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DAMON WINTER Los Angeles Times

AGELESS STAR: Designed by Pierre Koenig in 1958, the midcentury Modern Hollywood Hills home of Carlotta and Buck Stahl has been appearing in films for 42 years.

DESIGN

Some are architectural gems while others have a simpler style that conjures Elsewhere, U.S.A. Meet the hardest-working homes in show business. They get more gigs than some actors.

Best house in a leading role

By JAMIE DIAMOND
Special to The Times

WHEN location manager Timothy Hillman needed a house that would make a statement about the Barbara Walters-type mother Jane Fonda portrays in the upcoming film "Monster-in-Law," he settled on a majestic 1927 Wallace Neff home in Pasadena as the character's home. "We wanted to show that she oozed class," Hillman says, "so we picked this gated estate with fountains in front and grand windows into the living room."

It wasn't the first time this house had appeared on screen: It was seen in "Frances," the 1982 film biography of actress Frances Farmer, and the Disney film "The Pest," and it played the homes of Elizabeth Taylor and diet doctor Robert Atkins in television movies.

Some actors become stars, and some L.A.-area houses — this Wallace Neff is one — have their own kind of star status, appearing in a number of films, television shows, commercials and print ads. As if it's no sweat to get work. And, as with actors, the houses' repeated movie roles have to do with both tangible and ineffable factors, such as whether the house has [See Movies, Page F10]



MODERN LIFE

Company's coming. Quick, let's clean

The constantly tidy home may be a thing of the past. But what's good enough for guests?

By ROBIN GREENE HAGEY
Special to The Times

AS much as we say we don't like to clean our homes, two little words remain the biggest motivator for getting out the mop and broom: "Company's coming."

"I tell my kids that I clean occasionally," says Diane Korpinen, a mother of four from Thousand Oaks who juggles a frightening

schedule of after-school chauffeuring and a full-time job. "If we're having an occasion, I clean for it."

Our relationship with cleaning is ambivalent enough to be noted by academia and studied by the cleaning business. And it's just dysfunctional enough to become a product innovator's dream. Since 2000, corporate America has invented such "instant cleaning" aids as pullout wipes for polishing windows and the ubiquitous Swiffer — designed to keep a loaded symbol, the mop and bucket, in the closet.

Though women ages 18 to 64 do half the housework they did in 1965, "men are actually cleaning more than they did 40 years ago," says John Robinson, a sociology professor and director of the Americans' Use of Time Project at the University of Maryland.

The study has been tracking the way we spend time for almost 40 years.

Although men are contributing more — and more than a few women would insist that's not saying much — the Maryland study attributes the decline in time spent cleaning to more women working and fewer people having children or marrying (allowing them to maintain lower standards without the annoying interference of a mate).

"But there's also that hedonistic tendency we have to go with activities we enjoy ... and housework is at the bottom of the list," Robinson says. Yet most of us still care about fooling the outside world into thinking, yes, the house always looks this nice, thank you. But why?

"It's the whole idea of social comparison," says Virgil Ad- [See Messy, Page F4]

