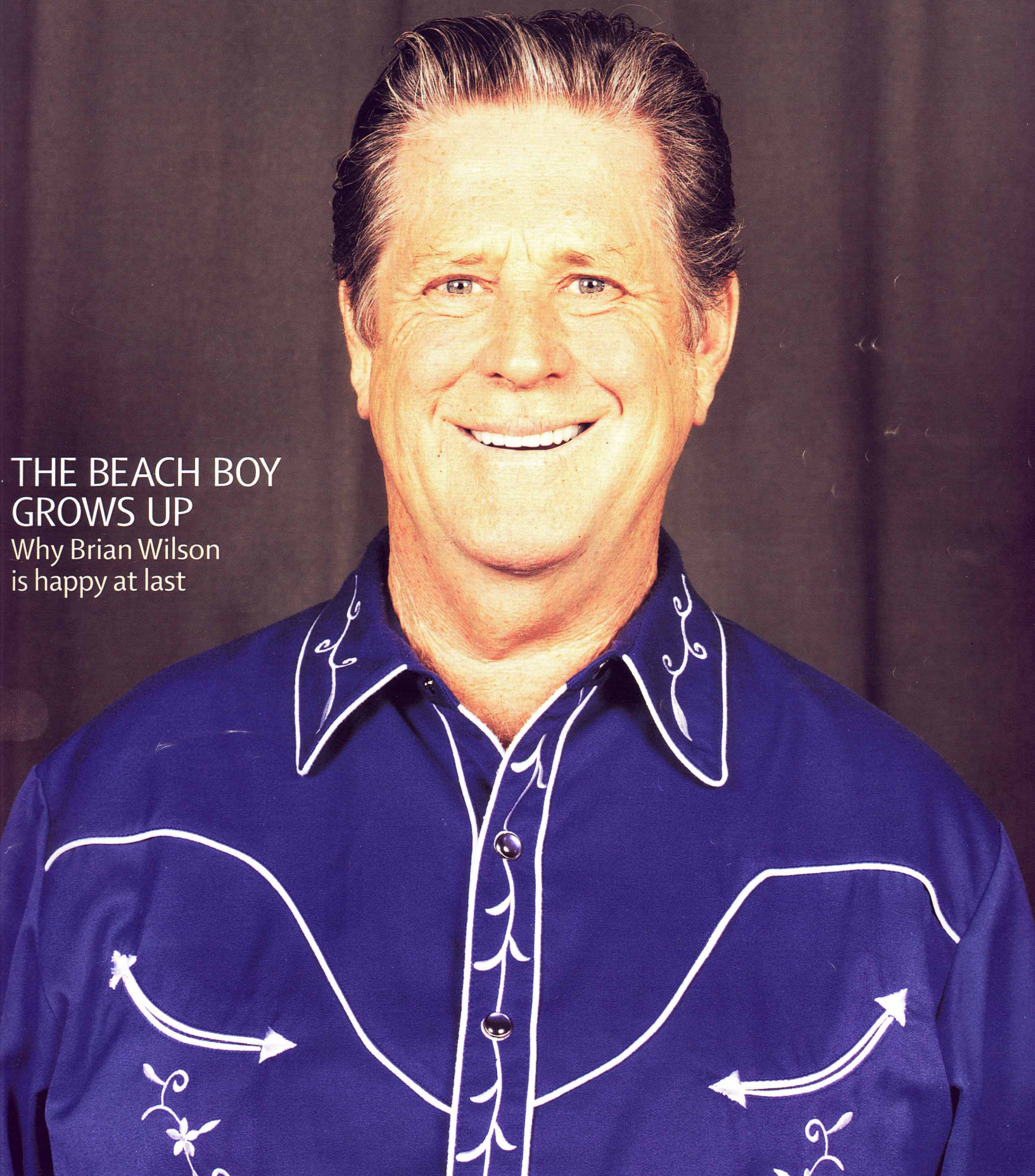


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THE BEACH BOY GROWS UP

Why Brian Wilson
is happy at last





The chenille-covered sofa in the sitting-room (above) is by Baker. The Murano glass chandeliers in the drawing-room (right) are designed by Carter Tyberghein

What do you with an interior 'like a wedding cake'? Strip away the artifice, then take extra care with any new ingredients you bring to the mix. Dominic Bradbury visits a Chelsea house reborn

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LUSCOMBE-WHYTE

THE ICING ON THE CAKE

Scale is not a problem for the interior designers Patrick Tyberghein and Laura Carter. They have worked on hotels in Paris, a ski lodge in Courchevel and a chateau in Belgium. When it comes to houses they also think big. Their latest project, an 1840s family residence in Chelsea, ranges over six floors and includes an interconnected mews house to the rear. It has a grand staircase and a service stairway, plus a lift in case you forget your novel at the top of the house. It has a guest floor, six bedrooms, five bathrooms and a basement for staff. It has high-tech lighting, heating and sound systems hidden away behind features old and new. For Tyberghein and Carter it represents two and a half years of work.

