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Unveiling the
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Hello...

Welcome to the vibrant Spring edition of *London Mums* magazine! I'm tapping away on the Caledonian Sleeper train back home after a four-day jaunt to the mystical Isle of Skye. I was there for a press escapade, diving into its history, folklore and natural wonders. Get ready to be swept away by this fairy-tale film destination - find out all about it in this edition.

This season, we're exploring music, travel, toys and culture, providing a feast of exciting content to ignite your imagination and keep you entertained.

On the cover, we've got the fabulous singer-songwriter, Camille O'Sullivan, whose soul-stirring voice and captivating performances will take you on a musical journey like no other. Prepare to be spellbound by her unique mix of rock, theatre and storytelling.

In the music world, we're taking a groovy trip down memory lane with the revival of legendary Brit band, The Prisoners. Join us as we chat with James Taylor about their upcoming reunion gig at The London Roundhouse in Camden - it's going to be a blast from the past!

Turning to toys, we've got the scoop on the latest trends from Toy Fair London 2024. Think creativity, mindfulness and inclusivity - all the things that matter to today's generation.

In culture, we're excited to announce the return of the Cinema Made in Italy festival, featuring the best of Italian cinema from the past year. Plus, explore our book corner for thrilling reads for all ages.

Finally, spotlighting Casey Major-Bunce, the super mum of four and hacks queen, whose fun and creative ideas have amassed over 400k Instagram followers. Casey shares her top Easter tips, proving creativity knows no limits.

So, grab a cuppa, get comfy, and explore *London Mums* magazine for a season of inspiration, adventure and endless possibilities! Cheers!

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

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Star Chat!

Camille O'Sullivan: Unveiling the soul of music

By Monica Costa

Camille O'Sullivan, the enigmatic Irish singer known for her powerful voice and captivating performances, recently invited me on a journey through her stream of consciousness and the heart of music. With her soulful interpretations and captivating stage presence, Camille's musical adventure knows no bounds, seamlessly blending rock, theatre, and storytelling into a mesmerising experience.

When you connect two passionate women over the phone — one Irish and one Italian — the result is nothing short of explosive. Our interview, initially planned for just 20 minutes, ended up stretching over an hour, delving into a multitude of topics. From cherished musical memories and iconic figures to discussions about fencing and song-writing, our conversation covered a wide array of subjects. Yet, amidst it all, one thing became abundantly clear: Camille possesses an unmatched fiery spirit and an incredible warmth that exudes a star-like quality, making her instantly likable.

Q: You mentioned how romantic-era music and the raw energy of rock and roll inspire your songs. Can you explain how these influences shape your music?

Camille: Absolutely! The romantic



vibes and the pure essence of rock and roll have always resonated with me. While bands like Spandau Ballet and Duran Duran were rocking the charts with heavily produced sounds, I've always been drawn to the raw simplicity of rock. It's like The Prisoners, who make music with just a guitar and bass, keeping it real and honest. My music is about stripping away the layers and letting the soul of the music shine through.

Q: Your performances are often described as unique and mesmerising. What inspires your special style?

Camille: I draw inspiration from a mix of artists, like Nick Cave and David Bowie. Each song I perform becomes a part of me, infused with my own feelings and experiences. Whether it's a haunting ballad or an electrifying rock anthem, I aim to take the audience on a journey, making them feel every note and every word.

Q: How do you approach song-writing, especially when you're interpreting songs by other artists?

Camille: Writing lyrics is like pouring out my heart onto paper. It's personal and intuitive, letting the words flow naturally. When I sing other artists' songs, I aim to capture the essence of the original while adding my own twist. It's about bringing the music to life on stage, making it my own.

Q: Your performances have gained worldwide acclaim. How do you connect with the audience and express your emotions during live shows?

Camille: Performing is like therapy for me. I pour all my emotions into every song, immersing myself in the moment. I want to create a connection with the audience, inviting them into my world. Whether it's joy, sadness, or passion, I want them to feel it too.

Q: Looking back on your career, what have been some memorable moments or challenges?

Camille: Like any artist, I've faced doubts and

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“Writing lyrics
is like pouring
out my heart
onto paper.”





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I draw inspiration from a mix of artists, like Nick Cave and David Bowie.

uncertainties. The loss of musical legends like David Bowie and Leonard Cohen hit me hard, making me question my path. But these challenges have also been opportunities for growth. It's about staying true to myself and my vision, no matter what.

Last December, I found myself singing at Shane McGowan's funeral alongside my dear friend Mundy. It was a bittersweet moment as I bid farewell to my friend whom I deeply respected and cherished. However, when they asked us to perform "Haunted" by Sinead O'Connor, I was taken aback. The song held such profound meaning, and I couldn't help but feel overwhelmed by the responsibility.

Q: What are your feelings about returning to the stage after the pandemic?

Camille: It's been quite a journey, hasn't it? With Covid shaking up our lives, it's been a rollercoaster of emotions. Personally, I've felt a bit like a lost soul, especially after being away

from the stage for two years. Last year, I found solace in hula-hooping, but now I'm delving deeper into my artistic self. I'm exploring new ways to connect with audiences, engaging in more conversations during gigs. It's a time of reflection and transformation for me. I want to express my gratitude and love to both the people who have supported me and the artists who have inspired me, like Shane and Bowie, as well as the remarkable women in my life, including my daughter.

I love performing gigs in churches, such as London's Union Chapel on 8th March, because every part of the venue feels like a stage, and people seem to feel more spiritually connected.

I get nervous before every concert. Someone once told me that I seem like a scared mouse pacing at the back of the stage, but as soon as I step to the front, I transform into a confident tiger. It's as if I have to become a fierce animal to overcome my fears. Every song is different, and I aim to take each person in the audience

on an emotional journey. Like my heritage — half French, half Irish — darkness and light are significant. Life has its tough moments and its wonders, and we embrace them all. As Nick Cave used to say, Irish people have a dark sense of humour.

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"I'm focused on nurturing my relationships, especially with my daughter."

