

'We started the whole WAG thing'

THE PALS JOIN US AT THE BINGHAM TO TALK 'FOOTY WIVES', CLUTTER AND FAMOUS CLIENTS

The test of a great friendship is probably a long holiday or journey together – and best mates actress Susie Amy and professional lifestyle 'de-clutterer' Vicky Silverthorn definitely bonded big-time when they tackled Route 66, the ultimate American road trip, a few years ago. 'Our car was almost hanging on a rock at one point!' recalls Vicky, 31, who also worked as Lily Allen's personal assistant for two years. 'But it didn't put us off as we went ahead and did another big US road trip – only that time in a sturdy SUV!'

'I was struggling to maintain my dignity and not corpse!'

Vicky's been a PA to many a musical and sporting celebrity, but these days she's specialising with her very own de-cluttering service, where she helps her clients strip their wardrobes back and sort out their mounting paperwork in a bid to calm and cleanse their lives. So has she de-cluttered former *Footballers' Wives* actress Susie? 'You bet she has!' says 30-year-old Susie, who's currently on a major UK theatre tour of the Agatha Christie thriller *Murder On The Nile*. 'I'm the unorganised one – although I've got a better memory than Vicky, when it comes to organising my home, I am absolutely useless.'

One field of knowledge where Susie does excel is the use of beauty products, both on set and in her personal life, and she's got her own beauty blog offering style and make-up tips. After meeting them over lunch at the exquisite boutique Bingham Hotel in Richmond, Surrey, we reckon these two ladies would make a brilliant double-act when it comes to re-organising your life and making you feel and look good in the process! >



Above: Cheers Vicky and Susie! Below left: Susie with her former *Footballers' Wives* co-stars Katherine Monaghan, Gillian Taylforth and Zoe Lucker

ORGANIC DUCK EGG SALAD AND YOUNG ARTICHOKE WITH SOY AND TRUFFLE DRESSING

Remember to rub the artichoke heart flesh with lemon juice, working swiftly to prevent oxidation.

SERVES 4

● 4 organic duck eggs ● 3 globe artichoke ● 3 large Jerusalem artichokes, peeled salad leaves and cresses **For the cooking liquor:** ● 100ml white wine vinegar ● 400ml water ● 75ml olive oil ● Juice of 1 lemon ● 2 bay leaves ● 1 sprig thyme ● 2 crushed garlic cloves ● Salt and pepper **For the dressing:** ● 1tsp honey ● 1 tsp dark soy sauce ● 2tsp rice wine vinegar ● 1 egg yolk ● grated fresh truffle ● 25ml truffle oil ● 150ml organic rapeseed oil



1 Remove the outer leaves of the artichokes and peel until the central yellow flesh is exposed. Cut off the top and hard stem at the bottom. Using a vegetable peeler, remove any further green on the artichoke heart, until only the yellow flesh is exposed, and rub the artichoke heart with fresh lemon juice. Use a spoon to remove the hairy chokes on the inside of the artichoke heart. Place all ingredients for the artichoke cooking liquor in a pan, bring to a simmer, add both globe and Jerusalem artichokes, cook until tender. Remove with slotted spoon and keep warm.

2 For the dressing, place egg yolk, soy sauce, honey and vinegar in a bowl, whisk until completely emulsified. Continue to whisk while

slowly adding truffle oil and rapeseed oil until all oil is incorporated. Place duck eggs in a large pan of boiling water, cook for 5 minutes and remove from the pan with a slotted spoon. Peel and keep warm.

3 Crush the Jerusalem artichokes with a little olive oil, spoon onto the plate. Cut the globe artichokes into pieces, and arrange around the outside of the crushed Jerusalem artichoke. Place soft boiled egg on the crushed artichoke, arrange mixed salad leaves and cresses over the completed dish. Dress the dish with the honey soy truffle vinaigrette.

How do you two know each other?

Susie: We met nearly ten years ago. Vicky was living with some friends of mine and we just clicked. She was working with one of my ex-boyfriends at the time, as a PA for his management company. We ended up in Dubai together about two weeks later, again with mutual friends.

Vicky: We've since become really close friends and regular travelling companions. We've been on two big American road trips, including Route 66, driving from Chicago to LA. We hired an amazing car and we literally stopped in every place along the way.

That sounds like an amazing adventure – was it a major bonding experience too?

Vicky: It was an unbelievably bonding experience – and the trip of a lifetime. I'd recommend it to anyone. We got lost, we got stuck, we got in bizarre situations, we got pulled over by the police! We met some of the best characters that I've ever met in my life. We arrived in Albuquerque during an enormous balloon festival. We met some expert pilots and the next morning we were going up in a hot air balloon!

How did you cope with the driving?

Vicky: We shared the driving, although Susie's a lot more confident driving in America than I am! I made myself do it. We did the first trip in a Dodge Charger, and we got stuck in a couple of situations, where the car was almost hanging on a rock in New Mexico at one point!

Susie, we still probably know you best from your role as Chardonnay in *Footballers' Wives* – does the series haunt you?

