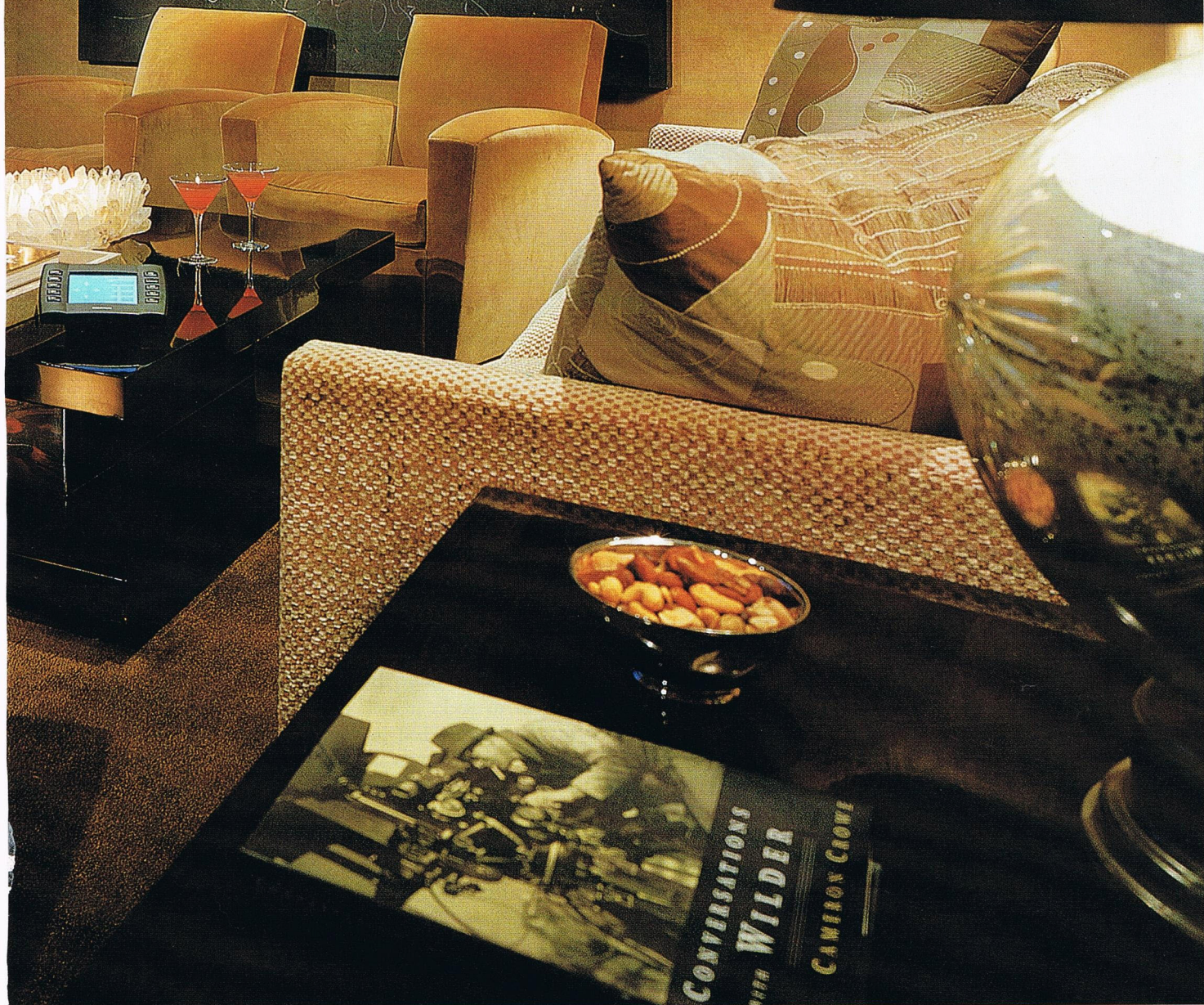


DIRECTOR'S CUT

By Emily Young
Photography by Erhard Pfeiffer

A young television executive transforms a former rock star haven into a sophisticated Hollywood Hills retreat that's so inviting, he barely leaves home.





Interior designer David Phoenix dressed the media room with a Dessin Fournir sofa in cotton velvet, Rose Tarlow chairs in woven chenille, a tufted leather ottoman of his own design, and a Richard Shapiro lacquered ebonized wood coffee table. While the screen remains exposed on the ultrasuede-covered wall directly across from the sofa, the projector, speakers, and other audiovisual equipment vanish into the ceiling and the built-in wall unit. The painting above the couch is by C. Gregory Gummersall.