There's a concept in Spanish culture called "duende." Duende is an elusive quality in artistic expression, characterised by intense emotion, rawness, and authenticity. It goes beyond technical skill, captivating audiences with its profound emotional depth. It involves tapping into deep emotions and channeling them through art, creating a powerful connection with the audience. It's the magic that happens when an artist is fully engaged in their craft, evoking strong emotional responses from those who witness it.

My mother used to joke, "I'm glad you're not fully French; you'd be too serious." Being open and vulnerable on stage is crucial for me as a performer. In my personal life, I often feel uncertain, but being on stage is therapeutic. The joy of music unlocks something within me. I feel most present when performing in front of an audience, despite any fear I may have. It allows me to embody all the qualities I aspire to — more sexy, more funny, more open, more free — like a child. I see that same freedom in my daughter, and it's something I've lost in my own life. But when I sing with the band, I feel the power of people. I like to embrace people

through songs and give hugs after the show.

Rock 'n' roll, to me, is about being wild, feral and untamed. Let's dance and sing until my time on this earth is over.

Q: Besides music, you've explored architecture and acting. How have these experiences shaped your artistry?

Camille: Each experience has added to my artistic journey. Architecture taught me about structure and design, while acting allowed me to explore different emotions. It's all about storytelling and expression, enriching my performances on stage.

Q: What's next for you, both personally and professionally?

Camille: I'm excited to keep sharing my music with the world, exploring new creative ventures. Personally, I'm focused on nurturing my relationships, especially with my daughter, and finding balance in life. Whether I'm on stage or at home, I want to embrace each moment and stay true to my passions.

Raunchy and dangerously fragile with an exceptional voice, Camille is a courageous and singular performer, one of the most gifted interpreters of narrative songs about loss, love, joy, light, and darkness.



Camille O'Sullivan will perform in the stunning surroundings of London's Union Chapel on 8th March 2024.

2024 Toy Trends

By Monica Costa reporting from Toyfair London

The toy trends of 2024 are all about inspiring creativity, mindfulness and inclusivity, reflecting the values of a generation deeply connected to the world around them.

Collectibles across generations

Brands like Euggy are reinventing collectibles. Euggy founder Hoon, a travel writer featured in documentaries, trekked Everest, witnessing plastic waste. Inspired to act, he created 3D cardboard puzzles to connect people with nature. With over 80 creatures, Euggys educate and entertain, fostering love for the planet. These mini animal puzzles appeal to both kids and adults.

Emotional Learning

Games promoting mindfulness and emotional intelligence are gaining popularity, with Learning Resources offering a range designed to help children navigate complex feelings creatively.

Kidult Nostalgia

The Kidult trend remains strong in 2024, with adults seeking out nostalgic toys with sustainable designs. From classic Playmobil playsets to modern innovations, nostalgia meets sustainability, like Playmobil Vespa model.

Sustainability

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, Playmobil leads the charge in sustainability, with a range celebrating diversity and inclusivity. Working towards 100% sustainability, Playmobil's efforts have already achieved 90%, manufacturing exclusively in Germany.

Hippychick sets the standard for ethical toys with its eco-conscious Crocodile Creek range, which also fits within the popular £10-£20 price range, and focuses on inspiring children to explore the natural world. www.hippychick.com



Puzzles

Puzzles are back in vogue, offering quality time away from screens. Ravensburger Puzzles, designed in the UK and manufactured sustainably in Germany, offer options like the 3D puzzle that becomes a useful object such as a pen holder or a globe, promoting mindfulness and focus. Smart Games also offer customised puzzles, gaining popularity for personalised gifts.

Less conversation, more action



Julia Minchin, founder of Hippyckick, shares her trend predictions for toys in 2024.

As someone who has sourced and sold more than my fair share of toys over the years, I've learned that a good toy combines the joy and play

opportunities that truly engage a child, with the durability, practicality and developmental benefits that parents are looking for. In 2024, as Millennial parents are succeeded by those of Gen Z, and we see the caring, respectful values of the kindness economy put down roots, toys must work even harder, being ethically and sustainably made and financially viable for families in these tough economic times.

It's a tall order, but one that I think the toy industry will step up to in 2024. With the climate crisis doubling down on us all, I think this will be the year that both manufacturers and retailers begin to take their environmental impact and responsibilities more seriously. Many manufacturers are choosing FSC approved suppliers for wooden toys and are replacing gaudy single-use plastics with sugarcane-based bioplastics that are more efficiently produced and can be more easily recycled. I'm sure we'll see an increase in the number of brands switching to eco-friendly materials in their ranges and packaging this year.

If the pandemic taught us anything it was to value and embrace simplicity. Though, thankfully, lockdown will get further away from view, simple toys that encourage children to exercise their own creativity will continue to thrive. Wooden building blocks,



Crocodile Creek Puzzle



More and more manufacturers will be using FSC approved suppliers for wooden toys

walkers, pull-alongs — these traditional, must-have toys offer comfort and reassurance in a post-pandemic world, and I think we'll see more parents investing in these timeless pieces for babies. And, just as teenagers are once again embracing cassettes and CDs, I think we'll see the same kind of nostalgia for play experiences being reflected in children's toys. Think classics like prams and shape-sorters, xylophones, ride-ons, and toys that support old-fashioned imaginative play over push-buttons and flashing lights.

This is not to say that parents won't continue to embrace technology, it's just that it will need to be useful and practical rather than superficial entertainment. White- and pink-noise sleep aids have been game-changers for many exhausted parents seeking gentle sleep solutions. It looks likely that interest in this kind of intelligent tech that both comforts babies and helps parents, especially those who work from home and face the daily juggle of combining work and parenthood, will continue to increase.

As the cost of living crisis continues to bite hard, there's been a huge upwards surge in customers opting for preloved with websites such as Vinted leading the way. Here at Hippyckick, our preloved page is also witnessing significant growth. I think we'll see more parents turning to pre-loved, toy library, toy swaps and even subscription services in 2024. Any stigma around buying and using second-hand will undoubtedly be eclipsed this year by the realm of benefits of using these services. It helps the planet by using fewer resources and means children are never without age-appropriate and stimulating toys, even when budgets are tight.

