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Life, etc.

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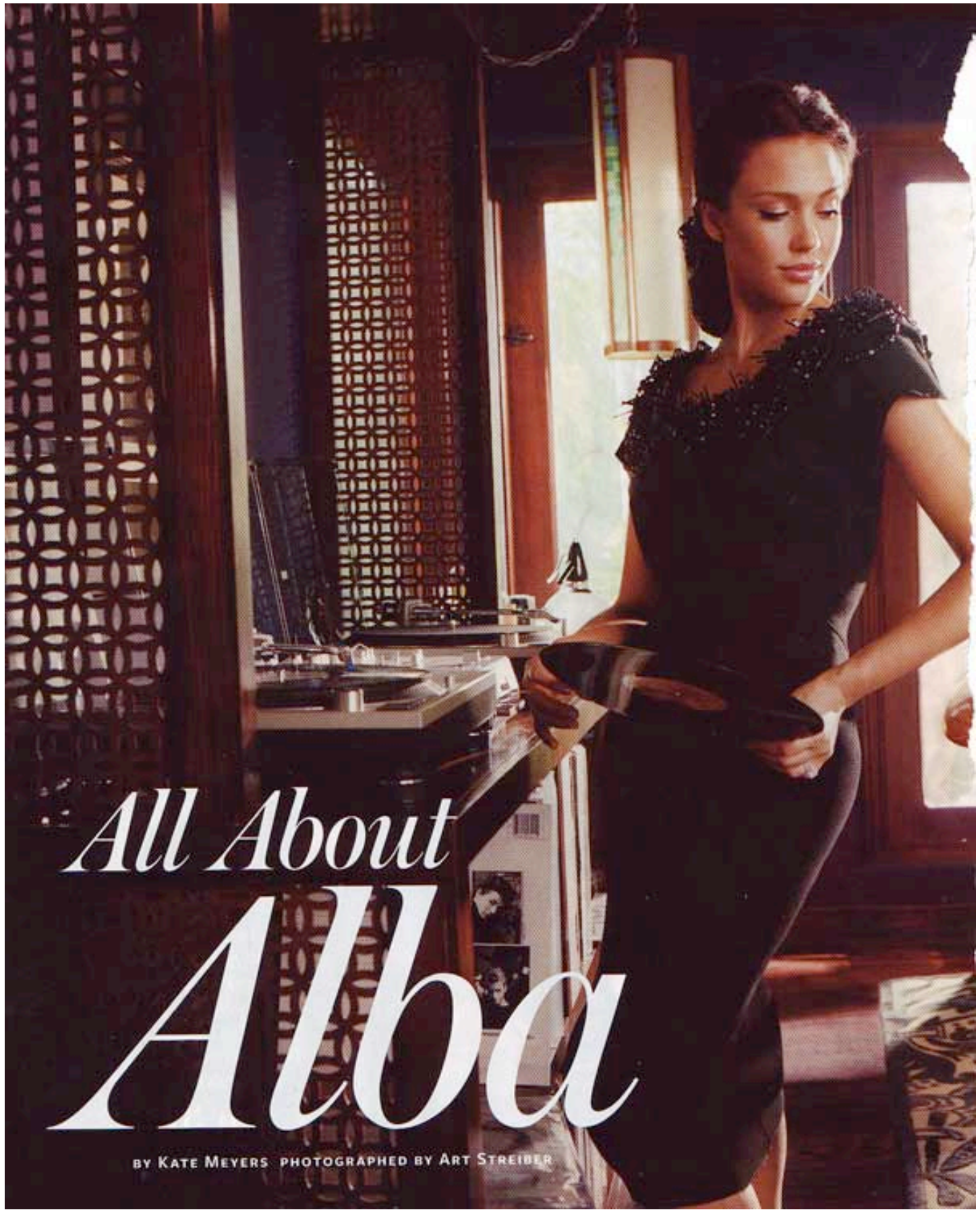
The actress and her husband, entrepreneur Cash Warren, kick back Beverly Hills-style in the yard of their new home—a California property that interior designer Kari Whitman helped them turn into an eco-friendly family zone.



"The energy here is so inviting—it is open and playful. And everywhere you look, inside and out, you get to see a part of nature."

