



Showcase set drifts by in a haze of soft-rock flourishes

Paddy Casey

CrawDaddy, Dublin

ED POWER

PADDY Casey rolled off the Irish singer-songwriter production line in the late '90s, a dewy-eyed ex-busker specialising in lushly earnest torch songs.

Initially, he found it hard to claim a berth in a music scene already adequately provisioned with heartfelt strummers. But that all changed in 2003 when Casey's second record, 'Living', became a slow-burn phenomenon, hanging around the charts for nearly 18 months.

Rather than attempting to

re-cast himself as a hard-living rock monster, Casey, on his new LP, 'Addicted To Company', seeks to coax his inner-soul to the surface. This isn't as absurd as it sounds: beneath their plaintive gloss, Casey's songs have always testified to his skills as an arranger, featuring parping horns, jazz-inflected drums and even flute solos that mightn't have felt out of place on a Celine Dion ballad.

Not surprisingly, new tracks are to the fore at his intimate showcase concert in CrawDaddy. Listening to the fresh material it's hard to detect any concrete progression in Casey's songwriting: 'Refugees' culminates in a raggedly overblown sing-along chorus; 'Addicted To Company' drifts by in a haze of soft-rock.

The closest the evening comes to defying expectations is rag-time workout 'Not Out To Get You', which sees Casey's guitarist strap on a banjo. You only wish Casey was prepared to challenge his audience – and himself – more often.