In all, 2024 is shaping up to be a year of real change and progress in toyland, and Hippyckick is ready to embrace it.

First aid: Responding to head injuries in sport



By Emma Hammett

There is increasing evidence demonstrating the proven correlation between repeated head injuries in football and dementia: former professional footballers

are 3.5 times more likely to die

of dementia and other serious neurological diseases. As such, coaches and parents must be aware of the risks surrounding head injuries, and what to do if a player experiences one.

When most people bang their heads, it can be difficult to tell whether they have done any serious damage. Most head injuries are not serious, but severe or repeated injuries can cause damage to the brain.

Symptoms of a concussion

It is important to note that only 10% of head injuries result in loss of consciousness. There are many other symptoms you should keep an eye out for.

In a child, look for loss of consciousness, intense crying, trouble walking, and complaints of head and neck pain. If your child experiences these, call 999 or 111.

Following a head injury during sports, players may experience: loss of consciousness, difficulty with coordination, delayed reactions, heightened emotions, changes in personality. If any of the above occur, call the emergency services immediately.

If they are unconscious, ensure you roll them into the recovery position to ensure their airway remains open, whilst protecting their spine. In the event where they are unconscious and not breathing, you would need to start CPR.

There will be some symptoms that you will need to ask them about: headache, blurred vision, difficulty remembering things, feeling dizzy, being more sensitive to light/sound.

Coaches and parents should be confident in removing any player who has experienced even a minor head injury. They should stop playing straight away and sit off the pitch somewhere warm and dry and be monitored closely for anything unusual.

Repeated head injuries can increase the risk of brain injury. Call an ambulance if you see any of the following: Abnormal breathing, unconsciousness, bleeding/clear fluid from the nose, ear, or mouth, unequal pupils, vomiting more than two or three times.

If the casualty is not an infant, has not lost consciousness, and is alert and behaving normally after; talk to them and check they know where they are. Continue to monitor them for the next 48 hours. Keep observing them and checking their symptoms.

To relieve any superficial swelling or pain, you can periodically apply a wrapped ice pack to the area for up to ten minutes. If they are unusually drowsy or can't be woken, call an ambulance.

The most important step following an injury is rest. A player must have at least 24 hours complete rest for an adult, and 48 for a child or adolescent. No one should go home to an empty house: an adult must always be observing the casualty, conscious of the symptoms of a brain injury.



The player must follow the gradual return to activity or sport (GRAS) guide to ensure a safe recovery. A free copy of this can be found at www.firstaidforlife.org.uk or by emailing emma@firstaidforlife.org.uk More information can also be found on England Rugby's website.

Following a concussion children and adolescents must abstain from playing sport for 23 days; this is 19 days for an adult.

First Aid for Life is a multi-award-winning, fully regulated first aid training provider led by highly experienced medical trainers, health and emergency services professionals who tailor the course to your needs. For group or individual training at our venue or yours, visit <https://firstaidforlife.org.uk> or call 0208 675 4036.

First Aid for life provides this information for guidance and it is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. First Aid for Life is not responsible or liable for any diagnosis made, or actions taken based on this information.

An itchy situation

Searches for head lice advice and sales of head lice prevention products see stark increase. How can you help prevent head lice?

The NHS has published **statistics** that weekly visits to their health advice page on head lice and nits have seen an increase of 34%. Thousands of parents across the country, left scratching their heads on the topic, have been seeking advice with the page receiving the equivalent of one click every 39 seconds at its peak.*

Vosene Kids haircare range, designed to help keep headlice at bay, has also identified a considerable year-on-year sales increase. New sales data from the brand has uncovered a 231% increase in sales of their award-winning **Head lice Defence Spray** and **3in1 Shampoo** with natural head lice repellent actives, this year compared to the previous year.** Vosene Kids now sells 1 shampoo every 2 minutes, suggesting that more parents than ever are seeking out ways to help prevent head lice.***



So what can you do to help prevent head lice?

Make it harder for head lice to jump on board by keeping long hair tied back and asking your little ones to avoid games that involve head-to-head contact.

Use Vosene Kids as part of your child's everyday hair care routine. The Vosene Kids 3in1 Shampoo and Headlice Defence Spray are formulated with natural head lice repellent actives to help keep headlice at bay. After every wash, check for eggs at the front of the

head, behind the ears and at the nape of the neck – eggs may be hiding away at the base of the hair shaft. Spotting early signs of their arrival can stop any new lice families getting too comfortable.

About Vosene Kids products:

3in1 Shampoo, 250ML, RRP £2.00. Available at Asda, B&M, bodycare, Boots, Home Bargains, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Savers and Tesco.

The specially designed Vosene Kids shampoo cleanses and conditions children's hair and scalp for tangle-free hair. It also contains natural head lice repellent actives – tea tree oil and lemon eucalyptus oil to help keep head lice at bay. For best results, the shampoo can be used alongside the Conditioning Defence Spray. Paediatric dermatologist tested and approved.

Headlice Defence Spray, 150ML, RRP £2.00. Available at Asda, Morrisons, Poundland and Tesco.

Vosene Kids specially formulated defence spray conditions and detangles hair. The clinically proven formula also contains natural head lice repellent actives, including citronella oil, to help keep head lice at bay. For best results, use after the paediatrician and dermatologist approved, 3in1 Shampoo.



More information about the product range can be found at <https://vosene.co.uk/>

*Source: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/09/visits-to-nhs-websites-head-lice-advice-page-jump-by-a-third-in-back-to-school-spike/>

** EPOS sales at ASDA, YTD week ending 30 Dec 2023.

*** 1 unit is sold every 2 minutes for the shampoo based on ASDA EPOS sales data for 26 weeks ending 30 Dec 2023.

MUSIC CHAT!

Groovin' Down Memory Lane with **JAMES TAYLOR** of **THE PRISONERS**

MONICA COSTA takes a groovy trip through musical history with James Taylor from The James Taylor Quartet, as they dive into the revival of his legendary Brit band, The Prisoners. With a reunion gig set to shake The London Roundhouse in Camden on 24 May 2024, it's time to prepare for a blast from the past. And none other than former label boss Steve Lamacq is on DJ and hosting duty.



