

London Mums

FREE - Issue 44

Spring 2025

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**RaRa's Music:
From heartbreak to
soulful sounds**

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Hello London Mums,

**the season has turned,
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fragrance discerned!
Sun-kissed mornings, skies
clear and bright, Spring is a
canvas of colour and light.**



RaRa's story blooms with a melody sweet,
From Cheltenham's charm to Memphis' beat.
A red piano, a poodle in tow,
Her soulful sound sets hearts aglow.

Carmen Consoli, with Sicily's grace,
Weaves magic in music, a time-honoured embrace.
Her voice is a bridge from past to now,
A songbird whose art makes spirits bow.

Expert advice, serene and wise,
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Books, oh books! Adventures untold,
From *Princerella* to *Maya Mysun* bold.
Heroes arise, new worlds unfold,
Stories like treasures, timelessly gold.

So here's to spring, with all its delight,
A season of wonder, a season so bright.
Embrace the change, the bloom and the cheer,
For magic awaits – the best time is here!

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Monica Costa

Editor in chief, Founder of London Mums and
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RaRa's Music: From heartbreak to soulful sounds

By Monica Costa

I first met RaRa two years ago at her penthouse accommodation overlooking the River Thames, with stunning views of the city skyline. We sat next to a cherry red baby grand piano, while two playful toy poodles scampered around us, adding to the relaxed yet vibrant atmosphere. At that time, when she was known as Raquel Reno, I attended her live performances in Camden and Central London. The vibes and sounds were incredible, and I could tell back then that she was destined for greatness. Though the path has been tortuous, I have always known she would get there in time. Now she lives in the Cotswolds enjoying a very fulfilled and happy country life, where her heart is.

With songs drenched in the rich sounds of southern soul, you could easily mistake RaRa for one of the iconic divas of the 1960s when you first hear her music.

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**"The pain and
hardship have made
me stronger"**

Growing up in Cheltenham, RaRa discovered her parents' collection of classic records, which included Aretha Franklin, Dusty Springfield, Whitney Houston, and Mariah Carey - voices she admired and aspired to emulate. Driven by her love for music, she travelled the world, moving to China where she joined a band, then to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, where she formed *The Cherry Bomb*

Gang - Dubai's first rockabilly band, giving modern pop songs a vintage twist. But when Covid hit, everything came to a standstill. Returning home, RaRa focused on her own material, drawing inspiration from the timeless soul of the '60s.

"The female performers of that era had such raw energy and edge: Ronnie Spector, Tina Turner, and The Shangri-Las. I was inspired by both their style and sound," she explains. It wasn't long before she caught the attention of an investor and manager, who introduced her to renowned producer Nigel Lewis, the force behind hits by Dina Carroll and Eternal. This connection ultimately led her to Nashville, where she recorded with legendary musicians, eventually landing in Memphis - home of Elvis Presley and soul music. Here, she met Grammy Award-winning producer Boo Mitchell, famed for his work on *Uptown Funk*. RaRa is now working with the Hi Rhythm Section (known for their work



with Al Green) at the iconic Royal Studios in Memphis.

With lyrics that are both dramatic and romantic, RaRa's music draws deeply from personal experience, exploring themes of broken relationships, family pressures, and the struggles of being a young woman trying to make it in the music industry.

Back in London in 2023, RaRa continued to hone her songwriting, collaborating with prominent artists and producers, including John Fortis (producer of Ellie Goulding's *How Long Will I Love You*), Paul O'Duffy (co-writer of Amy Winehouse's *Wake Up Alone*), Ant Whiting (co-writer of John Newman's *Love Me Again*), and James Reynolds (known for his work with Dua Lipa and Paloma Faith).

Her music video for *Sweet Hurricane* marked an exciting leap into her creative world, portraying a turbulent relationship where love and toxicity collide, exploring the extremes couples endure to stay together, even when the reasons may not be clear. Dramatic moments, like the smashing of a baby grand piano, help convey the emotional intensity of the narrative.

It's been two years since we last spoke, and you've undergone some significant changes - both personally and artistically. How has this transformation influenced your music and creative process?

RaRa: It's been a challenging couple of years, really more like a rebirth than anything else. There were so many things I didn't understand about certain events, so I turned to song-writing as a way to release those emotions. The pain and hardship have made me stronger, and they led me to Memphis - where I found a new sound and collaborated with Grammy Award-winning producer Boo Mitchell. I've also learned to be



truer to myself, both as a person and an artist. One of the biggest changes was my name. I now realise I was trying to please others, but RaRa is who I really am - it's what everyone calls me, so I'm embracing it now.

When we last spoke, it was two years ago in a penthouse overlooking the River Thames with a stunning view, sitting next to a cherry red grand piano. You were known as Raquel Reno back then. Since then, I've seen you perform live at two gigs in Camden and Central London. What's the biggest change in you, both artistically and personally, since we last spoke?

RaRa: Wow, yes! That interview feels like a lifetime ago. Back then, I was still figuring things out, still exploring what my true sound and identity were. Since then, I've gone through a lot of personal growth, and I think that has really shaped my music. The performances in Camden and Central London were such key moments for me - they showed me just how much I've evolved as an artist.

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I'm much more confident in who I am now, both on stage and in my music.

Your new music seems deeper and more mature, reflecting your recent experiences. Can you tell us about the themes you're exploring in your upcoming work?

RaRa: I wanted my music to resonate deeply with listeners. There were times when I felt isolated and heartbroken, and I wanted to connect with others who might be feeling the same. My songs explore themes like pain, heartbreak, transformation, and the journey of finding yourself again after difficult experiences. I truly believe that everything we go through is part of our path, and I want my music to reflect that.

You've been spending a lot of time in Memphis producing your new music. What is it about Memphis that inspires you, and how does it compare to your creative experiences in London?

RaRa: Memphis opened my eyes to gospel, soul, and blues - it's in the air, you can feel it. I've had the privilege of

working with the Hi Rhythm Section (Al Green's band) and local gospel singers, diving into the music scene there. The sound in Memphis is raw, real, and unique. It's exactly the authenticity I've been searching for in my music. I'm recording at Royal Studios, where legends like Al Green, Otis Redding, and Aretha Franklin have recorded. The deep roots of soul and gospel in Memphis are something London just can't replicate. I came here for the sound - and it's been an awakening for me.

Your breakup seems to have been a catalyst for this new chapter. How has heartbreak shaped your song-writing, and do you find it easier or harder to create music from a place of pain?

RaRa: I don't think I'd be able to write without having lived through real experiences. It's much easier for me to write when I'm drawing from genuine emotions. It's like a flow - when I'm in that zone, the words come naturally. Pain can be a muse, in a way. It's all part of my creative process.

You mentioned in our last interview that you were working on an EP. Is this new music part of that project, or has it evolved into something bigger?

