

addicted to shoes

JAN WALDRON INDULGED HER LOVE OF FOOTWEAR WHEN SHE VISITED DANIELLI IN DARTMOUTH. PHOTOGRAPHS BY IAN JACKSON

Ok, I'll start by making a confession. I have a little problem - an addiction really. Shoes. I have too many and still haven't got enough! As a connoisseur, I have to say that there aren't many individual shops selling nice, unusual shoes in Devon. There are some, but not many. So imagine my joy when I found out that a new, independent shoe shop had opened in Dartmouth at the beginning of June.

Danielli is a veritable sweet shop for shoe-holics. This chic little shop offers a diverse range of designs hand picked by owner Sarah Hanafee. Shoes of every colour imaginable can be found at Danielli: crisp white, smart tan, delicious caramel, zingy lime, deep purple, ruby red, baby pink, hot pink, cream, black and turquoise, to name but a few.

Displayed in a tempting way, alongside bags and belts which co-ordinate, the shoes are sourced from Italy, Spain and France, hence the continentally inspired name: "I wanted something that sounded European," explains Sarah. "Plus it was the name of a hotel my husband and I stayed in in Venice."

Needless to say, the shoes are beautifully made and you won't see dozens of other people wearing the same styles. "It used to be impossible to find the sort of shoes I wanted locally," says Sarah, who moved to Dartmouth from Winchester 18 months ago. "So I decided to open my own shop. I started by going to the fashion fairs in Paris and Italy to see what was about. I ended up buying designs that I loved, and which I thought other women would love too."

The result is a selection of hard-to-find labels, including Antica Bottega (lovely flat mules in the softest Italian leather), Jaime Mascaro (elegant evening shoes and stylish daywear models from Menorca), Castamero (of-the-moment espadrilles in candy colours with wedge heels) and Pump & Circumstance (mules and essential pointed-toe loafers from France).

Since opening, Sarah has exceeded all her expectations. Ladies of all ages have been come in to browse, and have emerged a short time later with up to five pairs of shoes. "One customer was a particular fan of Pump & Circumstance and bought a pair in every colour," says Sarah.

I can understand the customer's dilemma. After what seems

like an eternity of nondescript shoes on the high street, it is hard to choose just one pair when you are surrounded by so many must-haves. For those who would find multiple buying too extravagant, there is a wish list service available. Simply fill in the little note, which will explain what size you take and what designs appeal. Then, if it is your birthday, why not send your other half along to the shop and, hey presto, any gift dilemmas are sorted out. Sarah is planning to have "men only" shopping evenings in the run-up to Christmas this year, and she is already offering a gift wrapping service.

Just a week after its opening, Danielli's stock had drastically reduced and Sarah had to dash off to Paris for more new stock. "We had a real rush. Nothing had prepared me for the incredible demand, not just from tourists, but from locals of all ages," she recalls. The designs are only bought in limited numbers - once they've sold out, that's it. On average there are 12 pairs available; when you consider that these are across the full size range, from three to eight, that is not many at all. The bags are even more exclusive, with only one or two of any design.

The shoes are surprisingly affordable. Although the shop looks chic and exclusive, prices are not prohibitive, ranging from £22 to £130 (from flip flops to boots), with the average price for shoes being £60 to £80. A healthy selection of bags sells from £35 to £60.

In addition, there is a good variety of belts, all of which would add the perfect finishing touch to any outfit. With prices ranging from £39 to £54, the supple leather designs are cut to fit any figure and any budget. "Women have gone mad for the belts, saying that they are so relieved to find somewhere that sells something unusual," says Sarah.

She explained that the customers have been incredibly enthusiastic and friendly: "Since opening the shop we have made so many new friends and had tremendous support from other Dartmouth businesses, which has been lovely." **DT**

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Danielli is open from 10am to 5pm, from Monday to Saturday.