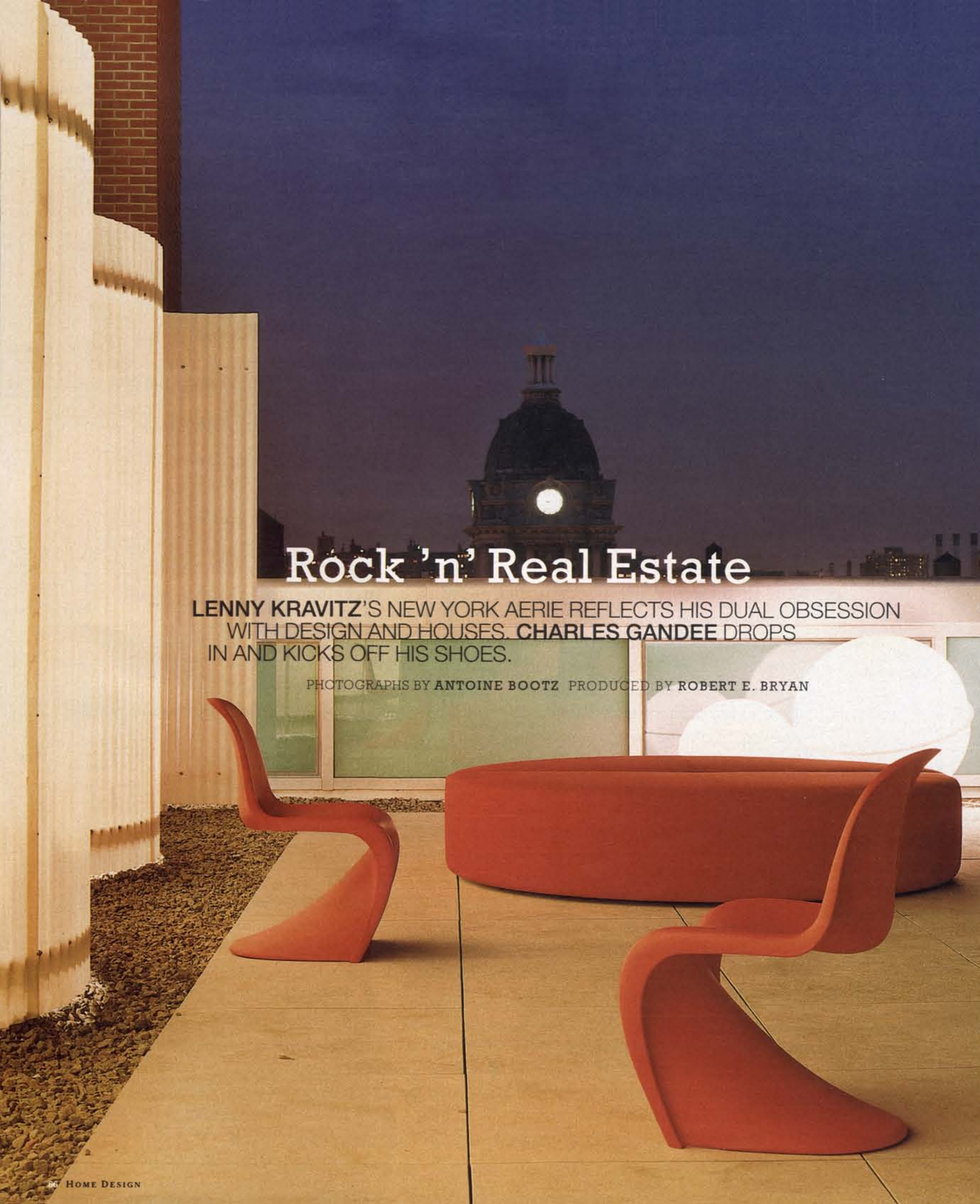


Rock 'n' Real Estate

LENNY KRAVITZ'S NEW YORK AERIE REFLECTS HIS DUAL OBSESSION WITH DESIGN AND HOUSES. CHARLES GANDEE DROPS IN AND KICKS OFF HIS SHOES.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTOINE BOOTZ PRODUCED BY ROBERT E. BRYAN



An acrylic grand piano and swing, a Donald Deskey pool table and globe lights covered in ostrich feathers greet visitors to Lenny Kravitz's SoHo penthouse loft. Opposite: the roof terrace at night.



In the living room, a French 1940's sofa and chair, a custom chair with acrylic legs and a Saarinen table with a silver-leather top are arrayed on a shag rug. The standing lamp's feathered shade is worthy of a Vegas showgirl.