RaRa: It's now going to be an album! I've recorded so much in Memphis, and it feels right to release a full album. I'm calling it *Made in Memphis*. There's just so much material, and it all ties together, so it would be silly not to release it as a complete album.

Your sound has always had a vintage vibe, but it seems to be evolving. How would you describe your new musical style, and who are your biggest influences right now?

RaRa: I've always been inspired by the drama and power in music. Right now, my biggest influences are Elvis for his big voice and dramatic songs, and the sounds of The Shangri-Las, Dusty



Springfield, Aretha Franklin, and Phil Spector's productions. I want my music to have that same bold, timeless quality.

Nashville is known for its storytelling tradition. Have you found yourself leaning more into narrative-driven songs with your new material?

RaRa: Country music is incredible - I've really fallen in love with it. Nashville's song-writing culture has definitely influenced me. I recently collaborated with Trey Calloway at the Nashville Songwriters Association on Music Row, and who knows, I might even release a country album one day! The art of storytelling is something I really admire, and it's something I'm exploring more with my new material.

What's the most personal song you've written during this period, and what's the story behind it?

RaRa: *What If It Was Your Daughter* is probably the most personal and raw song I've written. I was heartbroken when I wrote it. It's about being in a toxic but passionate relationship, where the other person ends it in a brutal, unfair way. I asked myself, *Would he want his daughter to be treated like that?* It's deeply personal, and I'm a bit scared to release it - it's very vulnerable for me.

You've always been inspired by strong female artists. How do you see yourself fitting into the legacy of women in rock and soul music today?

RaRa: I feel I could definitely make my mark. I've always admired the strong, independent women in music, and I've always had a bit of a rock edge to me - having been in a rock band before. I hope to continue that tradition and add my own voice to the mix.

What's next for you musically? Are you planning a tour, a full album, or more collaborations?

RaRa: I'm planning a church tour to



coincide with my album release later this year. The album should be finished by summer. I'm also working with Mississippi Macdonald on live shows and some writing, and we're looking to cut a track for the album *Made in Memphis*. There's lots to look forward to!

www.raraofficial.com

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ASK THE EXPERT!

How Hypnotherapy Can Improve Children's Mental Health and Help Them Cope with Anxiety

By Monica Costa

Children today face growing stressors, from academic pressures to navigating the digital world. With rising mental health concerns, many parents seek alternative therapies. Hypnotherapy, rooted in relaxation and focused attention, is gaining recognition as a powerful tool to help children manage anxiety and boost emotional well-being.

"Children are naturally imaginative and open to suggestions, making them ideal for hypnotherapy," says Marygrace Anderson, a certified hypnotherapist. "Using their creativity, we guide them to reframe thoughts and develop healthier coping mechanisms."

Understanding Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy uses hypnosis to access the subconscious mind. Unlike mind control misconceptions, hypnosis is a state of heightened focus and relaxation. In this state, children become more receptive to positive suggestions and guided visualisation, helping them address fears and anxieties.

"With children, sessions are always tailored to their age and personality," Anderson explains. "We use storytelling, visual imagery, or role-playing to engage their minds and empower them."

How Hypnotherapy Helps with Anxiety

Anxiety can manifest as difficulty sleeping, excessive worry, or physical symptoms like stomach aches. Hypnotherapy targets these symptoms by helping children understand and manage their fears.

"For instance, if a child fears school or public speaking, we use visualisation to help them imagine feeling confident and calm," says Anderson. "This reduces immediate anxiety and builds resilience."

Studies show hypnotherapy can lower physiological stress responses, like elevated heart rates, and enhance emotional regulation.

Building Self-Confidence

Beyond treating anxiety, hypnotherapy strengthens self-confidence. Many children experience negative self-talk, which worsens anxiety.

"Through hypnotherapy, we replace negative



thought patterns with positive affirmations," Anderson says. "Instead of 'I can't do this,' the child learns to believe, 'I am capable and strong.' These small shifts have a profound impact."

The Role of Parents

Hypnotherapy is most effective when parents reinforce positive changes at home.

"Parents play a critical role," Anderson notes. "I provide them with strategies like relaxation techniques and bedtime routines to promote security."

Addressing Misconceptions

Many hesitate to try hypnotherapy due to misconceptions that it resembles stage hypnosis. Anderson clarifies: "Hypnotherapy is an evidence-based practice focused on relaxation and mental clarity. It empowers children to unlock their potential to heal and thrive."

By addressing fears and equipping children with resilience tools, hypnotherapy offers a gentle, non-invasive approach to mental well-being.

"Every child is unique, and hypnotherapy honours that," Anderson concludes. "It gives them confidence to face challenges and the freedom to enjoy being a child again."



Special offer given to London Mums Magazine readers, with a simple promo on Marygrace Anderson's hypnotherapy website: www.mghypnosis.co.uk

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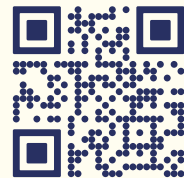


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Music chat!

Carmen Consoli: The Voice of Sicily speaking to the world by Monica Costa

Carmen Consoli is one of the most authentic and respected voices in Italian music, a singer-songwriter who has managed to maintain her artistic integrity without ever compromising. Her career, built on talent and consistency, continues to inspire generations of musicians and listeners.

On 7th February 2025, Carmen presented her new work, *Terra ca nun senti*, at the Britten Theatre within the prestigious Royal College of Music in London. This event was made possible thanks to the Consulate General of Italy in London, with the aim of promoting Italian culture around the world.

This musical project is a journey through the Sicilian language, a tribute to the cultural roots that have influenced not only her music but also international popular culture. With her unmistakable style that blends rock, folk, and traditional sounds, Carmen offered the audience an emotional experience, stirring the deepest chords of the soul.

For me, listening to her was more than just a concert. It was a return to my roots, an invisible embrace that took me back in time, to when I was a child and my second mother, Cecilia, raised me along with my four aunts and my grandmother Lina – all extraordinary Sicilian women. Though I was born and raised between Bologna and Ravenna, my heart has always beaten for Sicily too. The stories told by my grandmother, the warmth of Sicilian voices around me, the musicality of that accent which still moves me every time I hear it . . . all of this binds me deeply to Carmen's land.

That's why hearing her live touched me in a special way. Her words, her music, the way she carries forward Sicilian tradition

with pride and passion awakened a sense of belonging in me that is hard to explain. When she says, "The more local you are, the more international you become," I couldn't agree more. Roots are a bridge, not a limit. And the Sicilian language, so powerful and evocative, becomes an invisible thread that connects past and present, North and South, Italy and the world.

Thanks to Complitaly, I had the opportunity for this interview with Carmen – a unique moment that further deepened my bond with her music and that Sicily which, for me, has always been a part of who I am.

How was the launch of your latest musical project in London?