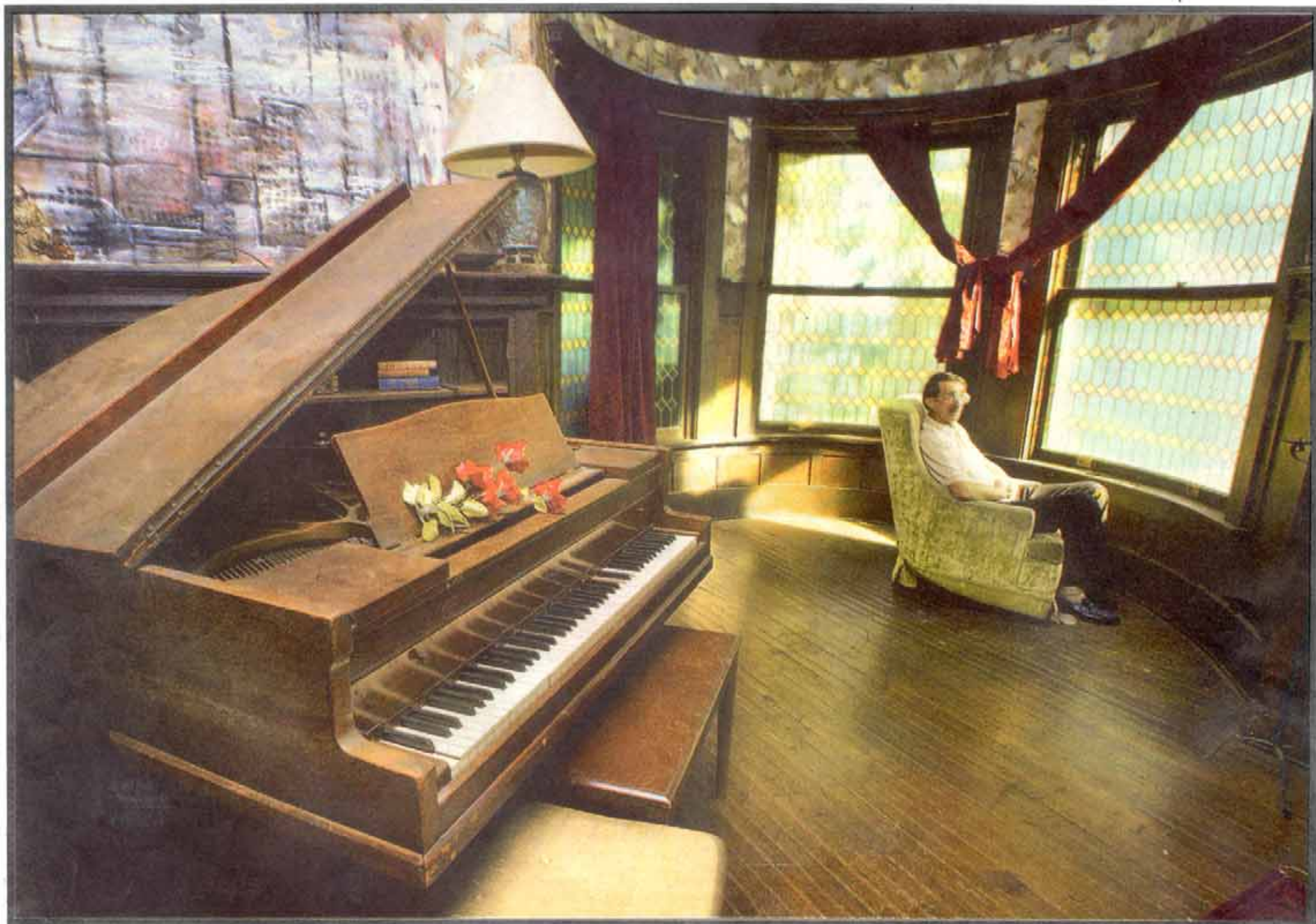
GARDEN

Sweet tarts of the trees

Swelled by summer's sun, pomegranates are now plump and blush. Long loved in ancient cultures, the pungent fruit is generating an all-new buzz — experts say its blood-red juices brim with antioxidants. An added bonus: The cousin of the crape myrtle is easy to grow at home. **PAGE 3**



RICHARD HARTOG Los Angeles Times



LORI SHEPLER Los Angeles Times

HEAVY ON ATMOSPHERE: Film production companies often do location shoots in Richard Rosales' West Adams district mansion "because it has nice details yet it looks rundown," he says. "A lot of people with mansions have nice oak floors and don't want to scratch or damage anything. We're not worried about getting dusty or dirty."

DESIGN

They do everything but act

[Movies, from Page F1] the right floor plan to handle balletic camera moves, is in a film-friendly neighborhood or is able to pass for a home somewhere else in America.

