

All white on the NIGHT

WANT A WEDDING THAT'S ROMANTIC BUT COOL, WITH DANCING TILL DAWN? THEN ALICE TEMPERLEY'S NEW BRIDAL RANGE IS FOR YOU. REPORTS **CLAUDIA CROFT**

The first dress Alice Temperley ever designed was her own wedding dress. Before she became the toast of the Notting Hill fashion set, before she had even met her husband, Lars, she remembers spending long, languid hours at her parents' cider farm in Somerset, sketching her dream gown. "As a child, I always imagined my wedding dress and drew it," she says. She credits her career as a designer to all that obsessive doodling.

Now her career is about to come full circle, as she launches her first full ready-to-wear bridal range. Her previous offerings had been gowns from her fashion collections done in white and a small bridal line only available from her own stores. The new line, called Ophelia, features 20 dresses and comes complete with shirtings, hair accessories and beautifully embroidered veils. They all exude that unfussy Portobello aesthetic that Temperley has not only made her own, but parlayed into a global lifestyle brand, cleverly merging her eminently wearable, romantic clothes with a bohemian lifestyle that takes in country piles, nights spent dancing barefoot in fields and a gaggle of gorgeous girlfriends that includes Liberty Ross, Laura Bailey and Jacqueta Wheeler.

For her own 1920s-themed wedding at the family farm in 2002, Temperley "was the very vision of a modern bohemian bride. Her dress, she says, "was made from lace that I'd collected for years and beautiful, tiny 1920s sequins. It had a lovely train with a low back with pearl straps crossing over." Her guests saved that, they walked up an aisle strewn with rose petals and everybody danced in the orchard until dawn. "My wedding dress is now covered in sheep shit and raspberries, because I jumped around in the field and completely relaxed in it," she says, neatly summing up the carefree Temperley approach to getting hitched.

She has since dressed barefoot beach brides, country-house brides, brides who have got married in fields and even one who wed in the African bush (see them all on her website — grateful brides send her their pics afterwards).

"People come in for something that's a bit more relaxed, not a normal bridal dress. They think of Temperley, and they think a bit more romantic and soft." And of a dress that will look as good on the dancefloor as down the aisle.

Her many years of making bespoke wedding dresses for clients such as Sophie Dahl ("It was amazing structured silk, with a corset, Jessica Rabbit-style, but demure, with beautiful lace down the arms so she was covered up") and Liberty Ross ("I did her evening look — a short, cliff dress, with a full skirt and a low back") have made Temperley an expert in what works and what doesn't. "You want to wear a dress and not feel like it's wearing you. It should feel like a second skin."

Despite obsessing about her own wedding dress since she was a child, Temperley does have one regret — not wearing a veil. "I feel like I should renew my vows, so that I can wear one. There's a church just opposite my house in Somerset, and a friend phoned me up the other day and said she had dreamt that I'd renewed my vows there. I was, like, 'Interesting...'"

So, what would her dream dress be like second time around? "It would actually be a lot bigger, because I love wearing the ready-to-wear dresses to parties, so as it's the wedding, I'd definitely go for a longer train, which I'd detach afterwards, and a long veil. Also a fine shawl and lace tattoos all over the top of my body. Actually, I should go and draw that after this, as it's not in my next collection." And she strides off back to Notting Hill to do just that. **O**



Matia Gryniewska-Dziwka, 48, is in a car, on a field, in Poland

Marrying with Alice

● Wear a veil Especially if you're getting married in a church — you're only a bride once. I love how you can see the body through them, it's so romantic. If your dress is plain and simple, you can have the most decorative veil. Also, when someone is wearing a dress with a low back, you can see their skin through the veil.

● What to do with the dress afterwards "We made a bespoke dress for an incredible Irish woman — it was one of the most expensive we have ever made — who had it framed. Other brides bring their dresses back to us and we dry them soft, pale colours, so they can wear them again."

● Put your dress through its paces "We'll get brides to jump around in their dress, sit in it, get off a chair, and climb over something. If they've got a train, we want to know how that will work if they are getting into a car. And if they are dancing, they must know how their sleeves are going to behave."

● How to be a beautiful beach bride "It's all about looking good barefoot. If you have a waisted dress, you're going to look like you have short legs. If you take off your heels, an empire line makes the legs look longer, and that's usually the shape we end up designing for beach weddings. Keep it soft with a full skirt for dancing around in as the sun sets."

● Look like yourself "You can go to town on hair and make-up, but if you don't look like yourself, the groom is going to be, like, 'Oh, my God, who are you?'"

● Dressing the classic British pear shape "I've just done a bride who had a tiny top half, but larger hips. We made her a tiny bodice with a much fuller skirt, and she looked so delicate."

Temperley Bridal: temperleylondon.com
Also available from net-a-porter.com

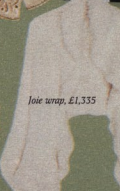
Bridal Segmont belt, £295



Ambella shirag, £1,250



Joie wrap, £1,335



Bridal belt, £345



Bridal hair comb, £185

Heart-shaped veil, £350



Elosha dress, £4,200



All from the Ophelia range by Temperley Bridal

Augustina dress, £3,500



Like the dream, from top: The model Alice Keshish; the producer Clare Neale marrying Alex James; and the make-up artist Andrea Vasilovic