Carmen Consoli: I received a very





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**It's a great
 honour for me
 to bring Italian
 music around
 the world.**

encouraging reception. I met fellow Sicilians and Italians. I love London. It's a great honour for me to bring Italian music around the world.

***Terra ca nun senti* is thrilling to listen to. What inspired you to embrace this project?**

Carmen: Love for the past and my roots. I believe the past holds the key to opening the door to the future. I've tried to draw from my history, and I enjoyed doing so because it helps me see the future more clearly. By singing songs written at the end of the 18th century and in the 19th century, I see the future. One day, I was invited to play with the group of friends with whom I share my musical projects, and with whom decisions are made collectively. We were invited to perform at the ancient Greek theatre in Syracuse. It was there that we got the idea to recover our traditions. Sicilian music is fascinating and complex because it seems that many classical music composers, like Vincenzo Bellini from Catania, in order to make a living, also composed music for popular tunes. So, it's very rich.

What do you truly want to express with *Terra ca nun senti*?

Carmen: *Terra ca nun senti* is a deaf land. Deaf to its children, it pushes them to leave in search of an Eldorado elsewhere and does nothing to bring them back. It's a song by Rosa Balistreri, written in the 1970s, in which she denounced a corrupt and uncaring government. I chose to title this concert *Terra ca nun senti* in her honour and to highlight her spirit of protest, which is still relevant today. Sicilian music is very similar to Aretha Franklin's blues, for example. The difference lies in the scales used. Aretha Franklin's musical language is oriented towards pentatonic scales, blues scales. Rosa Balistreri's is based on Greek, Arab, and harmonic minor scales. The language changes, but the intent is very similar. Both musical styles stem from inner suffering.

For the London concert, how did you select the pieces from the Sicilian repertoire, and how did you connect them with your classic works?



Carmen: I tried to select classic pieces that have a common thread with my own works. The recurring concept is always about fighting to be oneself and to reach the truth.

You are known for your authenticity. From the beginning until now, how has this authenticity evolved, and how do you express it as a woman and as a mother?

Carmen: I live music as a natural expression of mine, as a vital function, something I do best. Fortunately, it has also become my work. So, all this effort is aimed at something I'm passionate about. We tell our children to pursue a course of study for passion first, not for a career that promises to earn more money. As a very enlightened Calabrian professor once said, if we tell our children to become doctors for the money, they will become doctors for money, not with the spirit of Hippocrates. But studying out of passion means that, one day, happiness might come into their lives. Life is not only about money but also about happiness.

What do you think about technology in the lives of young people?

Carmen: It can be a great advantage or a disadvantage. An advantage if artificial intelligence becomes a help to shorten time and assist us. But if it becomes a substitute for human beings, then we shouldn't be surprised if two Japanese

tourists end up in a lake with their car because the satellite navigation told them to take that road. We must not switch off our ability to discern. We must operate as human beings. Our heads are not a CPU, and our souls are not an operating system. We are always human. We must not lose our essence.

Did you ever fear that audiences outside Italy might not fully understand your choice to use Sicilian?

Carmen: I think the more local you are, the more international you become. Global. You tell your truth and your roots without shame. And our Sicilian roots are truly precious. The Italian language was born in Sicily under the Sicilian poetic school. Only later did it move to Tuscany and become the Italian poetic school. So, the heart of the Italian language is truly Sicilian. This was another spark that made me think of promoting the Sicilian language around the world and seeing if anyone could connect with it. And, indeed, everyone understands it. It's incredible.

You are half Sicilian and half Venetian. How do these two aspects blend in your personality?

Carmen: The true fusion in my family was in combining the two cuisines. My mother adopted Sicilian recipes but adapted them with Venetian techniques. For example, *tunnina ca' cipuddata*



is a typical Sicilian dish with tuna and onions, but my mother saw it like *sarde in saor* and made Sicilian-style tuna with onions treated like *sarde in saor*. Or caponata with white polenta. Because in my mother's house, we eat white polenta, not yellow, which is typical of Treviso. So this blend of cultures has been very important for me. I lived with my Venetian grandparents who lived with me in Sicily. So, at home, we spoke Venetian. My father would go to work, and I would spend the day with my grandparents. My son is named after my Venetian grandmother Carla. I've seen that there is not much difference between the two cultures. A small curiosity: I had amazing grandparents. My father came from a Sicilian aristocratic family. Not that they were cold, but they weren't used to expressing affection openly. My grandmother Lina was a Marchioness, and when I'd say, "Grandma, I love you," she'd reply, "Same to you." Meanwhile, my grandmother Carla from Treviso would say, "Come here" and hug me and shower me with kisses. Even my grandmother Lina, in her way, would fill me with kisses, but I mean, Venetians were more physical, paradoxically. They organised everything in the tavern, because every Venetian has their own tavern. My grandmother Lina gave me an apple for the school trip, while grandma Carla gave me a sandwich with a cutlet. In this musical

project, there's this idea of Italy making the most of these regional differences. And then I saw these Venetians appropriating the Sicilian language. My grandfather Ferruccio spoke only Venetian, but at a certain point, at 80 years old, he forgot how to speak Italian. He was well-educated, but he only spoke Venetian, and yet everyone understood him.

What is your next musical project?

Carmen: I'm ready to leave, but I need to close my eyes and figure out where I want to go.



Education

Rise of Students Granted Extra Time in Exams Highlights 'Disconnection' of Outdated Education System which is not Reflective of the Diverse Ways Students Learn

Education Academic hits back at relevance of testing and exams as a measure of student ability – arguing that 'extending time' simply avoids the root issue

Leading education academic and Co-Founder of international online school, School Beyond Limitations (SBL), has spoken out following recent statistics from Ofqual, that 420,000 students in England have been granted extra time in GCSE and A-level exams, four times more than a decade ago. Dr Martina Geromin, who is also a multi-time published academic author with 35 years in education and research, believes that the recent figures highlight a gaping misalignment between traditional testing and exams, and the diverse ways that students demonstrate their learning and abilities today.

Having worked in the UK and internationally as a teacher, university lecturer and adult educator, Dr Geromin feels this rise reflects broader challenges in the education system, "When you have this many students seeking extra time to get through exams and tests you have to question the purpose of current assessment models. Simply giving students more time to complete exams might address the initial symptoms, but it doesn't tackle the root issue," she said.

Dr Geromin also suggests that the data shows a growing recognition of special educational needs across the country and the possible inequities between private and state schools, but she believes that this trend also raises questions about the effectiveness and relevance of standardised testing as a measure of student ability.

"I regularly speak to students, parents and teachers who are increasingly questioning the value of traditional tests and exams, viewing them as disconnected from the modern world. When it comes to traditional testing, there are many children who lack the engagement or struggle to grasp the skills required for timed exams, not because they lack the knowledge or ability to achieve in those subjects, but because they reject the process," added Dr Geromin.

