

An Easy Kind of

Eden

What floats the boat of TV's most famous shrink? For Kelsey Grammer, it's a good (leather-bound) book, a little night music, and cooking with Camille at their lush, surprise-filled California Shangri-la

by John Griffiths / photographed by Art Streiber

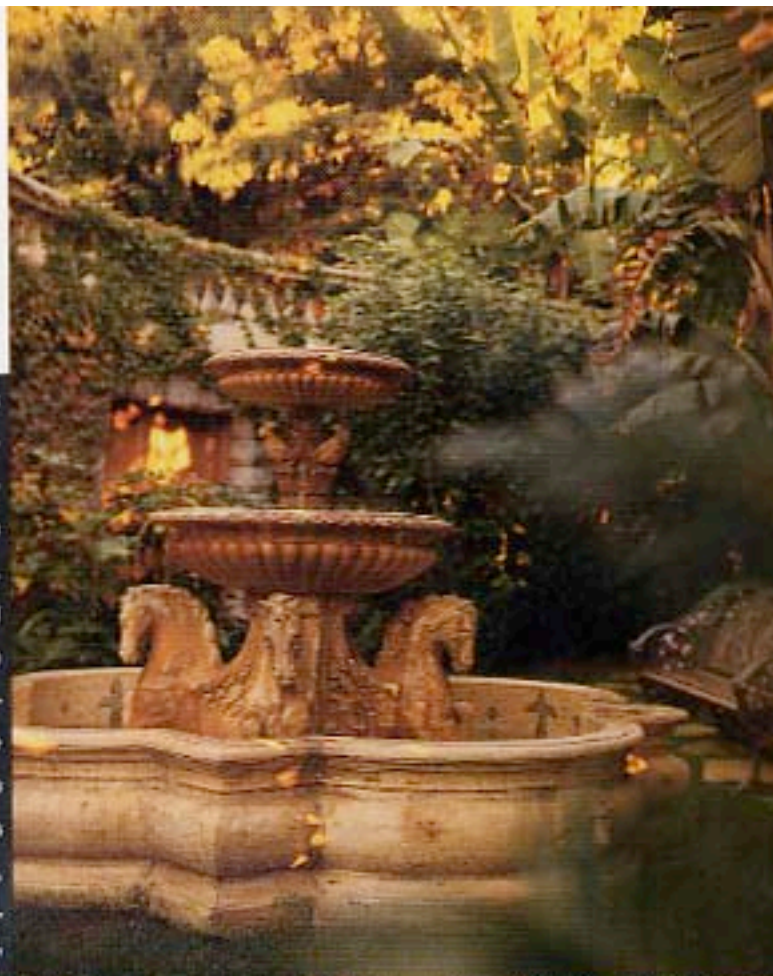
An Easy Kind of Eden

Kelsey Grammer is playing park guide. As water cascades from ornate fountains and orange bougainvillea pop against a pure blue sky, the famously mellifluous-voiced Grammer can't help stopping mid-sentence to ear-cup an owl's call as he offers a leisurely tour of his gated estate in Malibu. "I love to take long walks, thinking about what I meet along the way," he says with a grin, having hoofed it past a half-acre lily pond and rustling bamboo patches. Grammer's wife, Camille, has grown accustomed to losing her husband to these un-idle idylls. "Kelsey will say, 'I'll see you in two hours,' and go putter," she says. "I just think, Oh, Kelsey's off in Kelsey's world again." But what she doesn't mention is that Kelseyworld, at nearly five acres, could use a tram. "We *do* have a golf cart," Grammer says with his familiar chortle. "But it's a good walk."

So pass the canteen. After hugging his prizewinning horse, Napoleon, in the stables, monitoring the cucumbers in the vegetable garden ("It's tough keeping the rabbits out"), and proudly noting the dog runs he has cleared for Red, his Vizsla, and Bear, an Akita, Grammer—dressed in a soft green cable-knit sweater, khakis and, yes, clogs—comes roundabout to his favorite spot: an observation deck on the roof of his 8,000-square-foot guest house. "I love it up here," he says, beaming as he looks across the canyon to the ocean. "When the moon comes up over this hill—wow!"