—Jessica Alba

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All About
Alba

BY KATE MEYERS PHOTOGRAPHED BY ART STREIBER

A man with dark hair, wearing a grey cardigan over a white shirt and dark pants, is sitting in a large, dark leather armchair. He is holding and reading a magazine. The room is a library with a large window in the background showing a view of a city. To the right, there is a tall bookshelf filled with books. A hanging lamp is visible above the man. The overall atmosphere is warm and cozy.

*Sure, babies change your life. That's why **Jessica Alba** and her husband, **Cash Warren**, have moved to a larger L.A. home and gone green*

Alba spins LPs in the library, dubbed Cash's Man Room. "He's pretty organized for a dude," she jokes.



When talking décor, "serenity" was a word we used a lot," says Alba. The chosen palette is "rich, but still soothing and calm."

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As she leads a tour of her new two-story L.A. canyon home, Jessica Alba pauses before a foyer wall lined with framed photographs and singles out a black-and-white portrait of a stunning Mexican-American woman. "That's my grandma," she says of the eye-catching matriarch. "She had five kids, and her sister had 10. Crazy, right?" As Alba points to other ancestral photos (her mother is of European descent, her father is Mexican-American), she radiates pride in her family. "I never, ever doubted their unconditional love for me," says the 27-year-old actress, clad in a white J. Crew T-shirt, yellow cotton pants and flip-flops. Now it's Alba's turn to lavish that love on her own family: her 5-month-old daughter, Honor Marie, and her husband, Cash Warren. A big part of that is creating a home that she hopes her child "will remember forever."

Last year, the actress was living with Warren—a 29-year-old entrepreneur and Yale University graduate she'd met when he was assistant to the director of her film hit, *Fantastic Four*—in a multi-level home that "was not conducive to having kids," she says. "It was a fun couple's house with great views, a spiral staircase and no yard. It was tough just having dogs." (They have two bulldog mixes named Bowie and Rock, and a pug named Sid.) When she became pregnant, they knew it was time to move.

With the help of Alba's father, a realtor, they looked at over 30 homes before finding this villa-style house. Though it was an aesthetic mish-mash, "it had good bones, and the rooms just made sense," Warren says. Alba agrees. "I loved the indoor-outdoor flow," she says of the way most rooms open to the outside. "The vibe was really family."

Still, the house needed a makeover. "I had a really good idea of what I wanted," says Alba—no surprise for someone who forged her own destiny at age 11, when she entered an L.A. radio contest, won a round of acting classes, and scored her first film role (*Camp Nowhere*) within a year. While many people are thrilled to hand over the keys to a decorator, she wanted to stay closely involved. And what better partner than interior decorator and eco-design enthusiast Kari Whitman?

The two women met in 2006, when Alba surprised her parents with the chance to have their kitchen renovated on the WE network television show, *Designer to the Stars Kari Whitman*. (Emilio Estevez



"It's kid-friendly, animal-friendly. You can jump on the sofas, walk around barefoot. There's nothing off-limits here."



A sixties Murano glass chandelier hangs in the dining room. Chairs are ostrich-print faux leather. Silhouette dinnerware, Basso flatware, Tula stemware and a wool rug are from Calvin Klein Home. Mounted photograph by Irene Mamiye, an N.Y.C.-based artist. Top right: Most of the furniture in the house was bought used and refinished—except for the living room's custom sofas.

The kitchen is a gathering spot for breakfast—or when preparing dinner for friends. "I see to it that everyone has drinks first," says Alba.





Sage and brown hues create a muted tone for the master bedroom, while shutters block out daylight. Honor often naps beside her parents in the sustainable-wood co-sleeper. Below: Alba's jewelry collection.



Whitman shows Alba vintage crystal chandeliers. "All the lighting fixtures in the house are old," says Whitman. "There are so many great ones to choose from." (The oil painting is by Greg Miller, an artist who lives in Venice, Calif.)



and Virginia Madsen are among her other celebrity subjects.) They discovered a common passion for eco-friendly living. "We clicked immediately," says Whitman. "I incorporate the green aesthetic into my home designs as much as I can." And she found a kindred spirit in Alba, who drove a Prius before switching to a larger Yukon hybrid better-suited to her growing family. When they set out, Alba had so many ideas that she started a "huge" folder for pictures and swatches. In no time, says Alba, they developed a shorthand: "If I said, 'I like these three brown fabrics,' Kari would bring me 10 more shades of brown that were perfect. She really understood what I like."