Separate figures from the Department for Education (DofE) state that 30% of children are being given extra time, up from 15% in 2016.

The figures also show a large disparity between



Dr Martina Geromin

"It's crucial for the sector to explore more inclusive methods of assessment"

the proportion of children who get extra time at private schools (42%) and those at state schools (27%).

"It's not surprising that the number of children being granted extra time at independent schools is higher than in state, after all, it is a growing reason that many parents are choosing to educate their child privately or at home – because they have complex or diverse learning needs."

She continued, "Instead of focusing on granting extra time, it's crucial for the sector to explore more inclusive methods of assessment which focus on adaptability, problem-solving and collaboration, over memorisation and exam performance. Competency-based evaluations, portfolio submissions, and project-based learning are all examples that provide a more holistic view of a student's strengths and contributions. Adopting these kinds of approaches would not only respect the individual learning styles of young people today, but would also align more closely with the skills and creativity needed in today's workplace."

www.school-beyond-limitations.com

What to consider when buying your child's first phone

By the age of 12, 97% of British children own a mobile phone, making it a significant milestone. However, this comes with cost and safety concerns for parents. According to budget-friendly SIM provider spusu, four key factors should guide this decision.

Is Your Child Ready?

There's no universal 'right' time for a first phone - it depends on maturity and necessity. Many children receive theirs when transitioning to secondary school, helping them navigate travel, homework, and activities independently. However, Ofcom reports that 44% of nine-year-olds and even 25% of five-to seven-year-olds own phones.

Parents should ask: Does my child truly need a phone? Can they handle the responsibility? Beyond digital footprints, consider the risk of loss or damage - studies show the average child misplaces 13 items annually. A phone isn't just for communication; it's an introduction to digital responsibility.

What Will They Use It For?

Once readiness is determined, consider their phone's purpose. Is it just for family contact, or will they use it for gaming, social media, or streaming? If safety is a priority, smartphones with GPS tracking, like Google Family Link, can offer peace of mind.

Some parents opt for basic "dumb phones" as part of movements like Smartphone Free Childhood, but smartphones can provide practical benefits. Understanding your child's needs helps in choosing the right device.

How Can You Keep Them Safe?

Safety extends beyond screen time - monitoring online behaviour and app usage is crucial. Built-in parental controls, like those from Norton Family, can block inappropriate content, set screen time limits, and restrict app access. The NHS recommends no more than two hours of daily screen time, so establishing healthy habits is key.

Physical safety matters, too. Direct Line research found that nearly 20% of young people using phones while walking have been in or near road accidents. Educating children about mobile phone risks in public places can help prevent such incidents.



What's Your Budget?

A child's first phone can be costly. On average, parents spend £254 on the device and an additional £14 per month on calls, texts, and data. Consider repurposing an old phone with a SIM-only plan to save money.

spusu offers flexible, affordable plans starting at £9.90 per month, with free EU roaming - reducing the risk of unexpected charges abroad. Additionally, enabling parental controls on in-app purchases can prevent children from racking up costs on games like Roblox or Fortnite.

Balancing a child's growing independence with responsibility is key. By evaluating readiness, intended use, safety, and budget, parents can make an informed choice that meets their child's needs while keeping them secure and connected.

For affordable SIM-only plans, visit spusu's website www.spusu.co.uk

BOOK BUZZ!

Raakesh Piranawar's *A Happy Married Life* explores the beauty of everyday love

In an era where love is often depicted through grand gestures and social media perfection, author Raakesh Piranawar offers a refreshingly authentic perspective in his new novel, *A Happy Married Life*. Published on Valentine's Day 2025, the book delves into the real essence of marriage, demonstrating that true happiness lies in the ordinary moments of everyday life.

Unlike conventional romantic tales, *A Happy Married Life* does not focus on sweeping declarations or extravagant surprises. Instead, it highlights the significance of shared responsibilities, light-hearted teasing, and the unspoken understanding that strengthens a relationship over time. Through an engaging narrative, Piranawar emphasises that love flourishes not in spite of life's imperfections, but because of them.

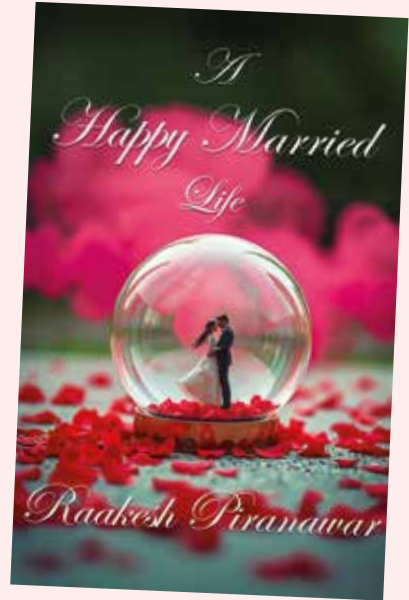
A Celebration of Love's Simplicity

The novel follows a couple as they navigate the realities of married life, illustrating how the beauty of a relationship is often found in the smallest moments. From enjoying playful banter while cooking together to sneaking quiet moments amidst the chaos of family life, *A Happy Married Life* paints a vivid picture of how love is sustained through humour, companionship, and mutual respect.

While the protagonists face everyday challenges – financial strains, miscommunications, and the occasional clash of personalities – their commitment to each other remains unwavering. Through warmth and wit, the novel reassures readers that love is not about perfection, but about embracing each other's flaws and growing together.

The book has been praised for its relatable storytelling and insightful portrayal of relationships. With its blend of romance and comedy, it offers a refreshing take on marriage, serving as both an entertaining read and a gentle reminder of the importance of partnership.

For couples seeking a heartfelt story that reaffirms the magic of real-life love, *A Happy Married Life* is an essential read for 2025.



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Through an engaging narrative, Piranawar emphasises that love flourishes not in spite of life's imperfections, but because of them

The Author

Raakesh Piranawar brings over 20 years of experience in the IT industry, with an MBA in Finance and a background in software development, project management, and business analysis. Passionate about problem-solving and innovation, he has successfully led multiple projects across various sectors. In addition to his professional endeavours, he enjoys mentoring and keeping up with the latest industry trends. His debut novel reflects his keen observations of human relationships and the universal desire for lasting love and companionship.

***A Happy Married Life* is now available on Amazon and other good bookstores.**

SheMed's Weight Loss Programme:

A Science-Backed Revolution for Women in the UK

SheMed, a digital health provider, is transforming weight management for women across the UK with its medically supervised weight loss programme. Since its recent launch, the initiative has gained remarkable traction, enrolling over 16,000 women in just two months.



Unlike one-size-fits-all diets, SheMed's approach is designed specifically for women, addressing the unique interplay of metabolism, hormones, and overall well-being. The programme combines GLP-1-based medications with expert medical oversight to support safe and sustainable weight loss.