Known for their garage rock vibes, The Prisoners bring that raw energy and DIY ethos straight from the Medway Towns in Kent. Their sound is a cool mix of 60s garage bands like The Sonics and The Seeds, spiced up with mod revival, psychedelic rock, and a dash of rhythm and blues. It's a unique blend that's guaranteed to get you moving.

Back in '82, they dropped their debut LP 'A Taste of Pink' on their own label, Own Up, before catching the attention of Ace Records' 'Big Beat' subsidiary. Hits like 'Hurricane' from 'The Wisermiserdemelza' EP and 'Melanie' from 'Electric Fit' had fans hooked,

and appearances on Channel 4's 'The Tube' sealed their status as garage rock royalty.

But the story doesn't end there. Albums like 'The Last Fourfathers' and 'In From The Cold' kept the hits coming, including the timeless 'Whenever I'm Gone'. Even after bidding adieu in '86, The Prisoners rose from the ashes a decade later for epic live shows, catching the eye of Steve Lamacq's Deceptive record label.

Their influence lives on, with bands like The Charlatans and the Inspiral Carpets openly tipping their hats to The Prisoners as true trailblazers of the scene. So get ready to groove, because The Prisoners are back to rock your socks off once again!

Monica: 2024 is going to be a very exciting year full of gigs with The Prisoners for you, James.

James Taylor: It's wonderful, and in a way, it's the culmination of a life's work. You build things up. In 2023, we managed to sell out at Cadogan Hall, so that's why we stepped up a bit.

Monica: Tell me about The Prisoners. I'm a bit of a fan. There was so much great music during the '80s that maybe you were a little bit overshadowed by other bands.

James Taylor: We kept making music the way we wanted it rather than signing record contracts that would help us. But we felt that would compromise our position. I personally didn't mind that, but some of the guys were really kind of uncompromising. And so that's how it worked out. It was good fun. It was a really good apprenticeship, you know. Learning how to perform and all the rest of it.

Monica: Could you provide some insights into the early days of The Prisoners and how the band came together in the Medway towns in Kent?

James Taylor: Sure, we all attended the same school from the age of 11. We were friends during our school years, and eventually we began playing music individually. Eventually, we decided to form a band together. Initially, we performed at local venues such as sixth form parties and nearby pubs. After about a year, we managed to secure some gigs in London, starting at the Hope and Anchor on Upper Street around 1982. Initially, our audiences in London were quite small, around 15 people per

show. However, we took initiative by putting up posters and producing our own record, "A Taste of Pink." We financed these efforts ourselves. Our dads used to drive us to gigs in those early days. It was a journey of kids making music, gradually building our audience from 15 to 100, then 200, and eventually up to 500 tickets a night by the time we split up. It was quite an evolution, and we had some fantastic experiences along the way.

Monica: It seems that your music has retained its freshness over the years because of its uncompromising nature. To many of us who followed your music back then, it still sounds refreshing and pure. How do you maintain that purity while navigating the realities of the music industry and working with record companies? Artists often face the dilemma of protecting their art versus sharing it with a wider audience. How do you strike that balance?

James Taylor: It's indeed a challenging balance to strike. As artists, our responsibility is to share our work and connect with our audience. Sometimes, we find ourselves making calculations and compromises to reach a broader audience. It's about finding the right balance between preserving the integrity of our art and reaching out to more people. The mechanics of the music business often come into play, and it's a dilemma many artists grapple with. Ultimately, it's essential to recognise that everyone involved has something valuable to contribute, and it's about finding common ground amidst differing perspectives. It's all part of the journey.

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"AS ARTISTS, OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO SHARE OUR WORK AND CONNECT WITH OUR AUDIENCE."

Monica: David Bowie was always pure and uncompromising, much like yourself. But perhaps he was a bit fortunate; he found the right people.

James Taylor: He once mentioned that in the '80s, he started commanding a million pounds per show. He remarked that it stifled his creativity. He



literally felt like he had sold his soul, and I think this is a danger that can occur. For the majority of his career, especially when he was prolific in producing music, he remained incredibly uncompromising. He would often reflect that he remained a relatively small-scale artist until the '80s, when he suddenly became one of the biggest artists around. However, with the enormous financial rewards, it became so much about the money that it seemed to diminish something else within him. Do you see what I mean?

The early Bowie era was exceptional. I particularly admire the Ziggy Stardust era. It embodied the essence of rock and roll. Then it transitioned into pop, but it retained its purity and originality. However, when financial pressures mount, it's challenging to resist the allure of money. How can one turn down such wealth? Perhaps there's also an element of excitement as you expand your reach and realise, "Wow, this is really working now, it's really, really good." Yes, you're absolutely right. It's a tough dilemma. Moreover, some individuals are naturally more creative in their youth, while others flourish creatively as they age. People experience different phases in their lives.

Monica: How do you perceive yourself? Are you more mature now or back then?

James Taylor: Nowadays, I'm involved in producing a lot of music. During my time with The Prisoners, I hardly contributed to music production. These days, I'm engaged in musical production every day. You find your path. I'm the sole member of

The Prisoners who pursued music as a career. The others pursued careers as firefighters, engineers, and the like. I've dedicated my life to making music. Over time, I've invested considerable effort in understanding my own creative processes and what works best for me. As I grow older, my passion for music only deepens.

Monica: How do you reflect on The Prisoners' contribution to the music landscape during that specific era?

James Taylor: Well, we were largely unknown, but we managed to secure a support spot with the Ramones, which allowed us to go on tour, so that was really nice. However, the musical landscape at the time was dominated by heavily produced music, such as the Duran Duran type, which was quite distant from our style. So, in a way, it wasn't our time, if I can put it like that. Nonetheless, on a smaller scale, people liked our music. We had bands that listened to us and were inspired by us, like The Charlatans and the Manchester scene, including The Stone Roses and Blur.

They interviewed us. They came down to Bedway — Damon, Rahal, Worm, and the others. They had

a fan-zine, a magazine, and they interviewed us before they became successful. So, we did have an influence on people. In The Prisoners, there is still a very strong desire to not compromise in a kind of puritanical way. However, I'm the least like that in the band. I'm the person who wants to open the music out to more people, to share it.

