

**THE PROPERTY**

Three-storey Victorian house in London

**BEDROOMS** Four

**BATHROOMS** Two

**RENOVATIONS MADE**

An extension into the back garden, doubling the size of the kitchen. An extra storey was added to enlarge the existing bedrooms and create space for a master bedroom en suite, plus an extra bathroom and bedroom on the top floor, formerly the attic.



# Restored style

BBC *News* and *Sunday Life* presenter, Louise Minchin gave her rundown Victorian villa a twenty-first century makeover

**N** **FEATURE** TRICIA WELCH **PHOTOGRAPHS** ROB SANDERSON

ews and current affairs presenter Louise Minchin and her husband David, who owns several gastro-pub/wine bars in London, bought their Victorian house in 2002. 'We'd been looking in the area for about nine months and had seen at least 80 properties, but none of them were quite right,' says Louise. 'I hadn't bothered to view this house because the photo on the agent's particulars was so unappealing. The details sat on my desk for a while and I kept meaning to bin it, but then I figured it must be there for a reason, so I went ahead and booked an appointment.'

Louise's instincts proved right, and on seeing the outside of the house, she knew it was the one. 'The house was far more attractive in reality than the picture suggested, and it was in the perfect street

and position, so I phoned David straight away and said, "I've found it!"; says Louise. 'David was so bored by the whole house hunting process by now that he was happy for me to put in an offer there and then if the interior was as good as the outside.'

**LUCKY FIND**

Although the property needed a lot of work and didn't have as much space or bedrooms as she'd hoped for, Louise knew it had the potential to be refurbished and extended into a large, stylish family home. 'I didn't want to risk losing it, so I offered the asking price,' says Louise. 'David then went to view the house and, I'm relieved to say, agreed completely that it was exactly what we were looking for.'

The couple decorated several rooms, but decided to wait until they could >>



The living room was the last room in the house to be redecorated. Louise has retained the elegant original features while introducing classic yet contemporary furnishings to create a soft, restful scheme



David and Louise

afford their big renovation project, which would involve a lot of building work including removing the entire back wall of the house, extending it outwards while building upwards to create a three-storey property. 'We knew that this was going to be an ambitious project, and we wanted to get it completely right, so that meant living in the house for a good while before embarking on anything major,' says Louise.

Louise and David ended up living in their home for five years before getting builders in to start work. In anticipation, the couple, together with their children, Scarlet now four and Mia, seven, moved to a rented house nearby to ensure a normal family life was maintained while the renovations took place. 'We employed an architect to interpret all our ideas, but we were able to project manage the work ourselves thanks to the flexible nature of both our jobs,' says David. 'We also enjoyed the creative process of choosing the design, layout and materials for the various rooms.'

### KITCHEN MAKEOVER

The most ambitious redesign took place in the kitchen. The once narrow, galley-style area has been transformed into a space twice the original width and a third longer, and it now forms the kitchen/dining room with an integral communications area for the couple to do work. 'The kitchen is very much the heart of the house, virtually every aspect of our waking day is played out here - there's a huge central island with plenty of storage space where we congregate for breakfast, cappuccinos and chats throughout the day, then when >>

**ABOVE & BELOW** This simple yet stylishly furnished family room just off the kitchen functions as a music room and play area for the children. One wall has floor-to-ceiling

walnut cabinets for storage, while a dark wood Chinese chest serves as a coffee table and toy chest for Mia and Scarlet



**ABOVE** The newly extended, modern-style kitchen offers great views of the garden from the wide window that runs the length of one side of the room

**RIGHT** A large oak dining table is perfect for informal dinners, with a canvas print of XXXX on the wall to add a personal piece of art to the room



### LEARNING CURVE

What advice do you have for others?

'Live in a house for a while before undertaking major work. This helps you make better decisions for refurbishment as you'll know what you really want in terms of living space and design. David and I have a lot of stuff, but we hate clutter, so good storage was a priority to tidy things away.'