"We know that weight management isn't just about diet and exercise – it's about understanding how women's bodies function," says Olivia Ferro, co-founder and CEO of SheMed. "Our goal is to provide a personalised, medical-grade solution that promotes lasting health benefits."

A crucial element of SheMed's programme is its stringent pre-treatment screening process. Mandatory blood tests revealed that 99% of participants had underlying health conditions, including high cholesterol, fatty liver, and early-stage diabetes – issues that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

"This discovery changed the way we approach weight management," says Chloe Ferro, co-founder and Chief Growth Officer at SheMed. "It's not just about weight loss; it's about proactive healthcare and preventing long-term health complications."

Given the growing regulatory scrutiny of online obesity medication prescriptions, SheMed stands out with its rigorous screening process and ethical prescribing standards. The company's transparent pricing – £159 every four weeks with no hidden fees – further differentiates it from other providers with fluctuating costs.



SheMed's programme offers a structured and science-backed approach that prioritises patient safety and efficacy. Key features include:

- **Comprehensive Health Assessments** – Every participant undergoes a full health screening, including a mandatory blood test.
- **Individualised Treatment Plans** – Weight loss strategies are tailored based on metabolic needs.
- **Expert Medical Support** – Patients receive ongoing care from private GPs.
- **Community and Accountability** – A dedicated peer network fosters motivation and shared experiences.

As demand for GLP-1 medications rises, UK regulators are tightening prescribing guidelines to prevent misuse. SheMed's protocol goes beyond BMI-based eligibility, ensuring that treatments align with broader health indicators and patient safety.

"We're not just another online weight loss service," says Olivia Ferro. "SheMed is pioneering a responsible, science-driven model that prioritises long-term health over quick fixes."

As obesity rates climb and regulatory frameworks evolve, SheMed's patient-centric model is setting new standards for digital health and weight management. The programme is not only helping thousands of women achieve their health goals but is also reshaping the conversation around weight loss in the UK.

For more details, visit www.shemed.co.uk



BOOK BUZZ!

Princerella The Prince: A Bold, Modern Fairy Tale That's Captivating Young Readers



A fresh take on the classic *Cinderella* story, *Princerella The Prince* by Sam S. N. Kerr flips the traditional fairy tale on its head. Instead of a downtrodden maiden, this modern retelling follows a privileged prince who is suddenly thrown into a life of hardship. Forced to navigate the struggles of everyday survival, his journey is one of resilience, self-discovery, and a newfound understanding of the world beyond palace walls.

Targeted at readers aged 12-18, *Princerella The Prince* blends humour, heart, and sharp social commentary, making it a must-read for teenagers and parents alike. Kerr's storytelling is both entertaining and thought-provoking, offering an insightful exploration of privilege, empathy, and personal growth. It's a fairy tale for the modern age – one that challenges expectations and inspires reflection.

While fairy tales are often associated with romance, *Princerella The Prince* is first and foremost a tale of transformation. The prince, once accustomed to a life of luxury, suddenly finds himself overworked, underfed, and desperate for freedom. As

he grapples with his new reality, a kind-hearted princess and a fairy godfather step in to help him reclaim his agency. But will his hard-won liberty last, or will he once again be reduced to a mere pawn in his family's world?

Kerr's witty dialogue and richly drawn characters make *Princerella The Prince* an engaging read, striking the perfect balance between laughter and emotional depth. The novel's themes of resilience, self-worth, and societal expectation resonate deeply, especially in today's world.

One of the book's most intriguing aspects is its subtle reflection of real-world issues, including the scrutiny faced by modern royalty. As one Amazon reviewer notes, *Princerella The Prince* contains "shades that reflect some aspects of the current situation with a UK prince, his immediate and paternal family, and the UK media." This clever infusion of contemporary relevance adds an extra layer of intrigue, making it a compelling read for both young and adult audiences.

Sammia Kerr, known by her pen name Sam S. N. Kerr, is a London-born author and university student with an impressive literary track record. Passionate about storytelling from a young age, she wrote her first book at just seven years old and published her debut novel at fifteen. Now, at nineteen, she has an astonishing 46 books to her name, covering a range of children's and young adult literature. *Princerella The Prince* is the first in a two-part series, with more stories on the way.

Independently published, *Princerella The Prince* is available in hardcover (£14.99, ISBN 979-8889927310), paperback (£13.99, ISBN 979-8889550815), and Kindle format (£9.99) on Amazon.

For mothers looking for a book that will entertain, inspire, and spark meaningful conversations with their teens, *Princerella The Prince* is a perfect choice. It's a fairy tale with a twist - one that challenges, delights, and ultimately, leaves readers wanting more.

MEET THE FUNNIEST TRIO IN TOWN!

The hilarious and heartwarming graphic novel series for early readers, created by Dan & Jason.



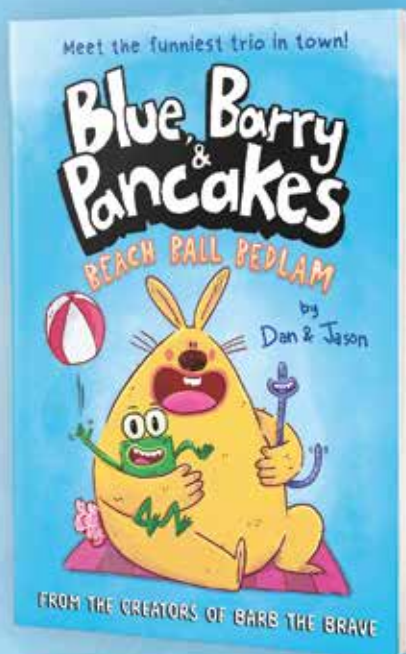
There's
BLUE, the
thoughtful
bookworm



BARRY,
the brilliant
inventor



PANCAKES,
the happy-
go-lucky
adventurer

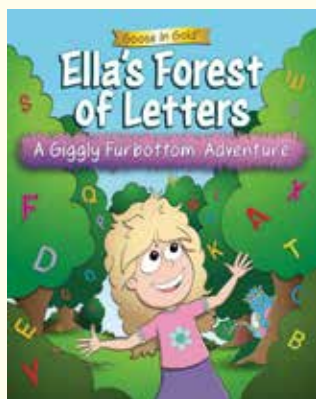


APRIL 2025



JULY 2025





BOOK BUZZ!

Giggly Furbottom: The Lovable Monster Taking Children's Books by Storm!

Meet Giggly Furbottom, the mischievous yet lovable monster capturing young hearts in the "Ella" series of children's books. With laughter, adventure, and a touch of magic, this growing collection is quickly becoming a must-read for kids aged 3 to 7.

