House&Home

The music-publishing prince of Bel Air

At home with the FT | Warner Chappell

Music's Guy Moot is about to be celebrated with an award in London, his old home city. But he's fallen hard for California, he tells *York Membery*. Photographs by *Todd Midler*



Clockwise from main: Guy Moot with his treasured Arsenal mug; Esther Williams was a former owner, hence the lap pool; the curved sofa is from a Pasadena warehouse; Moot created a cactus garden on the terrace; a Keith Haring jacket he bought in New York in the 1990s



Guy Moot's arrival in Los Angeles was badly timed. "My family and I moved to LA just before Covid," says the chief executive of music publisher Warner Chappell Music, adding wryly: "There's nothing like moving to a new city when it's about to lock down."

Seven years on, the Englishman is still living in the City of Angels, in a striking six-bedroom Bel Air house, built in 1964 in the mid-century modern style, with his wife, half-Danish interior designer Kristina, and their 22-year-old son and 19-year-old daughter. (He also has three daughters from a previous marriage.)

Life here seems to suit him. Since becoming chief executive of Warner Chappell Music in 2019, he has doubled the size of the business and, he says, "doubled the size of its reputation". Among the songwriters and artists he has signed to publishing deals since taking the helm of the business — part of the Warner Music Group — are Dua Lipa and Amy Allen (who's written songs for Sabrina Carpenter and British pop's new golden girl Olivia Dean, among others).

Moot had previously worked at EMI and Sony and, earlier in his career, signed artists including British jazz-funk band Jamiroquai, Amy Winehouse and the Arctic Monkeys. On November 9, he is set to be the 2026 recipient of the British music industry's prestigious Music Industry Trusts (MITS) Award, to be presented at a glittering ceremony in London. "It's a huge honour when you see the list of people who've received the award," says the 60-year-old, his two-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback Kaia lying at his feet. Past recipients have included Annie Lennox, Kylie Minogue and Sir Elton John. "Being the first music publisher to be recognised makes it particularly special. Music publishing has become sexy — in the past it was in the shadows. There wouldn't be a pop industry without songwriters and great songs."

His split-level home — the master bedroom is upstairs — was once owned by the American competitive swimmer turned actress and businesswoman Esther Williams. "It's an unusual house with a lot of glass, but the interior was rather dark before — it's got a lighter, airy feel since we put down pale oak flooring," says Moot, in his trademark Cutler and Gross glasses. "It's also very private, with a lot of vegetation, but you can just glimpse downtown LA through the trees." He adds: "When I first moved here I was shocked by how frequently older houses are demolished — it's a very different mindset to Britain and Europe. In LA, the lot is worth more than the house."







He loves "the fundamental design" of the property, but says his wife has made a big difference; the house now has Louis Poulsen lights, Scandinavian-style open shelving and white walls. A Kay Bojesen mini-monkey hangs from a shelf. "They're iconic and found in a lot of Danish homes," says Moot. There is another Kay Bojesen figurine, a miniature duck, on a windowsill. I also spy a set of Carl Hansen dining chairs and a couple of Louise Roe Copenhagen vases. "Our aesthetic has been to combine Scandinavian design with Californian style."

Not everything is Scandi-inspired, though. The kitchen was made from locally sourced timber and the matching curved sofa and table in the living room were from a mid-century modern warehouse in Pasadena. A large citrine crystal is on display in the hallway. The yellow quartz is reputed to emit positive energy and signify abundance. "Crystals are quite a thing in LA," says Moot.

Given that the property was once owned by Williams — who was set to compete at the 1940 Summer Olympics until it was cancelled due to the second world war — naturally it boasts an outdoor swimming pool too. "It's quite a novelty having a pool when you first move to LA and you're in it all the time," says Moot. "But after a couple of years, you never go in it again."

Moot grew up in Cheltenham — "not the posh part" — and worked as a tractor driver and a welder after leaving school in his teens. Later working in a record store, he then landed a coveted role as an A&R man at a London record company.

He inherited a love of gardening from his late mother. "I grew up in a huge, falling-down Victorian house. It had a big garden and my mum grew a lot of tomatoes. We ended up having them morning, noon and night." In LA, he has become fascinated by cacti. "I go to a place in Sherman Oaks and it's got an acre of crazy cacti — like stuff you've never seen." He spends much of his time in the cactus garden he has created on the terrace. "You can go from March or April to October without seeing virtually any rain in LA — so I can sit outside checking emails or watching TV," he says. "People have trouble driving in the rain here — they often cancel meetings when the heavens open."





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Inside hang four framed platinum discs presented to Moot in 2006 in recognition of Amy Winehouse's *Back to Black* album selling 1.2mn copies in the UK. He points out his JBL studio monitor speakers (Model 4312A Control Monitor), prized for their high-fidelity sound and three-way configuration, and which used to be in his London office. "I think of them as my golden speakers because I signed a lot of songwriters after listening to their songs on them," says Moot. "Artists often wanted to play their finished masters on those speakers because they loved the sound so much."

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> 'I miss the street life in London, the walking and the culture — and the Arsenal'

A framed jacket on the stairway was designed by the pop artist Keith Haring. "It reminds me of my time in New York in the early 1990s. It was such an incredible place then in terms of its culture blending," he says. "I didn't have a lot of money, but as soon as I saw the jacket in a shop I thought 'I'm having that!'"

That said, I rather suspect that if he had to choose between his Ridgeback Kaia and his various artefacts, she would win hands down. "She's a wonderful dog and very loyal," he says. "We wanted a breed that we could take on big walks outdoors — we take her on hikes in the Santa Monica Mountains."

Moot still returns to the UK two or three times a year on business or to see family, friends and his beloved Arsenal, which he has supported since moving to London in the 1980s. "I've always lived in north London — Camden, Kentish Town, Canonbury and St John's Wood. I miss the street life in London, the walking and the culture, as well as L'Aventure [one of his favourite local London restaurants] and the Arsenal. But California is the most incredible state — you've got the beach, you've got desert, you've got forests. It's an amazing privilege to be able to live in a different city."

He says he's looking forward to catching up with old friends and colleagues at the MITS Awards in London next week. The annual awards ceremony has raised more than £7mn to fund the work of two of the British music industry's most cherished charities: The BRIT Trust, which supports the UK's leading performing and creative arts school, and Nordoff & Robbins Music Therapy.

"I don't think many politicians really look at what the music industry is worth to the UK overall in terms of revenue, tourism and employment, and it's about time they did," he says. "The film industry gets lots of tax breaks but the music industry gets nothing."

At the same time, he says "the industry itself needs to make people more aware that working in the music business isn't just about being a musician or A&R person. It can just as easily be about someone being a digital marketer, a promoter or a studio engineer. There are so many different career paths."

Is Moot planning to stay in LA? "That's the plan and it's where my home, family and dog all are," he says, adding with a smile: "And nobody has told me to 'go back' yet."

mitsaward.co.uk



Clockwise from above: the aesthetic of the mid-century home is 'Scandinavian design with Californian style'; Moot's prized JBL speakers; on a shelf in his home office sit four platinum discs in a frame, given to him in recognition of the 1.2mn sales (in 2006) of Amy Winehouse's 'Back to Black' album