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Issue 25 Winter 2018/2019



London Mums



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reveals how
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her a better person

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Editor's letter



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Dear London Mums

Autumn and Winter might bring dark days but my interviewees will bring light and sparkle to your life. Alesha Dixon with her *Lightning Girl* book is a ray of sunshine, not to mention Hollywood heartthrob Andy Garcia and iconic 80s pop singer Paul Young. They all inspired me with their tremendous talents and kindness.

In a heart-warming and funny interview Alesha Dixon opens her heart about motherhood, her first laugh-out-loud superhero novel, female role models, guilty pleasures and a few BGT behind the scenes stories.

Andy García talks about his role as Fernando in the *Mamma Mia* sequel and shares a few Cher gossips.

Everyone's favourite 80's crooner Paul Young talks to me for the second time about his album *No Parlez*, a revival of his music career, the 80s and, of course, his new passion for cooking. You'll fall in love with him too! You can watch this and all my other interviews on our YouTube channel [youtube.com/londonmums](https://www.youtube.com/londonmums)

Last but not least London Mums' globetrotting reporter Rita Kobrak gives us tips to visit Tuscany with the children.

The London Mums' shopping pages are crammed full of Christmas gifts for kids and parents from toys to books. For additional gift ideas check out London Mums' dedicated site londonmumsmagazine.entstix.com where you can get up to 60% off tickets for West End shows and lots of London attractions.

I hope you will enjoy reading this Winter issue as much as the London Mums' team have loved making it!

Spread the word – joining London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!

Monica Costa

Monica

Editor in chief, Founder of London Mums & mum of 12-year-old Diego Let me know what you think of this issue at monica@londonmums.org.uk or via Twitter at @londonmums

THE BIG INTERVIEW



ALESHA DIXON

Editorial

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ALESHA DIXON REVEALS HOW MOTHERHOOD HAS MADE HER A BETTER PERSON

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In this heart-warming and funny interview with London Mums' editor Monica Costa, singer and hugely popular TV personality Alesha Dixon opens her heart about motherhood, her first laugh-out-loud superhero novel, female role models, guilty pleasures and a few BGT gossips.

As soon as we get into chatting, Alesha laughs in her familiar loud voice which makes me feel at home. I am so delighted to be with her because I totally adore Alesha. She is so likeable, chatty and feels like the girl next door. But Alesha is actually a huge pop star and VIP. She was part of Brit-nominated and MOBO Award-winning group Mis-teeq, before becoming a platinum selling solo artist. In 2007 Alesha won *Strictly Come Dancing* and then became a judge of the show for three seasons. Since then she has hosted many TV programmes and now is a hugely popular judge on *Britain's Got Talent*.

Q: Your first novel in collaboration with Katy Birchall is a laugh-out-loud, high-voltage, action-packed adventure series for young readers which sees 11-year old Aurora Beam, a new superhero, fight bullying and injustice with her mum. Where does your inspiration for this story come from?

AD: That's a tricky question to answer, because my inspiration comes from lots of different places. When I first set out to write a children's book, my daughter was my first point of inspiration. I'm a very creative person and always thinking about new projects and opportunities. When you have kids, and read stories to them all the time, your brain starts ticking. I just loved the idea of coming up with a character that could be a role model for boys and girls, and for my daughter. Then I came up with the name Aurora Beam and her super powers and the rest has just gone on from there. I take inspiration from real life stories, and add fun that can take children into a bit of a fantasy world, and provide positive subliminal messages. It's such a lovely feeling to know that children are picking up the book and enjoying it. That inspires me, and motivates me to want to do more. I feel lucky that I'm now in the position to create a series in *Lightning Girl*, and continue the story of Aurora Beam and her adventures.

Q: What's your favourite superhero of all time, and why?

AD: You know what? This is really random, but Iron Man. Lately, I've just been so obsessed with Marvel movies, but I look forward to him the most. He's just perfect and brilliant. Robert Downey Jr. is fantastic in that role. It insults me to not mention a female superhero, so I would have to give Wonder Woman a bit of a big up. The last Wonder Woman movie was actually fantastic.

Q: Maybe you're too young for that, but I grew up with the original *Wonder Woman* series with Linda Carter.

AD: I remember. I remember. Super heroes take you up to a different place and I don't know what it is about them, they just give your imagination to think what could be possible and how far the human body can go and how powerful, strong, clever, unique we could be. All of us want to believe that they really exist.

Q: Iron Man doesn't have his own superpowers naturally, but he creates them so it makes him even more special.

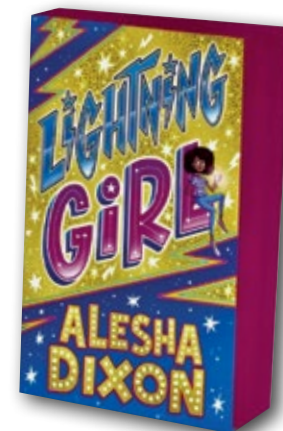
AD: It depends on how you interpret superpowers, because we've all got superpowers within us and he's a really good example how he created his own.

Q: Why do you think superpowers are so popular among children?

AD: It's about giving children something to aspire to and to spark their imagination of what could be possible. Young children look at the world with innocence and allow their imagination to get carried away. When we grow up we become quite suspicious and we want to know what's behind things. I love watching how excited my daughter gets by everything. Kids really embrace what they see visually and they believe it.

Q: How do you see the role of female superheroes influencing the girls of tomorrow?