It all began with *Bedtime for Ella*, released last year to great success. This heart-warming story helps children overcome night-time fears through laughter, as Ella befriends Giggly Furbottom instead of fearing him. With rhyming verses and a strong theme of courage, the book became an instant favourite among parents and children alike.

Following its success, *Ella's Forest of Letters* took readers on a whimsical alphabet adventure. Ella and Giggly explore a magical forest, meeting creatures from butterflies to hedgehogs while introducing young readers to letters in a fun and engaging way. The book not only supports early literacy but also fosters creativity, friendship, and a love for nature.

Next came *Ella and the Magic of Seven*, celebrating Ella's seventh birthday with an unforgettable adventure. Soaring through the sky and exploring enchanted gardens, she and Giggly meet mermaids, gnomes, and talking foxes in a world where kindness and imagination rule. The story highlights themes of curiosity, bravery, and the power of believing in the extraordinary. *Magic of Seven* appeals to older children, up to 10-years-old.

Why are these books making waves? They transform learning into thrilling experiences, teaching essential values through engaging storytelling. With vibrant imagery and playful rhymes, children embark on journeys filled with magic, friendship, and important life lessons.

Parents and educators love the series for its ability to:

- **Encourage creativity and imagination**
- **Teach the alphabet in a fun way**
- **Inspire curiosity and exploration**
- **Promote kindness and inclusivity**
- **Provide a comforting bedtime experience**

Children adore Giggly Furbottom, the ultimate giggling best friend, who makes every adventure fun while teaching valuable lessons. His charm and humour bring a fresh twist to the classic monster trope - turning fear into fun!

The excitement doesn't stop here - fans will be delighted to know that a fourth book is on the horizon, promising more magical mischief and heart-warming adventures.

With its delightful mix of humour, wonder, and learning, the *Ella & Giggly Furbottom* series is fast becoming a childhood favourite. Available on Amazon, these books are perfect for parents looking to spark imagination, inspire courage, and bring a little extra magic to bedtime.

Move aside, traditional bedtime stories - Giggly Furbottom is here to stay!



GIGGLY FURBOTOM[®]

BOOK BUZZ!

The Heart of a True Hero: Inspiring Young Minds to Embrace Emotional Intelligence

In a world where success is often measured by academic achievements and material wealth, a new book is offering a refreshing perspective on what it truly means to be a hero. *The Heart of a True Hero – The School of Life*, written by Sisay Ketama, is capturing the imagination of young readers while imparting invaluable lessons on emotional intelligence, kindness, and resilience.

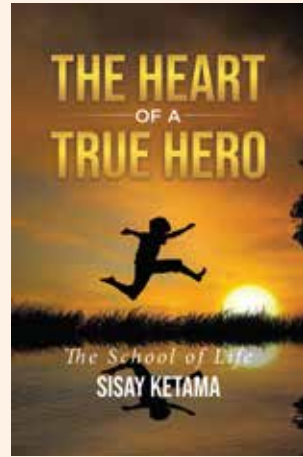
Designed for children aged eight and above, this engaging book follows Leo, an adventurous and inquisitive young boy who embarks on a journey through two imaginary villages. Along the way, he encounters unique characters and faces unexpected challenges, each of which helps him develop a deeper understanding of emotions, relationships, and personal growth. By encouraging readers to reflect on what it means to be a hero in today's world, Ketama's story highlights the power of empathy, courage, and everyday acts of kindness.

Parents, educators, and caregivers will find *The Heart of a True Hero* a valuable resource for sparking meaningful discussions on emotional intelligence and moral values. The author hopes the book will also contribute to a wider conversation about incorporating emotional intelligence into school curricula as a recognised subject.

Through Leo's journey, readers discover that heroism isn't about grand gestures but rather the small, everyday choices we make to be better, kinder, and stronger. With each challenge he faces, Leo learns about loyalty, forgiveness, and the importance of standing up for what is right - even when it is difficult.

The book's ability to resonate with young readers has been reflected in glowing reviews. One Amazon reader, Dylan, awarded the book five stars, praising it as "a brilliant buy for anyone, as it teaches valuable life lessons in an engaging way."

Author Sisay Ketama is an accountant by profession, but his true passion lies in empowering the younger generation. A dedicated advocate for youth development, he actively contributes to the Pharezfest community-based organisation in London,



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"If we can teach the young generation how to understand their emotions and connect with others, we are not just building better individuals – we are shaping a brighter, kinder world."

where he works on initiatives aimed at enhancing young people's well-being.

In 2024, Ketama completed the London TCS Marathon, a testament to his commitment to perseverance and leading by example. Through both his professional work and writing, he hopes to inspire young minds to harness their potential for good, developing emotional intelligence and resilience to navigate life's challenges.

The Heart of a True Hero is published by Tellwell Talent and is available in paperback (ISBN No: 9781779623027, £12.00) and Kindle format (£7.87) on Amazon. In the UK it can also be found at Waterstones, Better World Books, Alibris.com

As Ketama states, "If we can teach the young generation how to understand their emotions and connect with others, we are not just building better individuals - we are shaping a brighter, kinder world."

This book is a step towards that vision, inspiring children to become heroes in their own right, one thoughtful action at a time.

BOOK BUZZ!

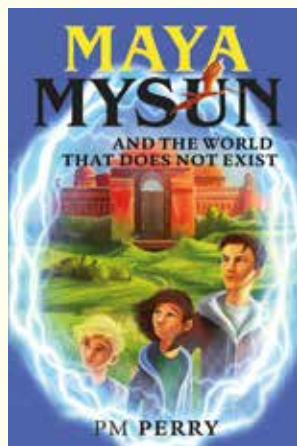
***Maya Mysun & the World That Does Not Exist* – A Spellbinding Fantasy Adventure**

In the captivating young adult fantasy novel *Maya Mysun & the World That Does Not Exist*, P.M. Perry transports readers into a world where magic and science collide, weaving an exhilarating tale of adventure, mystery, and self-discovery. With a thrilling narrative and richly developed characters, this story is perfect for young readers and adults alike who enjoy tales of magical realms, daring quests, and timeless lessons about courage and kindness.

A Journey into the Unknown

Maya Mysun and her twin brother, Jack, couldn't be more different - while Maya has always been fascinated by magic, Jack leans towards science. Their lives take an unexpected turn on their thirteenth birthday when their parents suddenly vanish after receiving cryptic warnings from unknown sources. As if this isn't bewildering enough, Maya's pet tortoise, Tommy, undergoes a strange transformation and whisks them away to a parallel realm where the boundaries of reality blur.

In this otherworldly domain, the twins embark on a perilous mission to uncover the truth behind their parents' disappearance and navigate the secrets of two opposing worlds - the logical and scientifically driven Siantia and the mystical and magic-infused Konjiuria. Along their journey, they encounter David, a streetwise teen who has been drawn into a mysterious facility. Together, the trio must uncover a sinister conspiracy and face menacing forces that threaten both realms.



ancient prophecies but also explores scientific principles, making it a fascinating read for those who enjoy both logic and wonder.

