

The tragedy behind The Cranberries song 'Zombie' that made the Irish band a global sensation

The story behind the song that made The Cranberries massive



The Cranberries. Credit: JOEL SAGET / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

While **The Cranberries** were already on the rise thanks to ballads like "Dreams" and "Linger," it was the explosive track "Zombie" that made them an international success. After the Irish four-piece released their multi-platinum debut album *Everybody Else Is Doing It So Why Can't We?*, it seemed as if fans knew exactly where The Cranberries were headed.

Their music was known for being ethereal, shimmering alt-rock in a sea of grunge. That is until the band released the explosive hit "Zombie" in 1994: the band shifted its image to reveal a somber anti-war song that featured lead singer Dolores O'Riordan's tenacious yodelling.

The ferocity of the song made sense: O'Riordan was singing about the violence happening in Northern Ireland that were making constant headlines.

On March 20, 1993, a bomb was planted in a trash bin in Warrington city centre by Irish republicans. It exploded, killing 12-year-old Tim Parry, three-year-old Jonathan Ball, and injuring dozens of people. The attack appalled the UK, Ireland and O'Riordan.

"I remember at the time there were a lot of bombs going off in London and the Troubles were pretty bad," she told *Team Rock*. "I remember being on tour and being in the UK at the time when the child died, and just being really sad about it all. These bombs are going off in random places. It could have been anyone, you know?"

She then added, "It's a tough thing to sing about, but when you're young you don't think twice about things, you just grab it and do it. As you get older you develop more fear and you get more apprehensive, but when you're young you've no fear."

O'Riordan wrote "Zombie" alone in her apartment in between tours rather than a collaborative effort.

The song was originally written on acoustic guitar, but then it was translated onto an electric guitar as it became a pure rock track.

Of the track, O'Riordan said, "That was the most aggressive song we'd written." "Zombie" was recorded in Dublin with producer Stephen Street, and while it definitely elevated the band's sound, they weren't making a song just to be a part of the grunge movement.

Directed by Samuel Bayer who made the visuals for Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Blind Melon's "No Rain," the video for "Zombie" was interspersed with footage of soldiers and children in the streets of Northern Ireland.