AD: When I was younger, there was always the perception that boys were stronger and faster so a lot of the superheroes that we saw growing up tended to be guys. Having more female superheroes really addresses the imbalance. It's very important that young boys and girls see both male and female superheroes. Why put limitations on what is possible for girls? It's about them being themselves in their best light and not thinking that it's just the boys. It's important that girls know that they are special too. They can equally achieve and succeed and we have to celebrate our differences. This reflects modern society and the way the world is moving towards. ▶



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Q: This is the perfect time for women to really showcase their excellence. There has never been a time like today, when women are not afraid of anything.

AD: That's right. There are so many examples of that. It's not about being better than men but about being equally respected. And it's about perceptions because many years ago there were stigmas attached to the female role but now we live in a time in which we see a lot of women equally doing great things all around the world in high positions. It's pretty important that we get this message across to the young generation so that they can believe in themselves.

Q: For me the real superheroes are all the mothers out there managing careers and family lives and everything else. You're a great example. How has motherhood changed you?

AD: I agree with what you said about juggling. That's something I too admire in mums. There are lots of parents just trying to make it work on a daily basis because it's a daily challenge. Motherhood has changed me for the better. Being a mum has made me a better person. When you have children, you're their first point of call, their role model and their teacher, so you want to set the best example. The better I am as a parent the more well-rounded human being my daughter will be as a result. It is my job to make sure she is a kind-hearted, lovely human. Becoming a mum has made me more responsible, more mindful, more patient. I've always been a compassionate and loving person, but having a child opens your heart even more and you almost look at other children in the same way you look at your own child because you know what that love looks like and

you also know what the struggle is like. It gives you more empathy towards other parents – I say parents because it's not just mums.

Dads are in the same situation trying to juggle work and family life. You have good days, you have bad days, but you should always remember the blessing, i.e. this beautiful person that you've created and how wonderful that is. To me that is a superpower.

Q: In Britain's Got Talent, you show a very human and sensitive side and you manage to stay true to yourself and honest about your own views. How difficult is it to be as opinionated as you are with a boss like Simon Cowell?

AD: I try to be as honest as I possibly can. It's a good question because making a television show, what gets me through is never forgetting that it's a human being with a real-life story standing in front of me. I always put that ahead of anything else, first and foremost. You can't go wrong with just being yourself, authentic and honest. It's really important to stay grounded and root for the talents in front of you to support them.

Q: Over the years you've seen so many acts. We have seen you crying, especially for some of the kids' acts. It's like a superpower to be compassionate like that. Is there anyone that you will never forget and why?

AD: The nine-year-old boy Malakai Paul auditioned one year. He started singing what could have been a Jennifer Hudson's song but he was really nervous and begun crying. He forgot the words so he stopped. I got up on stage and knelt down to him and just said to him: "If you don't want to carry on, you don't

have to. You've done brilliantly well". I gave him a big hug, then he got it together, sang the song and was brilliant. In that moment I felt very motherly towards him. I just wanted to put my arms around him and tell him it's okay. Because even when kids make mistakes, you still encourage them.

Growing up I never felt like my best was enough and so whenever I see anybody perform or do anything, I'm always conscious of wanting to encourage them. As long as you put your best foot forward and you tried, that's good enough. To improve you need to make mistakes. That's how you learn and grow. You don't have to be perfect or get things right all the time. That helps me when I'm on the show.

Q: You are an inspiration. Teenagers or young children look at you as a model to aspire to. In *Lightning Girl*, Aurora was inspired by a mum. Who is the person who has inspired you the most in your life and why?

AD: Lots of different people. I always say my mum because she is a wonderful person and taught me so much, but there are many other inspirational women including my nan. She is 80 years old and can still get on stage and act in plays very independently. She has a great life and I always tell her how much she inspires us. People fear getting older and my nan inspires me, because she shows me she lives her life in full, has fun, and is independent. She fulfils her passion. I also admire Oprah Winfrey, who defied all odds and went on to be the most powerful woman in the world. She is just a beacon of light. I look up to Oprah, because she uses her platform really well and responsibly. You can see she has a strong spiritual compass and she genuinely wants people to live their best life. I admire that quality. If you think about stepping into your own light and becoming the best version of yourself without being afraid, she is the epitome of that.

Q: Oprah has told many times how tough it was for her as a black woman at the beginning. That was an obstacle, but she managed to showcase that if you persevere in your goal, you might find resistance, but eventually you will succeed.

AD: We can learn from each other and when I think about people that inspire me, most human beings I meet, in fact, can teach me something new. That's the beauty of the human connection and I take inspiration from all sorts of people from all different walks of life. I'm forever learning in that sense.

Q: What's your earliest London memory?

AD: I was born in Hertfordshire. But I spend so much time in London so I feel like I'm a London girl. It's a

fantastic, vibrant city and I love it. I am grateful to be able to work in such a brilliant part of the world with so many iconic landmarks. London plays a significant role in *Lightning Girl*. In the first book the Natural History Museum plays an important role. In the second book, it's the Houses of the Parliament and in book three, which I'm currently writing, there will be another iconic building. London as a backdrop is fantastic because everybody loves it.

Q: London is almost like another character in your novel.

AD: Absolutely. I always say that. Like when Sarah Jessica Parker used to say that New York was a big character in *Sex in the City*. It's important to add a popular location in a story to give people a sense of familiarity. They already feel like they're in that place because they know it.

Q: And what are you up to now? Can we expect more music or books from Alesha Dixon in the near future?

AD: I like being busy. But I try to find the right balance between working and spending quality time with my daughter. The second book is out soon. I'm actually in the process of writing book number three and in the studio writing music. I'm also going to start a new show in the near future, but I can't mention it yet.

Q: What's your guilty pleasure, if you have the time to treat yourself at all?

