



This open-plan living/dining area would be the perfect place for a *Hullabaloo* party. And like the best Hollywood soirees, new Italian pieces (such as the Minotti sofa) rub soft shoulders here with classics as well as custom items (the leather armchairs were created by interior designer Darryl Wilson, who shares this home with his wife, fashion editor Kristin Young).

FULL CIRCLE

MET HOME OF THE MONTH In round three of its short life, a '60s cliff-hanger in Los Angeles gets a fresh makeover that celebrates its origins with rare purity of form.



When

hen Darryl Wilson got his first look at this house in the Hollywood Hills, he knew it could be “one of the coolest houses in Los Angeles”—which was no doubt what the original (still anonymous) architect must have had in mind back in 1963. But the family that was selling the cliff-hanger (the home’s only owners) had done “everything they could to hide the architecture,” says Wilson. They covered up the go-go energy of the place with wood floors, brick walls, floral wallpaper and wood-slat plantation shutters. Happily, the designer was able to see through all the dysfunctional decoration to impressive neo-deco, swinging-’60s bones.

Wilson, who is married to Kristin Young, West Coast retail editor of *WWD*, is not your average interior designer. His father, Marvin, was a real estate developer who built thousands of homes, and his uncle Ron, who started out doing the models for brother Marvin, later designed homes for Cole Porter, Johnny Carson and a score of residences for Cher (who used to baby-sit for Darryl). Grandpa Wilson built his own auto-parts store on Santa Monica (it now houses the tony Palm restaurant). At first, Wilson resisted his master-building heritage with a law school degree and then employment in the entertainment industry, but his mentors kept telling him to give it up. It was Mo Ostin, now chairman of DreamWorks SKG Records, who told Wilson to “follow the flesh,” he remembers, “by which he meant to do what was in my blood, this passion for space and a love of designing houses.”

Since then, Wilson’s clients have included Kelsey Grammer, for whom Wilson designed a five-acre estate in Malibu; Chad

Smith, the drummer for the Red Hot Chili Peppers; Interscope Records in New York City; and the chairman of Polygram. But turning this particular hillside sow’s ear back into the mod moderne silk purse from which it had devolved, with himself as client, would take patience, ingenuity and a total gut.

Wilson loves light, and the atrium, with its sentinel trees (they look like banana trees but are giant birds-of-paradise, and Wilson even knows their Latin name off the top of his head, since he used to own plant stores), is brightened by pyramidal skylights. Light fills the circular domed foyer of the house proper, too, and while you might not think it at first, the room was inspired by the 2nd-century Pantheon in Rome. “I’ve loved that building ever since I was a kid,” remembers Wilson, citing its huge dome with the circular opening at the center letting the weather in. Wilson invited sunshine into his own private dome and added the likewise classically inspired railing, offsetting the marching ovals with contrasting square-framed art on the walls.

Fashioning a winding staircase of poured lightweight terrazzo proved to be a challenge, since no two steps are the same shape or size. The blue-steel railing also presented some engineering challenges, keeping all the ovals upright while wrapping around the circumference of the room. It’s the kind of entryway Auntie Mame would have had in the ’60s (but maybe that’s what happens when you’ve had Cher for a baby-sitter).

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONN COOLIDGE. WRITTEN BY MICHAEL LASSELL.



Wilson (pictured opposite with Young) left the original fireplace, with its bronzed-ceramic wall, and the conversation pit, though he raised the back of the seating to increase the level of comfort. It’s the only part of the house that turns inward, making it a cozy antidote to the 180-degree views, which extend from downtown L.A. to the Pacific Ocean.



Like the '60s, the master bathroom is long on design and short on modesty. Every detail is chosen with the precision of a curator's eye, from the terrazzo floors, bathtub and countertops to the ebony tub surround and cabinets. Opposite: The pool-deck view up at the house—a third story is currently being inserted between the main floor and outdoor entertaining area.



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Passing through the two-story foyer, guests step into a grandly open white-on-white space that consists of three intersecting circles. The room combines the traditional living and dining areas and what used to be called a conversation pit in the days of Sammy Davis Jr.'s soigné TV variety show. Wilson tied the spaces together with seeming acres of arctic white shag carpeting and punctuated each space with brilliantly colored fabric, like the paprika mohair on the conversation-pit banquette.

Wilson likes to shop the auction circuit, too. The Sputnik chandelier in the dining area was made of brass ("That's one of the ways you know it's original," he instructs), but he had it chrome-plated. The gleaming vintage side table beside the sofa, another play of circles, didn't need any work at all. The vintage Eero Saarinen dining table with matching chairs, however, wasn't as big as Wilson wanted it (for the scale of the space or for dinner parties), so he had a larger top made for it and added a lazy Susan in a kind of pragmatic "why not?" gesture.

Upstairs, the master bedroom luxuriates in a similar look, but in blue and fitted with furniture that doesn't throw sleek modern lines too many curves. The bathroom is a showplace of poured terrazzo (countertops, floor, shower and tub ledge) with contrasting macassar ebony. Wilson also modernized the pool area and replaced the kind of wooden deck railings you might find in rustic Big Sur with sleeker railings of powder-coated steel to mark the limits of the decks without any undue visual interference.



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Details

① To enter the house, guests pass two concrete jardinières; floor-to-ceiling draperies hide the family automobiles. The dark walls make the blinding white of the house proper seem that much brighter.

② Both the floor and the sweeping staircase in the foyer are poured terrazzo; it's lighter than concrete, which is important in a house that juts out over empty space. Whimsical vintage chairs from the '70s are by Charles Hollis Jones.

③ The new conversation area by the pool includes a cantilevered gas-fueled fire table. Figurines in the niches are from Botswana

(where Wilson proposed to Young).

④ Circles in circles: A new spa tub sits inside the remodeled pool. New railings limn the property without obstructing a "king of the world" view.

⑤ The top-floor master bedroom is an icy blue that still manages to seem warm—and it plays host to straight-lined furniture, although the same white shag predominates, as do retro detailing (like the X-marks-the-spot Maharam fabric).

⑥ The interlocking circles of the main floor find simpatico furnishings in a concentric arrangement of a sofa and coffee table,

both by Minotti (the table was raised so it doesn't disappear into the shag).

⑦ The dining area looks through a newly expanded pass-through to a kitchen that used to be three smaller rooms. New countertops are chocolate marble; cabinetry is clad in zebra wood.

⑧ Wilson stripped the '60s facing off the fireplace in the master suite and then had a sleek funnel of a stove designed to replace it (fashioned by craftsman Tom Farrage). In the foreground is a vintage table with a sculpted Lucite base.

☛ See Resources, last pages.



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