Themes of Resilience, Friendship, and Self-Discovery

At its core, the novel is a story about resilience, the power of friendship, and the journey of self-discovery. Maya, Jack, and David must rely on their wits, determination, and the strong bond between them to overcome impossible odds. Through their adventures, readers are reminded of the importance of perseverance, kindness, and staying true to oneself, even in the face of overwhelming darkness.

A Must-Read for Fantasy Enthusiasts

Independently published, *Maya Mysun & the World That Does Not Exist* is a thrilling tale that keeps readers engaged from start to finish. P.M. Perry, a London-based writer, entrepreneur, and dream-chaser, has crafted a compelling debut novel that is sure to leave readers eagerly anticipating more adventures.

For those who love stories filled with ancient prophecies, mythical creatures, and heart-pounding escapades, this book is a must-read. To dive into this magical world, *Maya Mysun & the World That Does Not Exist* is available for purchase online at major retailers, including Amazon, Waterstones, and WHSmith.

Find out more about the author and his work at www.pm-perry.com

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"A thrilling tale that keeps readers engaged from start to finish"

A Unique Blend of Magic and Science

Unlike many traditional fantasy novels that focus solely on the mystical, *Maya Mysun & the World That Does Not Exist* introduces an intriguing balance between science and sorcery. P.M. Perry masterfully integrates these two elements, offering a fresh perspective that challenges readers to think beyond conventional boundaries. The novel doesn't just transport readers into a world of wizards, genies, and

BOOK BUZZ!

Gary's Gang Go for Gold: A Thrilling New Adventure for Young Sleuths

In an era of screen-based entertainment, *Gary's Gang Go for Gold* in *The Circus Train Mystery* offers a nostalgic return to the classic adventure genre. Aimed at children aged nine to eleven, this fast-paced novel follows five young friends who uncover a daring jewellery heist and must use their wits and teamwork to stop the criminals.

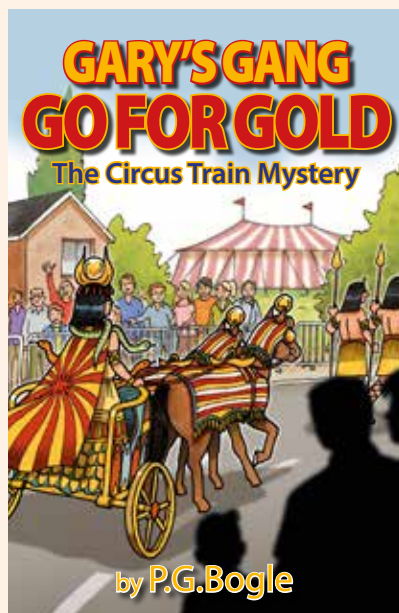
The story kicks off with the arrival of a circus in the railway sidings near Gary's home. As the children eagerly anticipate the Big Top spectacle, they stumble upon a gang of thieves planning to use the circus as cover for a major robbery. The friends must act quickly, navigating dangerous encounters with the criminals while the town is distracted by the circus.

Inspired by Enid Blyton's *Famous Five*, *Gary's Gang Go for Gold* captures the essence of beloved adventure stories. The book is filled with thrilling suspense, dramatic confrontations, and themes of friendship, bravery, and collaboration. As the children race to recover the stolen jewels, they must use their resourcefulness and courage to outsmart the villains. One particularly close call sees a friend narrowly escaping danger, adding an extra layer of excitement.

The book is a rollercoaster of twists and turns, keeping young readers on the edge of their seats. The children's quick thinking and teamwork make them relatable heroes, reinforcing the value of problem-solving and friendship. This is a book that will resonate with kids, offering not just an exciting adventure, but also a reminder of the importance of collaboration and bravery in overcoming obstacles.

Gary's Gang Go for Gold is published by Troubador Publishing and taps into the nostalgia of classic adventure tales while appealing to today's young readers. With its suspenseful plot, clever twists, and heart-warming themes, the book provides a welcome escape from the digital world and invites children to immerse themselves in a thrilling, old-fashioned adventure.

The book is available in paperback for £9.19 on Amazon. With a promising mix of suspense, excitement, and friendship, *Gary's Gang Go for Gold* is sure to capture the imaginations of young readers and leave them eager for more adventures.



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The children's quick thinking and teamwork make them relatable heroes, reinforcing the value of problem-solving and friendship.

P.G. Bogle, a lifelong lover of adventure stories, rekindled his passion for writing in retirement. After publishing his first book, *Algernon Arbuthnot Arrives*, Bogle noticed a gap in the market for adventure stories aimed at young readers. This led him to create *Gary's Gang Go for Gold*, drawing inspiration from classic tales like *The Famous Five* and introducing a new generation to the joy of thrilling, adventurous narratives.

Published by Troubador Publishing, *Gary's Gang Go for Gold* in *The Circus Train Mystery* is available from Amazon

BOOK BUZZ!

Give the Colours Back to the Earth: A new picture book to empower the next generation of Earth's Environment Heroes!



In a world where environmental awareness is more crucial than ever, Dr Yasemin Allsop MBE introduces *Give the Colours Back to the Earth*, a beautifully illustrated picture book

inspiring children aged 3 to 6 to become young environmental heroes. The book uses colours and textures to engage young minds, helping them understand the impact of small actions like recycling, reducing waste, and caring for nature in restoring the Earth's fading beauty.

The story follows a simple yet powerful concept: as the Earth's colours fade, so do those of the children. The book gently teaches that their actions can bring the vibrancy back, reinforcing the idea that even small steps contribute to significant environmental change. With accessible language and interactive activities, *Give the Colours Back to the Earth* is more than just a story – it's a call to action. Parents, teachers, and caregivers will find it a valuable tool for sparking discussions about sustainability while making learning fun.

Originally conceived as a musical, the story was performed by primary school children in London and Paris before being adapted into an animation that won the 1 Minute to Save the World competition in 2011. Determined to turn it into a book, Allsop faced the challenge of finding an illustrator. Undeterred, she taught herself to draw, ensuring that her message reached young readers worldwide. This marks her first picture book, though she is also known for the Alya the Pathmaker series.

Published by Wambrook Publishing, Give the Colours Back to the Earth is available in paperback from The Great British Bookshop (£6.99) and in Kindle format (ASIN: B0DL4R2J6R) on Amazon (£2.99). More details and educational resources can be found at www.pathmakerlearning.co.uk



Dr Yasemin Allsop MBE, a former primary school teacher and computing coordinator in London, now lectures in education, training future primary school teachers in computing and history. Recognised for her contributions to education, she was awarded an MBE in 2019. She lives in London with her husband, son, and their beloved Rottweiler, Shadow.

