

“Friends call me the punk rock Cath Kidston”

After helping to revamp the image of the Women’s Institute, Jazz Domino Holly tells Hugh Metcalf about taking on the pastel-dominated world of sewing for tots – and shows us how to customise a baby vest

A first flick through *Sew Tiny*, Jazz Domino Holly’s second book, and you know these aren’t your ordinary baby sewing projects. In place of the standard baby pink and blue fabrics, you find neon brights and zebra print, while cutesy patterns take a backseat to bold, graphic motifs on modern baby clothes, toys and quilts. Looking at her credentials, you get the idea that Jazz is never one to stick to the status quo. Not only is she the daughter of the late Joe Strummer, front man of seminal punk-rock band The Clash, she’s also the founder of the Shoreditch brand of the WI, the Shoreditch Sisters, widely hyped as the ‘coolest brand of the Women’s Institute’ and led a revolution in the way a whole new generation of women looked at the organisation. It was almost two years ago when little Boudica (or Bou for short) came into her life, and Jazz spared us a few moments to talk about the crossover of sewing and becoming a mum.



Sew Tiny is definitely a baby book with an edge.

How did you approach designing and sewing for it?

One of the first experiences of being a new mum is going out shopping to find things to prepare for the baby. For me, this first experience just left me feeling really disappointed with what was available on the High Street. Lots of pastels and cartoon teddy bears, but I think you really want the things you buy for your child to reflect your own style. Rather than just make do with what was out there, it was great to be able to flex my creative muscles and come up with my own designs.

So there was never any chance of pastel blue for a boy, pastel pink for a girl?

No, not for me. I can definitely appreciate it is a certain style, but I'm a lover of bright colours and fun patterns, so my daughter is too.

How would you define your personal style?

One of my friends once described me as a 'punk rock Cath Kidston' – neon and animal print instead of pastels and florals – so I guess you could say that!

Which project from Sew Tiny would you recommend a new mum or dad gets on their sewing table?

I really love the chevron patchwork baby blanket. It's quite easy to put together. It's a really fun make and when you're in that nesting stage, the satisfaction you get when you make something as significant as that is great. It'll be something that baby will be able to grow with and treasure for years to come too, because the style will take them beyond babyhood as it's so fun and bright and bold.

“It's great to use tactile fabrics. My big discoveries when sewing for the book were polar-style fleeces and Cuddlesoft”

Are there any things you try to keep in mind when sewing for baby in terms of your fabric choices?

I try to keep everything organic cottons and soft fabrics, as much as for comfort as to be careful with little one's delicate skin. I think it's also great to use lovely tactile fabrics. My great discoveries when sewing for the book were polar-style fleeces and Cuddlesoft fabric, which I'd never sewn with before. They were a lot of fun to use, and it's opened a whole new world of fabric shopping for me.

We know you did some sewing before Boudica came along, but how did becoming a mum change your sewing habits?

I suppose it more inspired me more than anything. Nesting for the baby and learning about all the things you're going to need meant lots of new project ideas. Previous to becoming a mum, I just sort of dabbled



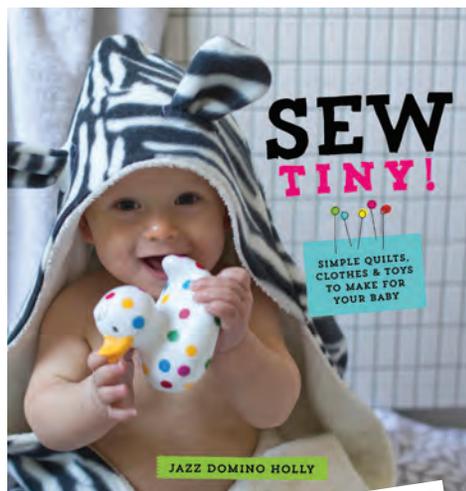
in things, I'd do a bit of knitting, a bit of embroidery, just pick things up and put them down, but as a mum I became a lot more focused, really creating things that would be useful. I started in the nursery, with practical things like the bedding and crib bumpers. Only when that was finished did I start to look at the more decorative items – brightly coloured mobiles and toys. Bou's just coming up to two now though, and toddlerhood is another story.

Do you hope to pass on sewing skills to her some day?

I can't wait until she's old enough to take part and participate, she's still so young that at the moment, we can't go much further than playing with pompoms or buttons or beads. She's just started to be interested in baking though, so we do that together. Growing up in a very alternative and creative background, I was pretty lucky to be supported and encouraged in my creative

ABOVE: Jazz's love of colour and music is evident in many of her designs.

LEFT: with daughter, Boudica



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Jazz's latest book *Sew Tiny* is out now; her favourite project, the chevron baby blanket; Jazz plans to be back out with her pop-up craft club when Bou is a little older.



pursuits. Yes, it's definitely something I want to pass on to Bou, so she gets that same sort of experience.

Do you still have time to be involved with the WI?

I don't at the moment, no. I founded the group in 2007 and I spent four years organising it, which was really exciting part of my life. But I got to the point where I wanted to move on and around that time I was asked to do my first book (*Queen of Crafts*), so I handed over the reins. It's still going really strong and I keep in contact with the girls. Now I'm a mum, I've got to give the time to explore my family's and my own interests, but I'm still supporting them from the sidelines!

What made the Shoreditch Sister's WI different?

When I started it, there were no other groups like it and it just exploded. It started a revolution in the WI and showed other young women what the WI could do and what they could get out of it. It had a reputation for being old-fashioned, so a new generation of women were able to see it in a new light as relevant and modern.

And what took the place of Jam & Jerusalem?

We were very focused on craft, sharing skill sets and using them in a subversive way. The WI is very

involved in the political campaigning side of things and as we were the first group to use craft as a tool to campaign, I think that set us apart. We got together and did some really fun community projects based around important social issues.

Are you still touring with your pop-up craft club, the Handmade Hangout?

It's something else that's taken a backseat for me at the moment, but the beauty of having a pop-up craft club is you can pop it up whenever I want. The idea was to take it to festivals and to travel with it, because growing up, festivals were a big part of my background. As soon as Bou gets a little older, I'll be out again with it. The first time we did it was in a massive teepee tent, and we decked it out with handmade decorations, did workshops on a range of different craft skills and materials, and everyone just loved being able to come in, learn a new skill and leave with a finished product. It's such an empowering thing. ♡

Sew Tiny: Simple Clothes, Quilts & Toys to Make for Your Baby by Jazz Domino Holly is published by Kyle Books, priced £14.99. Order at www.kylebooks.com