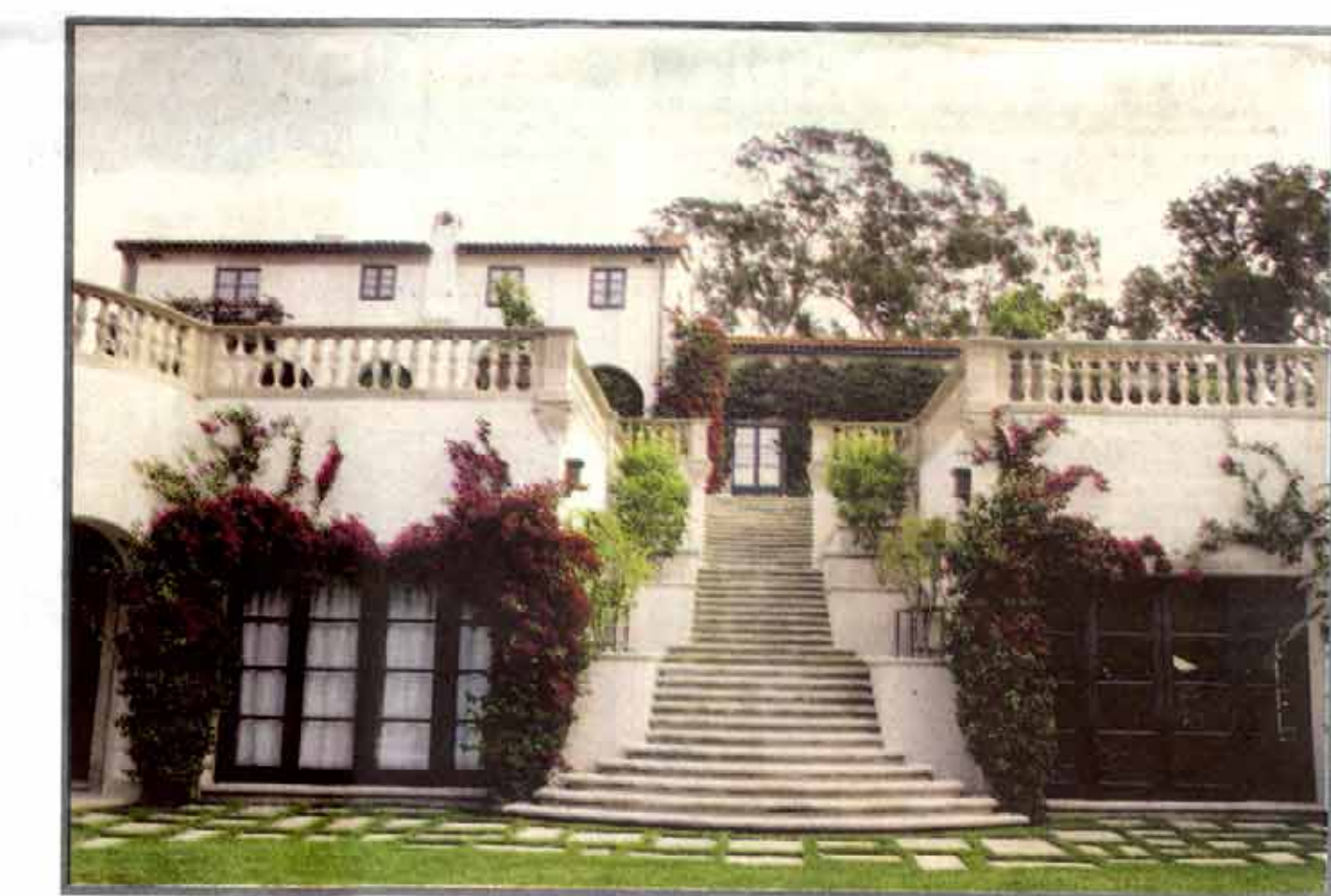
Let's start with the tangibles. Carlotta and Buck Stahl live in Case Study House No. 22, a glass-walled miracle in the Hollywood Hills, designed by the noted architect Pierre Koenig in 1958 and memorialized by an evocative Julius Shulman photograph of two women sitting inside the house. Soon after the home was built, film companies were interested in its unique design and cliff-top fit.

"They made a movie here in 1962 called 'Smog,'" says Carlotta Stahl. "But when they came up, it was a clear day, so they had to spray gunk on the windows to make it look like you were looking out at smog." The 2,300-square-foot house has more recently appeared in "Nurse Betty," "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," "Galaxy Quest" and "The Marrying Man."

"It's an architectural masterpiece perched at the top of the Sunset Strip, looking out at a blanket of lights," explains location manager John Panzarella, who used the Stahl home for the home of soap opera doctor Greg Kinnear in "Nurse Betty." "The house is completely made of glass, so you have the opportunity to film the interior from the exterior. You can set up a shot with the pool in the foreground, and through the glass wall you can see right into the house."

