

The log look is big this winter, with boutique hotels and Chelsea nightclubs adopting lumberjack style. Chop, chop, says **Hugh Graham** — here's how you can join in

Our special relationship with the US includes a fascination with log cabins, the Wild West and rugged Americana. Old westerns are a staple of BBC2 at the weekends, and Little House on the Prairie is on perpetual repeat. The cosy backwoods aesthetic evokes a welcome escape from the turmoil of modern life. It's also fashionable. A video of Pippa Middleton line-dancing at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, went viral in November, and the lumbersexual has replaced the metrosexual in Shoreditch: all checked flannel shirts, work boots and grizzly facial hair.

This rustic, down-home look is also catching on in design circles. Babington House, the hip boutique hotel in Somerset, has a guest cabin seemingly transplanted from a Canadian lake circa 1950, and its mother company, Soho House, plans to launch 30 log cabins this summer at the Soho Farmhouse, a new holiday retreat in Oxfordshire.

The acme of the lumbersexual interior is Beaver Lodge, London's buzziest new nightclub for the Made in Chelsea crowd. Started by Charlie Gilkes and Duncan Strirling, thirtysomething nightlife impresarios who are part of the Wills n' Kate set, the club is a paean to pioneer chic and cowboy cool: log walls and barn doors, plaid and gingham, oak barrels and wagon wheels, stuffed beavers and cowhide.

It may sound like a cheesy theme park, but the authenticity is astonishing, and after years of the lily elegant Scandi style, Walnut Grove-style rusticity feels

more comforting, as if Rock Hudson were stoking the log fire in a lumberjack shirt, with John Wayne keeping watch outside.

"I'm a huge fan of westerns — The Searchers, The Good, the Bad and the Ugly — and I loved the film Coyote Ugly," Gilkes explains. "Beaver Lodge was inspired by the Million Dollar Cowboy bar, in Jackson Hole, which I went to 18 months ago. Londoners have embraced the concept — it's so familiar from films. The log cabin looks cosy at this time of year, but we also put in a saloon feel so it works in the summer."

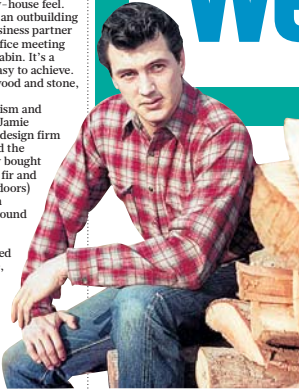
It's easy to get the look at home, too, Gilkes says. "It's a country-house feel. It's a fun thing if you have an outbuilding or a barn, although my business partner and I are doing our next office meeting room in the style of a log cabin. It's a cool thing to create, and easy to achieve. The key components are wood and stone, then you accessorise."

"It's all about fun, escapism and creating a getaway," adds Jamie Wilson, co-founder of the design firm CheekyTiki, who fashioned the interiors with Gilkes. They bought reclaimed timber (douglas fir and pine, old beams and barn doors) from Wells Reclamation, in Somerset, as well as half-round logs from a company that makes showjumping poles (aeavans.co.uk). The scuffed wooden floors, meanwhile, were salvaged from an old bank (£31 a sq metre; encoreclan.com.co.uk).

"We wanted it to have a beaten, worn look and a variety of textures," Gilkes says. "So we have a mix of logs and planks. One wall has



We've got cabin fever



Log on Top left, this three-bedroom home in Llangedwyn, Powys, was built by British Log Cabins. Above: stacked log feature wall by Janey Butler Interiors/Llama Developments (janeybutler.co.uk). Below, from left, Rock Hudson, the room's steel pillars were covered in slate (prices vary; fossil-stone.co.uk) and the taxidermy came from the Sunbury Antiques Market, held every second Tuesday at Kempton Park racecourse, in Surrey. "It's fantastic," Gilkes says. "I got there early — the car park is always packed with traders' vans from Portobello. I got a large grizzly bear [£3,000], a giant salmon [£250], moose antlers [£350] and a wolf head [£250]. "The stuffed bear I bought at Lots Road Auctions, in Chelsea. We bought the old storm lanterns, the western saddles on the bar stools and the ranch posters on eBay."

For a look that's more Northern Exposure than OK Corral, copy the Babington House cabin — its wood cladding may be reclaimed from an old Romanian mill, but the aesthetic is vintage Americana, says Vicky Charles, design director for the Soho House group. "Our design office is in New York, so I think we were subconsciously influenced by cabins in upstate New York, the Great Lakes and Canada. There's a big cabin movement in America, and we get excited about a website called Cabin Porn (cabinporn.com), which we are always tracking."

The key is not to try too hard, says Charles, who bought the eclectic furnishings from Original House, a salvage shop in Gloucestershire (original-house.co.uk). "It should feel biggledy-piggledy and lived-in, as if it's been there for ever — not shiny and new. The only new thing in there is the mattress. "It's all about vintage, reclaimed wood and found pieces, with lots of wool,

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silver-birch bark tiles." These cost £6.66 for 10 (floristrywarehouse.com).

The bar top was covered in beaten copper. The seats were upholstered in old denim, gingham and cowhide (denim, £25 a sq metre, joelandsontfabrics.com; Appledore gingham by Sanderson, £25 a sq metre; kingdominteriors.co.uk; Samua Cow-Mania faux hide, POA, malonefabrics.com). The tables were crafted from old bourbon barrels (£85; oak-barrel.co.uk) and metal animal feed buckets became light shades (£25; englishsalvage.co.uk).

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"It's all about vintage, reclaimed wood and found pieces, with lots of wool,

plaid, local blankets, a bit of floral — a sort of nature-inspired outdoorsy picnic. It has some stripes and ticking fabrics, a bit of fluffiness and fur, but it's not too twee."

If you're a stickler for new-world rusticity, you can buy wood cladding salvaged from Canadian barns from Indigenous, in Burford, Oxfordshire (from £175 a sq metre; indigenousltd.com). Or really get into the woods and build a proper cabin. British Log Cabins crafts round-log dwellings that are so authentic, you can picture Davy Crockett emerging from one in a coonskin cap (britishlogcabins.com).

"They're handcrafted — nothing is mass-produced or spat out on a line," says the firm's co-founder, Martyn Cordingley, who studied forest management and launched the Shropshire-based business with Dan Waring seven years ago. "We're not milling the timber, we're literally taking it out of the forest and building with it. Every lump and bump is visible, every piece individual, but it's precision joined. They're crafted with blood, sweat and tears."

Rugged log cabins may look odd in pastoral England, but much British architecture is imported, from the neo-Palladian to Cape Cod-style clapboard homes. Planners may reject an application for a log cabin if, say, it's next to a Cotswold stone cottage, but Cordingley says more and more are being approved, especially in woodland or remote natural settings. "They sit softly in the landscape. We built one in Wales on a Welsh stone plinth, as a nod to the local architecture."

British Log Cabins builds roughly two homes a year, with prices ranging from £18,000 to £20,000 — it is working on dwellings in Worcestershire and Yorkshire — as well as glamping huts and log beds. Interest is surging as people realise their eco-credentials: the logs store warmth in winter and retain cool air in summer, lowering energy bills. "The carbon footprint is minimal," Cordingley says. "We source all the timber — douglas fir and western red cedar — in the UK, and they'll last for 300 years. Deep down in their hearts, I think most people like the idea of living in a log cabin." →



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