Grammer has every reason to reflect up these days. He has been playing the endearingly pompous radio psychiatrist *Frasier* for eight sea-

Grammer has dotted his rambling and treasure-laden paradise with elaborate stone fountains, such as this equestrian tribute. Below: A free-form pool and one of several large patios are shaded by pepper trees. Opposite: the main house. Despite its size and grandeur, says castmate Peri Gilpin, "Kelsey's home isn't ostentatious. It's a retreat."



An Easy Kind of Eden

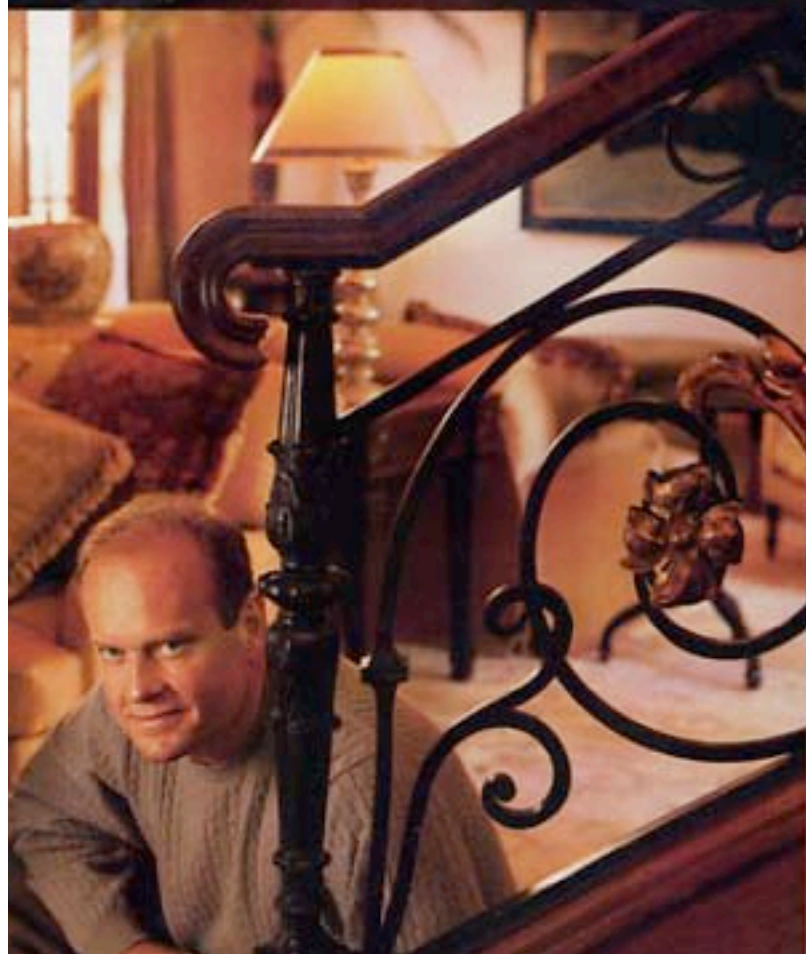
sons (17 if you count his *Cheers* years), and even after a time-slot switch, the show's fall premiere topped the charts, confirming the popularity of both the show and its triple-E Emmy-winning star. Meanwhile, he paired up with Bob Newhart for the recent Showtime movie *The Sports Pages*, and his latest big-screen foray—as an unethical tabloid reporter in the dark comedy *15 Minutes*, due out this month—lines him up opposite Robert De Niro (“I really had fun with that”).

Unlike the tragicomic opera of *Frasier*'s world, Kelsey's home life is more akin to refined chamber music. After three years of renovating (and planting), he and Camille officially christened their house last September. “He’s directing, he’s producing, he’s crazy about his wife,” says pal Peri Gilpin, who plays Roz on *Frasier*. “I think he’s finally found home, something he’s always deserved.”

