





LILY: THE REBIRTH *As she hangs up her mic to move into fashion, we ask Lily Allen to turn ELLE Style Advisor. Kerry Potter poses your questions and discovers what's behind the radical career change*

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Vintage silk kimono from
Lucy in Disguise. Silk
dress by Azzedine Alaïa
at Selfridges



'Hello, please sit down over there and I'll be with you in a minute,' says the receptionist, politely. Except, on closer inspection, it's not a receptionist. It's Lily Allen. Britain's biggest female pop star – outspoken, outlandish and out to party on all previous sightings – is quietly doing some paperwork at her desk in her central London office. It's like seeing Madonna driving a bus. All Lily's business projects – a new vintage clothing shop, an independent record label – operate from this cramped, shabby space, a venue that makes Piccadilly Circus seem peaceful. People flit around us, delivering packages, playing music, making tea. The room would make for a good Dalí painting: sharing floor space with a rails of dresses are a mini trampoline, one hi-top trainer (men's), a metre-high bronze palm tree ornament and a black acoustic Chanel guitar.

Lily's priority at the moment is Lucy in Disguise, the vintage clothing store she co-owns with her sister Sarah Owen, due to open in September in a quiet street behind London's Oxford Circus. Fashion rather than music? It seems that way, for now at least (aside from this month's collaboration on Professor Green's single, *Just be Good to Green*, she's adamant she won't be releasing any more records and gets cross when I mention it). Right now, however, the 25-year-old

looks as though she should be in bed – she thinks she may have picked up a tummy bug on her recent trip to the Brazilian rainforest, filming a documentary for the World Wildlife Fund. But even illness won't get in the way of her role as ELLE's Style Advisor this month – she's eager to answer your fashion questions. Dressed in a Prada cashmere cardigan and Citizens of Humanity jeans, she manages to do ill with a touch of rock'n'roll panache, teetering dangerously in YSL Tribute shoes and puffing on a new cigarette roughly every five minutes.

Cut through the chaos, smoke and weird Amazonian stomach bugs, and you actually find a pretty neat idea. Lucy in Disguise (the name comes from a cheesy romance novel belonging to her mother) was inspired by the fact that Lily's vast wardrobe was functioning as an unofficial hire shop for her friends and family. If you can't afford to buy a dress from this shop, you can hire it for a weekend. The stock will consist of pieces sourced by Lily and her 30-year-old sister from vintage fairs, auctions, flea markets and eBay, plus Lily's own tour costumes and outfits from red-carpet events and TV performances. Isn't it sad to part with your own clothes, I wonder. 'Not really,' shrugs Lily. 'I'm not precious about these things. I love clothes and I love consuming clothes and it's not ethical to do that, so I'm quite happy to turn it into a business and see other people having enjoyment out of it. What good are they doing lying in the back of my wardrobe?'

She does, however, keep special heirloom pieces – the Chanel jackets, the good jewellery – for her future children. 'When I'm buying expensive things I tend to think, "Yep, that's something timeless that I can give to my daughter."'

Lily has babies on the brain. 'I don't think I'm that young to have a baby. My mother had me when she was 23,' she says. Setting up shop will give her something 'more solid, something that *exists*, that makes me feel more grounded'. She is tired of performing and touring, and the itinerant lifestyle that it brings. 'It's difficult as a woman who wants a family. Kids take up your whole life, particularly in the first two or three years. So it wouldn't be very responsible of me to commit to doing a world tour if I had a baby.' She has sold over 2.6m copies of her debut album, 2006's *Alright, Still*, and this year bagged a Brit Award for Best Female Solo Artist and Ivor Novello Awards for Songwriter of the Year, Best Song and Most Performed Work (for single *The Fear* from her 2009 follow-up album, *It's Not Me, It's You*). Yet despite this, Lily Allen just wants to be at home in her newly renovated London townhouse with builder boyfriend Sam Cooper, 31. Tellingly, she perks up when talking about her plans to visit Sam's brother's newborn baby daughter later. It'll make you broody, I warn. 'I know!' she says, brightly.

'When I'm buying EXPENSIVE things I tend to think, "Yep, that's something timeless that I can give to my daughter." I don't think I'm that YOUNG to have a BABY. My mother had me when she was 23'

Sam appears to be a calming influence on her life and, presumably, one of the reasons why she's dipped out of the limelight in recent months. Recent public bust-up with Courtney Love aside (Courtney accused Lily of hogging the best Chanel dresses at the Brit Awards), the loudmouth, party-hopping Lily of legend has been largely absent from the tabloids. She hasn't drunk alcohol for a month, she says, as she's got too much going on in the office. She's learnt not to share her every thought, secret and 'photos of my dinner' on social networking sites (@Lilyroseallen is back on Twitter after a four-month leave of absence, but these days tweets to her two million followers are primarily about social issues) and she is more at peace with the endless public scrutiny of her looks that comes ►