I don't think 'haunt' would be the right word, as I had such a great time on it. I met some fabulous people who I'm still friends with, like Zoe Lucker [who played Tanya Turner], and I had a lovely chat with Gary Lucy the other day on the phone. It was a really great experience, and I was so young, I was 20 when I started on the show. Looking back, you don't always appreciate the amazing jobs that come along, and how rare those jobs are.

How did the role change your life?

Nothing would change my life beyond belief work-wise. My life is my family and my friends. But work-wise, it was a very interesting job and I think people do remember the crazy storylines. It was kind of the first of its kind. The word WAG

Hands off Vicky's plate, Susie! The girls are very close, after meeting ten years ago through mutual friends



hadn't even been invented when it came out. People didn't have such a great interest in real footballers' wives apart from Victoria Beckham and maybe Sheryl Gascoigne. I do think to a degree that we drew attention to footballers' wives and made people more interested in them.

The series was renowned for its crazy, over-the-top stories. Have you got a favourite scene from the series?

My favourite scene ever was when Chardonnay was interviewing Tanya Turner on her new chat show, and Tanya was confiding in her about her

husband Jason's inability to maintain an erection! It was just the most hysterical scene! I was really struggling to maintain my dignity and not corpse!

Vicky, how did you get into the world of de-cluttering and clearing up other people's lives?

I worked as a PA for ten years for various people, including professional sportsmen, and most recently I worked for Lily Allen for two years, which involved a lot of travelling around the world. A lot of what I did for her was keeping everything around her very organised, because I believe that when everything around you is organised, you work better. When I left Lily, I thought, what can I do? I soon worked out that what a lot of people needed was a massive de-clutter.

If people don't know you, might they feel a bit weird letting a total stranger go through their very personal items?

I think they would if I was just someone called Vicky who knocked on their door. However, I think I'm very lucky in the fact that I've worked for some names – and people are very happy to give me the keys to their house. One of the most important things about my clients is confidentiality. Discretion is utmost, and there's an instant trust when I go in, once we've met and once they know what I've done, which they do from my website.

Aren't people worried that you might be too ruthless, and chuck too much stuff out?

I think some of my clients might be a bit anxious before I go in there, but I've done something for a while called the memory box, and that kind of takes the fear away. The memory box is for items that are taking up room in your wardrobe, or your life, that you don't want to throw away, but you don't need them to be out all the time. ▶

ROAST SCOTTISH HALIBUT

Served with parsley purée, smoked eel, cucumber and cockle butter sauce.

SERVES 4

● 4 x 150g (approx) pieces of halibut ● 25ml olive oil ● 300g flat leaf parsley ● 50g smoked eel fillet, cubed ● 36 live cockles, cleaned ● ½ cucumber, peeled, deseeded and cut into 1cm dice ● Freshly chopped parsley ● 150g unsalted butter, cubed ● 100ml dry white wine ● Parsley cress (optional)

1 Remove the parsley leaves from the stalks, and blanch in boiling salted water for 5 minutes or until leaves start to break down. Drain well and blitz in a food processor while warm to a smooth fine purée and season. Preheat the oven to 200°C, heat the olive oil in a non-stick pan, then add the halibut. Cook on one side until golden brown, then place the whole pan into the oven for 2-3 minutes or until fish is cooked through.

2 Heat a saucepan until hot, place in cockles, add white wine, cover with a lid until all



cockles have just opened. Strain and reserve cooking liquor for base of the sauce. Reduce the cooking liquor by half while boiling, whisk in the butter one cube at a time, remove cockles from the shell and add to sauce. Reserve some cockles in the shell to put on the plate for presentation. Finish the sauce by adding diced cucumber, smoked eel and chopped parsley.

3 Spoon parsley purée on to the plate, place fish on top of the purée, place cockles in the shell neatly around the halibut, spoon over the butter sauce and garnish with parsley cress.

What's in your memory box?

Everything from photographs to things like a little nightdress that I wore when I was five – with the Pink Panther on it! And a scarf that my mum got me for my 18th birthday. Again, hopefully things like that might get used again – and when I pull them out of the box and show my children, I can say: 'This is what Mummy got for her 18th!'

Who else have you de-cluttered?

I've worked for the singer Rumer, Elly from La Roux, and rugby players Danny Care and Ugo Monye. One of the problems many people like that have is that they're travelling constantly, and they're not really at home for more than a day or two, and I saw that with Lily – we'd come back from Europe, and we'd disappear the next day to America. That's how I help. Lily wouldn't give me any instructions. I'd unpack, I'd organise her clothes, I'd go through her paperwork and her mail, and deal with anything that needed doing.

What was it like working for Lily Allen?

Absolutely incredible, and very exciting – she's fantastic. It was for two years, around about the time her second album came out, and then we almost immediately went on tour, so we were travelling all around the world for 18 months, a couple of times over, with European tours, UK tours and American tours. I was by her side the whole time, on video shoots, photo-shoots, everything. It was the most amazing two years of my life!

