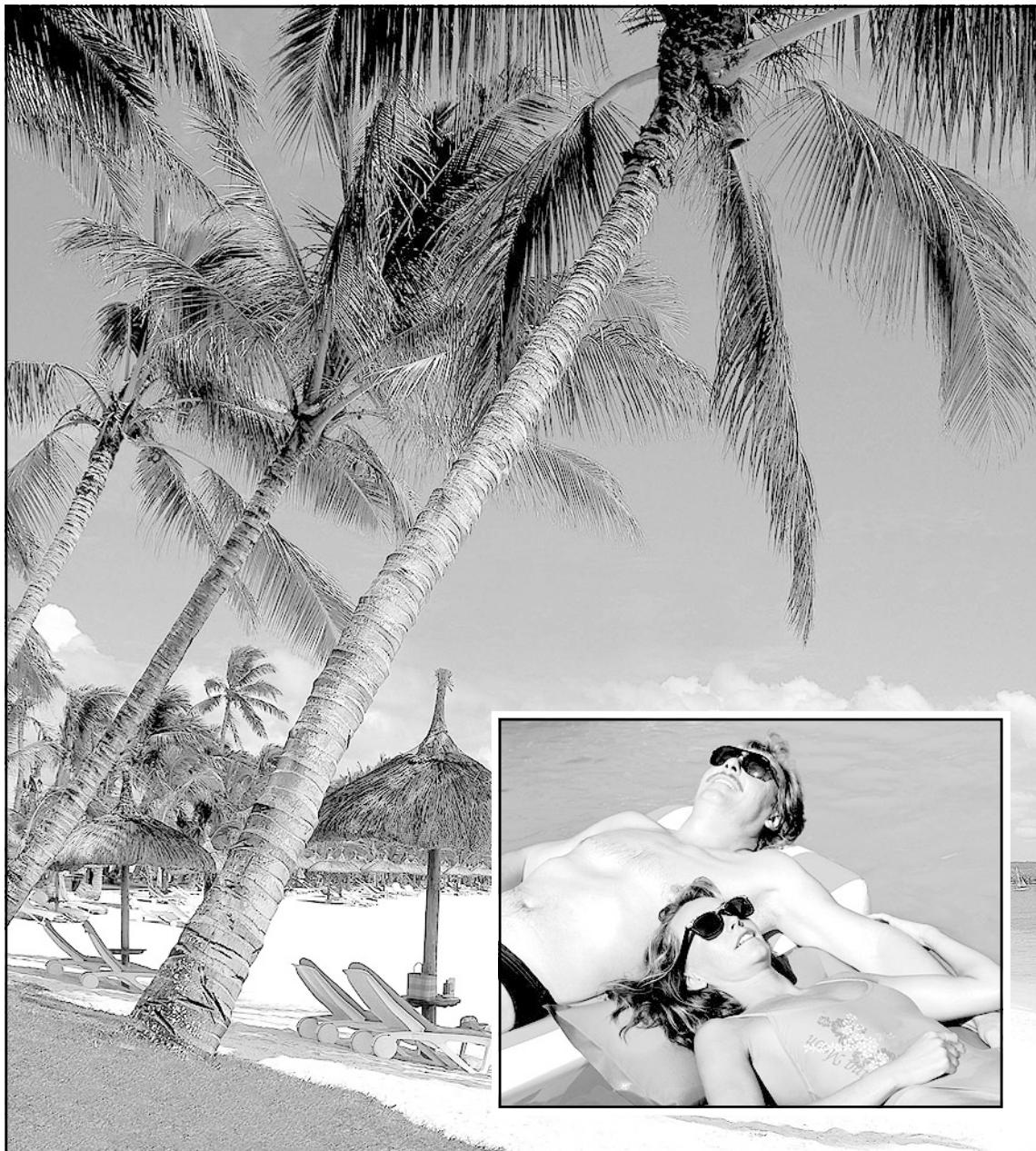


— these months can be dreadful

feel SAD



IN THE SUN: People suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder can feel remarkably uplifted on their return from a sunshine holiday.

because I'm conscious if I don't get the daylight in, I'll pay for it," he says.

Unlike Brian, Mary is on medication for SAD related depression.

Mary, who first became depressed following a car accident seven years ago, gets extreme episodes during the winter.

"After the accident in June I was back at work after a few weeks, but that winter I became very seriously depressed and couldn't face the world. I was very anxious, very panicky and felt very hopeless," says Mary.

Although the former nurse struggled to go to work for a number of weeks after depression kicked in, she became so low and un-motivated that she had to give up her job.

Then she couldn't pay her mortgage so she lost her house.

"I couldn't understand why it was happening to me," recalls Mary.

"I was very independent and had travelled all over Australia and

Asia, and suddenly I wasn't able to get out of bed."

"Giving up your job is like giving up your life and losing your home is like losing all the rest. I felt totally worthless."

Mary, who is now in her mid 40s, sought counselling and began medication and after a year, she noticed her condition improving.

Today, Mary lives a normal life and has learned how to deal effectively with the symptoms of depression which especially plague her in wintertime.

Aside from the medication, she attributes a great deal of her progress to the advice and support she receives at weekly Grow meetings.

