

Wow!


**AS I
SEE IT**

Julie O'Leary

I SAT in a local pub, with two friends, listening to singer/songwriter Paddy Casey serenade us with his well-known hits and new creations.

When the musician settled into his high bar stool seat, he remarked on the cosiness of the venue. I was only feet away from his amplifier; the dim lighting and small crowd made the gig very intimate.

In some ways, the Dublin man looked like a fish out of water, because he seemed slightly uncomfortable with the rough and readiness of the set-up, shifting slightly in his seat and clumsily unplugging guitar leads and other paraphernalia. I liked the sense of vulnerability that he exhibited, because it really showed that he was in the business for the right reasons.

When he opened his mouth to sing, my suspicions were confirmed, he is a true master of his craft.

His lilting tones and haunting melodies had me swooning from the beginning. It was a stark contrast from a gig I saw him perform a number of years ago, where he sold-out a concert with all the bells and whistles of almost 3,000 people. This recent offering accommodated just shy of 100 people.

It must have been strange to perform at the two extremes and maybe it is a sign of the times.

People can't afford to splash out for expensive tickets now, so they are looking for more value for money. Things have come full circle for this musician and I was proud to have him sitting in front of me in my little corner of the world.

I am more than sure that Paddy Casey started his music career by travelling the roads and lanes of Ireland. Then he graduated to the bigger venues and paid big bucks for brass bands and a legion of roadies. He made it big time — in Ireland at least — and now here he was again in my local town, trying out new material and treating us to his big hits like *Saints And Sinners* and *Lucky One* that have become anthems.

Tough times feature in Paddy Casey's lyrics and he quipped a few times before singing a new song that it was about the recession but in reality, wasn't everything about the recession these days? As I sat and listened, I realised that was one of the reasons we were all there. We were out for the night to escape from the reality of the world. We wanted to forget about all the money worries, the fact that many of us were job hunting, the terrible weather in America, and the atrocious famines and wars around the world. Music lets us switch off, even if it is only for a little while.

I think a local gig in Cork is far more important to me at times than a big national event, because in a familiar place that has memories and associations with people, the words of songs take on a whole new meaning. Each performance of the same music can feel very different because of the people around me, and the way that I am feeling.

As I looked around at the crowd, I wondered what stories the spectators had, what their worries were, what their hopes and dreams entailed. Each line of a song sent me off on a new tangent of thought, into a dreamland that I know only I inhabit, but it is nice to think that one little evening can conjure up so many different things, in a little place in my little corner of the world.

“

We wanted to forget about all the money worries, the fact that many of us were job hunting, the terrible weather in America, and the atrocious famines and wars around the world.

Sound asleep

Ireland's first ever Gentle Sleep Coach Lucy Wolfe tells SANDRA QUINN how she got involved in sleep science and gives some simple tips on how to encourage your baby to sleep the night through

A SCREAMING child, a red face, an exasperated and desperate parent — this is the scene in many bedrooms in the middle of the night when baby wakes up and just won't go back to sleep.

It is this stressful scene that Lucy Wolfe set out to eliminate when she trained as Ireland's first-ever Gentle Sleep Coach — her business involves one-to-one consultations with parents to find out what is causing their child to struggle with a sleep pattern and within a few nights, with a few minor adjustments, their child is sleeping soundly.

Mother-of-four and an estate agent by profession, Lucy first discovered the stress of sleep deprivation when her first child Jesse, who is now eight, started waking up at 5am when he was eight-months-old.

Lucy said: "At that time, none of my friends had kids and Jesse started to wake up in the middle of the night.

"I knew nothing about correct sleep routines and I didn't know who to ask — I was lost, confused and felt as if it was all somehow my fault."

So Lucy got involved in sleep science and read every book she could find so that she could make Jesse's nights more peaceful for her baby, herself, and husband Alan who were all sleep deprived.

