

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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THE MOROCCAN GARDEN
OF YVES SAINT LAURENT
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ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST VISITS: Burt Bacharach and Carole Bayer Sager

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AS BURT BACHARACH and Carole Bayer Sager divide the territory when they compose songs—he writes the melody, she the lyrics—so they divide their tasks in daily life. It was her job three years ago, for instance, to find their current house. After traipsing through what she reckons as “about a hundred other houses,” she settled on

the rambling Spanish Colonial Revival mansion built in Bel-Air in the 1920s, replete with a tiled roof, stucco walls, a shady courtyard and towering palm trees.

“It had good bones,” she recalls. But bones weren’t enough. Inside, the house was a bit somber and dark. More like a monastery than a villa. So

ABOVE: Built around a central courtyard with a circular pond, fountain and tall palm trees, a 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival house in Bel-Air is the “ideal California house” to composer Burt Bacharach and his wife, lyricist Carole Bayer Sager. OPPOSITE: “Burt loves horses,” says Bayer Sager, who commissioned the fiberglass pair from Richard Mulligan and presented them to her husband as a gift. “The mare has the same markings as our championship filly, Heartlight No. One,” she adds.





the Bacharachs brought in interior designer Waldo Fernandez to turn what Bayer Sager feared was “a white elephant” into the breezy, inviting house they live in today.

Fernandez added windows wherever possible so that they could enjoy the view, on a clear day, over downtown Los Angeles and out to sea as far as Catalina Island. He also colored the interior with desert tones and freely scattered lots of his signature oversize chairs, sofas and tables.

The room with the best vibes, of course, is Burt Bacharach’s music room, situated over the garage. “It’s great,

ABOVE: “We loved the structure of the house—especially the arches—but it didn’t benefit from the views, which were one of its main attractions for us,” says Carole Bayer Sager, relaxing with Burt Bacharach. RIGHT: With interior designer Waldo Fernandez, the couple decided to expand the size of the rooms and install large windows throughout. Pastels were used in the living room, which is comfortably furnished with oversize pieces and contemporary artworks, including a painting by Julio Larraz. Lighting from Wendelighting.







In Burt Bacharach's music room are a piano and synthesizer. The many photographs on the walls and in the window alcove are of family, friends, musicians and his horses. Hansen wall lamp.

except when it rains," jokes this legendary composer of such unforgettable songs as "Alfie" and "The Look of Love." "Then you have to walk across the courtyard in the rain." But mostly this soft-spoken, craggily handsome artist is quite content. And quite concentrated. He works away in his airy studio at the keyboard of what he describes as a "hopped-up piano"—an acoustic piano hooked up to drum and other synthesizers. Certainly his music has always had an instantly recognizable modern, air-brushed sound. His orchestrations for the 1968 Broadway musical *Promises, Promises* were as technologically smooth as any of the dance mixes of the next decade.

But Bacharach has always been wary of letting machines do the composing. That's too easy. "I still have

the same attitude about writing on the synthesizer as on a plain piano," he explains. "And that is not relying too much on what you're used to doing, or on the motions your fingers are accustomed to going through. You have to see that you don't get fooled by pretty chords."

Burt Bacharach and Carole Bayer Sager have composed many of their own dual hits in this room away from the other rooms. They first met on the *Mike Douglas Show*—Bacharach was cohosting—and music has always been an important part of their relationship. Both received Oscars in 1981, along with Peter Allen and Christopher Cross, for writing the theme song to the movie *Arthur*. They each received a Grammy for their 1986 "That's What Friends Are For"—a moving melody recorded by Dionne

Warwick, Stevie Wonder, Elton John and Gladys Knight, with all proceeds donated to AIDS research. Their ballad "On My Own" recently helped boost Patti LaBelle back up to a number-one spot.

Carole Bayer Sager had written successful lyrics before she teamed up with Bacharach, including a collaboration with Marvin Hamlisch on the Broadway musical *They're Playing Our Song*, and songs for Barbra Streisand, Frank Sinatra and Aretha Franklin. But her successes began to multiply after she met her husband. "I never had two number-one records in a single year with any collaborator until Burt," she admits.

Bacharach, too, thanks his wife for his return to the charts. His profile was highest in the late sixties when it

continued on page 216



ABOVE Fernandez designed separate tables—lighted from below—for a flexible seating arrangement in the dining room. Chairs by Donghia.

BELOW: The loggia, with its arched doors, vaulted ceiling, tiled floor and contemporary rattan furniture, is used for alfresco entertaining.



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VISITS

Burt Bacharach and Carole Bayer Sager
continued from page 132

seemed that every song Dionne Warwick recorded was a Burt Bacharach/Hal David composition. But in the seventies Bacharach was quieter. "My music is much better now," he feels. "Right when I met Carole I was a little bit out in left field."

Even though they work more in syncopation than in tandem—Bacharach is much slower at composing than his partner—they finally do come together. Evidence: the four Oscars, an Emmy and two Grammys, some lined up in the library bookcase as casually as bowling trophies.

The Bacharachs like to entertain. And music helps make their parties personal. When they threw a birthday party earlier this year for their neighbor Elizabeth Taylor, they wheeled the Baldwin piano from the living room out into the courtyard, where they had lined up tables and strung twinkling lights through the trees (even though it was February).

A favorite conversation piece at these outdoor parties are two fiberglass horses frisking motionlessly in the west garden, one of which resembles their own Thoroughbred racer, Heartlight No. One. The Thoroughbred, named for a song they wrote for Neil Diamond, has the distinction

The Bacharachs' house is filled with such lively idiosyncrasies. Their art is quite often Latin American, such as a Julio Larraz painting hanging on the living room wall, which they chose because it tells a story. ("It's a mystery as to why the rope is hanging down from the window," says Bayer Sager of the haunting picture.) The many plants and flowers sprouting in straw baskets throughout the house tend to the wild and tropical—orchids are a particular favorite.

When the songwriting team guest-hosted on *The Late Show*, Carole Bayer Sager toted her favorite crystals and placed them around her on the emcee's desk to make her feel at ease. These crystals can usually be found at home, on the bedroom mantel or on her desk. "I'm going to get a really big one for the living room," she says enthusiastically. "A huge one. I think they're beautiful, and I think they have a certain vibrational energy. Or I'd like to think they do. They feel good to have around."

Perhaps these crystals—along with the giant windows and mirrored fireplace—give their bedroom its especially relaxed quality. "I love the bedroom," says Bacharach, who has moved his gym equipment into an ad-

Evening is their favorite time, when Los Angeles looms in their windows like a rear-screen projection.

of never running without having her owners serenade her first. They claim that's why she became such a strong contender, winning the coveted Eclipse Award in 1983.

The other animal on the grounds is a spotted cow that looks like it's munching grass next to the estate's original 1920s swimming pool. "I gave the cow to Burt for Father's Day from Christopher," says Bayer Sager, referring to their twenty-two-month-old son, Christopher Elton. "I tied a red ribbon around its neck."

acent room. His wife agrees. "When I'm not working, I'm in the bedroom or on the phone."

During the morning they appreciate the surrounding rocks and rills of Bel-Air. But evening is their favorite time, when the expanse of sea, sky and busy buildings that is Los Angeles looms in their windows like a rear-screen projection. "It's very peaceful then, and I think it's very special," says Carole Bayer Sager. "It's hilly, it's green, and still you can see the city lights twinkling." □