Monica: The Charlatans were heavily influenced by your music, but personally, I prefer The Prisoners. I can feel your distinct tunes in their music, but I prefer The Prisoners.

James Taylor: They were friends of ours. We would be on tour, they would be the support band, and they looked up to us. They wanted to sound like us, and they did—they sounded exactly like us. But they cleverly found a way to sell it to the public. However, that's not always for the best, to put it that way.

Monica: "Hurricane" is one of the songs I really love. What was the inspiration behind that particular track and its significance within The Prisoners' discography?

James Taylor: "Hurricane" is about broken



relationships, isn't it? It's about when you're young, you fall in love, and then it all goes horribly wrong – the brokenness and the impossible feelings that come with that. I think The Prisoners were quite into all of that kind of pain, a teenage angst.

Monica: Your music arrived perhaps a tad late, don't you think? If you had come a few years earlier...

James Taylor: Before or after, it wouldn't have mattered. Had it been earlier, it might have worked. If later, it could've been fine too. But in 1983, no chance. Back then, it was all about Spandau Ballet and Duran Duran. We were the only ones doing what we did. No one else at all at that time.

Monica: Indeed, it's regrettable. But now, you're resurrecting it. And I believe the timing is spot on. Those who were into that music then are now nostalgic for it. It's the perfect moment to reintroduce it.

James Taylor: We just sold 2,000 tickets for the Roundhouse. So you might be onto something.

Monica: Count me in.

James Taylor: People do seem eager to hear The Prisoners again. Perhaps this is our moment.

Monica: You once appeared on Channel 4's The Tube alongside other big bands. What memories do you cherish from that experience? How did it shape your path?

James Taylor: We had our girlfriends make us those Star Trek clothes. Then we went on TV, and it was thrilling. Everything we did in The Prisoners was fun. We had our own humour, a language of our own, like the four of us were one. We laughed through it all, even when things went south on tour in Europe – van breakdowns, gigs cancelled, money lost. We always found joy in the madness. It was a golden time.

On the French show, they talked a lot, in French, while we were itching to play. Our drummer was like, "Let's get on with it!" There was banter. Johnny, the drummer, was my best mate, so funny and mischievous. There was always something silly happening. We misbehaved on that TV show, and it was worth it. The host scolded us afterward, said we'd never be back.

So, this time around, we'll be friendlier. We want to make friends. Back then, there were fewer restrictions, more spontaneity. I miss that.

Monica: As an '80s girl myself, I recall that spontaneity. Watching that clip, I felt that vibe – the banter, the freedom. Today, spontaneity seems undervalued. That's what we've lost. Maybe it's why The Prisoners are resonating now. They bring back that spirit. Please bring it back, at least the freedom that comes with it. Nowadays, it's all about careers and money. I've interviewed Colin Blunstone of The Zombies many times. He shared how, in the '60s, they cared only about making great music. The Prisoners are good because they're uncompromising and rebellious. I love that.

James Taylor: Back then, musicians spoke out against societal wrongs. Now, they're too content, too happy. They should lead and inspire. Love should be their message. Hate and war dominate now, limiting our freedom and spontaneity. The world is at war, and it's disheartening. I hope musicians have the courage, like the Sex Pistols did, to challenge society and change the world.

During that era, many musicians found themselves behind bars at some point due to their perceived threat to society. Consider iconic bands like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and the Sex Pistols – all of whom experienced incarceration in their quest to challenge the status quo and effect change on a global scale.

Monica: The Prisoners didn't end up behind bars despite the band name – it's quite an intriguing choice. How did you come up with it?

James Taylor: Well, the lead singer's father was a prison governor here in Rochester. You see, we have four prisons in this town, and he was the man in charge. But if you ask him, he'd probably deny that's where the name came from.

Personally, I'm not a fan of incarceration, but this town has a strong military presence. It's the same place that gave us Charles Dickens, another figure who reshaped society for the better. Despite the challenges, we must envision a better world. By immersing ourselves in imagination, our music can flourish. It's akin to Beethoven, who, despite living through turmoil, created beautiful music from his visions.



Monica: If we delve into the songs of The Prisoners, particularly “Melanie,” is it about lost love?

James Taylor: Indeed, “Melanie” explores finding solace in someone, only to lose them and grapple with that loss. Falling in love at a young age feels almost like madness – it consumes you entirely. It’s akin to sudden fame, and losing it can shatter you. Both “Hurricane” and “Melanie” capture that aftermath of loss and the struggle to rebuild.

Our dynamic shifted during the reunion in ‘97. Unfortunately, I don’t recall much about that period due to my struggle with substance abuse. However, I’ve been clean ever since. The band reformed, and we made recordings, but the drug haze clouds my memory of those songs. It was a rebellious time; everyone around me was the same. The ‘90s felt like one big party, but eventually, we had to piece ourselves back together.

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MUSIC, AT ITS CORE, IS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE

Monica: It seemed like drug use was almost a trend at the time. Do you think it influenced creativity?

James Taylor: Indeed, many artists are sensitive and susceptible to addiction. Drugs can offer a different perspective, as David Bowie famously said, but ultimately, it’s about finding balance between the childlike creativity and adult

responsibility. When I write music, I tap into that childlike state of playfulness. It’s where the magic happens.

Monica: The Roundhouse gig on 24th May 2024 – what can fans expect?

James Taylor: Fans can expect The Prisoners at their best. We’ve been playing smaller gigs to prepare, and the band is tight. We chose the Roundhouse for its capacity to accommodate 3000 people; this project is about sharing our music. We want to preserve our integrity while reaching a wider audience.

Monica: Are there any standout moments that epitomise The Prisoners’ rebellious rock ethos?

James Taylor: As teenagers, we revelled in a sense of freedom and expression, unbothered by consequences. The day the band ended was devastating, but rediscovering it now brings pure joy. The explosive gigs, the anarchic energy – those are the anecdotes that define our rebellious spirit. Reconnecting with that feeling, even decades later, is priceless.

