

# Would YOU let a room full of adults judge your child's looks?



**It can be bitchy... but that's only because others are jealous**

Cosmetic tattoo artist Moya Wren, 40, lives in Glasgow, with partner Duncan McCallum, 33. She entered nine-year-old daughter Madison (right) for Mini Miss UK. Moya says:

Madison was asked by her modelling agency if she wanted to enter the contest and I thought it was a good idea. It costs £150 to enter, then by the time you've bought a formal dress, casual clothes and accessories, the total comes to £900. Because Madison is quite young I've had a lot of negative comments.

People say I'm a bad mother, a pushy mother, that my daughter's ugly and she shouldn't even be entering beauty contests. I think it's sad that people who don't know me can judge me like that.

Am I sexualising my daughter by putting a bit of make-up on? No. That's how she would go dressed to a party. I know there are people out there who would think differently but that's their problem.

Everyone in my church prayed for her to win the Mini Miss UK. She didn't get a place but she got a Mini Miss Poseur sash. We told her God didn't think it was the right time for her to win. She was upset when she lost and stormed off.

She was upset because she knew she was the most professional there, she was beautifully dressed and did everything right.

Madison would love to be a model when she grows up and if



that's what she wants then I'm right behind her. My mum left me when I was four, and my dad constantly had women coming in and out. He was married three times and he died an alcoholic age 49.

So I'm giving my kids all the love and help I can. It might look like I'm a pushy mum but it's pushing all the love on to them that I should have got.

The pageants can be stressful but it's great because we're doing something together. It can be bitchy but the comments aren't said to Madison's face. Madison is a beautiful looking girl and you're always going to get comments from people who are jealous. I just don't take any notice.



**I feel so proud when I see Sophie up on stage**

Taxi driver Ken Watson, 45, and his wife Joy, 36, who trains beauty therapists, live in Spennymoor, Co Durham with their only daughter Sophie, 13 (above). Ken says:

Sophie heard about the contest through an online casting agency. She does it because she gets to go to different places and meet new people.

It boosts her confidence and she wants to be on the West End stage, so it's good for her to do it. It's a lot of fun and she's won two competitions now, Mini Miss UK when she was 12 and Miss Teen Cinderella, so there's no stopping her.

Her dress cost £450 but she's used it more than



once and I think we'll get at least another year out of it.

We're not a rich family but we don't resent the money if it's something that makes Sophie happy.

There aren't many dads who go to the contests. I'm really there to provide transport. It's not stressful for me, whereas Sophie's mum is stressed to bits trying to get Sophie's hair and make-up perfect.

The dads stand outside having a laugh, drinking coffee, talking about how worked up the mums get and trying to keep everyone calm. Sophie's not plastered in make-up and she has a really natural look, which the Mini Miss UK judges liked. As a rule I don't really

like to see Sophie wearing make-up and she doesn't cake it on like some of the others.

Some of the little kids look unnatural in all their heavy make-up, and the parents think that more is better, but I don't like to see it.

I get a huge sense of pride when I see Sophie on the stage. She's the apple of my eye. There's no prouder bloke than me whether she wins or loses. As long as she's happy, I'm happy. If she starts to cry I feel a little bit upset.

The highlight for me was when Sophie won Mini Miss UK. I just felt that as long as each kid got a sash, I couldn't care if Sophie got Miss Carpet Cleaner. When her name was called out as winner you could have just swept me off the floor.

I'm biased as I'm her dad, so, of course, I thought she was the best one there.

**EXCLUSIVE:** Junior beauty pageants are big business in the US – and earlier this year, Britain held its first one. More than 2,000 pre-teens applied to compete in Mini Miss UK to win the £175 prize and title. Here the parents of three contestants explain why they put their kids through it...

By Sally Beck



NERVES: Backstage at Mini Miss UK

**I'd have loved the chance to be in a pageant when I was a kid**

Stay-at-home mum Alison Garner, 29, lives in Portsmouth with her partner, builder Dave Stedman, 29, daughters Chloe, eight, and Roxy, one, and son Harley, five. Chloe, who's signed with a modelling agency, came second in Mini Miss UK. Alison says:



I know there's an argument that these contests sexualise children and it's exploitative but my Chloe's so up for it. If she enjoys it I don't think there's anything wrong with it.

I don't think the heavy make-up is too much as it's just for the competition – I wouldn't let her wear it every day. Chloe wants to be a model when she grows up. I'll back her but I'd like her to do something else as well.

I was so quiet when I was a little girl but Chloe's bubbly and outgoing. I didn't make a lot of friends, whereas Chloe just chats to anyone. I lacked confidence as a child. If I'd had the chance to do a pageant as a child I would have loved it.

We try to keep the costs down. We bought her formal dress from the internet for £35 and then spent about £100 on accessories like gloves, a hairpiece and jewellery. We probably spent about £350, including her entry fee.

As part of the pageant she had to do a two-minute performance and she chose boxing, which she does as a hobby, so she could do that with her dad. It meant he could get involved, too.

The judges really liked it and said it was a different thing to watch.

She was over the moon to come second. I cried but I also had a big smile on my face.