It was agreed that the house's look needed to be simplified. "It was Italian with Mexican and Spanish touches," Alba recalls. "I didn't want to feel like I was living in a theme restaurant." So they undid some previous "improvements"—by smoothing surfaces and removing embellishments—to define the house's inherent clean lines and create a new elegance.

Respecting the environment and protecting the family's welfare were the guiding criteria for all decisions, from the chlorine-free saltwater pool out back to the used furniture inside. "It's all about working with existing things," says Whitman. "Jessica really got into it and would e-mail me

A woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored, draped sleeveless top, is sitting at a vanity in a master bath. She is looking into a large, ornate mirror with a gold frame and a row of light bulbs along the top edge. The vanity counter is cluttered with various items, including a vase of white lilies, a framed photograph of a family, several perfume bottles, a hairbrush, and jewelry. The lighting is warm and intimate, creating a soft glow around the woman and the vanity.

A prized family portrait sits among crystal and silver perfume bottles and accessories on the vanity in Alba's master bath.

"Hard work and love of family are things I got from my parents. I want Honor to know she is No. 1 in my life."



"I can't think if I don't know where things are," says Alba, who converted the fourth bedroom into this well-heeled closet.

things she found on Craig's List." Together they hit antiques shops and hotel-liquidation warehouses looking for treasures—like vintage light fixtures and a desk chair that once belonged to film director Cecil B. DeMille. Their objective: pieces that suggested Old Hollywood but could be reinvented with a modern spin. "I handpicked every piece of furniture," says the ever resourceful Alba, who mixed old finds with new accessories and rugs from Calvin Klein Home. "I found that at an antiques store in East L.A.," she says of a glam chandelier twinkling in her stairwell, "and we had it dipped in silver."

As planned, Alba and Warren were able to move in just before Honor's arrival in June. Today, she says, "Life is not so much about me anymore. My priorities are different. I feel more confident, more womanly and more grounded."

The actress claims she is not in a rush to go back to work. Instead, her mind turns to the upcoming holidays, and she rattles off a list of relatives she's inviting for Christmas dinner. "We do a potluck and sing carols while my grandfather plays the guitar," she says. And although she doesn't say where the tree will go, rest assured, Jessica Alba knows exactly. ■



Kari Whitman relaxes in Alba's backyard, where faux turf extends right to the rim of the pool. Yes, the 'grass' is also soft!

Reupholstered vintage chairs illustrate Whitman's recycling equation: old + reuse = green.



Whitman's color kit helps conserve paint. \$39; wallmakeup.com.



Lawson-Fenning's Aerial crib is an example of eco- and design-friendly baby furniture. \$1,240; nurseryworks.net for stores.



Kari's Guide to GREEN

Whitman, a self-proclaimed product of "Colorado hippie parents," says eco-friendly décor can be second nature. Here, the designer shares tips that are hits with her Hollywood clients.

1 REUSE AND RECYCLE! Whitman scours antiques stores, flea markets and a client's existing inventory before even thinking about new furniture: "The craftsmanship is often better in older pieces. For Jessica's house we bought almost every piece used" (see living room chairs, left).

2 BE PAINT SMART To avoid buying (and wasting) several cans of paint before finding the right shade, Whitman invented Wall Makeup. The do-it-yourself kit lets you create and test small batches of custom colors before a dealer matches them. She likes nontoxic Mythic paint (mythicpaint.com).

3 SAVE WATER, GO FAUX For Whitman, synthetic turf is a long-term commitment to saving water and "an amazing way to be green." She likes Forever Lawn (foreverlawn.com), which is made from recycled plastic and tires. "It looks so real, and eliminates pesticides," she says. Plus, it just needs an occasional rinse.

4 PROTECT BABY For Honor's nursery, Whitman and Alba chose a crib and changing table made with sustainable wood and nontoxic paint. They bought linens from Sagecreek Organics (sagecreekorganics.com). To keep everything clean, Whitman suggests using Mrs. Meyer's nontoxic baby detergents (mrsmeyers.com).

5 THINK DETAILS You don't have to renovate your whole house to go green. The interior designer surfs the Web for stylish and affordable home accessories. She likes eco-furniture.com, btlements.com and uncommongoods.com.

—GLYNIS COSTIN