

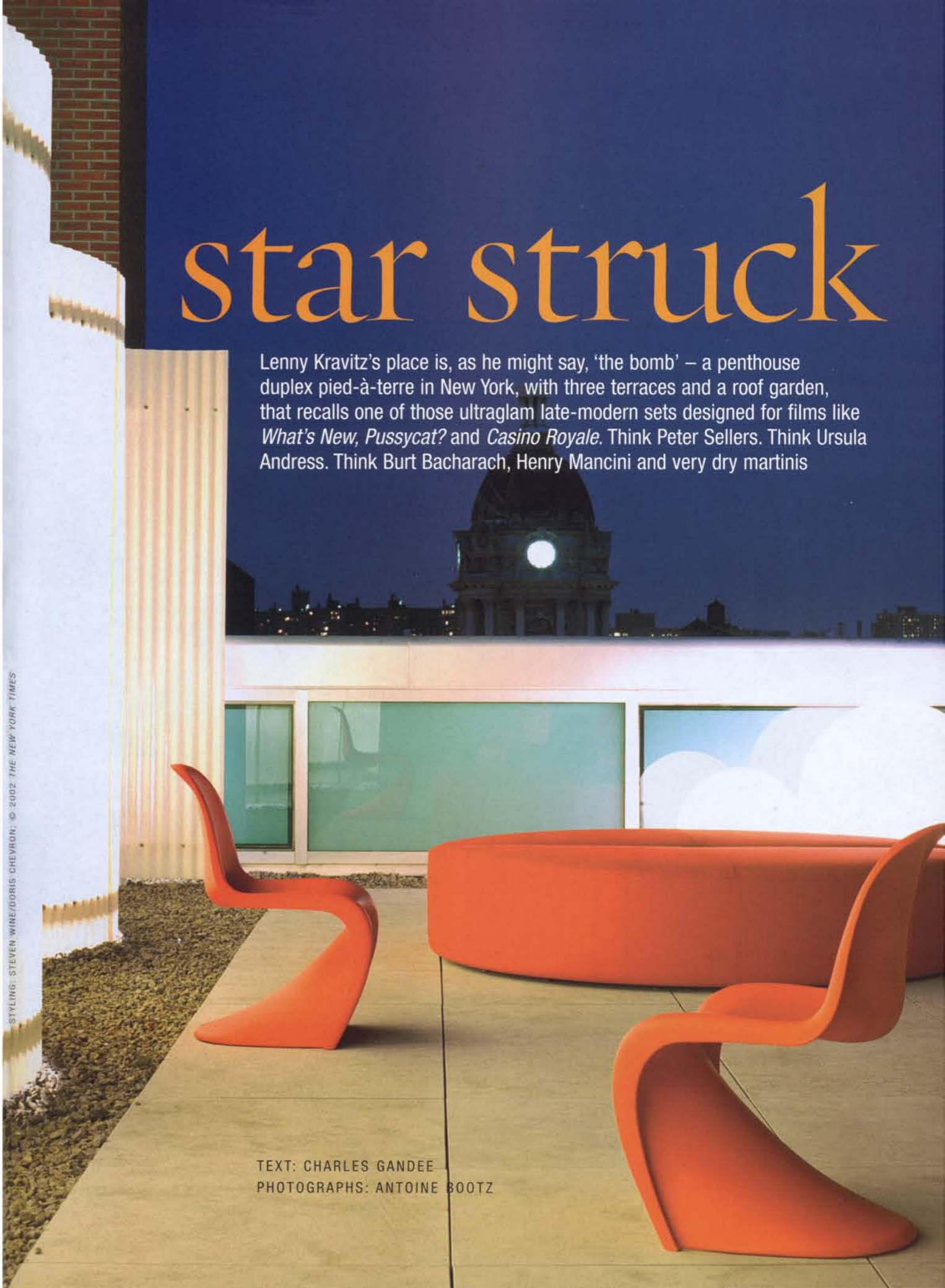


The media room. Designer Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz mixed traditional elements, like the Knole sofa, with modern ones, like the acrylic coffee table and the Andy Warhol silk-screens of Muhammad Ali. The white fox-fur pillow adds rock-star flash OPPOSITE The roof terrace at night