M

idway through his July 19 concert at the open-air Jones Beach Theater on Long Island — which is to say, somewhere between “Are You Gonna Go My Way” and “American Woman” — Lenny Kravitz looked out at some 14,000 rain-drenched fans huddled before the Slip 'n Slide-style stage he was clearly having a bit of trouble navigating, and took pity on the wet wretches. So, he leaned into the microphone as if he were going to lick it — which was not as unsavory as it may sound — and suggested, in that low, throaty, hey-baby drawl of his, that everyone come back to his place (actually, he may have used the word “pad”) so they could all dry off and finish up the concert in comfort.

The crowd roared with gratitude, as well it should have: Kravitz's place is, as he might say, “the bomb” — a penthouse duplex pied-à-terre in SoHo, with three terraces and a roof garden, that recalls nothing so much as one of those ultraglam late-Modern sets they designed in the 1960's and 70's for the big seduction scene in films like “What's New, Pussycat?” and “Casino Royale.” Think Peter Sellers. Think Ursula Andress. Think Burt Bacharach and Henry Mancini and very dry martinis.

Which is probably not what the rock-on Tommy Boy baggy-jeans crowd was thinking. But never mind.

Like Karl Lagerfeld and Giorgio Armani and Tom Ford, Kravitz has the design bug — and he has it bad. Meaning that he, like his house-proud friends in fashion, has a dazzling portfolio of real estate. There's a 50-acre, 12-building beachfront compound soon to be under construction in the Bahamas that Kravitz describes as “my sanctuary.” There's a 200-year-old Creole cottage in the French Quarter of New Orleans that simultaneously recalls Anne Rice and the bordello where they auctioned off a pubescent Brooke Shields to the highest bidder in Louis Malle's “Pretty Baby.” There's a recording studio cum house overlooking Biscayne Bay in Miami, designed as a kind of homage to the retrofuturistic Danish designer Verner Panton, who Kravitz actually called (before Panton died in 1998) for a bit of design

Charles Gandee, based in New York and Paris, writes about architecture, fashion and culture.



The living room's curving masonry wall, tinted a dark metallic gray, contains a minimalist version of a fireplace; its gas-fed flames rise from a bed of sea glass.

counsel. And across the bay, on a gated island off Miami Beach, there's a brand-new 15,000-square-foot, eight-bedroom developer spec house: overblown Mediterranean McMansion on the outside, period Playboy pad on the inside, silver Ferrari Spider 360 in the driveway. And then there's the penthouse in SoHo — designed by Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz — where, when the polished-steel doors of the white-leather-padded elevator cab open, you are greeted by the unabashedly fabulous spectacle of a transparent acrylic Kawai grand piano that, according to the Lafayette Street dealer who sold it to Kravitz, once belonged to Ingrid Bergman. Although the estate of Liberace seems more likely.

The second thing you notice is a somewhat menacing steel-and-glass staircase with shag-

carpeted steps that cuts through the grand entry like a stalactite neatly bent on the diagonal. Directly to the right there's a clear-acrylic swing with a leather-studded black-rabbit-fur cushion suspended on stainless-steel wire cables from an I-beam lodged in the ceiling 11 feet above. Behind the swing, in a greenhouse-like alcove that soars to 26 feet, there's a streamlined moderne billiard table by Donald Deskey (best known for designing the interiors of Radio City Music Hall) and, floating above it, a trio of luminous orbs encased in bleached white Chinese ostrich feathers. Of the plumed light fixtures — which, thanks to a series of strategically placed air conditioning vents, are constantly aflutter — it is fair to say this: if there are cheerleaders in heaven, these could be their pom-poms.

Welcome to the Roxie Penthouse Hotel,

The second-floor landing overlooks the billiard table. On display are Kravitz's four Grammys, a selection of tribal art and pieces from his rock memorabilia collection. Another stair, seen in a reflection at far left, leads to the roof terrace.



In the media room, the designer Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz mixed traditional elements, like the Knole sofa and its Fortuny fabric, with modern ones, like the lighted acrylic coffee table and the Andy Warhol silk-screens of Muhammad Ali. The white fox fur pillow adds rock-star flash.



On the second-floor landing, above left, 1950's Italian furniture looks right at home with a framed vest worn by Jimi Hendrix and the original handwritten lyrics to "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." Kravitz's white-on-white bedroom, above right, is a study in the ethereal. The bed is topped by a fuzzy, hand-loomed cover and screened by a sheer curtain.