Monica: Your insights are truly touching. Music indeed has a responsibility to foster authenticity and unity. It’s been a pleasure hearing your perspective.

James Taylor: Thank you, Monica. You’ve been a fantastic interviewer, allowing me to express myself fully. Music, at its core, is an expression of love, and I’m grateful for the opportunity to share that.

THE PRISONERS

+ **VERY** SPECIAL GUESTS

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Cinema Made in Italy: London's hottest cinematic extravaganza returns this Spring!

By Monica Costa

London's vibrant cultural scene is set to welcome back the much-anticipated Cinema Made in Italy festival from 20th to 24th March 2024. Organised by Cinecittà, in collaboration with the French Institute in London and The Italian Cultural Institute, this year marks the festival's 14th edition, promising to showcase the best of Italian cinema from the past year.

Cinema Made in Italy serves as a platform to catch the cutting edge of Italian filmmaking, with several films making their UK premieres alongside a classic Italian movie.

Nicola Maccanico, CEO of Cinecittà, highlights the festival's commitment to inclusivity and diversity, with 50% of the films directed by women and 30% being first features. Among the highly anticipated films is Paola Cortellesi's "There's Still Tomorrow," which became the highest-grossing film of the year in Italy, capturing the hearts of audiences nationwide.

Other notable highlights include Alice Rohrwacher's "La Chimera," Edoardo De Angelis' "Comandante," and Ginevra Elkann's "I Told You So," each offering a unique perspective on contemporary Italian society.

In addition to film screenings, Cinema Made in Italy offers audiences the opportunity to engage with filmmakers through Q&A sessions following select screenings, allowing viewers to gain insights into the creative process behind each film.

The festival also celebrates Italian animation with the screening of "Chicken For Linda!" winner of the Cristal Award at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival. For classic film enthusiasts, Luchino Visconti's 1951 masterpiece "Bellissima" starring Anna Magnani will be presented in a fully restored 4K version, offering a glimpse into the golden age of Italian cinema.

Cinema Made in Italy is not only a celebration of cinematic artistry but also a testament to the enduring cultural exchange between Italy and the UK.





C I N E M A MADE **I** N ITALY

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Book corner

'Martha Crumble and the Dendro Doorway': A Classroom 'Must-Have,' New Children's Book Turns Learning into an Adventure

Written by Dave Caswell, 'Martha Crumble and the Dendro Doorway' teaches valuable life lessons within a captivating story. Children and caregivers alike will delight in Martha's adventures as she discovers the enchanting world of Dendro; a world populated by talking animals, gnomes and bursting with magic. Ideal for classroom discussions or a bedtime story, 'Martha Crumble and the Dendro Doorway' will resonate with young minds and inspire creativity, engagement and interaction.

Children are invited to journey to 'Dendro,' the thrilling creation of author Dave Caswell and the centrepiece of his new book, 'Martha Crumble and the Dendro Doorway.' The magical tale not only promises to captivate young minds with its exciting adventures, but also serves as a profound teaching tool, emphasizing virtues like courage, forgiveness and healthy self-esteem.

Dendro will introduce young readers to environmental consciousness and the power of nature, all while celebrating the growth and resilience of the book's young protagonist and heroine, Martha Crumble. An ideal addition to any young readers' library, 'Martha Crumble and the Dendro Doorway' is perfect for explorers, dreamers and anyone seeking to nurture a more conscious and courageous next generation.

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The first day at a new school is always strange. But for Martha Crumble, this is no ordinary school. And as she will come to learn, she is no ordinary person.

After an encounter with a strange cat, a message from a peculiar library book, and a trip down the roots of an ancient tree, Martha finds herself in the mysterious world of Dendro; a world inhabited by gnomes, trees, talking animals, and magic.



Dendro is under attack and Martha and her friends must find and close a mysterious doorway in order to save, not only the world of Dendro, but also their own.

Fears must be overcome, courage found, and sacrifices made, in this magical and thrilling adventure where worlds are entwined, and nothing is ever as it seems.

"Writing about Martha Crumble was a journey in itself. I wanted to create a world where children could learn about themselves and the environment, whilst still having loads of fun. I believe stories are tremendously powerful teaching tools, and through Martha, I hope to encourage kids to be brave, kind and environmentally aware."



The author:

Dave Caswell has worked in International Community Development since 2004, and has a Masters in Intercultural Studies, with a specialism in 'Children at Risk.' Dave has lived and worked in Uganda, India, North America, and South Africa. Martha Crumble and the Dendro Doorway is his fourth children's book.

For more information visit:
<http://davecaswellauthor.com>

Book corner

'Mummy and Me': Debut picture book celebrating solo parenting by Lydia Bright and illustrated by Jojo Clinch

This adventurous and moving story is a celebration of single parenting and how our differences can bring us closer together.



'Mummy and Me' is the heart-warming debut picture book from much-loved TV personality, influencer and entrepreneur Lydia Bright, beautifully illustrated by Jojo Clinch and published by Puffin (£7.99).

Etta and Mummy are a terrific team of two – a small family, perfectly formed. But on one of their “Magic Making Days”, they decide to write their very own story together. In it, Etta meets a big pirate family and starts to wonder what life would be like if it wasn't just her and Mummy. It takes a wild and ever-so-slightly-scary adventure to remind her just how special her relationship with Mummy is – and that they are the dream crew of two!

This is a book about the magical relationship between all mums and their children, but the story developed during Lydia's own journey as a single mother, which she has shared with her 2.5 million social media followers. In the UK there are around 2.9 million single-parent families accounting, for 15% of all families, and around 84% (2.5 million) of lone-parent families are mothers* (Office for National Statistics). Puffin is thrilled to publish this truly special book, celebrating single mums who are often under-represented, under-supported and under-celebrated, as they lean into their mission to publish books for every child everywhere, and ensuring all children see their family set-ups reflected in their books.

