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H O M E ENTERTAINMENT D E S I G N

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*Making
room for
music*

*and video...without
it costing
a fortune*



**First
Issue**

DISCO DAVILLA

A discrete discotheque has been created in this stylish house in Pimlico. Working on the basis of an existing system added impact and clarity has been introduced into the sound. A custom built cabinet houses decks and mixer while speakers and CD player remain hidden



Looking back along the balcony towards the 'music box' which houses the power amplifier, cassette deck and twin turntables as well as a mixer, power relays and electronics for the active loudspeakers used in this installation



The dancers' view of the midrange and treble speakers (top left). The drivers in their custom housing in the balcony (right). Mission CD player remote control eye mounted on the skirting board allows the unit to be hidden out of sight (bottom left)

Much thought, planning and effort go into the making of a home in which the architecture, furniture, paintings and music combine to express the owner's personality and tastes in a way that seems perfectly natural. Jeremy's is such a home. Jeremy, an entrepreneur in the field of entertainment, has a modern villa in Pimlico, London, designed and built to his own specifications. Nothing in it is there by chance. Everything owes its presence to choice. The living area opens out into a curved space that soars up to a partly glazed roof. At first floor level this space is overlooked by a balcony that defines the limits of an office suite reached by a spiral staircase set back from the main living area.

Speaking of the style in which the house is decorated and furnished Jeremy refers to it as 'classic contemporary'. The proportions are classical. The furniture, carefully chosen to express its owner's individuality, represents a successful marriage of styles to produce a harmonious whole. There are a couple of

antique pieces, a few good reproductions and some specially commissioned furniture of modern design showing various influences, including Art Deco. The same careful matching is evident in the paintings that share the wall with a large mirror that reaches from mantle to ceiling. This expanse of glass reflects a view of the garden through a window opposite, thus opening up the windowless wall and effectively extending the space by creating the illusion of another garden.

We all have a yen to do something that may not fit in with our professional role. Most of us do nothing about it. In contrast, Jeremy – whose business interests involve him in night clubs and discos and has always fancied being a disc-jockey – decided he would have the necessary equipment installed in his home. It had to be a good system and the system had to be well integrated with its surroundings. The house had to be as attractive after installation as it was before. What he needed was good equipment, good design and a high standard of installation. With these requirements in mind he contacted installer Angus Gibson Music and interior designer Derek Frost Associates.

He explained to Angus Gibson that what he

wanted was nothing less than a fully professional, working DJ console with a choice of records, tapes and Compact Discs. Being interested in good quality sound he wanted a high quality system. As his main interest is Pop music the system needed to generate a lot of bass, with a high level of separation between bass and treble. Gesturing to his solar plexus, Jeremy said with a grin, 'It must hit them right here – lift them off the ground'.

He decided that the console would be sited in the office suite but he didn't want a lot of technical hardware on display. He describes the design feel of the office as 'adult and serious' – a place where a lot of work gets done. It is not a play area and somehow the equipment must be installed so as not to compromise the suite's basic function. Similarly, the speakers must be well integrated and not look like something left behind by an absent-minded technician. So, having discussed the project and worked out the equipment requirements with Gibson, he asked Derek Frost to consider the question of how it should be housed.

Frost is an interior designer with 12 years' experience. Prior to setting up his own design





Derek Frost's design for the 'music box' takes the spirit of its styling from a 'fifties Chevrolet (left). The robust Technics turntables and mixer inside the segmented lid of the music box (top right). A striking piece of furniture in its own right (bottom right)

company, four years ago, he was chief designer and director for Mary Fox Linton in Fulham Road. He undertakes a wide range of interior design projects, residential and commercial, both in the UK and abroad.

Frost also designs speciality pieces of furniture and decorative objects. His furniture features a combination of materials, such as metal, wood and glass, and a variety of finishes – marquetry, lacquer and gilding among them. His range of work is broadly based and the sources of his inspiration varied. In part they can be found in oriental art and in the best of the present century's European design. He likes clean lines and prefers to design for the individual taste.

Describing his approach to work as non-academic Frost likens himself to a couturier. He likes to involve his client in the creative process so that some of the client's own ideas are reflected in the finished object. The interest is in an object's 'personality' as well as in its function. He feels it should be designed to say something, something relevant to its function, to whoever sees or uses it. When asked to solve the problem posed by Jeremy's DJ console his approach was characteristic.

He has been involved in the interior design of Jeremy's house and he spoke of its architecture as having its own 'voice'. What was needed to house the console, Frost decided, was not something that would disguise its nature but something that would proclaim its function. The answer was a music box. He considered sound system decoration of the past and began to think along the lines of the juke boxes and radiograms of the 'forties and 'fifties. Looking one day at a poster depicting the front view of a 'fifties Chevrolet car he realised how he could shape the music box to give it the appearance he wanted. He worked out the details and had the cabinet made. With its equipment installed it stands, a large but not obtrusive addition to the furniture of the office suite.

The cabinet is painted and decorated with musical notes gilded on the doors. When it is closed none of the equipment can be seen. It was made by Roger Nicholson Interiors, using composite board MDF, with a spray cellulose paint finish. The mixer control surface is a matching laminate and the decorative gilding is done in white-gold oil by Yumi Katayama, a graduate of the Royal College of Art. Inside are two turntables from Technics, a pre-amplifier

and power amplifier from Quad and a Nakamichi cassette deck. There is ample storage space for records and tapes.

Gibson's role was to take the existing Tannoy speakers and give height and sparkle to the sound. He chose an active solution with the treble 'rolled-off' from the full-range Tannoys downstairs. Mid and treble are now handled by separately driven speakers just below balcony level. These are custom made to Frost's specification integrated into the angle between the balcony and the wall.

Had there been any installation problems? There was only one and that had been overcome with ingenuity. With the Compact Disc player shut in a downstairs room it could be operated by remote control only if the room door was left open. Not acceptable. The solution was to take the remote control eye out of the player and install it outside just above the skirting board beside the door. The only other problem, said to be a slight one, is acoustical and caused by the reflective plaster surfaces. Jeremy is working on that one. In planning an installation like his he emphasised the importance of deciding exactly what was wanted and then thinking the whole thing through before a start was made.