He says that of all the midcentury modern homes in the L.A. area, this one makes the strongest visual statement. "You can shoot a McMansion anytime you want, and no one will remember it," he says. "It just satisfies my creative juices to get great architecture into movies."

So, like an exquisite starlet, the Stahl house possesses matchless and pleasing features. And it doesn't matter that it can't act.



ANNIE WELLS Los Angeles Times

GRANDE DAME: This 1927 gated estate in Pasadena, designed by Wallace Neff, has achieved its star status as a film location. Its next role? It will appear as Jane Fonda's home in the upcoming "Monster-in-Law."

Its cinematic opposite may be the Rosales house, seen in "True Romance," "Bad Influence" and "Town & Country." Richard Rosales bought the Greek Revival mansion in the historic West Adams district after a fire, and he now manages it. (Yes, houses have managers.) "Film companies like the house because it has nice details yet it looks rundown," he says.

In fact, Rosales keeps the scene of the fire, the basement, unrestored, the better to attract music videos. "A lot of people with mansions have nice oak floors and don't want to scratch or damage anything. We're not worried about getting dusty or dirty," he says. "When they want run-down mansions, we get all the business."

"He's easy to work with," says Pan-

zarella. "With some people, we deconstruct all their decorating and they freak out. He doesn't."

Another factor in the popularity of the Rosales house is its versatility. In "True Romance," the first floor served as a drug den while the second floor stood in for Christian Slater's would-be coke dealer's apartment in another part of town. Film companies appreciate it

when they can drive their trucks and equipment to one site and shoot more than one location.

"A great view isn't enough for a house," says Catherine Meyler, the owner of a location listing service that represents architectural gems such as the Stahl house. "I also need a good exterior, or a nice lawn, or an unusual selection of plants to give the producer



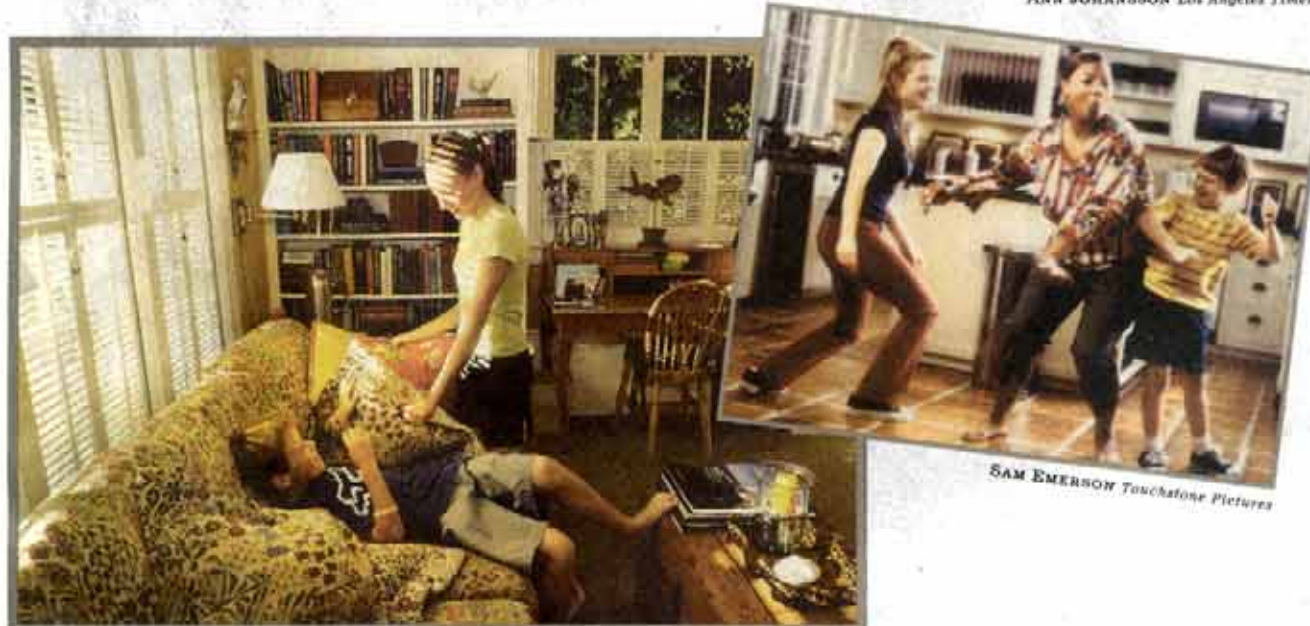
STARWORTHY: With its glittering city views, the Stahl residence, shown at left in scouting shots, serves as the home of soap opera doctor Greg Kinnear (right, with Renée Zellweger) in "Nurse Betty."