Kravitz's New York pad, named, like all his houses, for his mother, the actress Roxie Roker, who is best known for her role in "The Jeffersons" and who died in 1995. On the off chance that you should forget where you are, there are 13 digital monitors deployed throughout the space that flash the words "Roxie Penthouse Hotel" — as opposed to, say, "Villa Roxie" (the Miami Beach McMansion). The monitors are part of the elaborate Crestron computerized system that controls virtually everything electrical in the 8,550-square-foot apartment — including all 57 stereo speakers.

"If I hadn't been a musician, I would have been a designer," Kravitz says, sitting barefoot at the surfboard-shaped clear acrylic bar sandwiched between the billiard table and one of the 10 flat-screen televisions in the duplex. Kravitz is wearing denim bell-bottoms, the carefully shredded remains of what appears to have once been a shirt, and many gold, platinum

and diamond rings, studs and bars in or on both ears, both nostrils and both nipples. Though the signature dreadlocks are long gone, in their place is another evocative hairstyle — this one less reminiscent of late Bob Marley than of early Angela Davis (in her radical Brandeis phase).

After clocking the countless tattoos Kravitz displays on his formidable upper torso and thigh-size biceps, most would conclude that it is probably better that this "pin-up honey" (Vibe magazine's honorific) opted for a career in music, rather than design. Nevertheless, when you are a rock star, you have special dispensation to pretty much do, wear and build whatever you want.

"I love to design clothes, I love to design homes," Kravitz says. "I know the way I like a silhouette to look on my body, and I know the way I like to live." Indeed he does. Kravitz, 38 and the recipient of four consecutive Grammy Awards, is fearlessly flamboyant. After all, how

many men do you know who can look as studly in a long feather boa as they do in skintight black leather chaps?

"Fashion and design, it's all the same, man," says the man who, depending on the day, appears to have drawn his sartorial inspiration from Jimi Hendrix, Bruce Springsteen, Bryan Ferry or Ziggy Stardust — by way of Gucci, Cavalli, Versace and Gaultier. "Ever since I was younger, even just in my room, aesthetically things have to be a certain way," adds Kravitz, who was born in New York, the son of the NBC news producer Sy Kravitz, who is of Russian Jewish descent, and Roker, of Bahamian and African-American descent. If, in his youth, Kravitz's tastes tended to run along the lines of Kiss posters, psychedelic lamps and assorted, as he says, "funky rock 'n' roll stuff," he traded up in 1989, after his debut album, "Let Love Rule."

"The first thing I started collecting when I got

Continued on Page 104

A mirrored wall reflects the billiard table and the ostrich-feather lights, whose spherical form is echoed in the white Mongolian lamb pillows on the long window seat.



KRAVITZ

Continued From Page 72

some money was Art Nouveau," he says. "I was very much into the 60's, a hippie sort of environment, and I found the furniture to be psychedelic and very organic." He adds, "Everything derived from flowers and insects and pods, and drippy."

Rock stars tend not to do things in moderation, and in this respect Kravitz is true to his tribe. During his Art Nouveau phase, for example, he assembled a serious collection of Louis Majorelle furniture, and at one point he became so obsessed that he flew to Barcelona: "I was looking to get a Gaudí apartment, to live in a complete Art Nouveau environment." Though he found one for sale, he didn't buy it: "The people who had owned it previously had put all drywall on the inside." Which wouldn't do for Kravitz, who, if you haven't already guessed, is a perfectionist. He is also intimidatingly neat — he has his custom-embroidered sheets, for example, changed every morning. At the Roxie Penthouse Hotel, the eye searches in vain for a scratch, a smudge, a bit of vagabond dust. And toward that tidy end, Kravitz actually insists that all visitors remove their shoes at the door. "The only person who didn't take his shoes off in my house was Prince," Kravitz says. "But that's cool. He's the man." Indeed, if there were an exception to be made, few would fault the choice of the little Prince.

Five platinum and two gold albums later, Kravitz can have anything he wants. And what he wanted in SoHo was to work with Noriega-Ortiz, a Puerto Rican-born graduate of Columbia University's school of architecture who, after nine years in the office of the 80's sensation John Saladino, opened his own firm in 1992.

