

Sing Me to Sleep

Indie Lullabies

UK Daylight Pyjama Party coverage in *Word Magazine*, July 2010 issue

CHILD CARE → ROCK

MONTESSORI *Kindie music – indie for kids – is delighting parents as much as the under-10s. It's a bold new advance in taste management*

STAGE INVASIONS AREN'T supposed to be this cute. As sprightly folk-popsters The Leisure Society launch into their second number, a two-year-old wobbles past the bass amp to the front of the stage, almost making it to the edge before he's whisked off by his mother to a murmur of aahs.

It's a bit past one on a Saturday afternoon in north London's church-cum-venue Union Chapel, and we're at the Pyjama Party launch of *Sing Me To Sleep*, a collection of "indie lullabies". The majority of the crowd are fully grown but there are plenty for whom, like my two sons, this is probably a first gig. Both bands on the bill have held their attention so far, though at a push they favour Brighton's The Leisure Society, who are a bit more uptempo and melodic, over the theatrical but rather dark The Real Tuesday Weld.

It's all very peaceful but then, despite the stage invasion, this isn't really a jumping-around

event. *Sing Me To Sleep* was put together by Philadelphia-based illustrator Kate Garchinsky, 36, inspired by her love of indie music and her job, which had led into marketing children's music for US toyshop FAO Schwarz. "The record is for parents who'd like to get their kids into their kind of music early on, rather than all the really trashy music that's out there," she says. "I had a lot of friends who were having babies who would never play commercial children's music because it's just too annoying."

Garchinsky doesn't name names, but it's not hard to guess who she might be talking about: sickening singing dinosaur Barney, perhaps, or The Wiggles. These Australian kids-pop titans, who produce the kind of jarringly simplistic songs guaranteed to send parents into psychosis, are evidence of just how big a deal children's music is. Australia's highest-earning entertainers over the past five years, they're huge throughout most of the world in a market that still buys CDs and will also pay for DVDs, books and any kind of merchandise they care to produce. It's the US that's way ahead in this game, though, with the likes of Miley Cyrus, the Jonas Brothers, the *High School Musical* films and the *Kidz Bop* series of chart hits covered by children, now up to volume 17.

Where there's a mainstream, an alternative will surely come, and now that Miley has been sexed up, the new thing is "indie", as in indie for kids. Here, the stars are two acts who have also had some success with grown-ups. Dan Zanes has now made seven albums that rework old folk rhythms and themes, and it's been good to him: he managed just a single grown-up solo album after his band The Del



The Real Tuesday Weld delight well brought up under-tens at the Union Chapel, blessed relief for anyone who's heard Big Red Car by The Wiggles.

Seattle who rock!") and The Royal Order of Chords and Keys (aka R.O.C.K. and very Jack

Black), it's really a conference. This is indie music not just in the generic sense, but also in the original sense of independently made; most of these artists work on small labels or their own, and their ability to sell music in a genre that had no definite home in the high-street/mall era has been revolutionised by internet trading. So much so that now the trad children's entertainers want in: alongside "The Future of Marketing Kindie Music: From Photocopied Flyers to Social Networking", Kindiefest this year included a panel called "Old School Meets New School".

It's not such a leap, of course. Alternative pop has always had a strong link with the years of innocence and imagination before those nasty hormones kicked in, from Jonathan Richman to The Cure to Belle & Sebastian (who put together their own compilation of kids music, as did Tindersticks), and it's their fans who are buying

this. After all, the success of kindie is not down to the kids but to the people who have to live with them. As John Flansburgh of They Might Be Giants said recently, "I can't tell you how many times I've had parents come up to us and say, 'Your record saved our lives.'" Anyone who has heard The Wiggles' *Big Red Car* will know what he means. **JAMES MEDD**

SING ME TO SLEEP: INDIE LULLABIES is out now on American Laundromat Records