

Blurred Lines

Architect William F. Cody gave new meaning to the notion of indoor-outdoor living and his talents are on full display at a ranch-style home in Thunderbird Country Club.

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Homeowner Greg Gugliotta added a built-in grill station just off the kitchen, put in an oversized gas fire pit on the covered loggia, and restored two fountains that were custom made by a foundry in Santa Barbara in the 1960s. “We wanted to create private spaces on the grounds so that no matter how many people you have in the house you can always find a quiet oasis,” he says. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RYAN CASTILLO, DESERT BIRD MEDIA

From the moment you spot the massive, intricately carved front doors at 70909 Fairway Drive in Rancho Mirage, you know you’re in for something special.

The expansive California ranch was designed by William F. Cody in 1952. It was the first home constructed on the third fairway of Thunderbird Country Club and is currently on the market for \$1,349,000.

“I purchased the house almost four years ago, but had my eye on it long before,” says Greg Gugliotta, current owner and award-winning television producer of *The Fosters* and *Tut*. “Like many examples of classic desert architecture, this home needed an infusion of time and money to uncover and restore the underlying design elements, like the exposed beam structure. Over time, things change because a house really is a living thing and people make changes to accommodate their needs.

“One example of evolution in this home was the addition of a huge master suite with an oversize dressing room and a killer marble master bath,” he continues. “It’s so private that you can literally throw a party in another part of the house and not know it when you’re in the master suite.”

Gugliotta notes that he and his husband are only the second family to own the property and have carefully built upon the work of the previous owners who, he says, took exceptional care of the home.

Some of the classic Cody-esque features of the 3,200-square-foot, four-bedroom, four-bath house include the massive stone walls and fireplace that bisect the house, lending what Gugliotta calls “the feeling that the architectural structure literally hangs from the imposing stone walls.”



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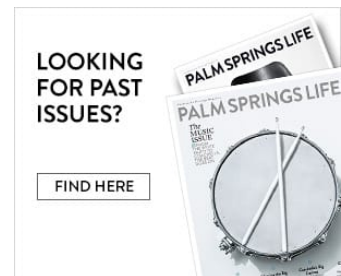
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“Everyone has their own aesthetic,” says Gugliotta. “While some prefer the absolute modern lines of midcentury design, I lean toward the low-slung elements of the true California ranch with its wide overhangs and heavy use of stone and wood. It really is the perfect desert estate that exemplifies California living.”



“The front doors are original to the home and, I think, indicative of Cody’s restrained use of ornamentation,” says Gugliotta. “They remind me of the doors he used on the famous St. Theresa’s Church [in Palm Springs] as they are so unexpected. We had to send them out to an industrial sandblaster to remove years of paint and varnish and bring them back to life.”



The home has both exposed beams and tongue-and-groove ceilings. The master wing was added during an expansion of the home in the 1970s.

Cody’s devotion to seamless indoor-outdoor living is on full display with a rear limestone patio that is covered with a post-and-beam structure. “The loggia is so huge that you could fit another entire small house under the outdoor roofline,” says Gugliotta. “And the view of the Santa Rosa Mountains over the third fairway is breathtaking.” Overall, the home has 1,500 square feet of covered outdoor living space.

Gugliotta did make some changes to the home but was careful to maintain the integrity of the original design.



“I think the perfect balance in a desert ranch is having great expansive ‘public’ spaces, such as around the pool and spa, balanced with intimate little grottos where you can read a book in privacy,” Gugliotta says.

“This house owns such great structural lines that really deserved to be respected,” he says. “A primary task here was re-establishing a view and access to the pool from the great room where the windows had been removed, and restoring and replacing the wood interior ceilings that had been lost through time.” And he had all-new wood interior doors and trim milled to match the original vision for the house and designed custom built-in cabinetry to reclaim the study and make the rooms suitable for modern homeowners.

The property also has a bunkhouse casita. “The bunkhouse is a major problem — in that nobody ever wants to leave it!” says Gugliotta. “It’s a very eclectic combination of wood walls and ceilings, a restored original bath, and modern amenities like a wet bar, individual HVAC, and a fireplace.”

The casita also has a small, private patio that guests can access through French doors. “Guests always comment that they feel as though they have their own personal island where they can disappear,” Gugliotta says. “Honestly, it’s my favorite retreat when I need to work on a script in absolute privacy.”

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“As we know, outdoor living is key in the desert,” Gugliotta says. “So we had to strip away every bit of the old landscaping and start fresh. It’s important to be as eco-friendly as possible these days, so we invested in an entirely new irrigation system that is extremely efficient and allows you to have lush landscaping for a fraction of the operating cost and water use.” He also laid in a new exterior lighting system with close to 100 state-of-the-art LED fixtures that illuminate the grounds for a fraction of the power usage of older systems.