

## Dedicated follower...

SIXTEEN YEARS ON, she has been a successful model for 12 years, but she still gets jittery when confronted with a feedback. It all started when, wandering through New York during her school holidays, she passed the building where the Dixie model agency was setting up. 'They were actually hammering the sign on the door'. She was beckoned inside by an assistant, who advised her to go into modelling and sent her to see Steven Meisel. A few months of Victoria Beckham, Belle Freud and John Galiano, Dixie is now based in Chelsea and models for time between her boyfriend, musician Robert Downey, and acting. She completed a Shakespeare workshop at RADA last year and has a part in the forthcoming *Julius Caesar*. *She's the class, she's completely naive. Myself!* ● SACHA VOLKMAN



'These are clothes for serious, elegant women, who have strong presence and character. There will always be a market for contemporary glamour'



It's not craftsmanship in Peter Frenck's clothes, not to mention the don't-edge-for-problematic, that Liberty agreed to sponsor the designers' first solo-couture collection during London Fashion Week last March.

In the weeks before a show, Pearce and Frenck can be found, day or night, in their studio-cum-office in Holloway, draping voluminous fabrics around a *Thinkmen* mannequin with the sounds of MTV in the background.

'To be successful, you have to dig your life away,' says Reynolds. But the investment of time and money has paid off. For winter, Pearce Frenck has conceived a collection of gloriously luxurious clothing, including a dramatic floor-length coat in the colour of butter, a simple button-down, and the narrowest of waist shirts, with one single button across the chest. Their cut and technique look back to the golden days of couture, what it is and what it was everything.

It is difficult to pinpoint who contributes what to the designs. Reynolds and Andrew compliment each other, adding a flourish that elevates an otherwise plain design to the realm of wearable fantasy. 'These are clothes for serious, elegant women who have strong presence and character,' says Reynolds. 'There will always be a market for contemporary glamour.'

The parlours at Peter Frenck's studio – always a tiffle up of what is going on inside a designer's head – are crisscrossed with pictures of women at their most perfectly turned-out and finely groomed. There are images of strong women – the 70-year-old model Carmen Dell'Orefice, Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren. There are dressier divas who bear matching handbags, gloves and shoes, the sort of women who, in their dreams at least, wear black net veiling on their perfectly turned hair, creating a layer of mystery between themselves and reality.

Andrew and Reynolds are both designers – without their partners, they would never have got as far as they have, with their collections selling at Liberty Harvey Nichols and Jones in London, Bergdorf Goodman in New York and Saks Fifth Avenue in Los Angeles. Their names are such that they are featured heavily in a three-part documentary on the fashion industry, titled *Rags to Riches*, the first instalment of which will be broadcast on 27 October.

Andrew and Reynolds are not antipathetic young designers, being neither avant-garde nor hip, and are not designing clothes for the super-wealthy fashion victims of the year 2001. Instead, they dream of dressing the Princess of Wales. 'She has elegance and presence. She is really chic, yet understated,' says Reynolds. 'But the hardest part of our job is that we are not and we're not on the clothes.' □

Sacha Volkman, top: wears tulle £225, £1,400; sailor top, £150, both by PEARCE FRENCK, at Harvey Nichols. Beaded clothes, £200, at Faith Lotus, 127 Fulham Road, SW3. Left: the 1999 autumn/winter collection of Liberty

CHRISTOPHER WOOD