



# the simple things

May

Taking time to live well

## Weekend adventures

Cycling lost lanes  
Spring foraging  
Country show fun

# BLOOM

A family get-together • Appreciating bugs & bees • Ocean liners  
DIY herbal teas • Why we love a pencil skirt • How to bounce back  
An abundant garden • Cheese & kimchi toasties • Palm Springs style



## A n a l o g u e

*As technology advances apace, spare a thought for the once-loved objects that are left behind. In a new series, we meet the people passionate about encouraging us to look again and be inspired by the beauty and inventiveness of life pre-digital. This month: TYPEWRITERS*

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Photography: JONATHAN CHERRY Words: JULIAN OWEN



JouJou and Walid restore typewriters such as this Corona and the Smith Corona (opposite)





“It’s a feeling,” says Mr Vintage Typewriters, on the appeal of his namesake. “It’s more than an emotionless computer.”

Mrs Vintage Typewriters agrees. “When you work on something 100 years old and help give it another 100 years, it’s so satisfying,” she says. “The people who thought of every single thing inside are brilliant.”

Until 2014, Walid and JouJou Saad hadn’t so much as touched a typewriter. Then Walid came across one by accident – “I don’t recall where, probably a charity shop or car boot” – took it home, fixed it up, and started typing. Then he bought another and repeated the process. By 2015, he says, “we were under their influence and wanted to do it as a job”. A pair of discarded careers – in banking and IT – and 300 restored typewriters later, their trading sobriquet is rather well met.

“A typewriter is fascinating in every single aspect,” says Walid. “It’s full of springs, links, keys, metal, screws, everything is connected – it’s an incomparable invention. I love the ‘ding!’ at the end of each line.”

Then there’s the individuality, says JouJou. “An Underwood, for example, is heavy – when you type you need to strike really hard. When you type on a later portable one, it’s lighter, a completely different experience. There’s a different one for every taste.”

Little charm is ascribed to today’s digital writing tools, where one machine’s output is indistinguishable from multimillion others. Not compared to this analogue world of infinite variety in which every typewriter’s mechanism affords it a ‘signature’ as distinct as a fingerprint. Still, those new-fangled writing aids are useful, right? “The most important thing about a typewriter is there’s no autocorrect,” says Walid. “Everything in your mind will lay on the paper. Many authors say to us ‘If I delete an idea, I could be deleting a potential novel or film’.”

It takes anything from three hours to four weeks to restore a typewriter. “You’d be fascinated to know there are at least a hundred models with different ways

to type,” says Walid, adding that the very first was made in 1855. Giuseppe Ravizza called his machine “*Cembalo scrivano o macchina da scrivere a tasti*”, which magnificently translates as ‘Scribe harpsichord, or machine for writing with keys’. Is there a Rolls Royce of typewriters among those that followed?

“It’s a personal thing,” says JouJou. “To me, it’s the Imperial. It’s the strike of the keys, I love the feeling, it completely raises up.” For Walid, it’s the Hermes, “made in Switzerland, all in one seafoam green colour. Mechanically perfect, powerful, and they will not cause pain to your fingers.”

Mr & Mrs Vintage Typewriters’ finished work has been seen on the small screen, big screen and inside innumerable offices and homes. “You’ll never imagine how many people still use them,” says Walid. “In the last two years we’ve had calls from writers, journalists, collectors, directors, teenagers, teachers, and owners of companies that like to personalise their letters.”

This may be an impertinent thing to ask, but are new typewriters being made? “A Chinese manufacturing company is trying to copy one,” sniffs Walid, “but it’s a total failure. They contacted us asking us to repair it! I said, ‘I can’t help you, we prefer the originals’.”

Do you use them yourselves? “Yes,” says JouJou. “Our kids have their own, they love it. We use it ourselves for writing cards, letters to family and clients.”

“Last month I wrote a poem on a special italic typewriter,” says Walid, “and shared it on Instagram.” It begins: “I Insert My Paper//with one thing on my mind// Will type all my words// Not a letter left behind.

“I wanted to write what I was feeling, because we took a different road in life that we are proud of.” [mrmrvintagetyperwriters.com](http://mrmrvintagetyperwriters.com)

**“With a typewriter there's no autocorect. Everything in your mind will lay on the paper”**