"When we first saw the house, we thought it was quite overdone," says French-born Tyberghein. "It was very opulent, like a wedding cake, yet at the same time



'The house was bland and had no soul. We tried to regain the elegance and create a real home'



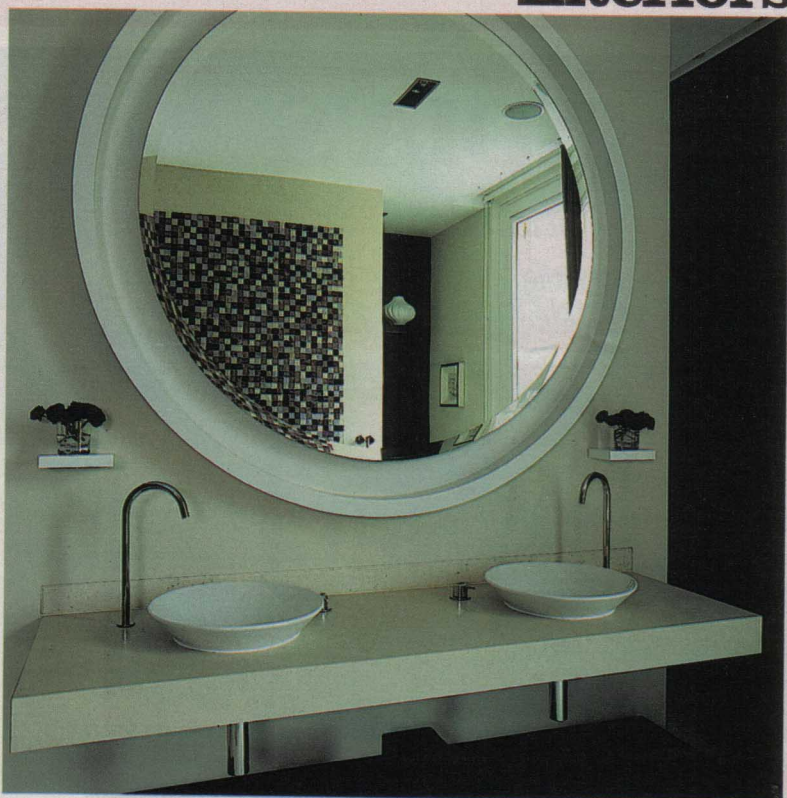
Clockwise from above:
a painting by Clem Crosby
in the dining-room;
a chair by J Robert Scott;
a second-floor landing

it was bland and had no soul. We tried to regain the elegance of the house and create a sense of continuity throughout, as well as creating a real home for our clients. They wanted a family house, not a show home.' In the mid-1990s the house had been reworked with faux period mouldings and cornicing. Carter and Tyberghein decided the house needed simplification. Many excess mouldings were removed, creating a cleaner backdrop.

The designers also wanted a better connection between the main house and the mews house, especially at first-floor level where they created a fluid promenade from the family room at the rear to the main sitting-room at the front. This sense of promenade continues in other parts of the house, especially the floor holding the master bedroom suite, where bedroom, bathroom and a private sitting-room flow into one another.

'We were very conscious of trying to create a thread of continuity, so you get sequences of rooms which open up to create a vista and strong sense of perspective,' says Tyberghein. 'And we were very conscious of the light levels, designing rooms to make the most of the sunlight.' Of the two designers Tyberghein tends to take the more architectural approach. Brought up in Paris, he moved to London in the 1980s, went to work at the design firm David Hicks and met Laura Carter, who was in the same office. The two soon became partners in life, finally setting up business together in 1997. 'It takes time to evolve your own style and philosophy of design,' says





The huge bathroom mirror is by Carter Tyberghein

Tyberghein. 'We certainly have that, but we are also influenced by the context of the project, the location, the client and their ideas.'

Carter grew up in Sussex and worked with the English traditionalists Colefax & Fowler before her years with David Hicks. The combination of the two backgrounds gives their work wide-ranging scope and broad influences – sourcing materials and furniture from around the world – and a sophisticated, continental flavour. 'The French side of the partnership is more emotional, passionate and masculine,' says Carter. 'I have strong ideas but am more reserved and feminine in my approach. We disagree at times but we also spark off one another.'

Carter is more involved with the decoration side of their projects, but there are many areas of overlap, especially furniture. 'We designed a lot of elements – the bathrooms, vanity units, cupboards, headboards, mirrors and chandeliers made in Murano,' says Tyberghein.

'Here we have 14ft-high ceilings in the drawing-room, so finding furniture on the right scale can be tricky. If we know what we want, we may as well draw it ourselves and have it made. And most of our clients like the idea of having something

'If we know what we want, we may as well draw it ourselves and get it made'

unique.' Many of these pieces created integrated storage, which allows the rooms to remain uncluttered. The master bedroom is bordered by built-in closets coated in glazed linen, which adds texture and contrast. The headboard in here and the mirror in the adjoining bathroom introduce circular shapes to soften the strong symmetry and right angles in most of the other rooms.

'Obviously we can't custom-design everything,' Carter says. 'A room can end up looking quite sterile if every piece is designed by the same person. So we try to integrate period pieces and some contemporary furniture. We like the mix. And there's a restraint to it as well; the trick is to stop before you go too far.' ●

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