

Modern-day Gatsby:
Long Island manse lists
for \$100 million

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MANSION

*'Men's fortunes are on a wheel, which
in its turning suffers not the same man
to prosper for ever.' —Herodotus*

HOMES | MARKETS | PEOPLE | UPKEEP | VALUES | NEIGHBORHOODS | REDOS | SALES | FIXTURES | BROKERS

MANSION



KEEP IT SIMPLE Moby in the living room of his 1925 Tudor home in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles. He planted a pine garden and decorated parts of the home with oversized forest photography.

Moby Finds Peace Beneath the Pines

The musician, once known for his opulent real-estate buys, trades a castle in the Hollywood Hills for a more modest house near Los Angeles's Griffith Park: a bedroom dedicated to yoga

BY KATY MCLAUGHLIN

TO TRACK DOWN the musician Moby these days, follow the pines. Under the evergreen branches lining a road through Los Angeles's Griffith Park, through the freshly planted pine garden in his yard, and into his office, decorated with oversize forest photography, Moby can be found laying plans for a vegan restaurant he'll open this fall, which he'll call "Little Pine."

The pine motif represents a transformation for the recording artist, who turns 50 on Friday and is perhaps best known for the electronic dance music he pioneered in the 1990s. He has spent 25 years touring, making about 14 albums (the exact count is tricky, he said, because of unofficial and country-specific albums), descending into and recovering from substance abuse, and buying and selling real estate. Today, Moby, who is single, is staying put, working on an album, living clean and limiting himself to one relatively modest house.

"I'm an L.A. hippie without the hair," said the musician, born in New York City as Richard Melville Hall but known all his life by the nickname his parents gave him in honor of his ancestor, Herman Melville. "I like hiking, yoga, meditation and eating organic, vegan food."

His new home reflects this wholesome identity. He picked the 3,800-square-foot, 1925 brick home in Los Feliz, which he bought for \$2.9 million last September, for its location a block from Griffith Park, where he hikes five to six times a week.

It is a departure from his previous home, the famous Wolf's Lair, a 1920s-era replica of a Norman castle in the Hollywood Hills. He bought the castle when he moved from New York to Los Angeles in 2010 for \$3.925 million and put roughly \$3.5 million into a total rehabilitation, he said. The home was "as remarkable as an L.A. property could be," he said.

"But daily life is making popcorn and watching 'Dexter' and checking Facebook," and he felt ridiculous entertaining dates in the vast, baronial dining room, he said. The property sold in November for \$12.4 million, according to the Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor.

It wasn't the first time Moby bought real estate that eventually struck him as overbearing. He also owned, in the early 2000s, a 60-acre compound an hour north of New York City, where he built a disco and practiced "crazy debauched drinking," a habit he abandoned in 2008. In 2005, he paid \$4.5 million for and spent \$2 million to renovate "the weirdest real estate I ever had," a turreted, four-floor apartment at the top of the Eldorado building on Central Park West. He sold the property in 2008 for \$6.7 million.

"It would have been a great home



STAY CLOSE The music studio with 10 guitars occupies an upstairs bedroom near Moby's bedroom, above; records on display, right; a second living room off the kitchen.



BE GREEN Drought-unfriendly grass was replaced with mulch, irrigation and native evergreens. The pool and guest house, above; top to bottom: a porch, artwork in the bathroom, piano in the sunken living room.



for a superhero," he said. He has also had, over the years, a loft on Manhattan's Bond street, a share in a property in the Dominican Republic and a Hollywood Hills house owned with friends, among other properties. (I was acquainted with him about 25 years ago when he lived in an apartment in downtown Manhattan with some mutual friends.)

He said he always hoped to make a killing in real estate, but lamented that he doesn't really have a knack for it: Most of his real-estate investment required expensive renovation and upkeep that ate into profits. He chalks his real-estate overreach to the impulses of "a kid who grew up

on food stamps and welfare."

Realizing that owning a dazzling real-estate portfolio wasn't making him happy, he decided to sell off everything and reorient his life toward enjoying California's nature.

His current home required little renovation, though he ripped out the drought-unfriendly grass and replaced it with mulch, drip irrigation and native evergreens. He also converted a small pool house into guest quarters. Having sold all the furnishings with the Wolf's Lair, he bought a house's worth of "unpretentious, Scandinavian, midcentury" furniture. Guests are asked to remove their shoes, to avoid marring the impecca-

bly clean, off-white area rugs.

The home is sedate and conventional, with little evidence that an alternative-music star occupies it, until it comes to an expansive, sunken living room with windows overlooking Griffith Park. Other than a baby grand and a futon, the room is unfurnished.

"Marina Abramovic was here and she said, 'you must leave this room exactly like this,'" said Moby, imitating the experimental artist's Serbian accent. "So I did," he said. From time to time, he'll break the peace with a dance party, he said—another reason to resist furnishing the room.

Upstairs, Moby occupies each of four rooms for slices of each day. He

sleeps in the bedroom; works out in a gym; meditates and stretches in the yoga room and creates music in the studio. Twelve keyboards—"they each have distinctive sonic qualities"—10 guitars and other machines and microphones are so essential to his life, he said, that he felt lonely in his former castle because they were too far from his bedroom.

He delights in his Los Feliz neighborhood because, he estimates, "it has the highest percentage of weirdos on the planet." And he loves his new home because just about every evening, he can walk out his front door and lose himself in long treks beneath the pines.