This page, on set:
appliquéd lace and silk
dress by Miu Miu. Gold
and diamond bangle
by Annoushka
Opposite: vintage ostrich-
feather shawl from
Lucy in Disguise. Silk
and lace dress by Preen
at Selfridges



'Kids take up your whole LIFE, so it wouldn't be very RESPONSIBLE

This page: vintage
ostrich-feather shawl,
as before
Opposite: silk-tulle
headpiece (worn as dress)
by Piers Atkinson.
Ponyskin shoes by
Yves Saint Laurent

with the territory of being a famous woman. 'When I was on tour earlier in the year, I'd be on stage for one-and-a-half hours a night, so since the tour finished in March, I've put on about half a stone. But I do Pilates three times a week. I am still body conscious, but I'm not so concerned with it; I don't care as much.'

For now, she's happy nesting with her boyfriend and indulging her love of clothes. The cheeky ingénue who burst into the spotlight four years ago wearing vintage prom dresses, Nike trainers and giant Creole earrings has, in recent times, been embraced by the world of high fashion. Karl Lagerfeld, who cast Lily in his Chanel Coco Cocoon campaign, remains a firm, if unlikely, friend. 'I always enjoy the Chanel shows – they're like going to the ballet,' she says. When did she and Karl become close? 'It was at a big party in Coco's apartments in Paris. I was drunk and got lost in the building. I wandered into an attic room and Karl was there. I got really embarrassed and apologised, but he said, "No, come in." We had a chat – although I can't remember what about, I was so drunk. I do remember asking him about some shoes he'd designed that had a green ring in the heel [from the Chanel a/w 2009 collection]. I asked how they worked. He drew a diagram explaining the physics of making the shoe. I've still got the drawing. A week later I was asked to do the campaign.'

Time to get down to business. Lily stubs out her cigarette, sits up straight and turns her attention to your Style Advisor questions...

I'VE GOT LOTS OF NICE PIECES BUT STRUGGLE TO PUT THEM TOGETHER. HOW CAN I MAKE DRESSING IN THE MORNING EASIER? Assess how you feel – mood is very important. Then choose one base item, something you really like that day, and build your look around it. Having a neat wardrobe helps – Practical Princess [practicalprincess.com] organised mine; it's divided into seasons. I have dresses divided by length and T-shirts and more casualwear divided by colours. And my shoes are in boxes with photos on the front. If all else fails in the morning, chuck on a dress. I do that quite a lot – it's just one piece, but it's a whole outfit.

I FIND VINTAGE SHOPPING REALLY DIFFICULT. WHAT ARE YOUR TIPS? First, ignore the sizing. A size 12 now is different to a size 12 in the 1970s; vintage shops that divide clothing into sizes may not have taken that into account. If something is too big but you love it, get it taken in – we're going

of me to COMMIT to doing a world tour if I had a BABY'

to have an alteration service in our shop. Don't go with the mindset that you want to reference a certain era. Just try lots of things on, and have fun with it – I like to play with clothes all the time. Some eras are good for certain things – the 1920s are good for summery, beaded dresses, the 1970s are great for maxi floral dresses and the 1980s for harder-looking jackets and jeans. And don't worry about looking *too* vintage – many current designers go shopping for vintage for inspiration for their lines, so you can get a modern look.

I'M MID-TWENTIES, LIKE YOU, AND DON'T WANT TO LOOK TOO POLISHED. HOW CAN I DO ELEGANT WITHOUT LOOKING BORING? It's important to have an element of humour in what you're wearing. I think that's one of the reasons why the Chanel campaign came about for me. Karl could see I was already wearing all of those clothes before they got involved with me – I always thought it was funny to be a 19-year-old girl wearing a beautiful Chanel tweed jacket with trainers. So wear a ladylike piece with something quirkier, or a flash of colour; mix it up a bit. Don't be afraid of



doing grown-up – I've just bought a vintage Balmain white-as-snow fur coat in Paris, which I love. If you love it, buy it.

I FIND SHOPPING DEMORALISING. HOW CAN I MAKE IT MORE FUN? I feel self-conscious shopping – my size fluctuates so I never know what to gravitate towards. And because I'm famous people are always staring at me. Timing is important – avoid after school, after work and the weekends when it's just so busy.

Have a plan – when I don't have a plan of what to buy and where to shop, I get distracted and come back with things I don't need. And don't forget online shopping – I love Net-a-Porter because of the next-day delivery. My mum does loads of online shopping but just puts it in her basket and doesn't buy it. She likes a browse, and still gets that shopping thrill without spending the money.