Is it fair to say Lily has kind of de-cluttered her life since all that fame and fortune, as she's now taken a step back and become quite domestic?

She's very domestic. She's a fantastic cook. She's keeping away from the limelight now because she's now a mum to her baby girl Ethel. I love that I was involved in her life and seeing all the changes – from Lily who was single, to Lily who's now had a baby with an amazing guy [Sam Cooper]. I myself am single, but when I think about what I'd want, it's something like they've got. They are truly happy!

Susie, do you have a boyfriend?

Yes, Irish rugby player Rob Kearney. We've been together for over two years. Rob lives in Dublin, and I love it there – I've got a whole new set of friends and family out there. He comes over to see me in London as much as he can. I didn't know much about rugby before we met, and I'm learning. It's a bit more complex than some other sports, but I usually sit with one of the other girlfriends, or Rob's dad, and go: 'What's happening?!'

Vicky describes working for Lily Allen as 'the most amazing two years of my life'



Has Vicky de-cluttered your life?

Yes! I love having my house clean and organised, but that's not something that's within me. So Vicky came round and she did my wardrobe, and my third bedroom, because I have a friend staying right now, and we made a lot of progress!

'We got in bizarre situations, we got pulled over by the police!'

You have your own expert lifestyle area, with your Blusher And Blogging website; have you always been into beauty products?

Always, from my very early teenage years. I was spending all my pocket money on skin care products. It's not that I love to wear loads of make-up, but I'm a real sucker for products and treatments. That's my kind of down-time, how I try to relax. Last year, when I was about to travel the world, I was determined to be a source of information for beauty spots that are off the beaten track, which is something I've found very hard to find when searching online. So my aim for the blog is for it to be both informative and personal.

Tell us about your current theatre tour in Murder On The Nile...

We're touring all over the UK until July with the play, which is based on Agatha Christie's *Death On The Nile*. We've got a fantastic cast including the amazing Kate O'Mara, who plays a grande dame called Miss Ffoliot-Ffoulkes, which is the best name ever! I've got a really fun part – I play a very wealthy socialite who's honeymooning with her husband on a luxury steamer in Egypt, and there's a murder, of course. I love touring, and you stay wherever you can. I've got family in Glasgow, and friends in Cardiff, so you can get some quality catch-up time in places you wouldn't maybe get to otherwise.

OK!

TO BOOK PROFESSIONAL ORGANISER/DE-CLUTTERER VICKY, VISIT HER WEBSITE WWW.YOUCNEEDAVICKY.COM.

VISIT SUSIE'S BEAUTY WEBSITE AT WWW.BLUSHERANDBLOGGING.COM. SEE SUSIE IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S 'MURDER ON THE NILE', ON TOUR UNTIL JULY. FOR INFORMATION, DATES AND TICKETS, VISIT WWW.KENWRIGHT.COM.

THE BINGHAM HOTEL, 61-63 PETERSHAM ROAD, RICHMOND UPON THAMES, SURREY TW10 6UT. CALL 020 8940 0902 OR VISIT WWW.THEBINGHAM.CO.UK.

FEATURE BY ROB DRISCOLL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB BAALHAM HAIR AND MAKE-UP BY JULIE WEST USING CHANEL AND BOBBI BROWN RECIPES BY SHAY COOPER

WARM HAZELNUT SPONGE WITH CARAMEL CUSTARD, POACHED APPLE AND BLACKBERRIES



When baking the caramel custard, make sure it sets to the consistency of a crème brûlée.

SERVES 4-6

Sponge: ● 115g sugar ● 115g egg whites ● 45g ground hazelnuts ● 45g flour ● 115g melted butter
Caramel custard: ● 250ml double cream ● 250ml milk ● 7 egg yolks ● 100g sugar
Poached fruit: ● 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and turned into ball shapes with a melon baller ● 1 punnet blackberries ● 100g water ● 100g sugar ● Zest of 1 lemon ● Blackberry sorbet (optional)

1 For the sponge, place sugar, hazelnuts and flour in an electric mixer, slowly add egg whites until a smooth batter, then slowly add the butter. Place in piping bag and pipe into greased stainless steel rings, bake at 175°C for 15 minutes, golden brown but still moist. To make the custard, caramelise the sugar until dark brown, deglaze with the milk and double cream, remove from the heat, whisk into the egg yolks, and place in an oven-proof dish and bake at 90°C until set to the consistency of a crème brûlée. Allow to cool and whisk until smooth and place in a piping bag.

2 For the fruit, place water, sugar and lemon zest into a pan, bring to the boil and remove from the heat. Add the apples and poach for 3 minutes until cooked, remove from the heat, add blackberries to the warm liquor, and reserve.

3 Brush the sponges with some of the reserved poaching liquor. Warm the sponge through in the oven, remove and place in the centre of the plate. Pipe some of the caramel custard next to the sponge. Arrange the poached fruits around the outside of the sponge and custard. Finish with the blackberry sorbet.