By the time she had her second child Ellen, who is now six, she had read so much about sleep patterns that Ellen was sleeping very well straight away.

She said: "When you have a baby, you don't anticipate any problems, so when they start waking up in the middle of the night, or won't go to sleep, it is daunting because it is unknown territory and you just don't know where to go for help.

"I remember asking my doctor to refer me to a sleep



clinic for Jesse and I was told that they didn't exist here — so there was literally nowhere to turn to for help."

Lucy has four children, ranging in age from eight years to just nine months, and over the years, she became an expert in regulating healthy sleep patterns. She was the person that her friends and family would turn to for help if their baby was having trouble sleeping.

Lucy said: "This profes-

sion is very big in the States and in the UK, but over the nine years that I had my kids, it still hadn't come into the Irish market, so I decided to try to make a business model out of it and I am now Ireland's first Gentle Sleep Coach."

Lucy said that many parents are afraid to admit that their child is having trouble sleeping because they see it as a personal failure — even though for most children, one tiny change in their routine could lead to peaceful nights and a happier child.

She said: "When parents approach me they are coming to me through a fog of sleep deprivation and when they do pick up the phone, they are desperate for someone to help. As a parent, I can

empathise with everything that they are going through, because I am facing the same challenges as the person sitting in front of me."

The service that Lucy provides is informal, educational and non-judgmental. She is often the last shred of hope for parents who may not have slept properly in months.

Lucy said: "With parenting, there is no one style to fit all, but a few small changes to a child's routine can get them into a pattern that will help them to sleep better. What I give people is a package tailor-made to suit their child's needs and it is something that will last for an entire childhood."

Before the Gentle Sleep Coach programme begins, Lucy determines the different factors that contribute to the child's sleeping problems so that she can decide what changes need to be made.

Lucy explained: "If you go to sleep with your pillow and duvet and wake up to find them gone, you would be distressed, disori-

entated and you would struggle to get back to sleep without the duvet and pillow — it is the same for a child who goes to sleep with a bottle and wakes up in the

middle of the night to find the bottle gone."

She added: "We try to encourage things that the parent isn't needed for, so that the child can self-soothe and sleep independently of their parents — so that if they wake up in the middle of the night, they have the tools to get back to sleep themselves.

"It is all about creating the right routine and environment for the parent and child, so that they develop a healthy sleep pattern and consistency is key. Sometimes parents see an improvement in just two nights, but if the child is older it can be more challenging to change their pattern, so it might take up to two weeks to set a healthy pattern."

● For more information on Lucy Wolfe's Gentle Sleep Coach methods, visit www.sleepmatters.ie or call into Unit 2, Reeds Court, Barrack Street for a consultation.

BENEFITS OF GENTLE SLEEP COACH METHOD

- A good routine will make a happier child.
- They will have better learning capabilities — babies break down what they have discovered during the day while they sleep, so when they sleep well, they absorb this new information more effectively.
- They are calmer and worry less, as sleep deprivation can cause a child to be stressed and cranky.
- A good sleeping pattern helps a child's IQ, it promotes good growth and it ensures a healthy weight.

TYPICAL NAP TIMES FOR BABIES

- FOR a six to eight-month-old child, they should ideally wake up between 6am and 7am. They can then nap for an hour and-a-half around 9am, and again at around 1pm. They should have their dinner by 5.30pm, their bedtime routine can be started an hour later and they can be in bed by 7pm.
- For a 12 to 18-month-old child, they should be up by 7am or 7.30am, and can have an hour-long nap at 9.30am. Then another nap in the afternoon for about an hour and a half but this can stretch to two and-a-half hours when it becomes the only nap of the day. Dinner can be at 5.30pm, the bedtime routine can be started an hour later and the child should be asleep by 8pm.
- For a two-year-old child, they should wake up by 7.30am, and they can have an afternoon nap around noon. They should have dinner at 5.30pm and their bedtime routine can start one hour later. They should be asleep by 8pm.