The rock star and the designer met after Kravitz, on the lookout for a new pied-à-terre in Manhattan, took a tour of an 1890 paper manufacturing building on Crosby Street that was being transformed into 13 lofts, on the market for between \$2 million and \$8 million each. Kravitz was smitten not only with one of the two new penthouse duplexes built atop the five-story red-brick pile, but also with the work of Noriega-Ortiz, who had been tapped by the developer to design the building's lobby, wine cellar and part of the landmark facade, as well as the bathrooms, kitchens and fireplaces in each unit. "I looked at the fireplace, and I knew whoever had designed it was hip," Kravitz says. "Then I requested to meet Benjamin, and then we met, and we hit it off."

"Hit it off" doesn't quite do justice to the dynamic between the duo. Like an old couple — a happy old couple — they

affectionately finish each other's thoughts and sentences. "He's extremely talented, extremely visual," Kravitz says. "Plus, I have so many different tastes when it comes to architecture and interiors, and Benjamin's very well versed. He knows how to mix many different styles together."

For his part, Noriega-Ortiz confesses that the first meeting with Kravitz, who arrived one Sunday afternoon solo ("no entourage"), was unforgettable. "I really wasn't familiar with his music," confesses the designer, who nonetheless found Kravitz "visually quite astonishing." (One day the rock star turned up at the designer's office in SoHo wearing a full-length patchwork fur coat — "I think it was pony skin," Noriega-Ortiz says — and then, as the two men walked down the block to visit the apartment, he turned to Noriega-Ortiz to ask why so many people on the sidewalk seemed to be staring at him.) "He's really stylish," Noriega-Ortiz says. "And when you see a client who is stylish, you know a project is going to turn out great."

The other thing that impressed Noriega-Ortiz was the way Kravitz described the apartment-to-be. "He said, 'I wanna tell you what I want the apartment to feel like,'" the designer recalls. "And then he started talking about what he wanted — using words like 'sexy,' 'sensual,' 'light,' 'open' and 'airy.' All his descriptions about the rooms and the apartment were about feelings and emotions, which is exactly how I see interiors."

Kravitz did, of course, come with plenty of aesthetic baggage. "The only project I had seen of his was the Panton house in Miami," Noriega-Ortiz says. "And I didn't want to do that. I said, 'Lenny, it's time to move on.'" Besides, he adds, "I like to mix things." He continues, "We kind of did a lot of periods in this house."

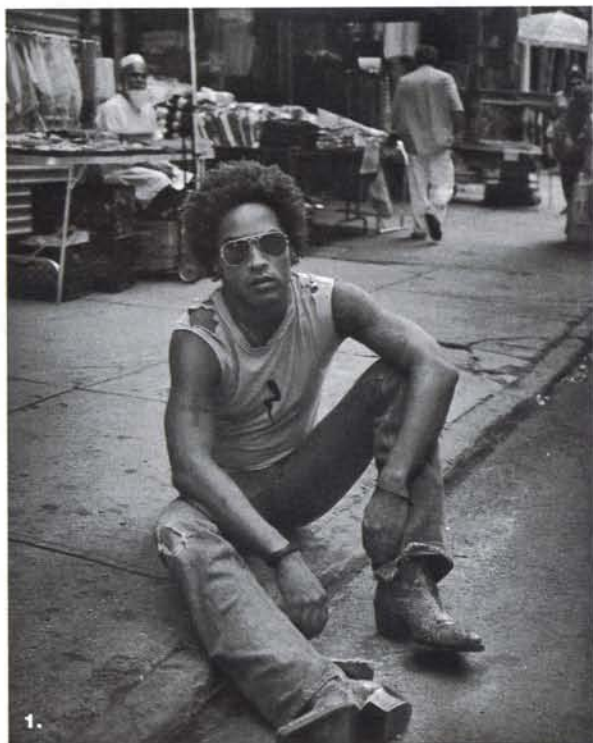
Still, as Kravitz told the designer, "I'm a big fan of Stanley Kubrick, a big fan of '2001,' 'A Clockwork Orange' and just the 70's in general." And then he amended his litany of words to further define his aesthetic: "glamorous, futuristic, clean, but at the same time, funky — not rigid."

"I wanted it to feel like a gallery-museum, you know, white walls, wood floors," Kravitz adds. "I think I made a reference to the Guggenheim" — Frank Lloyd Wright's, not Frank Gehry's — "and I think that's where that curved wall in the living room came from."

In truth, the living room's 36-foot-long sinuous gray masonry wall, which features a moatlike shelf of sea glass (where the fireplace's steel gas pipe is neatly buried), cleverly conceals the flues and plumbing and electrical risers for the apartments below. And, Kravitz's observation aside, the curvilinear wall actually appears to have been less inspired by Wright than by admirers of Le

Footnotes

RESOURCES, REFERENCES AND THE BACK STORY BEHIND THE STORY.



