

LIVING

## Inside Rebecca Lim's newly renovated 90-year-old house that has its original features preserved

CNA Lifestyle gets an exclusive tour of the actress and her husband Matthew Webster's renovated two-storey house – an old, cosy home for a new family.



Actress Rebecca Lim takes CNA Lifestyle on a tour of her new home and this sofa is a favourite spot for her to relax. (Photo: CNA/Kelvin Chia)

“It is my very first home and when my husband Matthew and I bought the house, we were very excited about it,” shared Rebecca Lim.

Glowing and visibly pregnant, the 37-year-old Singaporean actress warmly welcomed CNA Lifestyle into her new home with [husband Matthew Webster](#) and – very, very soon – [their first child](#).

And as the Mediacorp actress embarks on a new chapter in her life [with her new family](#), she's doing so in a place that's old and full of history.



*Rebecca Lim plays host and graciously shows us around the 90-year-old two-storey house she and husband Matthew Webster call home – and yes, the baby room is prepped and ready.*

Rebecca revealed that the two-storey home they recently moved into is more than 90 years old, something that the couple were very mindful of when they started renovating it.

“We made a conscious effort to preserve as much of the heritage of the original house as possible and to keep as many items in their original condition as we could. We really felt that these items cannot be found anymore and it is our responsibility to preserve as much history as we can,” she said.

To help preserve as much of the building's heritage as possible, the couple tapped into the expertise of their friend, [architect Edmund Ng](#) of Edmund Ng Architects.

Many of the original fixtures were kept and incorporated into the modern home – from the main wooden door that opens into their living room to the window grilles and panels, as well as the staircase with its wooden bannisters (and creaky steps).



*That staircase Rebecca's leaning on is one of the many original features of the 90-year-old house that was retained during renovation. (Photo: CNA/Kelvin Chia)*

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Rebecca also shared that it was Matthew who directed most of the renovation project.

“I have never had my own space before so this was my first experience doing up my own home. I am someone who is able to appreciate beautiful interior designs but to execute is a whole different ball game. I left the interior design to him so it was all a surprise and he would tell me what was happening whenever there was any decision to be made,” she said.

Additionally, they found out she was pregnant during the renovation, so she did not conduct regular visits to the site. Instead, Rebecca only got to glimpse the home once midway through the process.

“I guess when finally having a dream home, you do not nitpick at things. I really was looking at the bigger picture – that I finally have a home of my own and that a home is not a home without family,” she reflected.





*A precious family portrait of Rebecca Lim and her family. (Photo: CNA)*

The colour theme, which was inspired by the natural tones of the old house, exudes a timeless charm and evokes a homey, lived-in ambiance from the moment one steps in through the door.

"(It's) what we both love – black, white, brown and grey – nothing too adventurous as we wanted the design and feel of our home to stand the test of time," Rebecca explained.



*Rebecca and Matthew's living room that extends to the dining area at the far end. (Photo: CNA)*

Because of the house's long and narrow layout, one of the big changes their architect friend made was to remove a wall in front of the staircase to maximise the living space, which Rebecca described as the "heart of the home".

The living room also showcases the couple's individual personalities. The main feature wall offers a glimpse into Matthew's deep appreciation for the past – display shelves adorned with old books, vinyl records and other collectibles.



The living room shelves hold books and photos from the couple. (Photo: CNA)

"He's always very into history and loves vintage stuff," Rebecca explained.

"He started to get the ball rolling so I just went with the flow and just put items that really mean a lot to us. We have family portraits and pictures of us when we first met, our engagement, our wedding day and so on."

One special painting was of the house pre-renovation – which was done by actor and artist Chen Xi, the son of celebrity couple Xiang Yun and Edmund Chen.



Rebecca Lim showing us the painting done by actor/artist Chen Xi of the two-storey house pre-reno. (Photo: CNA)

Another cherished artwork in the space was a landscape painting of a temple in Indonesia, a gift from Matthew's mum.

"I actually just really love lying on my sofa and looking at this wall because every day I focus on different things. Every piece here evokes a different emotion and this is basically what we want this wall to be – about us and our memories, past, present and future. Hopefully we can get more pictures of our baby when the baby comes," she said.



One of Rebecca's favourite spots with a special painting for a visual accent. (Photo: CNA)

The couple's shared love for reading is also reflected in the carefully arranged bookshelves. "We are both homebodies. If we have nothing to do, you will just find me on the sofa watching TV or reading a book," said Rebecca.

"Now that I am getting heavier and heavier, I am here all the time just reading a lot of pregnancy books like *How To Be A Good Mom*, *Signs Of A Crying Baby*. But if not, I am just very random in my reading choices."

In contrast, Matthew prefers old "Indiana Jones"-type books, the *Harry Potter* series and plenty of tomes on wartime history. "These are not really my kind of thing, but he likes them," she admitted. "We are very different that way."