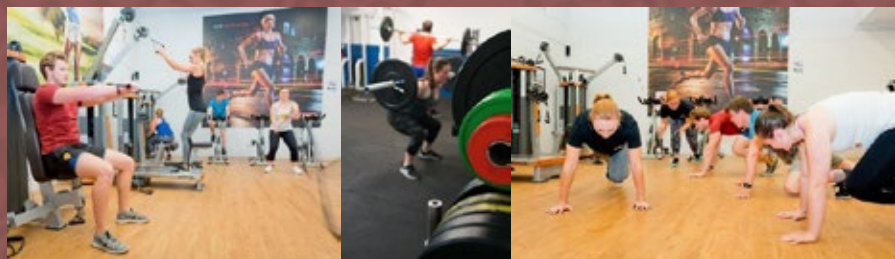
AD: My guilty pleasure is reality TV. I love watching shows such as *Love Island*, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, those that you can have on the background while you're cooking dinner. Just something very light-hearted, a bit of silliness. I always make the time to watch a bit of reality shows.

Lightning girl is illustrated by James Lancett & Steve Simpson. Photo by John Wright.





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ANDY GARCÍA TALKS FERNANDO IN THE MAMMA MIA SEQUEL AND SHARES A FEW CHER GOSSIPS

By Monica Costa

Andy García is a confident and charming man in his 60s who has embraced his age with grace. The mature roles he gets these days seem to resemble more and more his own real self. In the Spring he starred in the movie *Book Club* as an attractive and romantic Airplane Captain – Diane Keaton's love interest. In *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* he plays Cher's long-lost lover with great elegance.

Señor Cienfuegos (ANDY GARCÍA) and Ruby (CHER) in *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*. Ten years after *Mamma Mia! The Movie*, you are invited to return to the magical Greek island of Kalokairi in an all-new original musical based on the songs of ABBA. Credit: Jonathan Prime

Andy García is a confident and charming man in his 60s who has embraced his age with grace. The mature roles he gets these days seem to resemble more and more his own real self. In the Spring he starred in the movie *Book Club* as an attractive and romantic Airplane Captain – Diane Keaton's love interest. In *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* he plays Cher's long-lost lover with great elegance.

When I was asked to attend the press conference for the film *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, I was all over the moon because I've had a crush on him since he played the gentle and sensitive husband to Meg Ryan in *When a man loves a woman*.

I was a tiny bit nervous but as soon as I crossed his gaze I felt tremendously at ease. His Venus eyes are still very sexy despite being 62.

In this chat García tells me more about his character, Fernando Cienfuegos, the hotel manager in Greece, who is always dressed in linen, wears a stylish hat and has a well-groomed silver beard. Before his reunion with Ruby (Cher), *Fernando* seems quite sad and is fully dedicated to his job ensuring his clients are happy. He hints that 'the ship of happiness sailed away a long time ago' for him. But when he reunites with Ruby, everything changes.

Q: *Mamma Mia! Here we go again* is a huge film. How do you feel about it?

AG: It's hard to describe my feelings. The energy that it creates is incredible. It's a testament, obviously to the first film, and to ABBA's music that people are so connected with, and the anticipation that they have for this movie is a beautiful thing. This film celebrates life, women, family and love. It is a joy, full of optimism and just what we need in the world. I felt like I could take on the world when I came out seeing it.

Q: Who is your character Fernando?

AG: I play the general manager of the hotel club, and within the story I have a past. If you know the song *Fernando*, there is a past. And in the lyrics, it talks about the past that I had with Cher, who is grandmother to Sophia, played by Amanda Seyfried, and Meryl's mother and Lily's mother.

Now, there's been some rumour that it's possible that I'm also the grandfather. ABBA's musician Bjorn said that it's funny seeing me now as the Fernando of his song. He conjured up that guy 40 years ago looking at a starry sky and writing about Fernando, the freedom fighter, and right now I am this guy.

Q: Tell me a bit about your work with Cher on this film. What was it like having Cher serenade you?

AG: Last night or in the movie?

Q: Start wherever you wish to.

AG: It was a great privilege to work with Cher. She is crazy, warm-hearted and such a talent. We got on so well, very easy going right away. I was such a huge fan of Cher, not only as a singer but as an actress. So, when they approached me to be a part of it, I was very excited. I learned shortly thereafter, that Cher picked me out of a bunch, so that was doubly a blessing for me. I have so much respect for her.

Q: What's your favourite scene in the movie?

AG: My favourite scene is when Cher just says, Fernando.

Q: Cher is a legend, and you've been singing and acting alongside her. What can you tell me that we don't already know about Cher?

AG: Actually, she's extremely down to earth. One of the things I have always been attracted to her, even from her early days of television with Sonny





and their show, is that she always showed an extraordinary talent as an actress. The dryness in her sense of humour to me is so engaging. She's so present in life. She's so aware of everything and her commentaries on things are very, very funny. I remember when we were doing the film, I was experiencing some issues with my back. I kind of strained it playing golf here in England. She gave me some remedies and things that I should try. Then she texted me and said, "Here try this, I think it would be good for you." And she signed it Ruby with one of those kisses. She likes to apparently tweet and text a lot. So, I said, "Cher, is this you?" And she replied, "Of course it's me, how many people do you know named Ruby?" So that kind of sums it up.

Q: *Mamma Mia! Here we go again!* is quite a departure from your previous roles. How was it like to be part of a musical, and how much singing did you have to learn in terms of your preparation. The whole experience, I mean, we know you for different roles.

AG: It's like anything else, any part, you start from scratch and start building the character. One of my challenges was singing with Cher, well let's say she sang. I chimed in a little. Even though music has been a tremendous part of my life – it's not the first time I sang – you still have to cater to the tonalities of that song and be supportive in that song, so that was a challenge.