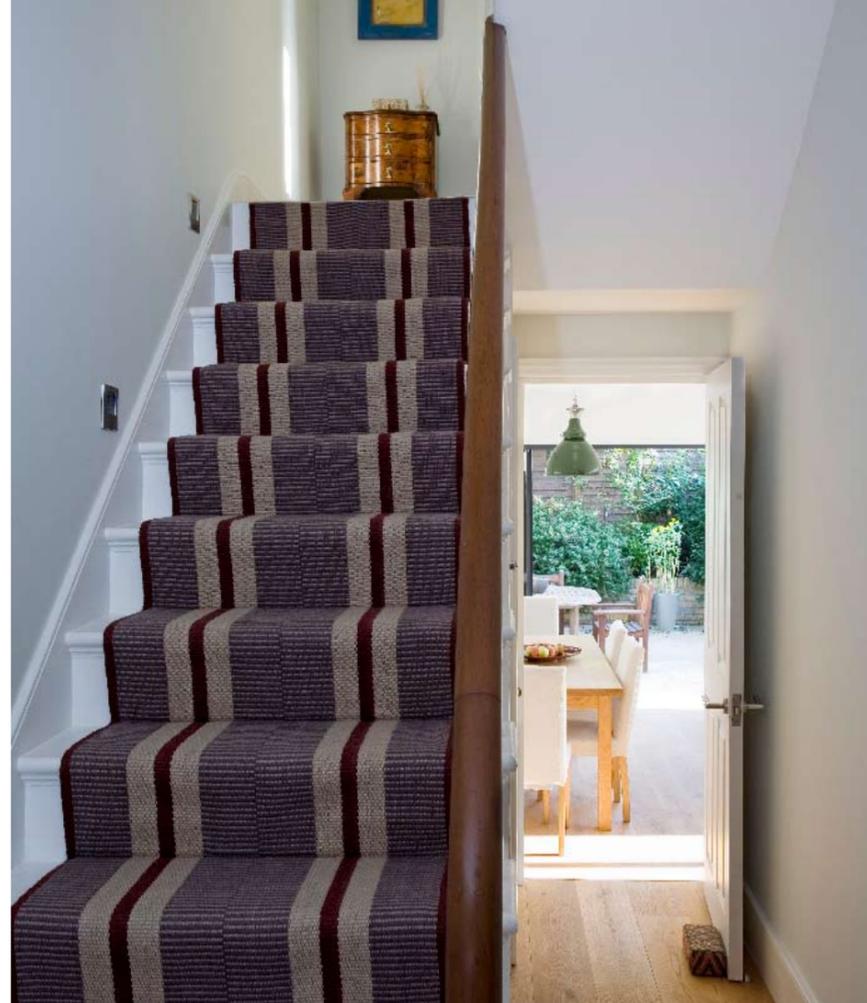
Which room took the most planning?

'Most thought went into the kitchen because we spend all our time here. David was keen on hi-tech, industrial design features for the appliances and worktops, and we factored in plenty of storage space for the cooking utensils. The bold design with brown/black wood-effect striped surfaces looks like Zubrano, an endangered wood, but is in fact an ethically sourced veneer. The dramatic, full-height folding doors are from Germany, and the triple-glazed doors and double-glazed windows help keep the room cosy.'



### INTERIOR INSPIRATION

'We wanted to create an environment that was modern and light without being bland, which is why we went for a neutral colour scheme punctuated with bold colours like the carpet on the stairs, dark woods in the kitchen and playroom, plus colourful paintings by our favourite artists. We also like to mix in antiques, some of which are inherited and others we've bought. Although the overall design result is contemporary and uncluttered, without being too minimalist, we do feel there's enough of an interesting and eclectic mix of elements too, which are very personal to us.'



*'We wanted an environment that was modern and light without being bland'*

**ABOVE** A strong coloured, striped runner on the stairs draws the eye in as you enter the house. Elsewhere, Louise and David chose a mix of neutral carpeting and light oak for a spacious, airy feel to the rooms

**LEFT** Custom-made wardrobes offer plenty of storage space to hide clutter. 'Our closets take up the whole of one wall and hide a multitude of sins,' admits Louise

our girls come home from school, it serves as the homework station,' says Louise.

