



GET THE LOWE DOWN

Fashion designer Pearl Lowe lets **Oliver Stallwood** in on the secrets of her glamorous yet eccentric interior style – and why she loves a good charity shop bargain

PHOTO: BEB TREDGAR

ASIDE from Macklemore and Ryan Lewis' anthem Thrift Shop, you don't often hear music biz A-listers exalting the joys of secondhand bargains.

But singer-songwriter-turned-fashion designer Pearl Lowe, who is married to Supergrass drummer Danny Goffey, can't get enough of

the good old British charity shop. While other members of Pearl's Nineties squad, The Primrose Hill Set, might only dare be seen in the fashion boutiques and interior design emporiums of the King's Road, Lowe is just as at home hunting for bargains in her local British Heart Foundation store.

'You can always make your money go further by combining a new statement piece such as a sofa with savvy selections from thrift shops,' she says cheerily. 'I recently

found a wonderful wooden sideboard that my husband is going to use as a drinks cabinet. We spruced it up simply by adding a couple of tassels we already had to the handles. And that was it. It's now a real hero piece

in our formal lounge and we get lots of compliments on it.'

Pearl and Danny escaped the London wild life for country wildlife ten years ago, moving from a Camden town house through various rural abodes, before finding their dream home in Somerset. Well, for now at least. Pearl and Danny describe themselves as 'serial movers' – it took

them five houses before they settled here. Each time, neighbours who were weekend city types, not enough land or stuffy properties have prompted them to get on the house hunting trail again.

The charmingly weathered house

was built in 1810, but has the 1920s

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'You don't have to follow the rules...'

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feel of an artist's retreat or pre-war setting for a roaring weekend jazz party.

With six bedrooms it is big enough for the family and is only a ten-minute walk into town. It's certainly eccentric, with quirky corning everywhere and lots of hidden corners.

A beautiful veranda runs along the back of the house, which creates a wonderful outside living area. The gardens are a dreamy vision from an Enid Blyton novel, leading down to a river, where the children can explore and the family hold parties in the summer. There is even a bridge and a boat house –



it is every inch the idyllic country retreat.

'The house really captured my imagination and I knew I could make it my own,' says Pearl. 'We'd been living in the same area of Somerset for a while so I'd already fallen in love with the location and just needed to find my next "project".'

Despite spending their twenties in London, rural living has come naturally to Pearl and Danny. 'The countryside really suits our family. I'm a country girl at heart. My husband Danny and I loved living in London in our 20s, but as soon as we reached our 30s and the kids [their three children Betty, Alfie and Frankie] started to grow, we needed some more space and peace. It's nice to be away

from the hustle and bustle of the city, although it's not too far if we need to head in for work or play.'

Plus Somerset allows Pearl to indulge in one of her favourite past times – hunting for vintage gems.

'One of the things I love so much about Somerset is its proximity to all of the antique shops and flea markets in the area; there's something about searching through to find that one special item that gives me a real buzz,' she adds.

But then we are back on charity shops — Pearl's secret weapon when it comes to home improvement. 'I think people are starting to realise that you can find incredible things in thrift shops. There was a time when they were seen as a bit moth-eaten and dated, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

'I think the popularity of vintage fashion has helped. It's acclimatised people to the notion that new isn't always best. You never know what amazing finds you're going to come



Close family: Pearl and husband Danny with Pearl's model daughter Daisy



Vintage gems: Pearl loves antiques

across. BHF has furniture shops up and down the country and they really are Aladdin's caves.'

The house is full of wonderfully wearied pieces. The dining room sofa has piano shawls draped across it; boudoir touches abound; chandeliers hang tastefully from the ceiling, highlighting Moroccan rugs; fringe lamps bring casual glamour; Edwardian display cabinets provide a sense of order.

Every piece has a story with reminders of places visited, says Pearl. She is a great advocate of painting existing furniture as a simple way to update the home without spending a lot of money. Annie Sloan is the natural choice for paints ('her colours are divine').

'I'd describe my style as faded glamour,' she explains. 'It has always been pretty consistent over the years – I think the only thing that has changed is I'm a little bit more adventurous now. I know what works more. I love to be playful with interiors and to experiment a bit, so I'm forever adding new pieces and textures to give an eclectic but sumptuous feel.'

Pearl's adventurous approach means she isn't afraid to try anything with her interiors – as long as you can paint or paper over it again if it goes wrong. Shopping in charity shops or flea markets should be an instinctive thing too if you are going to get pieces to suit your personality, she explains.

'I always tell people to buy the things that they are passionate about.

It doesn't matter if you don't think it will work, you'll always find a beautiful spot for it somewhere,' she continues. 'And don't necessarily follow the crowd. Have the confidence to make your home your own and trust your instincts. You don't have to follow the rules. Have fun with textures and colours instead. Just don't be afraid to try different things.'

Every room gives off a bit of a vintage boudoir vibe – from leopard print sofas to gilded mirrors and chandeliers.



The house is warm and cosy but glamorous all at the same time. Pearl has two dogs who follow her everywhere so having a blend of style and practicality is not so much a choice, than a necessity. But while

Pearl and Danny are perfectly at home, they haven't ruled out finding somewhere new in the countryside.

'This is my dream place, but I am a bit of a gypsy,' she says. 'So moving is something I love to do. I always have one eye out for our next home. I start to get itchy feet and want to move on to my next project.'

■ *DFS launched its partnership with The **British Heart Foundation** and DFS in May 2012, offering a service to any customer who chooses to buy their sofa from DFS. Customers can have their unwanted sofa collected for free by the BHF and the sofa will then be sold by the BHF in one of its Furniture & Electrical stores across the UK.*

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Thrifty: Pearl loves to hunt for vintage pieces in charity shops



Wild at heart: Pearl's garden features an ornate gypsy caravan



Chic: Boudoir touches abound

GET THE LOOK...

PEARL'S STYLE



1 Annie Sloan Provence chalk paint £18.95 for 1l, anniesloan.com **2** Wild Card fabric £98 per metre, houseofhackney.com **3** Urban Industrialists vintage letter £299, wayfair.co.uk **4** Amsterdam chandelier From £1,795, hollowaysofludlow.com **5** Salisbury slipper bath £599, bathstore.com



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Edition:
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