we had the full version of the song.

(Guitar ends)

Noel: You know, I can't tell you the relief that I felt because this was a song that she was really excited about. She felt that it was a different kind of feel from the stuff we'd done before, but it also had this kind of older Cranberries sound to it. When we began we were teenagers, and like a lot of bands do, when you begin, you're trying to be like your idols. You try to write songs like The Smiths, The Cure, kind of New Order, that kind of stuff. And in doing that for the song, I think it actually brought back that older kind of sound that we began with. And when recording the album, we went with that because we felt that was the nicest way we could finish the Cranberries career. And that was it, you know, we put the list of songs together and next of all, we were ringing Stephen Street who produced most of the Cranberries' albums, and we were in the studio. It was a bit of a strange situation to be in with Dolores not being there. This was the first song we did as the three of us in the studio together. And that first day was hard, it was hard for everybody to hear her again. We were all kind of sitting around having coffees and talking, and then it's time to kind of start, and I don't think anyone was really prepared for, you put on the headphones and you hear Dolores' vocal.

(Vocals: "Do you remember? / Do you recall? / Do you remember? / I remember it all")

Noel: And it was like that most mornings, when you went in and you put on your headphones, it would drag it all back up again, and the memories would come flying back of everything from the whole 30 years together. But you do get to a point, I guess, you realize, you know, we're kind of here to do a job. We need to be professional about this. And for her if nothing else, you want this album to be the best album that's possible to do. We realized it was time to, you know, put the head down and come up with the ideas and get these songs together. Mike and Ferg began the rhythm part of it on that day. Back on the demo, it began with drums. Stephen liked that idea, and we stuck with that idea then.

(Drums)

Noel: So that's Fergal on drums. One of the things we've been blessed with Ferg over the years is that he's a very musical drummer. It's not about getting a drum solo in or taking over the song. He very much works to the strength of the song, and he's been like that from the beginning.

(Drums with more ride cymbal)

Noel: There's kind of no ego with him playing, and it's a massive help when you write a song.

(Drums end)

Noel: And then we started adding in keyboard lines.

(Demo keyboard lines)

Noel: So that's actually Dolores' partner at the time, Ole, who played that keyboard part on the demo, the sound in particular I always loved. You know, it's like a swarm of bees coming at you. So we decided we'd keep it in there because it's so kind of odd and bizarre but it works so well within the track.

(Keyboard line fades)

(Acoustic guitar)

Noel: The acoustic that you hear was the one that I tracked on the first day as a kind of a guide for Mike and Ferg.

(Acoustic guitar)

Noel: And they're actually very sweet chords. So the challenge is to take something very sweet sounding and make it aggressive. So we just did an acoustic to begin with and then we can layer up the guitars later on.

(Electric guitar)

Noel: The guitar there is a Les Paul going into a Vox AC30, that's just driven and there's like a glissing sound as well.

(Electric guitar along with glissing sound)

Noel: It's kind of a thing I've done from the beginning where you would play on the first page of the bar just so that it's defining the chords. And it helps give it clarity as well, particularly when in the mix when you have so many instruments coming at you.

(Electric guitar ends)

Noel: And then my guitar line that comes in on the intro.

(Demo lead guitar)

Noel: That's actually from the demo, from the very first night. And also, we had a kind of a newer version that we recorded in the studio.

(Lead guitar newer version)

Noel: But it just didn't have the movement that the demo one did. When you're doing a demo, you kind of have a feeling and there's a freshness there that sometimes it's hard to capture that again. So Stephen suggested that we blend the two.

(Guitars together)

(Guitars fade out)

Noel: The only thing from the demo musically was the main guitar line and Dolores' vocal. We were kind of blessed really that her demo vocals were so good.

(Vocals: "Do you remember, remember the night? / At a hotel in London, they started to fight")

Noel: It's almost timid sounding at points, very soft. I think a lot of that is to do with the fact that she recorded them at home. But yet there's something lovely and sweet about it. A kind of almost innocent even though the subject matter is very dark, but that's what was great about Dolores is that she could mix these subjects with pop melodies that worked with the rock stuff going on behind it. So I think those combinations are really what gave the band its particular sound.

(Vocals: "She told the man that she fell on the ground / She was afraid that the truth would be found")

Noel: With the choruses, she loved to kind of open up the song a lot more. And I think this song is actually a perfect example of that because it's very much just a single vocal for a lot of the verses, and then it goes into the chorus. And it kind of sounds like it gets turned into stereo almost all of a sudden, and what it actually is is just those layers of her vocals. And she was a master at doing that.

(Vocals along with acoustic guitar: "And it's all over now / It's all over now / It's all over now / It's all over now")

Noel: Dolores hated hanging around the studio. She found it very tedious unless she was doing her vocals. So she would just come back every evening then and leave us to it during the day. So, in that sense, recording this album was familiar territory for us. But it was still weird the first hour everyday when you come back in.

(Guitar)

Noel: The three of us, the three boys in the band, we've been playing together since we left school, couple of years before we ever met Dolores. So it's been a massive part of our lives and to suddenly, you know, realize that this is it, this is the last time we're going to be doing this. The first day and the very, very last day we went in were the two toughest days. The emotions from the first day of, "What are we doing here? Is this going to work?" and all those kind of things and missing Dolores. And then the last day when you finish, it's like it's the end of it, it's the last time we'll be in the studio together as The Cranberries. It's sad, the thought of doing anything else now, you know, it doesn't really enter your head.

(Guitar ends)

Thao: And now, here is "All Over Now," by The Cranberries, in its entirety.

("All Over Now" by THE CRANBERRIES)

Thao: Visit songexploder.net for more information about The Cranberries. You'll also find a link to buy or stream this song. Coming up, more from Noel Hogan for our new segment called This is Instrumental. In our segment, This is Instrumental, we ask artists about the tools that shape how they write, play and think about music. Here is more with Noel Hogan.

Thao: Is there an instrument you have that's been really important to you?

Noel: It's a J-200 Gibson. It's a big, big old acoustic and all the songs I've ever written really began life on that guitar.

(Acoustic guitar)

Noel: I bought it in London just after my first daughter was born. I was living there at the time, but I had no instruments with me. I saw this in a shop window and it's been all over the world with me. It's one of those instruments that when you sit down to play, you can't help but start writing stuff. And it's kind of the go-to for, if you're ever kind of have a bit of, I guess, writer's block. No matter what you kind of play on it, it sounds really, really sweet on there.

(Acoustic guitar ends)

Thao: How long ago did you get it?

Noel: It would be

(Acoustic guitar)

Noel: 21 years now, I think. And it was already 20-something years old when I bought it so it's pretty old but it's been well looked after, it looks, it looks well for its age. And it's been with me so long, it's kind of, you know, it's a sentimental reason I guess, but it's almost inspiration for me, when I pick it up. So it's probably the most important instrument I have.

(Acoustic guitar ends)

Thao: Song Exploder was created and is executive produced by Hrishikesh Hirway. This episode was produced and edited by Christian Koons. Carlos Lerma made the artwork, which you can see on the Song Exploder website. Special thanks to P.J. O'Riordan as well as Zach McNeas who recorded Noel's interview. Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia, from PRX, a collective of fiercely independent podcasts. You can learn about all of our shows at radiotopia.fm. You can also find Song Exploder on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @SongExploder. And you can find me @thaogetstaydown. My name is Thao Nguyen, thanks for listening.