

# SINGLE STOREY: AN AMERICAN RANCH HOME IN BERKSHIRE

Tom Rigden



**D**avid Weston and Scott Mycock have long extolled the virtues of mid-century living, having lived in two other '60s bungalows and having been lifelong collectors of select period pieces. But it is with their latest renovation project, now complete, extensively documented and recently sold, that their take on single-story living has been most successfully rendered, and it is utterly compelling. Inspired by the West-Coast ranch homes they so love and the stories of swinging parties in the '60s, gleaned from original residents of the estate, David and Scott have fashioned a piece of cool Californian modernism so authentic that it is hardly credible that it is located on a wooded estate in Berkshire.

Their bungalow home is part of the Edgcumbe Park Development. Built between 1958 and 1972 and inspired by the Scandinavian and US architecture of the late '50s, the estate unfurls unexpectedly in a large area of English planted woodland. Wonderfully landscaped and immaculately maintained, it still has the same air of suburban utopia its original architects intended and as I arrive on a sunny July afternoon, I almost expect to be greeted by an American accent.

I ask the couple how they arrived at such a desirable living space. "We were turned onto '60s bungalows initially because it was the only place we could fit our piano", David recounts, "they're detached and the spaces inside are lovely. And then we realised that actually the light's fantastic too; there are big windows front and back and they just feel great to live with. Our friends laughed at us at first for our choice of home, but two sets have since moved onto the estate."

The pair run design and photography business Bungalow Industries from their home and it's an appropriate testament to their imagination and creativity. The building's frontage gives no indication of the tired and neglected gem that greeted them four years ago. The subtly angled roof and authentic detailing like tongue and groove paneling, carport and landscaping make for an understated but desirable exterior while the large windows preview an inviting interior.

Entering the bungalow through the American walnut front door, I am led into a brick and hard-wood finished corridor, unexpectedly bright thanks to a new skylight. It's here you gain first sight of the original parquet flooring, stretching across the expanse of the living room. "The flooring turned out to be one of the most exciting and gratifying parts of the renovation, with large areas painstakingly salvaged piece by piece", Scott reveals. Beyond his white baby-grand piano, I spy a set of four bent-ply Arne Jacobsen dining chairs around an Eero Saarinen table, a G-Plan Astro coffee table, a tan leather Conran sofa, an Eames lounge chair and a beautiful Sori Yanagi Butterfly stool. The focus of the room is their modern take on the log-burning fire, which seamlessly blends into the wall-space, in front of which lies one of the most

luxurious looking deep-pile rugs imaginable. This is a space that could host the mother of all 1960s dinner parties (in fact it probably did, if the stories from their elderly neighbours are to be believed).

So how have they created the look? "It's not deliberate at all. It's about collecting things that feel right and work in harmony with the house. The last thing we wanted was for the place to look like we'd just gone through a catalogue saying 'we want one of those, and one of those'. It really takes time to evolve a nice collection of furniture and interesting houses have special pieces that come from all over the place, not just off the internet. That takes a long time - it takes a lifetime for some people."

Leading off the living room is a winding corridor. The walls are lined with their photographs and the bedrooms and 'den' are tucked away off here; all bright, minimal spaces, decorated with a mix of contemporary and mid-century: FLOS Tab lights sit alongside a Jacobsen Egg chair and a stunning Nathan sideboard.

While their design philosophy is always to renovate and furnish sympathetically, David and Scott acknowledge that you have to make compromises to achieve a comfortable living space. Nowhere is this more evident than in the bathroom. "There is a dilemma in that many 1960s bathrooms look fantastic as a piece of design history, but just don't work as modern living spaces. We put the walnut paneling back in as a nod to some of the '60s interiors we saw on the estate and that made all the difference; the rest of it is modern. This is the epitome of the modern house - it is modern inside, but it's still of its period. You can't slavishly live in the past."

They have managed to achieve the same result with the kitchen, complementing the space with a dramatic re-styling that is even more in keeping with the building's Californian roots than the architect's initial design. "The kitchen just had a tiny high-level window. We opened the partition with the living room, creating an aperture and counter surface that's transformed the area into a light, sociable space. We've put in a feature that would have appeared in US homes of the time and inspired the original architecture, but for whatever reason wasn't included here."

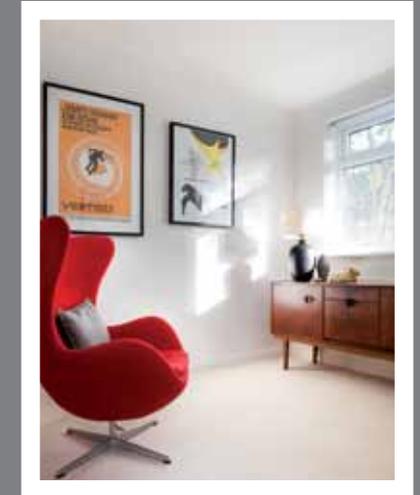
The builders of Edgcumbe Park pioneered new technologies throughout the estate that were not commonplace in UK homes in the '60s. David explains: "Renway were one of the first builders to use double glazing and central heating and there were features like built-in wardrobes. The original brochure even included a 'rumpus room'! They were pushing the boundaries of the time, but no-one has really acknowledged it."

It is clear that David and Scott have a real determination to secure recognition and ultimately a future for this type ►

**Below Den:** The teak sideboard is by Nathan and inherited from Scott's parents, the posters are a Saul Bass print for the film *Vertigo* and the book artwork by Alvin Lustig for DH Lawrence's *The Man Who Died*; the lamp and shade were a thrift shop find and the Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen was an eBay purchase.



**Above Lounge:** The Matte White Baby Grand Piano by Danemann was originally supplied by Harrods in 1972; the Verona pendant lamp came from eBay as did the Arne Jacobsen 3103 Stacking Chairs and the marble Tulip table by Eero Saarinen. The print is by Saul Bass for the film *Anatomy of a Murder* and was an exhibition poster from the Design Museum.



**Above Front garden:** The Butterfly chair by Hardoy was purchased on eBay