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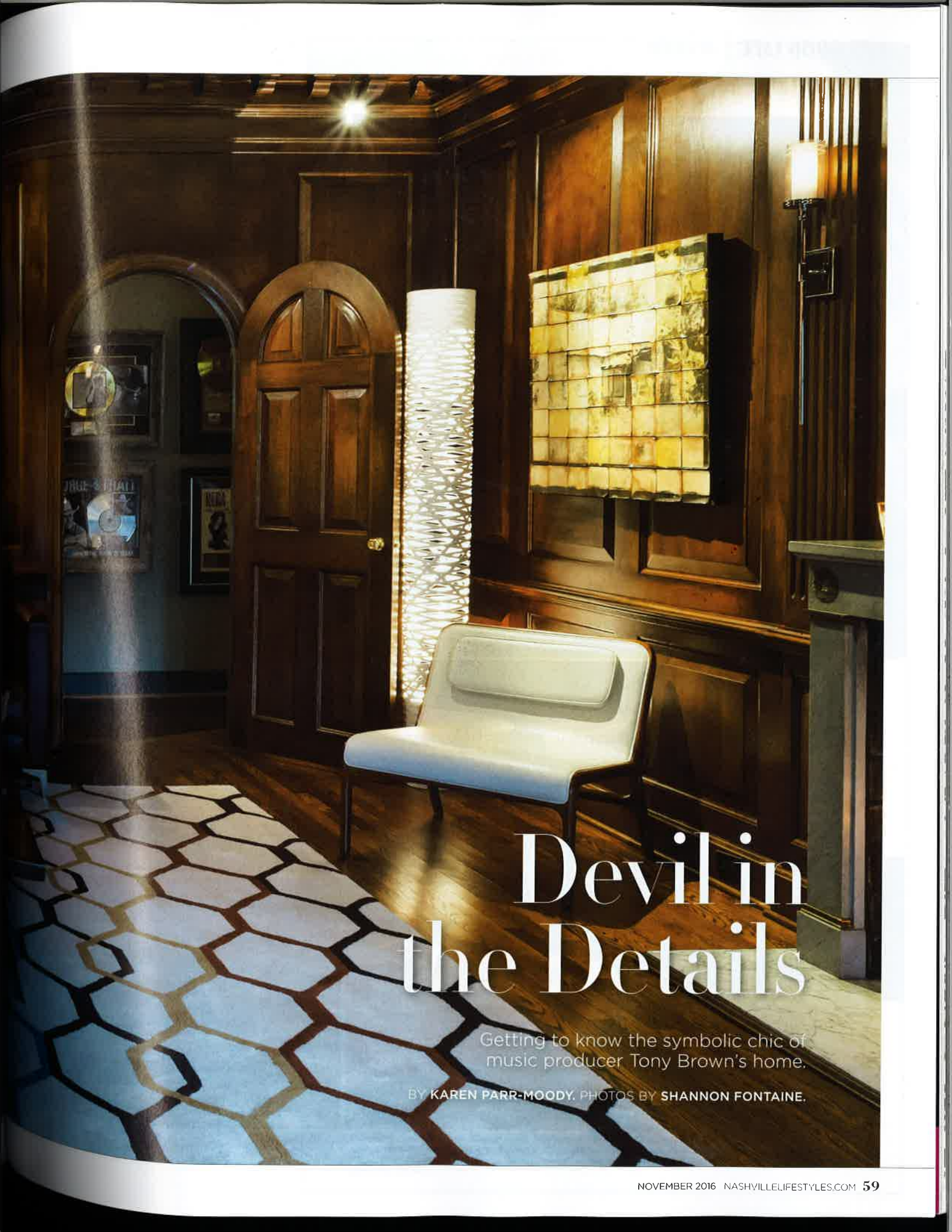
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Devil in the Details

Getting to know the symbolic chic of
music producer Tony Brown's home.

BY KAREN PARR-MOODY. PHOTOS BY SHANNON FONTAINE.





Music producer Tony Brown's house represents a yearning for beauty, nestled as it is in a posh Green Hills neighborhood and decorated with fine art and furniture.

That yearning is underscored by a photo in Brown's home office. It features three boys with dirty faces wearing worn clothes. It could have easily been shot by Dorothea Lange, that chronicler of Dust Bowl poverty. But it depicts Brown and his brothers in their Winston-Salem, North Carolina, hometown.

"This is how I grew up," Brown says. "I put that up there so I know I never want to be that poor again. Poverty sucks."

This photo is the only trace of Brown's humble roots in the exquisite, white-brick home. His office leads outdoors to a swimming pool, and an inner office door leads to a sauna. It's not a bad set-up for a man who once took baths in a metal washtub.

With such roots, there is the temptation to opt for flashy, nouveau-riche décor. That doesn't exist here. Brown's interior designer, Kathy Anderson of Anderson Design Studio, has worked with him for decades and says, "He's always had great taste."

Taste is aided by funds, which Brown has due to a successful music career. He began as a self-taught piano player. (A black Kurzweil digital grand piano in the living room corner is a reminder of those days.)

In the 1970s, Brown played piano for Elvis Presley, a role he shrugs off.

"Anyone could play with Elvis; it's just banging," he says. "It was that easy."

But Elvis didn't want just anyone: He wanted Brown, as did others, including the Oak Ridge Boys and Emmylou Harris. >>>

"I like modern. Not retro-modern, but contemporary that feels a little old-world, too."



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After playing piano for years, Brown says, "I thought I should get a real job with benefits." So, he shifted into music production at RCA Nashville, where he signed the mega-band Alabama. He then moved to MCA in 1984, where he worked for 25 years. During that time, Anderson created the décor for his MCA office and several homes.

Anderson calls this home's décor a combination of contemporary and classic. Some items bring culture to a room, such as an Indonesian chest in the living room and an antique Jacobean chair in the study. But most of the pieces are designed with clean, long lines.

"I like modern," Brown says. "Not retro-modern, but contemporary that feels a little old-world, too."

The art collection brings the décor together. There is a bronze sculpture by Ludwig Williams, a print by John Mellencamp, and an alabaster sculpture that was once an in-law's college project, as well as paintings by Robert Johnson, Paul Harmon, Tony Hernandez, and Arthur Orr.

The pièce de résistance hangs across the wood-lined study from a painting by a Hudson River School artist: It's an Andy Warhol silkscreen of Mick Jagger, signed by Warhol and Jagger.

The child of an evangelist, Brown remembers growing up with an outdoor toilet and riding around town in an old car with the words "Jesus Saves" plastered on the back.

"I always wondered what it would be like to have nice things," Brown says.

Clearly, now he knows.



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