She still gets low, "It's an absolute tiredness, physical aches and pains and a lack of interest in anything."

But now she endeavours to help herself as much as possible.

"If there is any blink of sun I go for a walk and you'd be surprised just how much getting out in the brightness helps," says Mary.

"I work at planning to meet people and I surround myself with bright colours and plants."

"In the beginning you feel really abnormal, but if you talk to someone you can stop it getting worse."

"Getting help is crucial."

But despite her positive attitude Mary knows SAD is something she will always have to live with.

"On those very dark days when it's raining all day and it doesn't seem to get bright, it's particularly difficult for me," she says.

"There's always that fear with the long nights and winters that it's going to come back worse."

If you suffer from SAD or other types of depression and want details of support groups running in the Cork area, contact:

Aware: 1890 303 302
or (01) 6617211
www.aware.ie
or
Grow: 1890 474 474
www.grow.ie

O'Shea on Monday



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The littlest stars impress at awards

Irish stars from home and abroad sashayed down the red carpet on Saturday night for the glitzy IFTA awards ceremony, Ireland's version of the Oscars. Reporting from the red carpet for the Evening Echo was Robert O'Shea.

WHOO! What a weekend. I'm after a couple of sleepless ones what with partying long into the night and the following evening with some of the stars and starlets of the big and small screen.

Despite my best efforts, I am no 'it girl' — referred to more often on nights out socialising as 'that guy' — but this weekend I rubbed elbows with the great and good.

But enough about my indiscretions with some of the highest-paid luminaries of film and television (more about that later), what about the bash itself?

There we were, lining the red carpet, our microphones and dictaphones drawn to pick off any errant celebrities. One of the other reporters, a veteran of three years action at the awards, gave me some advice: "Shout their name and wave like hell."

That was my mantra. I repeated it over. 'Shout their name and wave like hell.' 'Shout their name and wave like hell!' 'SHOUT their NAME and wave like HELL!'

My first celebrity came into view. It was **Samantha Mumba**. I made eye contact, extended my hand and — my God — she was coming my way.

"SHOUT THEIR NAME AND WAVE LIKE HELL!" I screamed in her ear.

When her PA stopped hitting me with her clipboard, I sensed that the other reporters were at first staring, then avoiding eye-contact with me.

I regained my composure after a few minutes in the bathroom. I looked at myself in the mirror. I was dressed impeccably. What celebrity could resist 20 seconds of gentle probing from that reflection? Not one of them, I decided.

I strode out of that bathroom and right back to the red carpet, took the position that I had been assigned to and caught the eye of another celebrity. It was only **Ray D'Arcy**, but sometimes a D'Arcy is what life deals you. Ray gravitated towards me, we shook hands, and I walked back to the bathroom. I had left my dictaphone on the back of the cistern.

Ray was gone when I returned, but, incredibly, when I retook my position, the number-one attraction at these awards was sashaying down the red carpet (*to sashay* is a verb that is inextricably linked to a red carpet. You cannot, for example, sashay up to the foul line in a bowling alley).

"It's Mischa Barton!" yelled somebody from one of the Dublin papers.

"Mister who?" I asked.

"Meecha Barton, you idiot," said the

woman from an evening news show. "Meesa," shouted someone else, gesturing for the star's attention.

"Meeska!" cried another.

"Mecca!"

"Mischief!"

I decided to keep silent and just wave my hand this time. And it worked. Her PA steered this wretched beauty, who reminded me of a wounded gazelle, towards my recording device.

"Hello," I said.

"Hi," said she.

"Well, what do you think?" I interrogated.

"It's great. I love being here."

"My mother is from Ireland."

"What?" she said.

"My mother is from Ireland," I repeated.

"Oh," she said, and with one long, confused look from the orbs of delight that you would only euphemistically call her eyes, she floated away.

I watched Mischa. I couldn't help but marvel how she was much taller in real life, even if this was the first time I had laid eyes on her, real life or otherwise.

As the other celebrities milled by, I mused that they were all littler in real life than I had thought they would be. **Gráinne Seoige**, **Littler**, **Kerry Katona**, **Littler**, **Eddie Hobbs**, **Littler**, **Pat Shorrt**, **Littlerr**.

But what of the awards themselves. Ooh — competition was fierce.

David Kelly won the Lifetime Achievement Award for the third year running, as was expected.

Mark Cagney, from TV3, won a personality.

Mickey Rourke, who has an Irish surname, took the best movie actor gong.

Judging from the nominations in categories for TV shows, the only dramas made in this country during the past year were: *Pure Mule*, *Love is the Drug*, *Proof 2* and *Murphy's Law*. I saw none of these shows, but they won a variety and hatful of awards nevertheless. Oh, and for the record, **Vanessa Redgrave**, **Gay Byrne**, **Orla Brady**, **Caroline Morahan**, somebody from *Coronation Street* and **Lea Cross** (could the subs find out who this is please).

As far as the Evening Echo is aware, Robert O'Shea did not attend the IFTA ceremony on Saturday night. Our best guess is that he watched it on television.

Tuché! I actually watched *The Living Daylights* on UTV.