But we also needed to fill the back story of the relationship between our characters. Fernando is such a powerful love song, longing, trying to remember those moments in life that meant so much to you. Not only the connection of the love side, but also the fact that they were involved in this sort of hypothetical revolution together. This is heavy stuff so I just tried to kind of lose myself in

that as deeply as I could and hopefully the acting Gods would inspire me right in that moment, right before the take. In films, it's not like theatre, where you're gearing up for that one little moment. You get to explore the character in a very short period of time. In a couple of takes and then it's gone. So you try to time yourself to read through, to set everything up for it, somehow for that inspiration to have residence. But the song takes you there, the story in the song gives you the challenge. It's what Robert Browning said: "One's reach shall be greater than his grasp, or what's a heaven for?". And the story of *Fernando* and Ruby, in this case, it's a very intense back story, and you just try to reach for it as best you can.

Andy was certainly one of the most enthusiastic members of the *Mamma Mia* cast. The director Ol Parker mentioned that at the end of the movie when everybody was on set to do "Super Trouper", Andy came in and his job was to help Cher up the steps on to the stage. He said: "What do I do now?" And the director said, "I guess you just melt away." But he asked, "Can I just stay and dance?" And he was like: "We'd love it if you did". Behind Cher's left shoulder is Andy getting down. Simply joyful!

Courtesy of Universal Studios. PHOTO CREDITS Jonathan Prime



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THE RETURN OF ICONIC 80s SINGER PAUL YOUNG WITH THE 35 YEARS NO PARLEZ TOUR

By Monica Costa and Rosalba Costantini

Everyone's favourite 80's crooner Paul Young is back on tour now, performing his debut album *No Parlez* in celebration of 35 years since its release (1983). We admire him so much so we met him in the heart of London for the second time. You can watch this interview on the London Mums' YouTube channel. Our chat is about the revival of his music career, the 80s and, of course, Paul's new passion, cooking all things Mexicana. A family man, always happy to be touring his classic hits as a solo artist or with his Tex Mex/Americana band *Los Pacaminos*. You'll fall in love with him, too!

Full interview is available on the London Mums magazine online and on YouTube. Further information on Paul Young & his career can be found at www.paul-young.com

Q: How much has Paul Young changed musically and personally in the last 35 years? Would you change anything if you could go back in time using a time machine?

PY: Well, it is probably a far bigger change in my life in those 35 years. I was single then, I have a family and children now. So many things have changed. But when *No Parlez* came out my whole world changed. My life changed. It will never be the same again. It's all been good so far. 90% good. I maybe would have worked harder at writing songs. It is something I got better at as I got older. When I was younger I didn't have patience for writing songs.

Q: One of your loyal fans in Italy, Giampaolo, said that your cover version of Joy Division's *Love Will Tear Us Apart* is the best ever. People still carry your songs in their heart.

PY: It's funny how certain songs like *Every Time You Go Away* mean a lot especially to those people who work in the air force, the army or the navy and get that separation.

Q: You have been with the band Los Pacaminos 25 years. Maybe one day you could create some Mexican soul...

PY: Well that was how it started. Ry Cooder first kicked this kind of thing. He had three really good R&B singers. Bobby King, Willy Green Jr. and Terry Evans, lovely voices. Underneath these voices some are playing the bajo sexto and some are playing the accordion and a Mexican drummer. Mexican drummers are very different to the way an American drummer plays. It's slapping. I was interested in why Ry Cooder would choose these musicians beside these singers. And it was a hybrid.

Q: Where do you feel at home when not at home?

PY: Italy! There I see Zucchero then I go to other friends on Lake Como. My children went there every year. So now they can't wait to go there. It's lovely to swim in the lake.

Q: You love cooking! You're like a big chef in your own home, well for friends and family. You've been on TV as well with your cooking. What's your favorite meal to eat and to cook?

PY: Recently I'm kind of in Italian mode. The kids

want more pasta. We're getting ready for the Italian holiday. So, I like to make homemade pasta fresh with basil. It's very easy. Another one my children love basil and lemon with Parmesan.

But then I like to cook Cajun food at home, because here in the UK we don't have any Cajun restaurants. We don't see Louisiana food much in London.

Q: And the connection with the Tex-Mex?

PY: I also love Mexican food. I only do it once every six months, but I make a mole sauce that takes about four hours but I then put it in small containers and in the freezer.

Q: Zucchero talked about the interesting connection between his food from Emilia in Italy and blues. What do you think about this? Do musicians connect food in a special way?

PY: Yeah, I do because when I'm playing with Los Pacaminos, I'm not just exploring the music side of it. I'm also exploring the food culture. When you get to know their music, you get to know their food and the people.

Q: Tell me your culinary secrets...

PY: If you tell me yours, I'll tell you mine.

Monica: That's not fair. Mine is not a secret, it's out there: less is more. When people in England or America cook Italian food, they put lots of unnecessary stuff in. But you just need to put the right ingredients and taste every single one like the best basil or olive oil. Not throwing all the sauce and spices together hoping for the best.

PY: That's right because in the end you've got a confusion of flavours. If you're eating tomatoes you need two or three ingredients and that's it, some salt some olive oil, some pepper. Maybe some oregano.

Q: Paul, is there anything else you want to tell us? We talked about food, now we're friends.

PY: Yeah that's true. Friends over food.... We're working on a Los Pacaminos Live album. That should be out soon. We've got the *No Parlez* tour and then after that I'll finish working on the next Paul Young album. Ciao a tutti!



Independent schools are more affordable than you think



Independent
SCHOOLS
Show
LONDON 2018



Let's talk fee assistance.

Many parents believe that their child needs to be awarded a scholarship in order to receive financial help from a school. This isn't the case.