Getting there has been as twisty as the trails that traverse his property. Bad-boy binges caused run-ins with the law in the late eighties, and tumultuous relationships in the early nineties added to what the father of two (daughters Spencer, 17, and Greer, 9, by two previous companions) might call his own tabloid penance. But at 45 he’s four years sober and deeply committed to

Camille, 32, his wife of three years. “I went through my problems, but I’m in a different place now,” Grammer says with a journeyman’s smile. “I look back at a man in pain, with self-esteem issues. But they were good years too, and I wouldn’t trade them.” Although more devastating events, including the separate, long-ago murders of his father, Allen, and younger sister, Karen, are less reconciled—“I’ve had some tragedies in my life,” he says softly—the running brooks and swaying palms here offer him “a sense of peace.”

So you’ll excuse Grammer if he likes to spoil Mother Nature. Today, rubbing his chin after gazing at a stubborn spot of brown grass, he makes a mental note: “Gotta trim those trees.” For a while, Camille chides, “Kelsey was spending all this money on the grounds, and I’m like, ‘We have no furniture!’ But it’s where he gets his solace.” That’s not to say Grammer



Above: Stately doors of swirling ironwork open onto the foyer. **Left:** Grammer gives a tour of the living room; a painting by Gilpin's husband, Christian Vincent, hangs in the background. **Opposite:** In the classically appointed living room, with its muted palette and brass accents, sunshine bouncing off a waterfall and streaming through a skylight gives everything an island glow.



*"I like a sense of being well away from town.
Even in my party days, I partied at home."*



An Easy Kind of Eden

can't get lost in the house itself, a dome-capped architectural goulash of Hungarian, Turkish and Italian architecture built in the forties. The couple's upstate New York country home is a base for antiquing, and their Polynesian plantation in Maui is a golf haven, but this is their primary hub: a tan, two-story villa boasting six grand main rooms and hidden indulgences like a roomy his-and-hers closet and the gym-spa, replete with cedar sauna, undulating hydro-bed, and massage tables, where Grammer submits himself to acupuncture before hitting the whirlpool.


Though he occasionally drops in at local sushi spots and celebrity haunts like the Ivy, he prefers to stay put. "I'm not a big L.A.-scene guy," he says. "I like a sense of being away from town." So in the massive French country kitchen, filled with treats from the garden and colorful Bauer plates, he'll make his famed Kelsey's Cradled Shrimp for pals. (The "informal" host has also been known to stuff 38 people into the room for a cozy, catered Christmas feast.) Or he might play the Steinway baby grand in the jazzy, elegant living room, a James Bond-chic mix of pale gold satin couches and Asian antiques like a Japanese burial urn picked up on a trek to one of L.A.'s more upscale Melrose Avenue shops.

His favorite room is the library, in which brown leather sofas, framed nautical maps, and the works of poets like W.H. Auden seem

to cry out for a smoking jacket. "You can crash my car and I wouldn't care, but if you break the binding of a book, I go through the roof!" says Grammer, who has been known to recite the poetry of Robert Burns to Camille on the stone veranda. Though that might sound a lot like *Frasier*, Grammer is quick to note that the twain don't always meet. After all, his TV ego would be unlikely to hop in a '73 Corvette or go mountain biking and deep-sea marlin fishing. "I grew up doing that tough-guy stuff," he says. What's more, says Camille, whose husband just bought a surfboard, "Kelsey's not into opera. He's more easygoing and fly-by-the-

seat-of-his-pants." Gilpin agrees: "He's like a beach boy. He's got a silly sense of humor and comes to work in shorts and flip-flops."

Maybe not so surprising, given that Grammer was born in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, where his free-spirited parents—Allen,



In the master suite, with its formidable marble fireplace, Grammer's passion for Asian décor is seen in a cherrywood canopy bed; small gold birds adorn the bedposts. In fact, nature motifs recur throughout, and who needs paintings on every wall when you live in paradise? "We added a lot of windows," he says. "I luxuriate in the beauty of everything."



“There’s no formality,” insists Camille. “Everybody eats around the island in the kitchen.”