

Children escape school bus that suddenly went on fire

By Eamon Donoghue

YOUNG children had a lucky escape yesterday when their bus went up in flames on their way home from school.

Remarkably, nobody was injured in the incident when flames mysteriously emerged within the bus.

Students were rushed out by the driver before the vehicle was left entirely burnt out.

The driver, who was carrying the children, aged four to 12, from a national school for the Bus Éireann school service, stopped the bus at The Ridge, Old Leighlin, Co. Carlow.

The bus, which was on hire to Bus Éireann, will now be inspected by gardai.

Muinebheag Cllr Tommy Bambrick said: 'There were no casual-



ties at all, but the kids were a bit caught up in it, and they were shocked.'

Gardaí from Muinebheag Station in the Bagenalstown area were called to the incident.

A garda explained that the kids 'all got out once it flared up. There were no injuries' and the

'entire' bus was cleared.

There are no clues so far as to what caused the initial flames. A Garda press officer said they are not expecting anything sinister from their pending inspection.

'No, no cause, not as yet. But an inspection will show that up I'm sure,' a garda spokesman said.

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BEGIN THE BEGUINE * ALWAYS ON MY MIND * ALL THE GIRLS I'VE LOVED BEFORE * AMOR * AND I LOVE HER

Irish Daily Mail

THERE is a neat tattoo on Kasey Smith's left arm that reads: 'Feel the fear and do it anyway'. It is a motto that Kasey lives by and one that helped her get over the devastation of her pop band Wonderland breaking up in September 2011 — and now she needs to again call it into use. Sitting across a bare breakfast table in Copenhagen, Kasey is stroking her left arm, still coming to terms with Thursday night's shock vote which saw her Eurovision dreams crumble on live television.

'Look, I am staying positive, I have to,' she says. 'I'm feeling good, better than I expected. When you think of the worst you always think things will be crap. But I don't feel crap. We went out and did the best performance that we could do and that's all you can do. And unfortunately it didn't work out the way we had planned, which was tough.'

For the past two weeks, Kasey and her team have been in their very own Eurovision bubble. Her days were spent being shuttled from the Central Hotel in downtown Copenhagen to the B & W Hallerne by the waterfront. Her days and nights were spent meticulously fine-tuning the performance, aiming to peak on Thursday, with just enough left in the tank for tonight's final.

Now that the unthinkable has happened, the confident, beaming pop star has been replaced by a tired and frustrated young woman.

'It was gruelling — especially when you are just waiting for that one night to arrive and time it so that it is your best performance. Every rehearsal we did was about placement, where to walk, getting used to the cameras — but last night we just let it all loose and we went for it. At least we can go home with our heads held high and with a sense of pride. I am knackered, I am shattered but I am delighted, a happy tired. And I get to spend the next few days with my family who are incredible. They are just so proud. Obviously they are upset; of course they are going to be.'

Looking back at the performance, Kasey still cannot find fault with the Irish entry. Everything went off as planned and she is confident that she gave it her all. Despite the disappointing finish, she is proud of her act and will treasure the memories of her brief flirtation with the Eurovision stage.

'It felt amazing from the moment we walked out onto the stage to the moment we started singing,' she says.

'You wait to hear Ireland called. But that never happened.'

'When you are up there, it is just unreal, like an out of body experience — and when I walked off stage I was just like "Did I really just do that?" Then you question the performance and whether I walked correctly or hit the right notes, but I was so into the performance that nothing else mattered. The room, the audience, the stage all disappeared and it was all about the performance.'

It was only after the song had finished that the real pressure was heaped on. The Irish delegation were ushered to their pod within the main hall and waited as the votes from all over Europe were tallied. As the hosts went through a long and agonising reveal, it soon became apparent that



by Eoin
Murphy

Entertainment Editor
In Copenhagen

Ireland was not the shoe-in that had originally been predicted.

'You feel like it is not real,' Kasey says looking back. 'It was just so tense and you are listening to the countries who are being called out and you are waiting to hear Ireland. But that never happened. And then it came down to the last place and it was between us and (Austrian entry) Conchita and we

'I don't know if we'd have won. But we should have qualified.'

knew then that it was over. The amount of support that she has is incredible and it is an amazing song. I think we did deserve to go through. I'm not sure we would have won it, but I think we should have qualified.'

It took time for the result to sink in. As the Irish team boarded their bus and headed back to the hotel, it dawned on them that they would not be returning to the auditorium. But it's not the first time Kasey has been kicked by the music industry, and she sought out the positives. Refusing to cry or grieve for the result, she simply took pride in her performance. Now she is focusing all her efforts on supporting her new friend, Austrian transgender activist Conchita Wurst.

'For the message that Conchita is putting out there, she deserved to go through and I hope she wins,' she says. 'I really do. After some of the stuff that actually has gone through, I really hope she goes on now and does it. The message that she is promoting and her stance against homophobia is so brave and I hope everyone gets behind her.'

When Conchita's name was finally called out in the great hall, the crowd erupted — however a number of fans were still left gobsmacked by Ireland's omission. Online social media sites like Facebook and Twitter exploded with disgust, branding the contests a sham and calling on Ireland to boycott next year's event. Kasey couldn't bring herself to look at the internet but was made aware of the outpouring of support by her boyfriend Wes, who was there with her mother and ten of her close friends. Sadly for Kasey, 20 more friends and relatives arrive in Copenhagen today — too late to see her perform.

'My boyfriend Wes was sitting there going through all the online comments and he was telling me that people were going mental over the result,' she says. 'It was nice that the people at home were sticking up for me and it means a lot. I haven't been on my phone yet so I haven't had a chance to go through