



PLAY TIME

Mr Uky

IN MANY WAYS, Zeynep Akpolat encountered the same trouble dressing her son as every other new mum. “He started walking when he was eight-and-a-half months old and one week later he was running,” she explains. “He still won’t stand still! But it was impossible for me to find a decent pair of trousers to fit him.”

It wasn’t just fit, either. While girls had the pick of stylish and colourful outfits, boys made do with drab greys, navy jogging bottoms and cartoon-character tops created from the kind of overpriced yet mass-manufactured materials that didn’t survive the rigour of, well, all that racing about. “The mainstream fashion industry is very sexist,” says Zeynep.

So, in 2014, she set up her own blog asking other mothers for help, and inviting tips on where to hunt down good items. The site quickly gathered thousands of loyal followers. Realising she was onto something, Zeynep took things one step further: teaching herself to sew and then making clothes for her son and, soon after, for her friends’ little boys. “How hard could it be?” she thought.

Today, Mr Uky – named after her son’s initials, naturally – is an independent business with five staff creating the items she initially struggled to find. Inspired by the cool, unisex 1970s-style outfits that she wore as a child, Zeynep’s clothes ignore current trends and aim to be timelessly smart and durable. “The looks are dapper,” she says, “but there is nothing preventing a girl from wearing them, too.”

Zeynep stops at nothing in her search for quality and diversity. Knitwear is handmade in rural Istanbul, jackets are sourced from bespoke tailors, while heavier materials such as tweeds sit in her collections alongside trousers with durable, elasticised waists. All her clothes use the highest-quality wool, cotton and linen normally reserved for adults. Or, as she more succinctly puts it: “Comfortable for the children and practical for mum.”

There is one final inspection that makes Mr Uky truly unique. “When I work on a new design or fabric I have a test period,” she says. “My son wears them every day for a couple of weeks. I wash them and put them in the dryer. Only those that pass are good to go. So they really are kidproof!”

— www.mruky.com