

Eco hero Sam Petter, of Tatty Bumpkin

Tatty Bumpkin is a rag doll with the greenest of credentials. Made from organic cotton, this bendy yokel fronts a company of the same name that designs eco-friendly toys and clothes for ethically reared tots. Its founder, Sam Petter, hopes that parents will consider her products whatever their stance on matters ecological. 'For every organic T-shirt you buy, you save a cupful of pesticides. Why would you want to swathe your children in chemicals when the alternatives are so much kinder to the skin and more comfortable to move in?'

Based in an oast house in rural Kent, Petter's innovative business incorporates both an online store and an award-winning training programme for early years movement classes. She says that the idea behind this dual enterprise was conceived the day she weaned her baby son, Oscar. 'The notion arrived fully formed. I'd done some baby yoga, but wanted to do something more creative with toddlers.'

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I'd enjoyed making things, but knew nothing about retail.'

Petter, a former graphic designer, started the business nearly four years ago. Her biggest challenge was establishing a fully organic and ethical chain of suppliers. 'When I first went off to research my idea, organic clothing production was in its infancy. No one was there to tell you how to find an organic dye.'

Now Petter buys her organic cotton from Turkey, while her distinctive hats and mats – appliquéd with 'yoga position' animal designs – are hand-crafted by a Fairtrade women's co-operative in Sri Lanka. 'They are such a small outfit that they can't afford organic certification, but they are also so



small they can't afford pesticide.'

A browse through Petter's cyber 'tattylogue' reveals the company's new infatuation with the eco-friendly properties of bamboo fibre. 'Bamboo is a lot smoother than organic cotton, and doesn't have that hard edge when you wash it,' Petter says. 'It's also the most sustainable plant on the planet. It's 100 per cent biodegradable and generates more oxygen than trees when it's growing.' Tatty Bumpkin's bestselling bamboo sun shirt – naturally high in anti-UVA and antibacterial properties – shows the versatility of this newly fashionable crop.

Brought up on an organic farm – her family has cultivated

Kentish cobnuts for generations – Petter has always been drawn to a holistic lifestyle. She hopes that her 'comfortable, non-sexual' clothes will free children up to 'live in the moment, and play in the mud'. A regular at the Kidz Field at Glastonbury, she recommends Tatty Bumpkin durable all-in-one playsuits for pre-teen campers.

'You don't have to be an eco-warrior to think about what you dress your children in,' Petter says. 'My clothes are more stylish than a lot of eco-clothes and are made to be handed down. I make clothes to feel good in and to feel good about.'

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Emma Hagestadt

Photograph by Brijesh Patel

Sam Petter recommends...

Switching to Moltex nappies – they're fully biodegradable. I'm a fan of the **Dr Hauschka skincare range**. I like the bio-dynamic ingredients and the fact it's a great company. Get hold of a **Like-a-Bike**. This wooden bike for two-to-six-year-olds was perfect when Oscar was learning to ride – a nice way to spend time together. And I love **Dr Karg biscuits** – crispbreads with übercrunch.