When Greg Berlanti wants to get away from it all, he heads for the hills. Sure, his hills overlook Hollywood and the neon glow of the Sunset Strip. But for private time, the multi-tasking writer/director/television producer gladly leaves the “dream factory” glitz behind.

“I write and sometimes spend 12 to 14 hours a day at home. I needed a light, airy, sunny place that’s conducive to work,” says the 32-year-old creator of the WB series *Everwood* and *Jack & Bobby*. “A lot of my friends’ homes felt older and stodgier, like where my parents might live. I wanted a modern home with clean lines and a tranquil feeling.”

Unfortunately, the house Berlanti bought in 2003 was a trendy shrine to rock ‘n’ roll. The previous owner, Fred Durst of Limp Bizkit, had indulged in his taste for flash, including mirrored wall tiles and a larger-than-life-size mural of Kurt Cobain. He had also converted the garage into a full-blown recording studio.

Enter Los Angeles interior designer David Phoenix, whose own home Berlanti admired for its down-to-earth, fresh aesthetic. “This was the epitome of a rock star’s fantasy home,” Phoenix says. “It looked like a set and did not really lend itself to being lived in. What I did for Greg was make things functional and comfortable.”



The light-filled living room features a Rose Tarlow sofa in ribbed velvet, mohair Dessin Fournir armchairs from Kneedler-Fauchère, and wood tables from Greystone Home Collection—all sitting atop a Stark Carpet silk rug. The painting is by James Franco. The Crestron wireless remote system controls the audiovisual entertainment as well as the sunshades and security cameras.

The makeover for the home began with a client/designer huddle to plot layout, palette, furniture, and accessories. After that, Berlanti bowed out of the picture, leaving Phoenix to morph the interiors into an inviting backdrop for real life. Working within the home's original footprint, Phoenix played off the architectural simplicity of the two-story building. Pristine white walls and dark-stained wood floors were perfect for highlighting masculine furnishings amid a cozy scheme of beige, honeyed tan, and chocolate brown fabrics and finishes.

The challenge of the remodel involved dismantling the recording studio and replacing it with a state-of-the-art media room and mini gym. "This made sense because Greg

is in the TV business and he loves to work out," Phoenix says. "The challenge for me was dealing with miles of old wiring, trying to salvage the existing security cameras, and getting everything to work on a new remote-controlled system."

The media room, situated toward the rear of the house, resembles a cocoon-like family room more than a formal auditorium. Phoenix upholstered the walls in bronze ultrasuede and covered the floor with plush silk shag carpeting. A generous sofa, swiveling easy chairs, and an oversized ottoman provide casual seating around the wall-mounted 100-inch Stewart screen. While the SIM2 digital projector and Sonance speakers are concealed overhead, the Sony VCR and DVD player, M&K subwoofer, and other audiovisual



Under a white cathedral ceiling, the master bedroom is a quiet retreat that, like the rest of the contemporary decor, unfolds in soothing earth tones. The sitting area of the suite pairs a sofa upholstered in striped velvet with a dark wood coffee table from J.F. Chen Antiques. The nightstands and bed frame are fashioned from ribbon mahogany. A 30-inch TV rises from a custom-built pop-up cabinet with the help of a mechanical lift.

essentials are tucked into a rack in the built-in bookcase.

Like Captain Kirk standing on the bridge of the *Starship Enterprise*, Berlanti is able to use the wireless Crestron automated remote system to choose between television, satellite programming, videotapes, or DVDs. He can also dim the lighting, play his favorite music, or monitor security throughout the house—all with the press of a button.

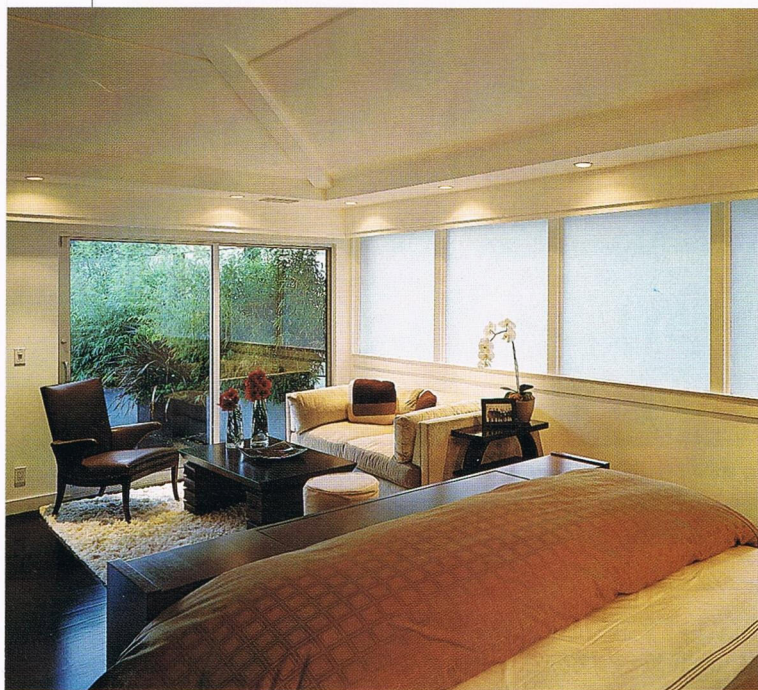
“It makes it so easy to have executives over to watch my early cuts and finished episodes, and then have a catered dinner afterward,” Berlanti says. “Because it’s so comfortable, this is the spot that all my friends are drawn to. I use it a lot as a big game room.”

The adjacent gym, complete with a limestone-clad bathroom that doubles as a steam room, is compact in terms of square footage but feels larger thanks to panels of mirrors. It’s equipped with a treadmill, a weight machine, free weights, and a JVC 42-inch plasma television.

In fact, thanks to two other TV screens in the house, access to a television is never more than a few steps away. In the glassed-in living room, another sofa and armchair grouping is gathered in front of the fireplace and a JVC 50-inch plasma screen mounted on a tile wall. Speakers are discreetly tucked into the ceiling. A Crestron remote controls video and music, and also raises and lowers the room’s motorized sunshades.

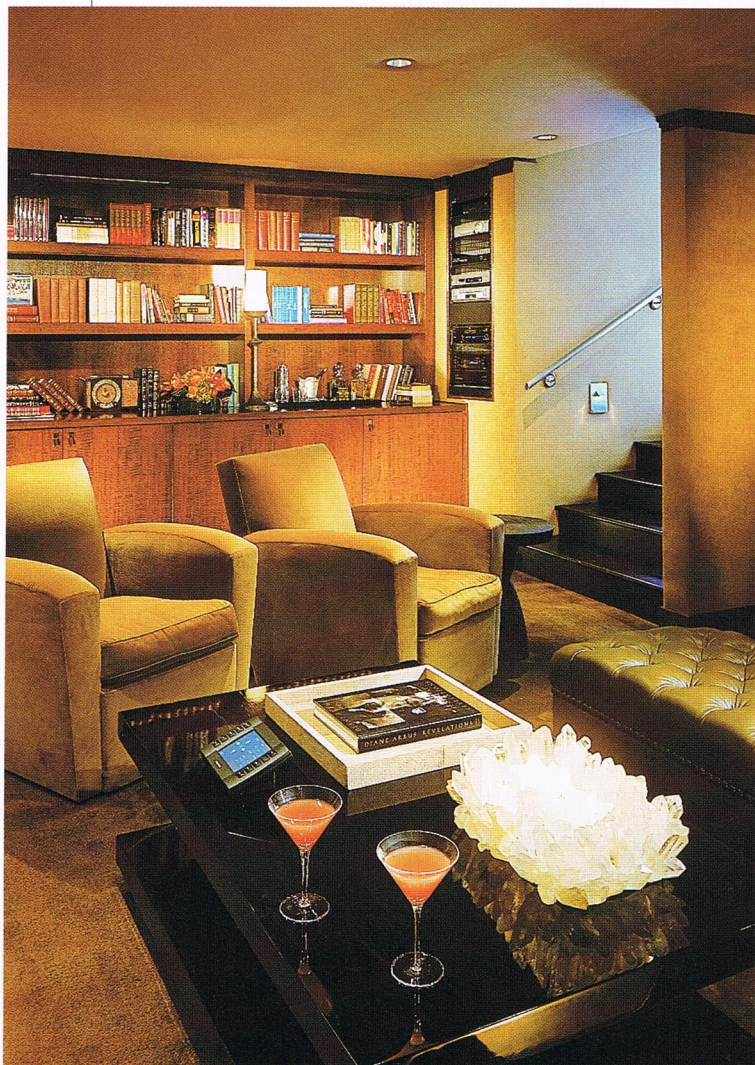
Even in the kitchen, a Sharp 12-inch LCD is available to watch during refreshment breaks. And in the lofflike master bedroom suite upstairs, the foot of the custom mahogany-and-cashmere bed frame now houses a Sharp Aquos 30-inch LCD television that rises on a mechanical lift with—what else—the touch of a button. “Having so many TVs is very appropriate because of what I do for a living,” Berlanti says, “and David even found a great way to incorporate one into the bedroom.”