I'M CURVY AND SHORT. LOTS OF THE CURRENT TRENDS LOOK AWFUL ON ME. WHAT WORKS BEST FOR MY SHAPE? Empire-line dresses, jeans with a heel and a top that covers your bum are good. And anything cut with an A-line. I'm wary of following trends that don't work for me – I don't have a model's body, ►



Topshop Unique. They feel lovely against your skin, you can layer them and they look great with everything. Stay clear of eBay if you're on a budget – you don't want to risk buying the wrong size. And you can be reckless when shopping online, as it doesn't feel so much like you're spending. Where I wouldn't scrimp is on tights – fancy tights are worth the money. I like Wolford. Just make sure they fit – if they dig in to your tummy, the outline of your outfit will look weird.

'CONFIDENCE *is what makes someone look great, so if you find something that you LOVE and feel that you want it in every COLOUR, go for it. If it makes you feel comfortable and HAPPY, why not?'*

HOW CAN I DRESS FOR MY 30TH BIRTHDAY PARTY WITHOUT LOOKING TOO TRY-HARD? I've found that my understated red-carpet looks get the best reaction. Less is more. Spend money on make-up and getting your hair done, but don't go too styled. Wear something that you feel comfortable in – maybe a floaty dress in a beautiful fabric – and can dance easily in.

I WEAR JEANS ALL THE TIME – HOW CAN I GET OUT OF MY STYLE RUT? Just go for it. I wear crazy stuff for shows to grab attention – I wouldn't wear those outfits to lunch! So create an opportunity where you could wear something outlandish and feel comfortable – throw a party with a theme or plan a girls' night out. And, day-to-day, wear jeans with quirky accessories, try a brightly coloured shoe with a jacket that has a flash of the same colour. It'll look like you're fashion conscious but not trying too hard. Your outfit should look like you've thought about it a bit, but not too much.

WHAT BASICS SHOULD I INVEST IN FOR A/W? I'd spend a good amount of money on a nice coat – but not necessarily a black one. Camel and lighter colours suit most people and there are lots around this winter. Get a good handbag that you want to show off – it will always make you feel like you've dressed up your outfit. Underwear is important, too – I think you should change it every six months. It makes you feel so much more confident if you've got something nice to put on under your outfit. I love Liberty's underwear department for Stella McCartney, Elle Macpherson and Spanx.

I ALWAYS SEEM TO GET JEWELLERY WRONG. WHAT ARE YOUR TIPS? It's important not to overdo jewellery. Start with a key item and then add in smaller items. Like today, I'm wearing lots of chunky gold rings and a subtle chain necklace. Don't wear big earrings, a big necklace and lots of rings all at once.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF FASHION ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED? Karl gave me some good advice once. I remember turning up at one of his shows wearing a YSL skirt with my Chanel top and shoes. Normally people are dressed in head-to-toe Chanel at his shows, but I didn't feel comfortable like that. I got a bit embarrassed about it, and said, 'I'm really sorry, Karl, I'm wearing YSL.' He said, 'Don't be ridiculous. It looks silly when people are too head-to-toe matchy-matchy.' He's right. And my final advice is about shoes: if they don't hurt, they don't look good. Yes, I know this goes against my whole 'be comfortable' thing – I think it might be to do with me being short... ■

Lily Allen's shop Lucy in Disguise opens in London in September; enq lucyindisguiselondon.com. Watch behind-the-scenes footage of ELLE's cover shoot with Lily Allen at elle.tv

so I wear what I can work with. You won't catch me dead in the new kitten heels, for example – I'm 5ft 2in, if I'm going to wear heels, they're going to be five-inch ones. My friend Miquita [Oliver] does that thing of ripping looks out of magazines of people she wants to emulate but that doesn't work for me.

I KEEP BUYING VARIATIONS OF THE SAME PIECE. HOW CAN I MIX IT UP A BIT? I do that. I'm obsessed with Prada's printed sundresses at the moment. They are such a good fit and a great summer staple, so I bought five! And I see how Topshop, New Look or Oasis bring out the same dress in different colours, so it's tempting. But I wouldn't worry too much – remember that you are paying a great deal of attention to what you're wearing, but it doesn't mean that everyone else is. Confidence is what makes someone look great, so if you find something that you love and feel that you want it in every colour, go for it. If it makes you feel comfortable and happy, why not?

I DON'T HAVE MUCH MONEY. HOW CAN I UPDATE MY WARDROBE CHEAPLY? For unique pieces, try somewhere like the Affordable Vintage Fair – they're all around the country. And there are brilliant things to be found in charity shops, you just have to put the time in. My best bargain buys are the cashmere-mix T-shirts from



This page: silk and lace
dress by Preen at
Selfridges. Feather boa
from Annie's Vintage
Opposite: ostrich-feather
shrug by Temperley
London. Silk dress by
Agent Provocateur