1. Lenny Kravitz's acid blues riffs and soul-inflected voice are throwbacks to classic 1960's rock 'n' roll. While his 1989 debut album, "Let Love Rule," was criticized by some for being too derivative, with four Grammys and 20 million albums sold, Kravitz has successfully introduced the MTV generation to a radio-ready blend of rhythm and blues, reggae, rock and even hip-hop. His 1991 Curtis Mayfield-styled hit, "It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over," remains his most commercially successful song. The retro rock-and-soul vibe of the 70's, Kravitz's favorite era, permeates his design aesthetic as well.

2. Of Kravitz's many homes, his Biscayne Bay residence in Miami — half house, half recording studio — wins the most-mod prize, with shagadelic décor worthy of "The Pink Panther." Its designer, Michael Czynsz, of Architropolis, in Portland, Ore., called the 50's-style ranch house, with its Verner Panton-inspired bold colors and shapes, "the best nightclub in the United States," and Kravitz's guests particularly love the room that is lined in floor-to-ceiling white shag carpet.

3. The glamorous ostrich-feather lights in Kravitz's New York billiard room are typical of the "couture" fixtures made by ... And Bob's Your Uncle, a studio owned by Steven Wine, a former glass blower (who is also the companion of Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, the designer of Kravitz's New York duplex), and Michel Landon, who was once a knitwear designer. Their combined expertise allows them to tackle all manner of commissions. In addition to the feathered lights



chez Kravitz (including these, with rooster feathers, in the dressing room), Wine and Landon also made the Austrian-crystal-studded curtains in the the media room, and have done work for Cartier and the Haru restaurant chain. Go to www.andbobsyouruncle.com.

4. Noriega-Ortiz believes that "interiors should be elevated into living works of art." He designs high-end residences that are tailored to his clients' personalities while maintaining the clean lines and simple forms of Modernism, balanced with elements of classical design,

to create "a human scale," where "color and form take precedence over the pedigree of any one object." His client list includes the media mogul Michael Fuchs and the author Laura Esquivel. Go to www.bnodesign.com.

5. The first item Noriega-Ortiz found for Kravitz's loft was a Kawai CR-40 Crystal Grand piano. Kawai began manufacturing these acrylic pianos some 30 years ago and produces no more than five a year. Neil Sedaka bought two, and Elton John played one of the early ones. Kravitz's piano is a vintage model, but you can check out new ones (going for \$94,000) at www.kawaius.com.

6. If you can't live without a set of suits worn by the Beatles or a Janis Joplin overcoat, then Gotta Have It! is the place for you. In 1995, Kravitz walked into Bob Schagrin and Pete Siegel's shop, at 153 East 57th Street, and he, well, had to have it. Since then Schagrin and Siegel have curated, authenticated and designed the displays of Kravitz's collection of iconic pop-cultural ephemera, which includes Jimi Hendrix's Woodstock set list, the vest that Hendrix wore at a 1969 concert in Copenhagen (a) and a blue-jean patchwork shirt of Bob Marley's (b, right). Go to www.gottahaveit.com.

7. The crew on the photo shoot at Kravitz's loft enjoyed a nonstop caffeine buzz, thanks to the Capresso C1000 Automatic Coffee and Espresso Center in the rock star's kitchen. Just push a button, and this self-cleaning dream machine "grinds, tamps and brews" a tasty cup of joe in less than 50 seconds. With its 64-ounce removable water container, it makes 40 espressos or 12 cups of coffee at a time. At \$799, it adds up to about a year of Starbucks — not including weekends. Go to www.capresso.com.

8. The bright white, anthropomorphic plastic furniture on Kravitz's living-room terrace is produced by the French designer Douglas Mont — a self-described "re-creator," because, according to his Web site, his designs "could have been made 40 years before," but they weren't. Mont describes his style as retrofuturistic, like that of his mentor, the Australian designer Marc Newson. Go to www.jetnet-design.com.

— Nia-Malika Henderson

1. © MARK SELIGER. 2. DAVID GLOMB. 3. ANTOINE BOOTZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. 4. ANTOINE BOOTZ FOR METROPOLITAN HOME MAGAZINE. 5. ANTOINE BOOTZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. 6A. BRUCE W. TALAMON. 6B. COURTESY OF GOTTA HAVE IT!. 7. CAPRESSO. 8. ANTOINE BOOTZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES.