



H26
The use of color in interior design is important to help calm tensions in their hustle-and-bustle lives.

I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET YOU A HOME LOAN!
Working together to get the JOB DONE!
Washington Mutual HOME LOANS
(800) 496-8807

VENTURA COUNTY
STARhomes

Sunday, Oct. 29, 2006 1C

www.VenturaCountyStar.com/Homes Information contained in these pages is not to be construed by the Ventura County Star Advertising Department



Stunning mountain views effortlessly surround and infuse the Agoura Hills home, entering numerous tall windows in the grand living room and serving as the perfect backdrop to an elegant gazebo with a latticed dome and stone pillars. The hills can host hikers and horseback riders.

The private lair of a famous pair



Celebrity beauty and music maverick are selling their high-end hideaway with recent upgrades, usable land, numerous unique artistic touches.

Far from the paparazzi and fans but still close to Los Angeles, former "Baywatch" babe Donna D'Ercole and Motley Crue bassist Nikki Sixx found a great estate for their growing family.

By Lisa I. Kranz
Star Special Sections writer

Decorate deer that peacefully poke around the Santa Monica Mountains didn't seem to mind too much when a guitar player for hard rock band Motley Crue cranked up the volume countless times in the recording studio at his home in nearby Agoura Hills. Thanks to the room's soundproofed walls, Mother Nature and the bold bassist known as Nikki Sixx could co-exist in harmony as neighbors.

Plenty of space to share makes a difference: the large Mediterranean-style villa is one of only four residences in the secluded gated community, each situated on 40 versatile acres. About halfway to Malibu, at an off-the-beaten-path road past signs announcing "No Trespassing" and "Go Slow" — children at play. The kids of Sixx and his wife, actress Donna D'Ercole, often played with friends on a huge trampoline, slide and swingset on the lower part of the property. Zoned for horses, the sizable lot also includes a pool, spa, built-in barbecue garden areas, even a playhouse with electricity.

Set back in peach-blossomed grove, the main house was built in 1980 and just barely comes into sight among trees after white picket fences.

Since the family moved in about eight years ago, D'Ercole oversaw a thorough reworking of the 6,000-plus square-foot interior, especially of the kitchen. Made over in 2002 by builder, Tobie Laughon of Dreamworks Construction, the kitchen features granite counters, slate floors, hand-hewn oak cabinets, a Wolf double oven and range, Gaggenau steamer, Fisher & Paykel dishwasher,



Tucked in a peaceful place offering abundant living space, the property features an array of outdoor options on about 40 acres plus more than enough residential rooms. While the rustic setting provides a pretty picture, a professional artist was recruited to decorate some of the kids' bedrooms with colorful, creative murals.

and SubZero freezer and refrigerator. One-of-a-kind finds are the built-in Miele cappuccino machine and granite island with custom copper sink, and a large island with custom copper sink, and granite island with custom copper sink, and a large island with custom copper sink.

D'Ercole was the kitchen's designer, a role quite different from her usual credits. A former Playboy Playmate with numerous film and television appearances, she starred in TV's "Baywatch" series and currently is making the movie, "Intervention." She married Sixx in 1999. He and his band are now on tour with Aerosmith. For at least two decades he has been a footballer, Motley Crue member sporting punky dark hair, eyeliner and black wattle while playing rebellious songs like "Shout at the Devil" and "I Wanna Be a Star." Please see **PRIVATE LAIR** on H11.

ON THE MARKET

Freshly painted and newly carpeted, this 1-story out-of-the-box home has a covered patio, an open backyard, 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, entertainment spaces. Call Becky Savell, Coldwell Banker Premier, 501-7016

Open 1-4 p.m. today, 1016 Quasar St., Simi Valley. Corner home has RV access, den, newer carpet, lovely tile, 3 bedrooms, 2 baths. \$719,900. Call Steve Bloch, Coldwell Banker Distinctive Properties, 432-7017.

In a great Moorpark neighborhood, this residence for sale features a gated pool, huge rooms and more. It's a great value. \$760,000. Call Michelle Hammond with Help-U-Sell County Properties, 379-8884.

This 4-bedroom, 3-bath Moorpark home has a large 980 center, kitchen w/ oak fridge, gorgeous granite, and built-in wine cooler. Call Steve Bloch, Coldwell Banker Centre, 484-DAVE.

Brokers differ when it comes to offering better rates

Competition is growing between real estate brokers who want to maintain the 6 percent commission rate and the increasing number who offer their services for a lower (discounted) rate. Various techniques are being used by higher commission firms to discourage discount exposure of listed properties by discount firms.

Five multiple listing service (MLS) groups recently entered into consent agreements with the Federal Trade Commission to stop anti-competitive practices that prevent discount brokers from featuring their properties on alleged that real estate brokerage groups use MLS services to discriminate against low-cost brokers to prevent competition.

"Buying and selling a home is one of the most important financial transactions most consumers make," said Jeffrey Schmidt, FTC advisor. "That makes it all the more important that consumers have a full range of options to pick the level of real estate services that meet their needs. When discussing the subject of commissions, many high-commission brokers say, 'You get what you pay for.' However, according to my observations, there are many highly professional brokers who have made a business decision to offer low fee service for a discount rate, while others offer specified services."

Many of these brokers provide just as good and competent service as the high rate brokers.

They have simply decided it's to their business advantage to charge a lower rate. An increasing number of brokers are going just that far.

The quality of service rendered by a broker is vitally important to a home seller. Regardless of the commission rate, it's important to check out several firms before signing a listing agreement. Check with your banker, accountant, friends — and most brokers are very capable of providing professional service, but there are always exceptions in any market.

Home staging is becoming increasingly important to home sellers in the wake of protracted, gloomy inventories of available properties, and longer periods required to consummate a sale. The term refers to making the appearance of the home more appealing and marketable to prospective buyers.

Reducing clutter and rearranging existing furniture is an important part of staging, said Dana Dickey, vice director of interior Redesign minor redesigners and home stagers. "It's a fairly simple process and very cost-effective. Homeowners I work with are amazed at how the look of their home can dramatically improve

with a little assistance. We want to give each home that 'wow' factor, especially in today's housing market. Home buyers largely make their final decision based on emotional factors. It's important that a house makes a good first impression."

In addition to speeding the marketing process, effective staging can also help boost the home's asking price, she noted. Many Realtors focus their attention on two rooms because of the high level of traffic through these rooms, each tends to collect clutter and become a source of messes.

"It's not that people don't want to pick up just naturally looks past something without even noticing it," Dickey said.

Staging is indeed important in today's home selling market. It can be accomplished by the owner who has the ability to visualize how the home would look to a person walking into and actor who merely becomes his assigned character in a play. The time he's taking on the job of a prospective buyer inspecting his house

isn't that circumnavigates the globe every two years. The Magellan offers two-to-four-bedroom private residences including a penthouse. If you'd prefer living under the sea rather than at Poseidon Undersea Resorts, it's a resort development on the sea floor to be accessed via a unique escalator, now in the planning stage. Or you might opt for a unit on a luxury vessel parked offshore that affords views both above and below the sea. UnderSea Resort and Residences are planning 12 such sales worldwide.

These fractional offerings were described in the current issue of Unique Homes magazine.

Even though the residential real estate market is experiencing fewer sales and slightly lower values in most areas, that is not the case with commercial real estate. Commercial real estate is a business investment, rather than a personal investment, and is driven by the economy. It was covered out in a recent study by Deloitte & Touche USA. "Commercial real estate continues to be a solid investment. It seems the only thing common and residential real estate have in common right now is the fact they both are in real estate."

Lisa Woodard, a Ventura resident, writes a nationally syndicated column and lives in a home who is a storyteller with a web site at www.lisawoodard.net. E-mail: Storylines@aol.com.



Cappuccino machine, granite counters and central copper sink highlight the totally remodeled kitchen.



views. Five stone columns supporting its domed roof of intricate latticework. Similarly fanciful, an ornate stone fountain features a rusticated face for its spout, surrounded by royal blue tiles and a mosaic pattern that by the built-in barbecue (pink) sink. Also close to the covered brick patio with a ceiling fan and white trellis with arches.

Trees on the property bear plums, apples, pears, persimmons, grapefruit, lemon, oranges and olives. D'Ercole liked to grow vegetables in a large garden area (nearly 20 feet). From there, she could and kids also enjoyed hanging out in the ever larger garden located up in the front distance, with a small foot bridge, leading to a pond and diverse patterns of plants and trees. It provides a calming presence because the grounds are so lush and greenery, the color and texture. Beyond nature's offerings,

there are many thriving plants in pots, and hot pink geraniums give a nice welcome near the home's front door. Though the six-bedroom, four and one-half-bath residence is ample enough, the and a guest house could be leveled to take advantage of trees. Riders could enjoy horseback and oak-covered canyons. Agoura Hills does have an equestrian low costs. While close to the urban entertainment and cultural activities of Los Angeles, it offers a rural spot with serene open spaces. Parks and recreation from toddlers to seniors and beaches are only a few miles away.

The community proved perfect for Sixx and D'Ercole, who have parted ways and for more information, or to arrange a private showing, call Realtor-Associate Valencia Alvarez with Paramount Properties at (818) 571-1268.