Universal



ANN JOHANSSON Los Angeles Times



SAM EMBERTON Touchstone Pictures

ANN JOHANSSON Los Angeles Times

AMERICAN CLASSIC: Spencer Hoffman, 10, plays in front of his picture-perfect South Pasadena house, top. Look familiar? It should: It was used in the '70s television show "Family" and has appeared in "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids," "Jurassic Park 3" and "Bringing Down the House" with Queen Latifah, above right. Spencer and his sister Hayley, 13, above left, are living on a movie set. With its clapboard exterior and nary a palm tree in sight, it could be anywhere in America — which is exactly why the location scouts love it.

more vistas to work with."

Debbie Hoffman is a mother of three whose family lives in the house America knows as the home used in the '70s television series "Family." Since then it has appeared in "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids," "Jurassic Park 3" and "Bringing Down the House." It's no coincidence that the Hoffmans bought this two-story, four-bedroom home, with its sloping roof, because it seemed the ideal place to raise children.

"It's got everything you'd want for kids," Hoffman says, "wide streets, nice sidewalks, a variety of beautiful trees, a well-maintained picket fence and a lot of property in relation to the size of the house." All enticing elements for film companies looking to cast a traditional family home. "Our house represents the all-American family home," she says. "And this is not a fantasy. What the movies make it out to be is what it is in real life. A safe neighborhood with kids coming over on bikes and baking cookies."

Another crucial element: Nothing about this shingled South Pasadena house says "California." The house has a clapboard exterior, no palm trees and a darkish feeling in the landscaping. And it's on a street with similar houses, which is quite important. It could be anywhere, and in fact it passes for Samuel L. Jackson's Baltimore home in the upcoming "XXX: State of the Union." Producers hate to spend money transporting cast and crew to distant climes when there is such architectural diversity here in Los Angeles.

The Hoffmans knew about the home's previous screen appearances when they bought it, but they say it wasn't a factor in the purchase. "It had nothing to do with our buying it," Debbie says. "We bought the house for the neighborhood and street and style of house."

For an Anywhere U.S.A. look, location scout Mike Fantasia ("The Terminal," "Seabiscuit" and "Girl, Interrupted") seeks out center hall Colonials.

"They have a front door in the center, and on each side two windows with six or nine panes apiece," he says. "Inside you find a central stairway with an or-

nate wooden handrail, the living room on the left, the family room on the right, and upstairs four or five big bedrooms."

"You definitely don't want stucco, red tiles and swimming pools," says Hillman. Whether a house makes it into the movies may also be dependent on the neighborhood's vegetation. "I stay away from bougainvillea, and the bane of my existence is palm trees," says location manager Iit Jones.

Can a home ever be overexposed to the point of losing its box office punch? Location scouts insist that a clever director can shoot an often-used home from different angles in imaginative ways so the audience doesn't recognize it.

"I don't think there are homes that companies don't want to film because they've been seen too much," says Fantasia. "But there are homes that people don't want to film because they are frequently filmed and therefore the neighbors become upset — too many early morning wake-ups, too many nights listening to generators and loud crew members, too much traffic congestion."

If a movie house needs to reflect a particular geographical setting, it also needs to say something about the character who lives there. For an episode of "The X-Files" about a monster who eats his neighbors, Jones picked a conventional family home in a gated community in Westlake Village.

"We wanted to juxtapose vanilla suburban utopia as seen from the outside against what lurked within," he says. "The gates implied security and safety, and the degree of uniformity in the color of the houses implied suburbia — the perfect place for a crazy monster."

But when monsters aren't living among Sub-Zeros and white oak floors, Jones says, they hang out in sinister Victorians, preferably more vertical than wide. "I find those in the Adams historic district," he says. "Visually, long and tall is creepier than broad and low." Who knew?

And where do bad guys live? That's easy: glass houses filled with uncomfortable geometric furniture. Think John Lautner's chemosphere in "Charlie's

Angels," Richard Neutra's Lovell home in "L.A. Confidential" and James Mason's ultramodern abode in "North by Northwest," a stunner that in reality was a set designed to look like a Frank Lloyd Wright house.