Lydia Bright added: “I started this journey when I was facing motherhood as a single parent. I was a little lost and in need of a distraction. That's when I started

writing. I discovered my set-up was to be very similar to that of elephants in the wild – this became the foundation of creating a story for my future daughter, so she could feel represented. Like the journey of motherhood, the story is filled with magic, adventure and a little bit of chaos. It shares the beautiful bond between a mother and her child and the love that comes from family (whatever that looks like).”

Jojo Clinch commented: “It has been a delight to work with the amazing team at Penguin on Lydia's lovely, fun and special picture book. I've enjoyed every minute of it, and I can't wait for it to be out in the world, celebrating all the wonderful single-parent families everywhere.”

The author:



Lydia Bright is a much-loved TV personality who launched her career on the Bafta award-winning *The Only Way is Essex*. Since appearing on the show, she has gone on to star in many TV shows including *The Island* with Bear Grylls, *The Jump* and *Celebrity Hunted*. Lydia became an entrepreneur in 2016, opening a boutique and e-commerce website that led to her own

clothing brand, stocked by ASOS, Very and New Look. In 2018, Lydia and her family made history by launching *The Brights* – the first-ever reality podcast, that has now surpassed 1 million downloads. Currently Lydia is focused on influencing, content creation and property. Lydia's proudest achievement is becoming a mum to daughter Loretta in 2020. 'Mummy and Me' is Lydia's debut picture book.

The illustrator:

Jojo Clinch is an illustrator based near Brighton. She works from her garden studio, surrounded by the South Downs and some noisy magpies. She finds inspiration from everyday life with her family and her lifelong love of picture books. When she's not in the studio, she can be found walking her dog Benji, or daydreaming in a café.

'Mummy & Me' by Lydia Bright and illustrated by Jojo Clinch (Puffin Books) is out now.

For more information please visit:
www.penguin.co.uk/books/452160/mummy-and-me-by-bright-lydia/

*Data taken from: Office for National Statistics.

Book corner

Lancashire Dad Publishes Scary Story Books To Support Children's Mental Health

Written to help youngsters face the overwhelming number of challenges that impact on their everyday lives, British author Zak Bellingham entertains, scares and thrills with his two-part series – *Be Afraid*.

With both installments mixing up the literary genres – from children's horror, mystery, comedy, science fiction and more – children and their parents/guardians find themselves immersed and entertained by stories that engender courage and, without exception, have the mental health of readers at their heart.

Aimed at children aged 7 to 14 (but still a great read for older kids and adults) and with no 'dud' story in either compendium, these two installments by Zak Bellingham are attracting five-star reviews from captivated readers and will leave an indelible and supportive mark on all its readers.

And all fans will also be pleased to learn a third edition is in prospect.

Be Afraid... A Little Book of Strange & Scary Stories for Kids

Nobody likes being afraid. If you're a child, would you dare to read this book on your own in a dark room? Don't worry - it's ok to be afraid. This is a collection of 14 highly original short stories for kids (and adults)

to read together or alone, around a campfire, or as bedtime stories. These are strange little stories that may frighten, excite or make you think. Who was the twin in the cupboard? Why did Laura cry "Alien!"? And what is the Fear Feeder? If you want to find out more, read on - and face your fear.

Be Afraid... Volume II - More Strange & Scary Stories for Kids

From pizzas that attack, to teeth that just want a bite, *Be Afraid... Volume II* is a follow-up to the original *Be Afraid...* that launched the series in spring 2023. *Be Afraid... Volume II* follows in the themes of the original and contains strange stories that focus on children overcoming fears and challenging circumstances. Where did the Boy find his Voice? Why did the Crowd go Wild? And do aliens really exist? If you want answers to these questions, you'd better get reading!

The author says:

"Some years ago, when my daughter was just seven, she had a fascination with horror stories. As we had no actual children's horror books in the house I was forced to essentially make up stories on the spot, every evening - for years! After a year or so of inventing a story each night at bedtime, I told her that I would one day pick out the best stories and create a book. She responded by rolling her eyes at me; eight years later, I finally found enough free time to achieve my goal."

Independently published, Zak Bellingham's *Be Afraid...* books are available on Amazon.



Mum Hacks: Easter Fun Tips from Dyslexia Superpower Casey Major-Bunce



Busy Mum of four and hacks queen Casey Major-Bunce @majormumhacks has over 400k followers on Instagram who love her fun and creative ideas.

Casey believes some of her natural resourcefulness and ability to think outside of the box result from her dyslexia, which she now considers her superpower.

She shared some of her top tips for Easter with us:



Fill an egg box with plastic eggs and pop some snacks in each egg for a fun snack. My kids love this, and it's a really good way to get children to try different foods.



Ice lolly eggs are a bit different - use an egg box and fill it up with plastic eggs. Use a piping tip to fill them with juice, pop a lolly stick in, and leave them overnight. My kids love these!



Fill an ice cream cone with mini Easter eggs and wrap them in cellophane. Tie off with a bow. These make the cutest low-cost Easter favours.



Want to try something a bit different? Buy a small box of Lego and using plastic eggs, fill each one with different parts. Leave the box and a note with a sign telling your child what they must do. You can also hide puzzle pieces inside the eggs.



Fill plastic eggs with notes of fun activities you can do together; it doesn't have to be expensive tickets. It could be 1 hour at the park, playing football in the garden, or watching a favourite film together.



For older kids - let everyone stay up past bedtime for a fun flashlight hunt, or use small glow sticks and add them to the eggs so they can find them in the dark!



If you have more than one child and want to make Easter egg hunts a little fairer, give each child a different colour plastic egg and tell them they can only collect their colour.



Too much sugar? On an Easter egg hunt, you could pop in hair ties, bracelets, Barbie clothes, or even Play-Doh instead.

Family Adventure: Exploring the Mystical Isle of Skye

By Monica Costa

Hey mums! So, picture this: we're chilling in the heart of Scotland's Inner Hebrides, on this mind-blowing island called Skye. It's like stepping into a fantasy world with all its history, stories, and crazy beautiful scenery. Whether you're up for some family fun or a romantic getaway, Skye is where it's at!