With its blend of storytelling, interactive learning, and environmental awareness, *Give the Colours Back to the Earth* empowers young readers to take action and protect their planet. A timely and inspiring addition to any child's bookshelf, it encourages the next generation to think critically about their role in shaping a sustainable future.



Gifts of Spring: Embrace the Season of Renewal

Spring whispers soft through the trees,
A dance of colours on the breeze.

With blooms and sunshine, hearts take
flight, A season of joy, a season of light.

Pink and Green Daisy Weekend Bag

Travel in style with this charming pink and green daisy weekend bag. Perfectly spacious for packing all your essentials for a quick getaway, camping, or even as a sturdy gym bag. Made from durable, waterproof oilcloth, this bag is as practical as it is pretty. It features two strong carry handles, a zip fastening, two internal pouches, and a zipped pocket to keep your valuables safe. Available alongside **matching accessories** including Pocket Mirror, Keyring, Makeup Bag, notebook and Wash Bag for the ultimate coordinated look.

Stockists:

Available at www.rexlondon.com

Artists' Sketchbook – Van Gogh Collection

A perfect gift for any budding artist or art lover, these high-quality, hardcover sketchbooks are designed to inspire creativity. The Almond Blossom edition features Van Gogh's iconic delicate branches against a serene blue sky, while the Starry Night edition captures the swirling, vibrant night sky in rich colours. Both A5 sized sketchbooks offer unlined, premium-quality art paper inside, ideal for free-flowing sketches, drawings, or notes, with sprayed edges adding an extra touch of elegance. Stylish, functional, and perfect for anyone inspired by Van Gogh's timeless artistry.

Stockists:

Available at www.prestel.com



Parenting Made Easy: Hippyck's Got Your Back (and Your Baby)!

By Julia Minchin

Hippyck is committed to helping parents on their journey through parenthood. From practical solutions that make life's difficult moments that little bit easier, to beautiful toys that will bring joy to families for generations.



Hippyck was born out of finding a solution to a problem that many parents faced. Their first ever product that kicked it all off was the award-winning Hipseat, which was designed to address one of the root causes of adult back pain. Perfect for carrying children between 6 – 36 months, the Hipseat provides a firm shelf for your child to sit on, reducing the pressure on your back. But don't just take Hippyck's word for it, their innovative Hipseat is endorsed and recommended by back professionals, so you know it must be good.

Good design is everything to Hippyck, and their award-winning waterproofs are no exception. It can be frustrating being stuck inside on a rainy day, which is why their waterproofs are perfect to get your little ones out and about come rain or shine. Choose from cosy Fleece-Lined Waterproof Suits for those chillier days, rated *Best for windy days* by The Independent, or lightweight Waterproof Packasuits which pack neatly away after they've been used. With the UK experiencing an average of 150-200 rainy days each year, the Hippyck Waterproofs are a staple for every child's wardrobe. They can be easily wiped down and are machine washable so when your little one comes in head to toe in mud, do not panic. Generously sized to allow for clothes underneath

and room for growing, their waterproofs are equipped with taped seams and quality zips to prevent leaks, so you can rely on them to keep your little ones dry.

Hippyck's Bedding Protection is essential for ensuring a restful night's sleep for the entire family. 100% waterproof, super soft and machine washable, their mattress protectors are all discreet, breathable and comfortable. Not only does it make the day-to-day management of bed wetting much easier, but it also prolongs the life of your mattress. They are not just perfect for your little one's bed, their mattress protectors are available in a range of sizes to fit all beds. Every mattress needs one.

But it's not only about the tricky times in parenting. Hippyck offer a delightful collection of beautifully designed, high-quality baby and toddler toys that you will want to treasure for generations to come. One of the most recent additions to their range is the Nattou Teddy collection. A charming range of plush backpacks, teddy bears and cot accessories, all crafted from luxurious teddy fabric for an ultra-soft, stylish and comforting touch.

Discover their collection of fabulous products, that are designed to last and will get you through those tricky moments in life.

Use exclusive discount code LONDON15 for 15% off everything on the Hippyck website www.hippyck.com sales@hippyck.com | 01278 434440



Toy Trends 2025: Innovation, Sustainability, and Collectability

By Monica Costa

The 2025 London Toy Fair showcased key trends shaping the future of play, with sustainability, collectability, strategy-based play, and immersive experiences taking centre stage. The toy industry is evolving to meet shifting consumer values, ensuring play remains entertaining, educational, and socially conscious. From sustainable materials to strategy-based engagement and social media-friendly designs, the future of toys is both innovative and meaningful.

Sustainability Leads the Way

Eco-conscious toys are now a mainstream demand. Playmobil's recycled plastic ranges and Hippy Chick's plastic-free offerings highlight this shift. Major retailers like John Lewis are prioritising biodegradable materials, influencing product development across the industry.

Collectability and Customisation

Toys that offer personalisation and collectability are gaining traction. Playmobil's Joylings Unicorn World and Ravensburger's customised puzzles cater to this trend, while space-themed and Banksy-style graffiti toys reflect a growing appetite for unique, expressive play.

Strategic and Skill-Based Play

Parents and educators seek toys that foster cognitive development. Ravensburger's strategy games, Brio's STEM-focused construction sets, and NASA-themed builds promote problem-solving and creativity. Puzzling competitions, such as the World Puzzling Championship in Spain, are driving interest in challenging and interactive play.

Immersive and Thematic Play

Narrative-driven play is thriving. Playmobil's space exploration and dinosaur sets made from recycled materials fuel children's imagination, while Asmodee's visually dynamic games align with digital trends. Travel-friendly games like Dobble cater to on-the-go families.

Social Media Influence

Toys are increasingly designed for *shareability*,



with visually striking games like Asmodee's Hues and Cues gaining popularity on platforms like TikTok. This trend reflects a shift where play extends beyond physical interaction into digital communities.

Space Exploration's Enduring Appeal

NASA-inspired sets, planetary puzzles, and STEM-focused space toys remain bestsellers, driven by real-world astronomical events and ongoing discussions around space travel.



Ravensburger: NASA-themed builds promote problem-solving and creativity



Playmobil: Championing sustainability with an 80% recycled Dino range



Hippychick: Offering plastic-free products, including camper van-inspired pastels for eco-conscious families. Use exclusive code LONDO15 for 15% off everything at www.hippychick.com



Rainbow Designs: Movie tie-in Paddington in Peru toys



Brainstorm Toys: 2025 Planet alignment inspires new educational range



Wheel into Spring with Hippychick



Use code **LONDON15** for 15% off
everything at Hippychick*

*Excludes Sale and Preloved

www.hippychick.com | [@hippychickbaby](https://www.instagram.com/hippychickbaby) | 01278 434440