Another focal point in the living room is a vinyl player, one of Matthew's prized possessions.



Matthew Webster's precious vinyl player. (Photo: CNA)

"There's something romantic about playing music from a vinyl because you listen to an album from start to finish instead of having music on shuffle like on modern platforms," she said, adding that she's especially attached to Peter Cetera's Glory Of Love – the song Matthew played when he proposed to her. "I always love it when he plays the entire album."

#### FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN THE KITCHEN

Moving into the sleek grey-toned kitchen, Lim proudly showed off the island, a feature she always wanted to have. "We intentionally wanted an open kitchen concept as food is really what bonds our families together and we hope to continue to do so in the years to come. When we have friends over, we somehow also always end up in this part of the house for some reason," she said.

To keep the "mess" under control, she specially requested plenty of storage such as over-counter cabinets as well as a concealed refrigerator. There is also a washing machine, dryer and dishwasher under the kitchen island to maximise space.



*She loves her kitchen very much, especially the big island. (Photo: CNA)*

"What I love about this part of the house is even when I am entertaining guests and moving in and out of the kitchen to get drinks or food for them, I can still participate in the conversation," said Rebecca.

To enhance the flow in this area, the kitchen was connected to the dining area, which was originally an open-air space pre-renovation.



“We decided to cover it up and convert this space to evoke a semi indoor-outdoor kind of feel. We have this wonderful nine metre-tall glass door, which is actually Matthew's creation. He is very proud of it but for me, my first thought was how to clean it and what to do if too much sun filters in!” she laughed, adding that they installed blinds for sunny days.

The dining area has since become another favourite spot for Rebecca, who can often be found here taking Zoom meetings, using her laptop or simply enjoying a cup of coffee with her mother.

#### FROM WALK-IN WARDROBE TO BABY'S ROOM

Moving up to the second floor (and past the row of Star Awards trophies Rebecca keeps near the staircase) we entered the couple's private sanctuary, where Lim revealed one unexpected challenge they faced.



*The original (and creaky) staircase that leads to the second floor... (Photo: CNA)*

“Towards the end of the renovation, we found out we were pregnant so there were some changes we had to make to accommodate our baby. However, there was not much that could be done at that point, so we will try to make the best of the situation one step at a time,” she said candidly.

In her first act of motherly sacrifice, Rebecca converted a space they initially allocated for her walk-in wardrobe into the baby's room. And there will be other challenges in the near future, she added.





The room that was originally supposed to be Rebecca Lim's walk-in wardrobe was turned into the baby's room... (Photo: CNA)

"This old flooring, which sometimes shrieks and produces a lot of noise, is not so conducive for a baby room. So that was not thought through and could be one big problem."

But she's thinking positively: "As of now, we only have one cot and one empty diaper trolley. So wish us luck one step at a time. Let's do this!"

#### INSIDE THE MASTER BEDROOM AND MEZZANINE

Meanwhile, over in their generously sized master bedroom, the architect and his team managed to retain more of the old window grilles, wooden window panels as well as the unique green stained glass window panels.



Rebecca and Matthew's cosy master bedroom... (Photo: CNA)

“We have been told many times by many people that very soon it will be filled with all the baby stuff but it is okay, we have a lot of storage to keep all the mess!” she said.

Thanks to the high ceiling, the architect was also able to build a mezzanine space in the room to house Matthew’s personal office, where his passions for history, Star Wars, music, cars, and guitars are on display.

“Matthew has a lot more hobbies than I do. I guess over the years, I have focused too much on my work,” she remarked.



The mezzanine inside the master bedroom, which serves as Matthew's office. (Photo: CNA)

The aesthetics of the office also blend in harmoniously with the rest of the interior design. “It ties in very nicely with these rattan (ceiling panels), which is a throwback to the 1920s and 30s as well as the entire feel of the house, which blends old and new,” Rebecca said, adding: “I really like the fact that he has a lot of passions and I am very happy that he has this office of his own because I think the man deserves his own little corner.”



Matthew Webster's office with his collection of guitars, vinyl and a drum kit. (Photo: CNA)

And while she jokingly pointed out there's no photo of her in the room, it does overlook the small seating area in the master bedroom, where she often hangs out. "Even though we each have our own spaces, we still are kind of in the same space, which I like."

So how does having a new home for a new family feel?

"In my free time, I relish just doing nothing and spending time with my grandparents in their home or just simply staying home to rest up sans makeup on my days off. It is not too different now with my own home, as I just want a cosy space where I can be myself, be comfortable and just relax," said Rebecca.

And of course, dream about the future. "My dream of having my very first home after working for so many years has finally come true, so thinking about it really gives me goosebumps."



*"My dream of having my very first home after working for so many years has finally come true," Rebecca Lim told CNA Lifestyle. (Photo: CNA/Kelvin Chia)*

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