Where we landed: The turn-back-time Duisdale Hotel

Our journey kicks off at the Duisdale Hotel, this fabulous Victorian mansion turned into the ultimate Highland hangout. Sitting pretty by the Sound of Sleat with those breath-taking Knoydart mountains in the background, while taking a hot-tub in the garden, it's like being in a movie. Whether we're chilling indoors with a Gaelic coffee at hand or out exploring, the journey here is just as fantastic as the destination.

Feasting Like Royalty: Dining at Duisdale

Okay, hold onto your taste buds, because dining at the hotel's restaurant is like a foodie fantasy come true. Every dish is a masterpiece made from local



goodies, from juicy venison to fresh scallops. And let's talk about that special chutney, straight from the hotel's garden - it's like a flavour explosion in your mouth!

Our foodie adventure:

Starters: We went all in with scallops and duck parfait, plus homemade bread with caramelised onion and cheddar cheese. Oh, and don't forget that lavender-infused butter - talk about fancy!

Main Course: Venison and lamb were our jam, with all the seasonal veggie goodness and the chef's killer chutney.

Dessert: Apple soufflés and a plate of Scottish cheeses? Yes, please! Every bite was like a little slice of heaven.

Our '80s style journey: Riding the Caledonian Sleeper from London

Our adventure truly begins as we hop aboard the Caledonian Sleeper, the night train from London to Inverness. It's like stepping back in time, but with all the modern comforts and yummy food. Seriously, who needs a plane when you can travel in style like this and overnight (so you can save the daytime for more adventures)?

Exploring Skye: Diving into nature's playground

As soon as we hit the island, it's like we're in a whole new world of epic landscapes and crazy



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**"A whole new
world of epic
landscapes."**

history. From the Cuillin Hills to the fairy-tale vibes of Trotternish, Skye is just begging to be explored. And Portree? It's like something out of a storybook, with its colourful harbour and buzzing vibe.

Our Top Adventures:

The Fairy Glen: Talk about stepping into a fairy-tale! It's all gnarled trees and mystical vibes – I half expected to bump into some actual fairies!

The Fairy Pools: Crystal-clear waters surrounded by killer mountains? People totally take the plunge!

Wildlife Watching: Red deer, sea eagles, and those adorable “hairy coos” – we saw it all! It's like a real-life nature documentary up in here.

Hiking Adventures: Trekking through the Quiraing and the Old Man of Storr? It's like being on top of the world, with views that'll blow your mind.

Neist Point Lighthouse: Sunsets and marine life? Um, yes, please! It's like a postcard come to life.

Getting lost in Skye's legends and folklore:

We totally got sucked into Skye's crazy history and

legends. From giants to fairies, love stories to epic battles – this place has it all! It's like being in our own fantasy movie, unravelling the mysteries of the past.

Fun facts to drop at parties:

Musical Island: The Skye Boat Song? Skye has its very own theme song! Yeah, it's all about Prince Charles Edward Stuart's epic escape after the Jacobite Rising.

Hollywood Calling: Skye is a Hollywood hotspot! It's been the backdrop for films like “Prometheus,” “Macbeth,” “The BFG,” “Snow White and the Huntsman,” and “King Arthur: Legend of the Sword.”

Trump Connection: Believe it or not, Skye has a connection to Donald Trump! His mother, Mary Anne MacLeod, hailed from the Isle of Lewis, which has a historical link to Dunvegan.

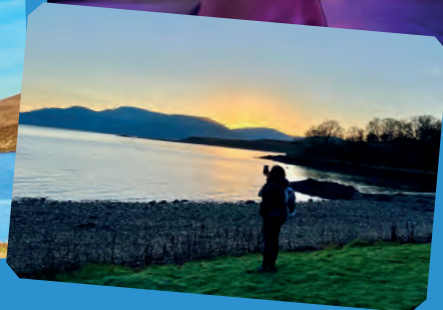
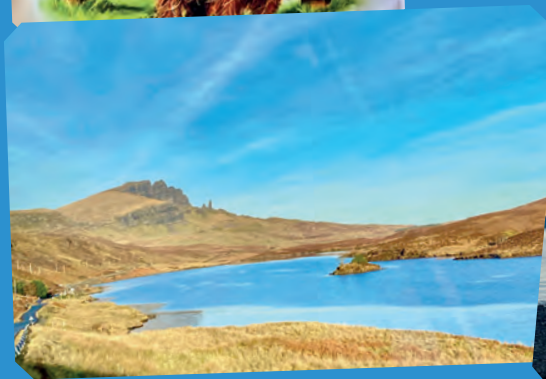
Unique Ferry Ride: Hop on the MV Glenachulish, the last manually operated turntable ferry in the world, and cross Kyle Rhea to reach Skye.



Gaelic Coffee anyone? It's made with whisky. Talisker Distillery is the only place on Skye making that world-famous Scotch whisky!

Dino Discoveries: Skye isn't just about history — it's also about prehistory! Check out An Corran for dinosaur footprints, including prints from ornithopods and sauropods. Talk about a blast from the past!

So, whether you're after adventure, relaxation, or just a taste of Scotland's awesomeness, Skye is where it's at. Grab your bags, too many Gaelic coffees (with whisky of course!) and let the magic of Skye transport you into fairyland!



The 'Future of Education is Emotional,

Dr. Holly Brings Cutting-Edge EQ Training to UK Families and Schools

Clinical psychologist Dr. Holly Symons launches Raising EQ®, bringing cutting-edge emotional intelligence (EQ) training to UK families, educators and schools.

Witnessing the impact of EQ on individual and family wellbeing, Dr. Holly aims to empower families and educators to raise emotionally intelligent children. Her evidence-based approach emphasizes self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills.

To learn more about Dr. Holly and Raising EQ®, please visit www.raising-eq.com



Why EQ Matters:

- Higher EQ leads to better academic performance, well-being, and career success.
- Studies show strong links between EQ and higher professional earnings.
- Dr. Holly's expertise has already benefited schools and attracted large audiences.

Raising EQ Services:

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- Educational workshops and training: empowering educators to integrate EQ into curriculum and support social-emotional development.
- With demand for EQ skills expected to skyrocket, Dr. Holly's arrival fills a crucial need in the UK.

Life is full of little celebrations!



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