"The movies portray modern houses as stark and cold," says Meyler. "This is meant to reflect the villain's personality — an isolated and creepy guy who spends time looking out windows at other people."

Cindy Olnick of the Los Angeles Conservancy believes the iconoclastic nature of modern design may seem to have certain commonalities with the criminal mind. "Modern architecture takes risks, deviates from the norm and literally hangs over the edge," she says. "It implies a lack of restraint."

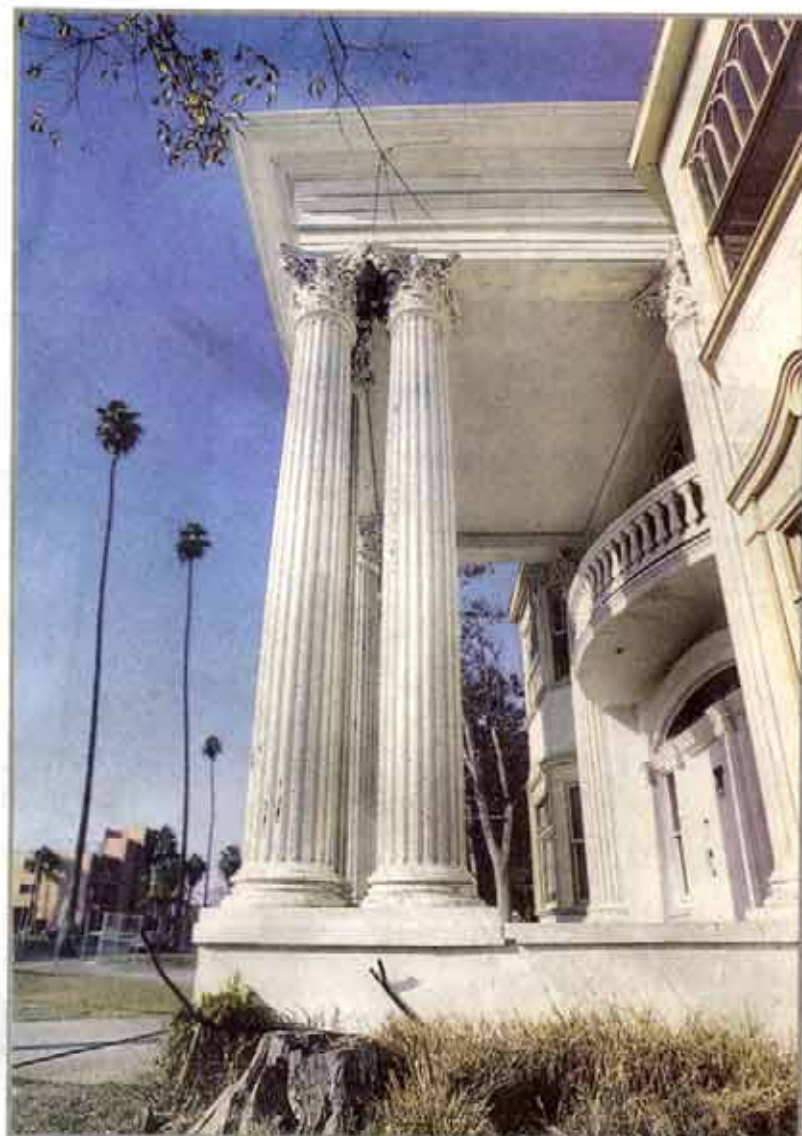
But Carlotta Stahl, who lives in a glass house, has a simpler explanation. "In movies, a glass house and children don't mix, and bad guys never have children," she says. In the 42 years her house has appeared in films, it has never played home to a child, despite the fact that her three children grew up in hers.

As always, there are just some styles that seem suited to the business. Want a starworthy estate that will have a career in film? Location scout Lori Balton gives this advice: "I'd buy land in El Sereno or City Terrace and build a midcentury-style house," she says. "I'd borrow from all of my favorite architects — Wright, Neutra, Schindler, Soriano — and have great sightlines and a lot of natural light. Care to invest?"

But remember, renting out to film companies is not for the faint of heart.

