

## Los Angeles Has Room for a Briton in Need of It

By NICOLE LAPORTE  
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Dana Dornes/European Pressphoto Agency  
Perra Ecclestone found a "homey and livable" spot for a reported \$85 million.



Jonathan Papp for The New York Times

It was mid-August, and Ms. Ecclestone, the 22-year-old daughter of the Formula One Management chief executive [Bernie Ecclestone](#) (net worth \$4.2 billion), was in London refining details of her \$5 million wedding on Aug. 27 to James Stunt, an entrepreneur and a reputed party boy, that was in the same medieval castle where Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes were married. Among the highlights: a \$130,000 Vera Wang gown, performances by Eric Clapton and Alicia Keys and white roses from France.

Outside, the city was burning and world financial markets were plummeting, but Ms. Ecclestone, who has long platinum locks and a Barbie doll figure, had work to do. Not only were there the dreaded seating arrangements to deal with ("All the politics, who's going to sit next to who," she said), but she was preparing for the introduction of her new handbag line, Stark, at [New York Fashion Week](#).

"So it's really manic right now," she explained coolly.

In London, Ms. Ecclestone is an heiress-about-town who pals around with princesses (Beatrice and Eugenie) and is known for her anti-recessionista tendencies. She collects

Hermès Birkin bags, favors fur and Alaïa frocks and lives in a \$90-million Chelsea manor. But on these shores, her profile has been practically nonexistent until recently.

Last month, Ms. Ecclestone staged the media equivalent of a debutante ball when she paid a reported \$85 million in cash for Candy Spelling's Holmby Hills mansion in Los Angeles. Built in 1991 by Ms. Spelling and her husband, the television producer Aaron Spelling ("Dynasty," "Beverly Hills 90210"), the house, known as the Manor or Candyland, is like a Disney fairy tale dwelling, with 123 rooms, a bowling alley, gift-wrapping suites and a beauty salon and barbershop. With a listing price of \$150 million, it was one of the most expensive homes in the country.

Why would a 22-year-old want to live in such decadence, not to mention in a neighborhood whose residents include Hugh Hefner?

"I didn't want a modern kind of house," Ms. Ecclestone said, describing the 57,000-square-foot Manor as "homey and livable."

"It was a great investment at the end of the day," she added, reasoning that she paid "kind of half-price." (She said that the reported \$85 million cost was incorrect, but implied that the number was "around that region.")

There are also her five miniature dogs to consider: "It's important for them to be able to have space."

Whatever her reasons, the fact that a common outsider was buying a notable, if often ridiculed, property from Hollywood royalty shook the Los Angeles real estate world and turned all eyes on Ms. Ecclestone. ABC News wanted an interview. Radar Online pitted her against Pippa Middleton for the title of British It-girl.

"I would say she was definitely making a statement," said Kurt Rappaport, a real estate agent and an owner of the Westside Estate Agency. "Usually, the people who buy these properties you know, or they're people you've heard of. Certainly, her father's someone that would be in the first category. But she, in her own right, other than running around the nightclubs of the world and spending a lot of money, is not known in high net-worth real estate. People were very surprised."

Not that Ms. Ecclestone is the first ritzy Briton to be drawn to the city. From Vivien Leigh to Peaches Geldof, Los Angeles has long exerted a pull on the British, who revel in its gardening-friendly weather, indifference to social class and admiration of an old-world accent (witness the recent celebrity fawning over the young, telegenic Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at a black-tie gala held downtown at the Belasco Theater in July).

Los Angeles is also the land of reinvention, and Ms. Ecclestone is hoping that the move will help her shed her image as "The Girl Whose Full-Time Job is Spending Daddy's Billions," as one Daily Mail headline stated.

"My full-time job isn't just blowing my parents' money," she said, pointing out that she has her own charity, the Meningitis Trust, and has been working since she was 18, when she turned down a spot at Central Saint Martins, the prestigious art school in London, in order to start a men's wear line, Form.

The line, which was inspired by the auto racing fashions she grew up with at events like the [Monaco Grand Prix](#), was short-lived because of the recession, Ms. Ecclestone said, but she's now back with her handbags.