



Once on a drive around San Francisco, Frances England and her kids decided to play a new game.

The rules were pretty simple: they decided to count all the people they saw walking by who were looking down, heads buried in their phones. There were too many to count; so many of us do that now, engrossed by digital images while the colors of our neighborhood slide past in a blur.

That's when England, an award-winning children's singer/songwriter started thinking: what if we rediscovered the fun of looking around? What if we felt a surge of delight at the tiny wonders we found - marveling at the music of raindrops pattering on pavement, or the shadow-patterns that fences paint upon the ground.

This is the curiosity that lights up *Explorer of the World*, England's fifth album for families. Written for the kid in all of us, but with a special nod to those aged 4 -12, these ten fresh and playful tracks pay homage to the everyday treasures all around us: from handwritten notes fluttering on the sidewalk ("All the Things I Found") to sunlight lacing itself through leaves ("See What We Can See").

This theme of exploration informs every aspect of the album, starting with the genesis of the songs themselves. "I decided to shake up my songwriting process," England says. "I've always started with chord progressions and melodies and I really wanted to open that up. So instead of starting with the chords of a guitar or piano, I started making melodies over the sounds of my city."

For two years England took walks around San Francisco and, with a handheld microphone, recorded an array of sounds she'd never really paid much attention to before. The bucket drum that kickstarts "Street Life" was played by a street performer on Market Street, then looped throughout the track. The ambient urban sounds of "City Don't Sleep" were recorded on late night walks through North Beach. These noises - along with the beats of a couple of salvaged drum machines - would form the vivacious foundations of the album.

To pull it all together, England asked two of her friends to co-produce the album: GRAMMY award-winner Dean Jones (Dog on Fleas) and composer Dave Winer (Justin Robert's Not Ready For Naptime band). Jones & Winer had never met before but England had a hunch that their styles would mesh together really well.



- 01 EXPLORER OF THE WORLD
- 02 CITY DON'T SLEEP
- 03 SEE WHAT WE CAN SEE
- 04 MY STREET
- 05 ALL THE THINGS I FOUND
- 06 STREET LIFE
- 07 CLOSER TO YOU
- 08 BALLAD FOR A BEATBOXER
- 09 CITY OF HILLS
- 10 LITTLE BY LITTLE

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She was right. “By Day Three, I was referring to them as my Dream Team,” says England. Indeed, Winer’s catchy beats and funky horn arrangements paired perfectly with Jones’ earthy, analog sensibilities.

One of the most special qualities of the album is how England, Winer & Jones’ musical styles seamlessly cross genre boundaries throughout the album and within the songs themselves. Nowhere is this more evident than on “Ballad for A Beatboxer,” a folk / hip-hop duet that Frances wrote for her beatboxing friend, Carlos Aguirre, who she’s worked with at a local nonprofit for years.

In gathering these sounds and songs together, *Explorer of the World* is nothing short of magic, a shimmering sonic journey through the undiscovered everyday - and a reminder of all the unexpected adventures that can happen, when you keep your head up and let our own curiosity lead the way.



On her walks, England took a lot of photographs and decided to use them to make an accompanying *Explorer of the World Art + Observation Activity Book for Families*. All the activities are based on the song lyrics and offer a fresh, creative approach to making time for observation, investigation and exploration.

“EACH SONG IS A LITTLE TREASURE OF ARTISTRY, CREATIVITY & HEART”
Los Angeles Times

“A TRULY ORIGINAL SOUND”
REAL SIMPLE

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“PHENOMENAL”



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