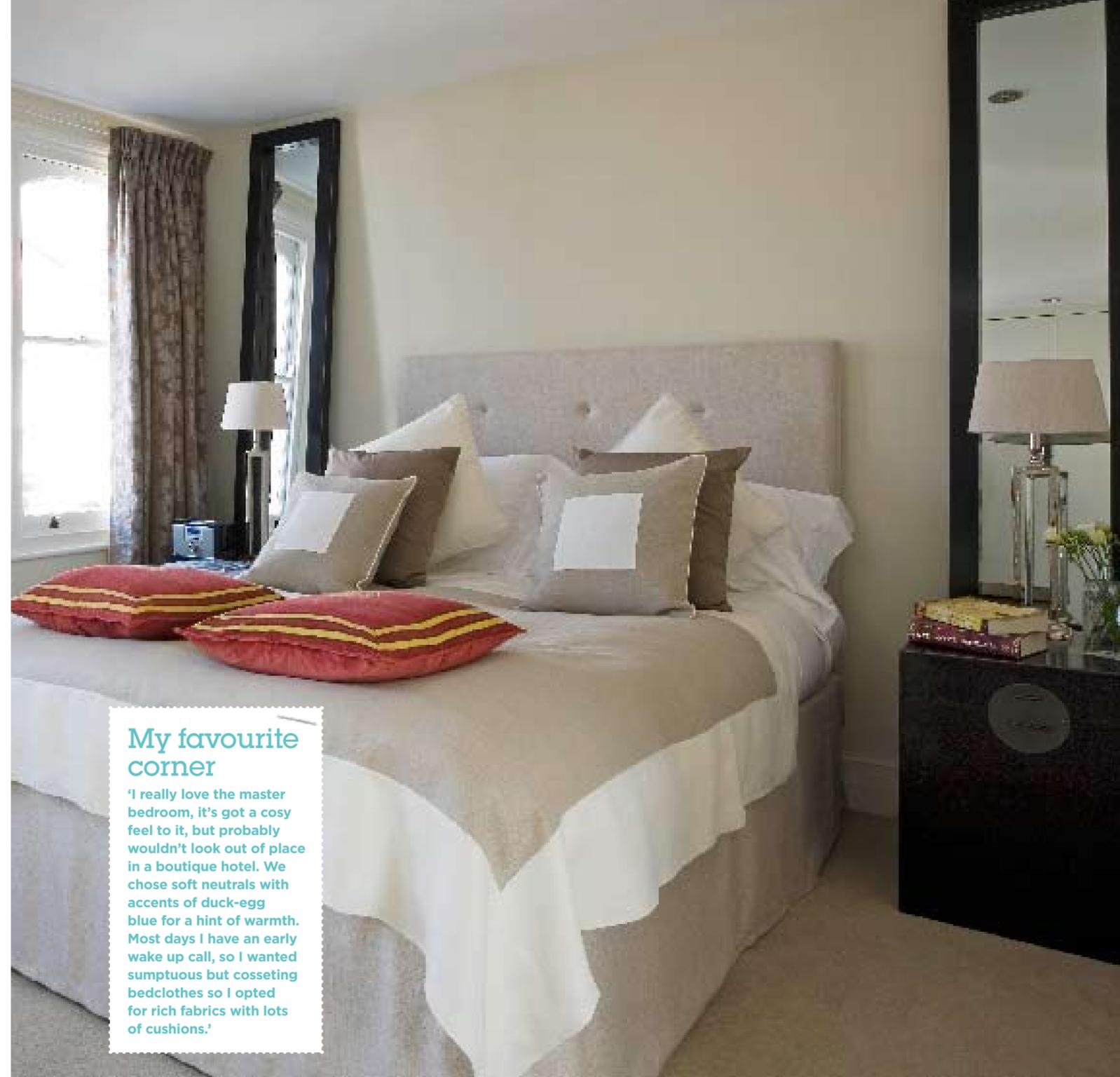
The cooking area is positioned to the right of the room beneath a large window that runs the entire length, with uninterrupted views over neighbouring gardens. 'I love this aspect because it feels like you're in the countryside, which is really therapeutic,' says Louise.

### LUXURY STYLING

The Minchins have designated a grand living room as a grown-up area, with an elegant original fireplace, sash windows and dado rail. 'We were lucky that the original features were still intact, but the walls were painted a violent 1980s orange,' says David. The room was transformed into a much more restful, airy space using a warm, neutral oatmeal shade on the walls and a soft cream sofa, plus grey velvet French chateau-style easy chairs and a bureau.

The calm, neutral scheme continues upstairs in the master bedroom, which is complemented by dark wood Chinese bedside cabinets with full length mirrors >>

The master bedroom combines a calm colour scheme with dramatic, dark wood accents such as Chinese bedside tables and long mirrors



### My favourite corner

'I really love the master bedroom, it's got a cosy feel to it, but probably wouldn't look out of place in a boutique hotel. We chose soft neutrals with accents of duck-egg blue for a hint of warmth. Most days I have an early wake up call, so I wanted sumptuous but cossetting bedclothes so I opted for rich fabrics with lots of cushions.'



behind and neutral drapes with a hint of duck-egg blue. 'The custom-designed wardrobes are my favourite feature here,' says Louise. 'There are all sorts of shoe racks, shelves, drawers and rails inside, hiding all my clothes and accessories – incredibly neatly – which is essential for my early morning wake-up calls.'

**A FAMILY HOME**

There are also two guests bedrooms on the first floor and a newly appointed staircase that leads up to the second floor, which has a large double bedroom and second bathroom for Mia and Scarlet. The girls picked a bright pink for their room, from the curtains and duvets to the walls and woodwork. 'It is a bit garish, but the girls absolutely love it,' says David, 'This is their space and we agreed that if it's what they wanted, then that's all that mattered!'

After all the building work and renovation, Louise and David feel they've achieved a modern makeover without compromising the Victorian features of the house. 'We love the mix of old and new, and feel that the update works on every level,' says Louise. 'It was certainly worth the time and upheaval involved.' [GH](#)



**To create a luxury en suite, the couple chose big square Roma-style marble tiles and designer bathroom fittings, and painted the room in a soft ivory**

*'We love the mix of old and new, and feel that the update works on every level'*



**ABOVE** Wood shutters provide privacy, while letting in plenty of natural light into the bathroom

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