"It's like Attila the Hun coming to visit," says Jones ("Hellboy," "Gattaca," "The X-Files"). "You've got more than a hundred people inside your house, all carrying equipment. Things will get dingy." Which is why respectable film companies have to pay homeowners so handsomely. Show business isn't for everyone, and it's not for every house. Many are called; few are chosen. But some are chosen again and again.

Jamie Diamond is a Los Angeles writer. She can be reached at home@latimes.com.



LORI SHEPLER Los Angeles Times

SCREEN GEM: A grand, columned house on South Harvard Boulevard, in the West Adams district of Los Angeles, has been a featured player in "Truc Romance" and "Town & Country."

Your house made the cut. Now what?

After striking a deal with a production company, it helps to set some ground rules — and include the neighbors.

By JAMIE DIAMOND
Special to The Times

SO you want to get your house in pictures.

The process often begins with a knock on your door from a location scout armed with a camera. Later, the scouting shots will be scrutinized by the director and the production designer, who have final say. Unless you've listed your home with a location service, most of which take a commission, the scout is the first gatekeeper.

There are aesthetic factors, but your home needn't look like Tara. "In a typical suburban house, if the rooms are too segmented, the feel is claustrophobic," says location manager Iit Jones. "I look for places with open floor plans so the camera can move gracefully from room to room."

Homes that are not decorative showplaces can work. "I tend to avoid houses where the taste is too fussy," says location scout Lori Balton ("Heat," "Pearl Harbor," "The Insider"). "Wallpaper is an anathema. Your home needs to be personal and yet neutral enough to allow directors to impose their own choices over the existing ones."

"The details are what makes a scout stop," says Mac Gordon, a location manager for "CSI: Miami." "A good hedge that screens another house; the fact that the place is on a corner or it has a front door with a small porch."

Then there are logistical factors: whether the neighbors are film-friendly and the property is accessible; and whether parking, catering and holding areas can be found nearby. "If you see the script has night filming, with gunfire, squealing tires and helicopters, there are just certain neighborhoods you stay out of," Jones says.

The hassles may be worth it. Besides earning extra money (you can rent your house tax free for 14 days a year), there are less tangible perks, including the peripheral association with glamour. For a school project, Allison Alanis' 14-year-old son made

a documentary about the filming of "Monster in Law" in his Pasadena home, and he is now aiming for a career in the film business.

James Fox, who owns a modern estate on 23 acres in Chatsworth (used in "Six Feet Under," an Usher music video and "Bewitched" with Nicole Kidman), has negotiated to have a film company's temporary addition remain. "They put in a zebra cork floor that cost about \$40,000 or \$50,000, and I said, 'Do you mind laying that in permanently?'"

Location services can be found on the Internet or in studio directories, such as L.A. 411. Some charge listing fees for a new property (Universal Locations, which lists 5,000 properties, charges \$175). The firms' commissions range from 20% to 30%, depending on the size of the job and property.

Let's assume that the film company loves your house, you're thrilled with the financial arrangements, the neighbors are willing and large people bearing heavy equipment are showing up at dawn. Now what?

Preparation: This can include minor alterations, such as a repainted hallway, or major constructions, like a porch or a two-car garage. Or it may mean leaving everything as is. After the film work is complete, a crew will put the home back the way it was, a task that can be helped with Polaroid or digital "before" pictures.

Contract: If you do not trust the location manager, do not sign the contract. You will have to hand over your keys to this person, so make sure you feel comfortable. Call your city's film office. Check the film company's reputation and past credits.

Insurance: Make sure the company is insured — ask to see the certificate of insurance. As an extra measure, ask for a deposit. Almost nothing focuses a production company more than the idea of losing money.

Add-ons: Set rules you feel comfortable with. You can stipulate that there be no eating, drinking or smoking inside the house.

Neighbors: Take care of them. Spread the wealth. Ask the film company to "buy" the neighbors' driveways. Ask for off-site parking.

Damage control: Know there can be damage. Remove irreplaceable objects.

Finally, let go: Once you've signed the contract, get out of the way and let the crew do its job.

REALITY SHOW:

Debbie Hoffman says of her often-filmed home, "It's got everything you'd want for kids. . . . Our house represents the all-American family home. And this is not a fantasy. What the movies make it out to be is what it is in real life."



ANN JOHANSSON Los Angeles Times

