



THE MOST POINT

MOBY, LET DOWN THINE HAIR

TWO YEARS AGO, THE GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING PRODUCER, MUSICIAN, TECHNO-GEEK, BRANDING ENTREPRENEUR, AND CONSUMMATE LOWER EAST SIDER MOVED OUT TO LOS ANGELES TO START A NEW LIFE. NOW, NEARLY FINISHED RESTORING HIS LEGENDARY OLD HOLLYWOOD CASTLE AND COMPOUND, THE MAN WHO MADE 'PLAY' HARD WORK (AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS) HOLDS COURT ON FEUDAL-DWELLING, OLD BLOW RESIDUE AND THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF ESCAPING MANHATTAN AND HOLING UP IN THE BEACHWOOD HILLS. **STINSON CARTER** TALKS WEST COAST STRATEGY WITH THE MILD MANOR MAN.

PHOTOGRAPHY TKTKTKTIK

The gate opens mysteriously—you've been eyed on camera and deemed acceptable to enter. A freshly laid cobblestone driveway leads up to the two-story, circa-1927 castle that Moby later describes as "Nordic-Gothic."

At the base of the drive is a guesthouse designed in 1961 by the great John Lautner; the façade is dressed in the style of the main house, but within, it's pure Mid-century Modern. There's an immaculate garden with a fountain and granite tiles spaced with manicured lawn—the kind of garden you might've gotten the guilotine for owning in another time and place. Then there's the overwhelming view of Lake Hollywood, not to mention the "HOLLYWOOD" sign that appears within fingers' reach.

Moby greets you at the stairs outside his kitchen door—for all intents and purposes, his entranceway. He's dressed casually for his afternoon hike in jeans, tennis shoes, and a pullover. At 46, he looks exactly the same as he did on the jacket of his CD you bought in college, so you suspect there's a Dorian Gray portrait hidden somewhere in the castle that looks like Moby should at this point.

Moby simply looks intelligent, like a dot.com millionaire, or a Stanford professor, enjoying his last moments of man-child hipsterhood. Indeed, he listens to his visitor like the interlocutor hasn't done his required Heidegger reading. You feel the need to doubt your pronunciation of foreign words in front of him, and double-check your cocktail conversation references.



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“I’m going to have to buy a bushel of sage and burn it 24 hours a day, for a month, to clear out the bad stuff that’s happened here,” says Moby, recalling what a friend told him when he first moved into this infamous address on the western spine of Los Angeles’ Beachwood Canyon. There has been no sage on Moby’s watch, but plenty of coconut water.

This castle has nearly as many celebrity stories as the Chateau Marmont and Hollywood Roosevelt combined. The Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and Errol Flynn are rumored to have done time here. Marlon Brando lived in the guesthouse for a spell, as did Donovan Leach’s mom (with kiddies Donovan and Ionia in tow). Other rumors usually involve anything from three-day benders to porn shoots and all points in-between.

For the past 80-odd years until very recently, the castle’s outer wall proudly bore the sign, “Wolf’s Lair,” from the original owner: Hollywood producer L. Milton Wolf. “It was a little awkward,” says Moby, “because Wolf’s Lair is also a rough translation of the name of Hitler’s bunker.”

Moby bought the house two years ago for just under \$4 million (he refreshingly doesn’t do the faux-discreet thing indicative of the Hollywood Elite), and has been meticulously restoring it ever since. “I’m 98% done,” he says. His assistant, Shannon Herber, says of his hand in the restoration, “there’s not a single doorknob or drawer pull in the house that Moby didn’t help design. He’s even putting brass covers on the AC touch pads so they’ll go better with the house.”

“For most of the house’s history, it’s been used for pretty degenerate purposes,” says Moby. “I almost feel like I’ve repurposed this place, like it feels more monastic than degenerate. The craziest parties I’ve had usually involve 20 people in the pool in the middle of the afternoon, kids and dogs running around, and everyone’s drinking lemonade.”

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The kidney-shaped pool and adjacent picnic table usually provide the setting for these refreshingly non-Hollywood afternoon gatherings. "L.A. is a great place to not drink," says Moby. "A great place to go to sleep early, to do stuff during the day—and New York is none of those things."

Moby now knows the owners of the neighborhood grocery store and diner by name, and he even indulges in local gossip with the old widows of Beachwood Canyon when they stop him on their silk-robed missions for newspapers, mail, or emptied trashcans.

His favorite room is the pool house, "because it's so unlike anything I would've expected to find in the middle of a city of 15 million people," says Moby. "It's quiet, and overlooks a lake and pine trees and trails." For the L.A. winters, when the pool is less tempting, there's a living room in the main house with a fireplace and floor-to-ceiling window that hosts cerebral "game" nights. The living room, like every enclave in the house, is a showcase of Danish Modern furniture. The kitchen has a vegan-stocked Sub-Zero and a Swedish range that appears underutilized and unnecessarily exorbitant.

He points out a framed letter on the kitchen wall: a handwritten note from Karl Rove, on White House stationery. "There's a story behind that," says Moby. "When my mom was in high school, she had a son and gave him up for adoption, so I have a half brother somewhere out there.

"I was in a hotel bar in 2007, talking to someone from Politico magazine, and I jokingly said to this journalist, 'Well, maybe my brother is Karl Rove.' That quote made it into print, and then a week later I get this handwritten letter from Karl Rove." The letter reads: "Moby, it's not me.... But James Carville is also bald—it could be him. Do you like crawfish etouffee?" Moby smiles: "A lot of right-wing Republicans, you want to hate them, but they're actually kinda' funny."

His other wall-mounted favorites are: a black-and-white photo of Moby in a bunny suit, an original illustration signed to him from "The Simpsons" creator Matt Groening, and four original lithographs by Bono, who showed up at one of Moby's birthday parties.

His guesthouse is his music studio. Every room is wired with XLR, video, and headphone in/out. "So you could theoretically have an entire six-piece band, all playing in different rooms and recording at the same time," he explains. His studio fridge is nothing but four shelves of coconut water. The newly finished theatre beneath the guesthouse was once a speakeasy, and there's a rumor that Bugsy Siegel spent time drinking there. When Moby bought the house, the space was a Tiki bar with a piano built into the wall. Now it's a stark theater space with concrete floors and matching grey walls. You could effectively torture and interrogate someone in here. Or amuse them, depending on the lighting.





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Moby is one of those lucky musicians who made his name (and hefty income) back when people actually paid for music. With six Grammy nods and the bestselling electronic album of all time (*Play*) under his belt, he now circles the globe playing music festivals (Australia, Europe, and South America are crawling with Moby fans) and the occasional fund-raiser.

In the past week, Moby attended Amazon-founder Jeff Bezos’ annual New Mexico creative retreat (where he witnessed Shirley MacLaine and Werner Herzog having a debate over which one of them was “less elitist.”) Then he flew to Mexico City to play a three-hour gig before getting back on a plane and heading home. He’s also busy working on a new album (for a 2012 release), and expanding his web-based music share site, mobygratis.com, which provides gratis music for independent filmmakers and film students.

For Moby, the days of waking up after wild house parties to morning-after bombs of “old cocaine residue on tables, spilled wine, and beer bottles with cigarette butts in them,” he says, are behind him.

When asked what his new fantasy house party would be, Moby says, “It would be a wedding party for me and my bride, who I was finally able to have a relationship with without having panic attacks.” He takes a pause, still Manhattan-y self-deprecating after all. “That’s my big sissy answer.”