



ABOVE & FAR LEFT: Some of Little Satsuma's range

LEFT: Jane Hampson

# SHE SUDS YOU YEAH YEAH YEAH

Nicola Mostyn talks to Jane Hampson about her Beatles-infused soap

RECENTLY, when I'm in the shower, I can't help thinking about orangutans. This is not, I hasten to add, because I have stopped shaving my legs and begun to resemble a primate (that's not an experiment I'm willing to try) but because I have been talking to Jane Hampson, creator of Little Satsuma, the first company to offer palm oil free soaps in the UK.

I hadn't heard of palm oil before talking to Hampson so I was pretty saddened to find out that this ubiquitous ingredient – present in one in ten household products – is a serious threat to the existence of the orangutan as huge swathes of its natural habitat are being destroyed and replaced with palm oil plantations.

Hampson heard about this issue from a friend. When she returned to Merseyside after working in London, she decided to set up a company making palm-oil free soaps. She'd previously worked in a bank so, as you might expect, this was no easy task:

"We made loads of batches," says Hampson, who began Little Satsuma in 2004. "It took us about a year to get it right. We also started to make our own soap moulds, moving from wood to plastic." Luckily, she had some expertise close at hand: "My Dad is a retired chemist, so he knows all the compositions and

chemical reactions. I've studied aromatherapy. And my mum helps co-ordinate things."

It's a business which is as much about creativity as it is conservation: "I think it's really rewarding to make the things that you use in your daily life. We seem to have become so disconnected from where our products come from, and people are genuinely amazed that we can make soap, like we have special powers!"

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A visit to [www.littlesatsuma.com](http://www.littlesatsuma.com) shows a range of gorgeous looking products, from exfoliating oatmeal soaps to fresh citrus to lemongrass and kelp, as well as environmentally-friendly lip balms, shampoo and moisturisers. Available to order from the website, Little Satsuma products are also sold in Landbaby in the Bluecoat and in Liverpool Cathedral. And while you're pampering yourself you are also helping a primate, since a donation from every sale goes to the Orangutan Foundation.

Displaying some impressive marketing savvy, Hampson has created a separate brand, "Scouse Soaps", a range which includes "Goodson Day Sunshine" and "Sergeant Peppermint" and which presumably goes

down very well with the city's tourists. And, not content with mastering soap-making, Little Satsuma recently embarked upon a new venture, making sustainable candles.

"We thought it would be easy" laughs Hampson. "Melt a bit of wax, add some scent. But trying to get it to smell was almost impossible! There's a fine art to it."

For a young company, Little Satsuma has made a big impression. The soaps were voted a best buy in Ethical Consumer Magazine in September 2007 and were mentioned on BBC1's Saving Planet Earth for promoting alternatives to palm oil. "And our Scouse Soap bars were in every goody bag at the Tourism Awards at St Georges Hall in April," she says, revealing plans to approach John Lewis soon.

With the palm oil issue gaining profile (as we conducted this interview, Greenpeace were staging a protest on the roof of Unilever, Port Sunlight, dressed as orangutans) and with shopping culture moving in an increasingly eco-conscious direction, Little Satsuma's sales are on the up.

"We are seeing more and more orders abroad – America, France, Holland and more recently Brazil and Slovakia! It's so exciting when they come in!"

Meanwhile, I'm going online to order some Peppermint and Poppy soap. Okay, I'll still be thinking about orangutans in the shower, but at least it will be in a good way. ■