One place where Berlanti prefers to remain unplugged, however, is the office. Originally a sitting area nestled beside a wall of garish lime-green tiles, this open space just beyond the master bedroom is anchored by a custom mahogany desk and custom-built shelves for storing Berlanti’s growing collection of first-edition books and manuscripts. “This is where he does all his writing,” Phoenix says, “so I wanted to give him a peaceful view overlooking the driveway out front and the pool in the back.”



“More people want a media room and are specific about what they want in a TV and surround sound. I’m learning to design so the equipment is out of sight but still accessible.”

—David Phoenix,
interior designer



Berlanti's media room is not only his favorite place to hang out with friends, it's also the perfect venue for presenting his finished TV episodes to industry executives. The versatile design works as well for hosting business guests as it does for entertaining friends. The soothing space is also great for reading and relaxing after a long day.

The entire renovation took eight months, but Phoenix managed to reinvent the punk palace into a sexy bachelor's retreat. And Berlanti, who admits to being stunned by the metamorphosis, remains ecstatic.

"Seven years ago, I was struggling and living in a one-room apartment. In my last house, I had one flat-screen TV and there was always a room that I wanted to change," he says. "This place is one element of my life that is complete. It represents everything I have been working for. Every day it reminds me how fortunate I am." *For a full interiors list, and a preferred list of architects and interior designers featured in previous issues of the magazine, please visit hemagazine.com.* **[HE]**

TECH TALK: THE BERLANTI HOME

The relatively small size of this media room is the primary reason that Todd DeAngelis and his team at Signals Audio/Video Inc. in Los Angeles installed **Sonance Cinema recessed ceiling speakers**. "In the back, we have the sofa sectional against the wall, so the recessed speakers were a necessity," he says. "As for the fronts, the decorator wanted to keep the area clean and there wasn't any room behind the screen to build speakers into the wall. We didn't want to build a false wall and come out a foot-and-a-half in order to get a box speaker behind the screen."

Powering the speakers is a **Denon AVR-5803 A/V receiver**. Although budget was a consideration in its selection, DeAngelis does not see this as a compromise. "Denon is a step up from most receivers. It is built better and sounds phenomenal. Sometimes I actually prefer a high-end receiver like the Denon to more esoteric preamp/amplifier systems."

Although it might not be the most elaborate installation he has worked on, DeAngelis says that the Berlanti media room is one of his favorites to show off. "It's such an inviting environment, and it produces an incredible amount of sound and video for its size," he says. "A lot of clients think, 'Oh, my room is too small. I can't put a home theater in it.' But this is a perfect example of a small room that has an incredible setup that's not overwhelming, but still a great performing space." *For a full equipment list, please visit hemagazine.com.*—Dennis Burger

RESOURCES

Custom installer: Signals Audio/Video Inc. of Los Angeles, Calif. (310.645.9855, signalsav.com)
Interior designer: David Phoenix Inc. of Los Angeles, Calif. (davidphoenix.com, 310.657.6577)
CD changer: Pioneer (pioneerelectronics.com, 800.PIONEER)
Control system and touch-screen remotes: Crestron (800.237.2041, crestron.com)
DVD player and HDTV satellite receivers: Sony (800.222.7669, sony.com)
LCD TV: Sharp (800.BE.SHARP, sharpusa.com)
Plasma lift system: Auton (661.257.9282, auton.com)

Plasma TVs: JVC (800.247.3608, jvc.com)
Racks: Raxxess (973.523.5105, raxxess.com)
Satellite receiver/TiVo combos: DirecTV (310.964.0700, directv.com)
Screen: Stewart Filmscreen (310.784.5300, stewartfilm.com)
Speakers: Sonance (800.582.7777, sonance.com)
Subwoofers: M&K (818.701.7010, mksound.com), SpeakerCraft (speakercraft.com, 800.448.0976), Velodyne (408.465.2800, velodyne.com)
Surge suppressor: Panamax (415.499.3900, panamax.com)
Surround-sound receivers: Denon (usa.denon.com, 905.564.1180)
Video projector: SIM2 (954.442.2999, sim2.com)