



TEXT: SALLY STITCH PHOTOGRAPHY: NATHAN KIRKMAN

# hollywood style

A Los Angeles home is jarred out of its '70s funk  
with a contemporary stroke of design genius

In the ideal scenario—from the designer's point of view anyway—the client offers a few comments of needs or desires, then tells the designer to take over. In the case of this ranch-style Hollywood Hills home, the owner, a bachelor, wanted a warm clean-lined retreat to escape the crazy entertainment world in which he works. Other than that, he surrendered the project to designers Sarah Shetter and Alison Palevsky of SPI in Santa Monica ➤













The home, built in the 1950s, featured the modern bones of the era but a 1970s facelift rendered it looking more like a staid lodge than a serene setting. Despite the floor to ceiling windows in the living room overlooking lush grounds, shag carpeting, a freestanding '70s fireplace and a white-washed timber ceiling dominated the view. Equally distracting, in the master bedroom, two exposed columns and a metal beam—all structurally necessary—exuded an uninvitingly industrial, and cold, mien. Shetter and Palevsky first turned back the clock by stripping away the vestiges of 1970s funk, then fast-forwarded to today, relying on the honest elements, global styling and uncluttered sensibility de rigueur in contemporary interiors.

Fortunately, the space did not require much structural work; its open floor plan was perfect for entertaining friends or just relaxing solo. Still, it needed to be returned to its mid-century roots. "We wanted to lighten the house and maximize the clean lines, juxtaposing the industrial elements with natural materials," explains Palevsky. What they did not want was a home that looked like a modern theme park. So out came the shag, replaced with scored concrete and softened by three large off-white rugs. The white-washed ceilings were returned to their natural wood tone and contemporary track lighting was installed in the living and dining rooms to radiate a sexy, ambient glow.



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Replacing the old fireplace is a gas version outfitted with a slick chrome frame and sided by two recessed nooks, which pull double duty as extra seating. And two original chocolate linen Milo Baughman chairs—picked up in Palm Springs—surround an antique African stool in what is an elegant vignette. These originals echo the reproduction Baughman chairs found in the living room. “We love mixing vintages and materials,” says Shetter. “All the furniture has simple clean lines and neutral colors but each piece is covered in a different fabric.” White pleather swathes an SPI chaise, playing off the black linen cubes and brown mohair sofa. Neutral tones in different textures add depth, say the designers.

The dining room is a study in white. A SPI custom-designed oak table with a white CaesarStone insert is lined with six Brazilian wood chairs wrapped in white fabric save for the lean legs and spine. “We chose these chairs for their slightly curved back legs,” says Palevsky; “there are so many straight lines in this house that a few curves here and there loosen up the rooms.”

The lower level master bedroom, the most challenging space because of the columns and beam, allowed the designers to test their ingenuity. “The room was long and narrow and there was no removing those structural elements,” says Shetter. Cleverly, the duo erected a floating walnut wall that encases one column, functioning as a headboard for the bed on one side and an office desk on the other. The other column, at the foot of the bed, serves as a mount for the flat screen TV, visible from the bed or outside deck. As a final touch, the columns and beam were repainted a steel gray from their original green so as to whisper “industrial” rather than scream it.

What makes a home breathe is the sense of movement from room to room, from interior to exterior. In this house, SPI very consciously used materials that reveal flow. “We tried to balance materials to create natural transitions from space to space,” notes Shetter. “The concrete floors upstairs transition to wood on the staircase leading to a warm wood floor in the master bedroom.” Why? “Because we believe when people wake up they’d rather step on wood instead of concrete,” says Palevsky. The real movement, of course, is from the outside in, and minimal window coverings maximize the home’s exposure to the flourishing greenery outside.

For the homeowner, who spends long hours at the office, this space provides the sanctuary he sought. “A lot of mid-century modern homes are notable for their minimalism,” says Shetter, “but this one, while clean and modern, is anything but stark.” In fact, she adds, though it’s definitely a bachelor pad, “I can’t imagine any woman who wouldn’t love it too” ■ SPI (Shetter Palevsky Interiors), 2222 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Unit A, Santa Monica, CA 310.396.1020 [spi-design.com](http://spi-design.com)