star struck

Lenny Kravitz's place is, as he might say, 'the bomb' – a penthouse duplex pied-à-terre in New York, with three terraces and a roof garden, that recalls one of those ultraglam late-modern sets designed for films like *What's New, Pussycat?* and *Casino Royale*. Think Peter Sellers. Think Ursula Andress. Think Burt Bacharach, Henry Mancini and very dry martinis

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The living room BELOW A French 1940s chair and a Saarinen table stand on a shaggy rug. The standing lamp's feathered shade is worthy of a Vegas showgirl
 OPPOSITE The dining room with curving masonry wall tinted a dark metallic grey



Welcome to Kravitz's New York pad – designed by Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz – where, when the polished-steel doors of the white-leather-padded elevator open, you are greeted by the fabulous spectacle of a transparent acrylic grand piano. The second thing you notice is a somewhat menacing steel-and-glass staircase with shag-carpeted steps that cuts through the space 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 three metres above. Behind the swing, in a greenhouse-like alcove that soars to eight metres, there's a streamlined modern billiards table and, floating above it, a trio of luminous orbs encased in bleached white fluttering ostrich feathers.

'If I hadn't been a musician, I would have been a designer,' Kravitz says. '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.' Rock stars tend not to do things in moderation and Kravitz is true to his tribe. 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 John Saladino, opened his own firm in 1992.

'He's extremely talented, extremely visual,' Kravitz says of the designer. 'Plus, I have so many different tastes when it comes to interiors, and Benjamin's very well versed. He knows how to mix many different styles.' For his part, Noriega-Ortiz confesses that the first meeting with Kravitz was unforgettable. 'I really wasn't familiar with his music,' confesses the designer, who nonetheless found Kravitz 'visually quite astonishing'. 'He's really stylish,' Noriega-Ortiz says. 'And when you see a client who is stylish, you know ►



Kravitz's white-on-white bedroom is a study in the ethereal. The bed is topped by a fuzzy, hand-loomed cover and screened by a sheer curtain
RIGHT A mirrored wall reflects a stairway leading to the roof terrace
BELOW An acrylic grand piano greets visitors to Kravitz's penthouse



a project is going to turn out great.' The other thing that impressed the designer was the way Kravitz described the apartment-to-be, using words like 'sexy', 'sensual', 'light', 'open' and 'airy'. 'All his descriptions about the place were about feelings and emotions which is exactly how I see interiors.' Kravitz adds, 'I wanted it to feel like a gallery-museum, you know, white walls, wood floors. Also glamorous, futuristic, clean but at the same time funky – not rigid.'

With the public rooms downstairs and the four bedrooms upstairs, Noriega-Ortiz tied the luminous bi-level space together by employing a palette of cool white walls, warm matt oak floors and a great deal of steel-gray fabric, which helps unify the wide range of periods he enlisted for the furniture and accessories. The stylistic spectrum runs the gamut from a pair of 18th-century gilded Italian pilasters set atop white pedestals flanking the piano to a collection of translucent-plastic anthropomorphic outdoor furniture that the designer found on a French website – www.jetnet-design.com – and rightly describes as 'pure Jetsons'.

'I do business in New York,' Kravitz says. 'So when I'm here, this really serves as a hotel for myself, for clients I'm working with and for friends in the business.' Another regular occupant is Zoë, Kravitz's 13-year-old daughter by his ex-wife, the actress Lisa Bonet best known for her role in *The Cosby Show*. The couple divorced in 1993, and Kravitz now has custody of Zoë. Asked whether his daughter shares his fascination with design, Kravitz sighs one of those paternal, whaddya-gonna-do sighs and says, 'She thinks I'm over the top in terms of being into it, but then she comes in and says, "I dig it."' ■