Over 168,000 private school pupils (33% of all pupils) get some sort of financial help. The 2018 ISC annual census shows that many schools have extended bursary provision in the last year, providing almost £400m means-tested fee assistance for pupils. Independent schools have become much more generous and this trend will continue.

So why do schools offer bursaries? It goes back to the mission of most public schools, where the founders wanted to pay for poor scholars to have an education. It's in the schools' DNA.

As Mark Bailey, High Master of St Paul's School, and David Goodhew, Headmaster of Latymer Upper, both agreed at the Independent Schools Show last year, diversity benefits all pupils.

'Our parents want us to be a school for people from all walks of life, from diverse backgrounds, culturally, social-economically, because it helps one feel like real life in the modern world.'

David Goodhew, Headmaster of Latymer Upper, speaking in The Sunday Times Education Theatre at the Independent Schools Show.

We can't tell you how much financial aid you might receive as schools differ widely in how they make

decisions and, of course, how much money they have for such purposes. Some schools, such as St Paul's, offer bursaries to families with a surprisingly high overall level of income (£120,000) whereas others have a much lower threshold. Schools are autonomous and there are no fixed rules.

The best way to find out what each school has to offer, and if you could be considered for some sort of financial aid, is to speak individually to the schools. A face-to-face conversation is much more effective with schools than an email chain or telephone call.

The Independent Schools Show returns for its twelfth year on 10th and 11th November. We have over 200 of the UK's leading schools all under one roof, providing parents with the perfect opportunity to meet schools one-to-one and get your questions answered. You can also hear from experts in the field in our two education theatres, covering all you need to know to ensure you select a school that is right for your child.

Tickets are FREE to everyone who registers before the Show. Be sure to get ahead of the game and get your tickets today. This is the perfect day out for all the family.



Visit www.schoolsshow.co.uk for more information and tickets.



The world's biggest school open day

Saturday 10 November
Sunday 11 November

Battersea Evolution, SW8 4NW

FOR TICKETS VISIT SCHOOLSSHOW.CO.UK

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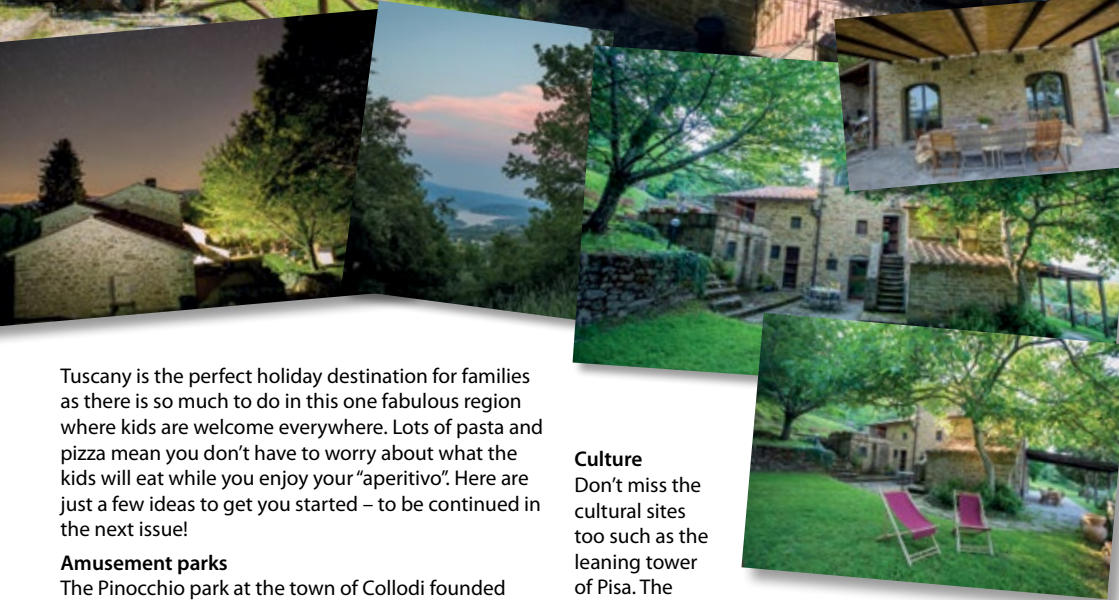
THE SUNDAY TIMES

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A JOINT DEVELOPMENT

TUSCANY WITH KIDS

By Rita Kobrak



Tuscany is the perfect holiday destination for families as there is so much to do in this one fabulous region where kids are welcome everywhere. Lots of pasta and pizza mean you don't have to worry about what the kids will eat while you enjoy your "aperitivo". Here are just a few ideas to get you started – to be continued in the next issue!

Amusement parks

The Pinocchio park at the town of Collodi founded 100 years ago and recently renovated, is a perfect outing for the family. It is a very Italian park, combining nature and art, with workshops, statues and art exhibitions plus a zip line and a butterfly house close by and included in the ticket entrance price. If you are looking for rides, I suggest Cavallino Matto close to Livorno set in a pine forest and with roller coasters, boats, 4D movies and plenty of rides.

Wildlife and nature

If your children are interested in wildlife you have Pistoia zoo, Poppi zoo (near Arezzo), the Livorno aquarium and at Viareggio the chance to see dolphins at the protected Pelagos sanctuary. Trips can be arranged to spot the dolphins by catamaran or sail boat with a marine biologist on board.

Horse-riding can be found all over Tuscany at a quarter of London prices.

Culture

Don't miss the cultural sites too such as the leaning tower of Pisa. The kids will love taking silly photos pretending to hold up the tower. In Lucca families can hire bikes to cycle around the 4.9 km walls. Anghiari is a medieval town that looks like a castle. Close by is San Sepolcro where older kids will enjoy the Aboca museum, the only herb museum in Tuscany, while younger kids will love the water park.

Where to stay

A family friendly villa is an ideal base to stay in Tuscany. Villa Radicata is family friendly family run villa is a less tourist part of Tuscany but within easy reach of the main towns such as Arezzo, Florence, Anghiari, Lucca. It has a private pool and an outdoor pizza oven.

Read the full article online at londonmumsmagazine.com

www.holiday-villa-in-tuscany.com For Villa Radicata rentals Tel 0778 5571292
or 0039 3495018679 Closet airport Perugia or Florence.

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Grade 1 Ballet - 5:10pm-5:50pm (8yrs+)
Grade 2 Ballet - 5:50pm-6:30pm (9yrs+)

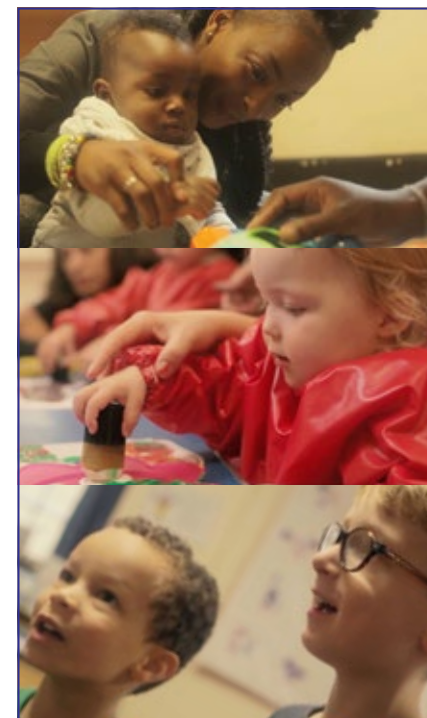
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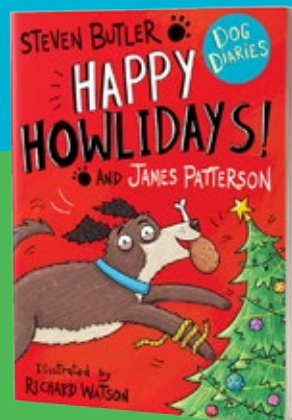
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JUNIOR'S READY FOR HIS FIRST HUMAN CHRISTMAS!

His perfect plans of redeeming his GOOD BOY status get sidelined with the appearance of snow, a tree in the Picture Box Room and packs of strange humans called Carol who come to the front door and howl...

'A perfect story to tickle the funny bone of any young reader!'
MEGAN RIX ON
DOG DIARIES

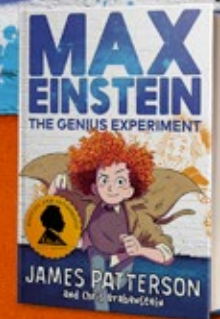


A BRAND NEW ADVENTURE SERIES FROM
JAMES PATTERSON AND THE ALBERT EINSTEIN ARCHIVES

'Any young readers out there interested in science and adventure...this book is brilliant!' TIM PEAKE

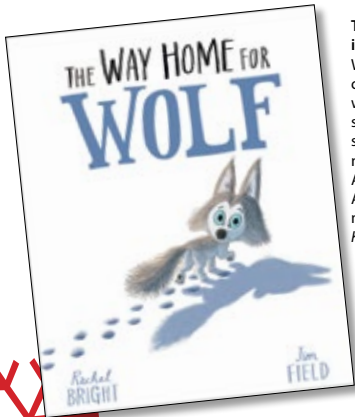


Penguin
Random House
UK



CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

Books for kids



The Way Home for Wolf by Rachel Bright, illustrated by Jim Field. RRP £12.99
Wilf is as strong and independent as a wolf cub can be – he can do it ALL BY HIMSELF. But when Wilf finds himself lost and alone in the snow and chill of an Arctic night, he discovers something important – sometimes we all need the help of a friend to show us the way. A feel-good tale of friendship set in the snowy Arctic from the creators of the bestselling, multi-award-winning *The Lion Inside* and *The Koala Who Could*.

Wundersmith by Jessica Townsend. RRP £12.99.

Morrigan Crow's adventures in the magical world of Nevermoor continue in *Wundersmith*. The most anticipated sequel of the year, this is a treat for all fans of magic and 'wunder'. In a stunningly designed package – with silver foil, hidden artwork under the jacket and beautifully designed interiors – it will make a perfect gift for all young readers.



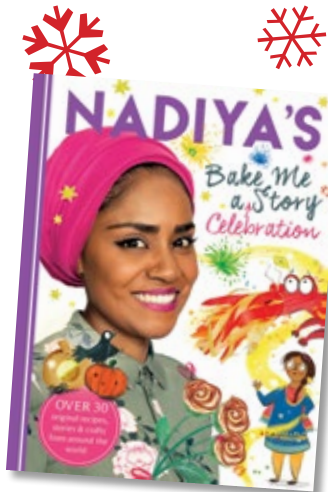
Nadiya's Bake me a Celebration Story by Nadiya Hussain. RRP £14.99.

A unique combination of storybook and cookbook, *Bake Me a Celebration Story* combines playful photography of Nadiya and her children with vibrant illustrations by Clair Rossiter. Whether it's Valentine's Day, Holi or Chinese New Year, there are many special moments to be enjoyed as a family throughout the year. And what better way to celebrate than to share stories, enjoy crafts and make delicious food with Nadiya, Britain's favourite baker



Wizards of Once: Twice Magic by Cressida Cowell. RRP 12.99.

Enter a land of wizards, warriors, mythical creatures and powerful magic in an exciting fantasy adventure from the author of *How To Train Your Dragon*. Witches are creating havoc in the Wildwoods and danger lurks behind every tree trunk. Wish is in possession of a powerful, Magic Spelling Book. Xar has a dangerous Witchstain on his hand. But Wish and Xar are separated by the highest wall imaginable and time is running out...



Treasury of Bedtime Stories by Enid Blyton, illustrated by Becky Cameron. RRP £25.00.
A stunning treasury of favourite bedtime stories from one of the world's best-loved storytellers. Both a gorgeous gift for fans of Enid Blyton and a striking introduction to her work for new readers, this glorious hardback contains over 300 pages of beautifully illustrated short stories to read and share at bedtime. With gorgeous full-colour illustrations by Becky Cameron throughout, this special book is a gift to treasure forever.



A Stage Full of Shakespeare Stories £12.99

Step on to a stage full of stories with this beautiful anthology of 12 stories from Shakespeare. Featuring much-loved classics such as *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*, each story is rewritten in a comprehensive way that is accessible for children and stunningly illustrated by collage artist Alice Lindstrom.

The Bear, The Piano, The Dog and the Fiddle £11.99

Hector and his dog Hugo have made music together through good times and bad times. But when Hugo learns to play the fiddle, and gets the chance to play with Bear's Big Band, will Hector's jealousy get the better of him? Set in New Orleans with a new cast of animal musicians, this sequel to the best-selling *The Bear and the Piano* teaches that friendship, like good music, lasts forever.



Silent Night £10.99

Celebrate the magic of Christmas with this beautifully illustrated book, based on the world's best-loved carol. Rediscover the Nativity Story in all its glory – from quaking shepherds to heaven-sent angels – as the song lyrics are brought to life on every spread. A gorgeous book for all the family to share during the festive season.



The Story Orchestra: The Nutcracker £14.99

Follow Clara on a magical Christmas adventure in this sound book edition of the classic ballet story. Watch the Nutcracker battle the Mouse King, meet the Sugar Plum Fairy and journey to the Land of Sweets, where wonder and excitement await... Press the music note on each page to hear 10-second sound clips which include music from: 'The Dance of the Reed Flutes', 'The Waltz of Flowers' and 'The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy'.



The Sound of Magic: Cinderella £14.99

Experience the magic of Cinderella like never before with this gorgeous interactive sound book, which comes complete with your very own sparkling gold-foil magic wand! Become the Fairy Godmother's assistant by tapping the wand on the musical notes as you read the story. With each wave of your wand you'll hear a different magical sound effect!



The books listed in this page are published by Hachette Children's Group
www.hachettechildrens.co.uk

The books listed in this page are published by Quarto
publisher www.QuartoKids.com

Woo Hoo!



HERE'S NEWS OF FOUR BRAND NEW children's games – from Drumond Park

Watch out for these great new table-top games from Drumond Park – they're going into the shops now, in plenty of time for Christmas! There's something here for everyone... from thrills, spills and wacky characters through to brain-teasing, linguistic endeavours – as well as some exhilarating, super-fast action tricks, too! So get ready for some serious fun with this enthralling game selection...



WORD BANDIT (RRP £24.99, age 8 to adult)
This attention-grabbing board game has a wonderful wheel-spinning letter machine at its centre (a small one-arm bandit) and features four easy word games to play, in two teams of any number, or by two individuals. It's full of brilliant, linguistic, whirling energy!



FOXY PANTS (RRP £22.99, age 4+)

Watch out for the dastardly Fox in this hilarious game as he sneaks around the chicken coops, looking to fill his pockets with sleeping chickens! The real fun begins when Foxy's pants get so full, they magically – shockingly! – disappear, sending the chickens scattering across the table! First one to gather enough to fill their chicken coop with one hand only is the winner!



SUPER SKI JUMP (RRP £19.99, age 8 to adult)

Introducing the ultimate trick challenge where practise makes perfect! The aim of this awesome, curiously addictive game is to progress through the various playing pieces and send your character flying down the awesome ski jump ramp – and score the most points by doing tricks and nailing the perfect landing!



WALLY THE WASHER (RRP £24.99, age 4+)

Meet the lovable Wally the Washer toy who spins just like the real thing, before spilling out his washing as young players race to collect their coloured clothes and fill their washing lines. But watch out for the smelly sock! If it comes out with the washing on your turn, you must pop the clothes back in – and wear the clothes peg on your nose!



Drumond Park has kindly given us three Prize Pairs of table-top games that are sure to keep little ones happy for hours this Winter!



SHARK BITE game (RRP £24.99, age 4+) combines the classic fishing rod 'hook 'em out' concept with the high tension of the looming jaws of a snapping shark! Players take it in turns to roll the dice and fish out the corresponding number of fish food pieces before that big ol' shark's jaws snap shut again.



In the new **WALLY THE WASHER** game (RRP £24.99, age 4+) Wally spins just like the machine at home, then suddenly spills out his contents onto the table. The players race to collect the coloured clothes, but if the dirty sock appears, you must wear the giant clothes peg on your nose – until the next time the sock falls out with the washing.



To be in with a chance of winning one of these Prize Pairs, write the name of your favourite table-top game of all time in the competition form online at londonmumsmagazine.com/category/competitions/. Deadline to enter is midnight on 5 December 2018.



For more information and stockists visit drumondpark.com. Have a look at Drumond Park's Facebook and Twitter feeds – facebook.com/drumondpark and twitter.com/drumondpark. And to catch up on all the news on their crazy blog go over to drumondpark.com/blog

Toy Trends for Christmas 2018



Martin Grossman, MD of H Grossman Limited has been in the toy business all his life. He started working for his Mum and Dad in their fancy goods wholesalers in Glasgow and now 75 years later the business they started is now the biggest toy company north of the border.

HGL sell products all over the world and to all the big toy retailers and supermarkets, with past top toy favourites such as chrome scooters, Alien Eggs, Scoobie Strings, hula hoops, loom bands and now slime and putty amongst their award winning toy lines.

So when looking for a man who knows the toy trends for the festive season we could do worse than look to Martin for some ideas on great presents that will hit the mark.

'Look for anything mythical and magical' says Martin, 'Unicorns, Mermaids, Dinosaurs will abound this year, on just about everything and in every form. We have an award winning light up Unicorn Scooter which has been really popular, so we have brought out a Dinosaur scooter with the same light up wheel function. These are a great price and also popular with parents for their fold up and go function. For younger kids we have the My First Scooter which moves from four wheels to three and then to two as they gain confidence. Watch out next year for our My First Trike too.'

Back to this year though and as expected slime and putty are still topping the toy tables. Be

careful where you buy, our slime was tested by Which magazine and found to be one of only three products tested which conformed to current safety regulations so be sure to purchase from a good toy retailer. Or stay safe and buy ours!

Creative products abound and our Grow Egg pocket money range is a great stocking filler. Just pop the egg in water and wait for your creature to hatch, mermaids, unicorns, aliens and dinosaurs are just a few of the items on offer.

Plenty of fabulous plush toys around too with the favourite animals for this year being, you guessed it, Unicorns! Followed close behind by Flamingoes, Llamas, Sloths, and we produce a fabulous Pegasus Unicorn that is flying off the shelves.

There are so many stocking filler items to choose from, squidgies are still popular with that great textured soft rise foam feel, addictive to squish. Whilst there will always be the high ticket items for that special gift, the robot, the new phone, the new tablet – there is always room for mid price items, scooters, skateboards, quality soft toys and lots of fun filled pocket money toys to keep the costs down and the play value high.

TOYS WISH LIST FOR CHRISTMAS

Mythical creatures are still topping the toys wish list this festive season. Kids cannot get enough of unicorns, mermaids and want them to feature on all their toys, large or small

All the toys on this page are available from H Grossman www.ozbozz.com



Unicorn squidgy assortment
RRP £4.99 each



Mermaid Grow Egg
RRP £3.99



Unicorn Poo
RRP 99p each



Unicorn Horn slime
RRP £1.99



Unicorn Scooter (Award winning)
RRP £29.99



Light up Mesh Ball
RRP 99p each

**Razor Turbo Jetts**

If your kids love hee-ies they will love this high tech motorised take on them! Razor® Turbo Jetts™ are electric, motorised heel wheels giving a one-of-a-kind boost to any pair of trainers. Simply strap them on, adjust to fit and ride comfortably at speeds of up to 10mph for up to 30 minutes of continuous use. Age 9+

SRP £129.99

Argos.co.uk

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TOYS AND FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

**Strictly Come Dancing: The Board Game**

This family board game captures all the fun and excitement of the hugely popular BBC show. Players pair with an in-game professional dancer and journey through training where they must answer trivia questions, take on fun challenges and perform mini dance-offs. The two players who make it to the game's 'live final' can perform a dance to one of the six tunes that are played on the revolving glitterball speaker, or they take on the finger Cha Cha challenge.

RRP 29.99

Available now from all good toy retailers and online

www.johnadams.co.uk/**Unicorn Wheelybug**

RRP £69.95

Available from
www.happychick.com**Pindaloo™**

If you're looking for a fun-filled skill toy that can help improve your cognition, coordination and provides fun all year round, you've come to the right place. Pindaloo™ is great for all the family. Once you teach yourself the first step, it will be impossible to put it down. Learn a range of tricks from beginner to advanced or create your own!

RRP: £9.99

www.mypindaloo.co.uk**Floof Mr & Mrs Snowman Set**

New Floof is a light-as-air, moldable compound that is perfect for indoor snow play! The Floof Mr and Mrs Snowman set includes everything needed to build two mini snowman characters including 120g of Floof, and a selection of character accessories.

SRP £12.99

www.smythstoys.com

Knoppers snack
Almost two thirds of mums (59%) named 3.30pm – 5pm as the time when they most need a pick me up after a tiring and busy day.

Available in single packs (RRP £0.50) for a bite on the go, or four packs (RRP £1.25) for the family

Knoppers – pronounced with a K – is available in discount stores and Convenience & Impulse stores.

**Tiger Tribe Beat the Clock Stopwatch Set**

Whether you're inside or outside, at home, the park or even at school, the Tiger Tribe Beat the Clock Stopwatch Set is jam-packed with fun and constructive activities to get kids interested in exploring time-- and beating it! From keeping balloons in the air, to running around the block, to setting the table, these fun time-based activities will delight and entertain children for hours. Age rating: 5+

RRP: £17.99

The main stockist is Trotters Childrenswear & Accessories

www.trotters.co.uk/**The littlest Reindeer**

Join the adorably ambitious "littlest reindeer", Elliot, as he sets his sights on becoming the newest – and tiniest – member of Santa's reindeer team this Christmas, with a little help from his friends!

Bring home this fun and festive family film out on DVD and Digital Download now.

Sleeping Bag with Feet and Detachable Sleeves Pirate by Slumbersac

Fantastic for active toddlers as they start learning to walk, giving them the freedom to move around, reducing the risk of falling over, while still enjoying the comfort of their sleeping bag at bedtime.

RRP from £29.99

www.slumbersac.co.uk

A photograph of a young child standing outdoors in the rain. The child is wearing a bright blue, hooded rain suit with white piping along the seams and a small yellow chick logo on the left chest. They are also wearing yellow rubber boots. The child is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred green landscape with a tree trunk visible. Rain is visible as white streaks throughout the scene.

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