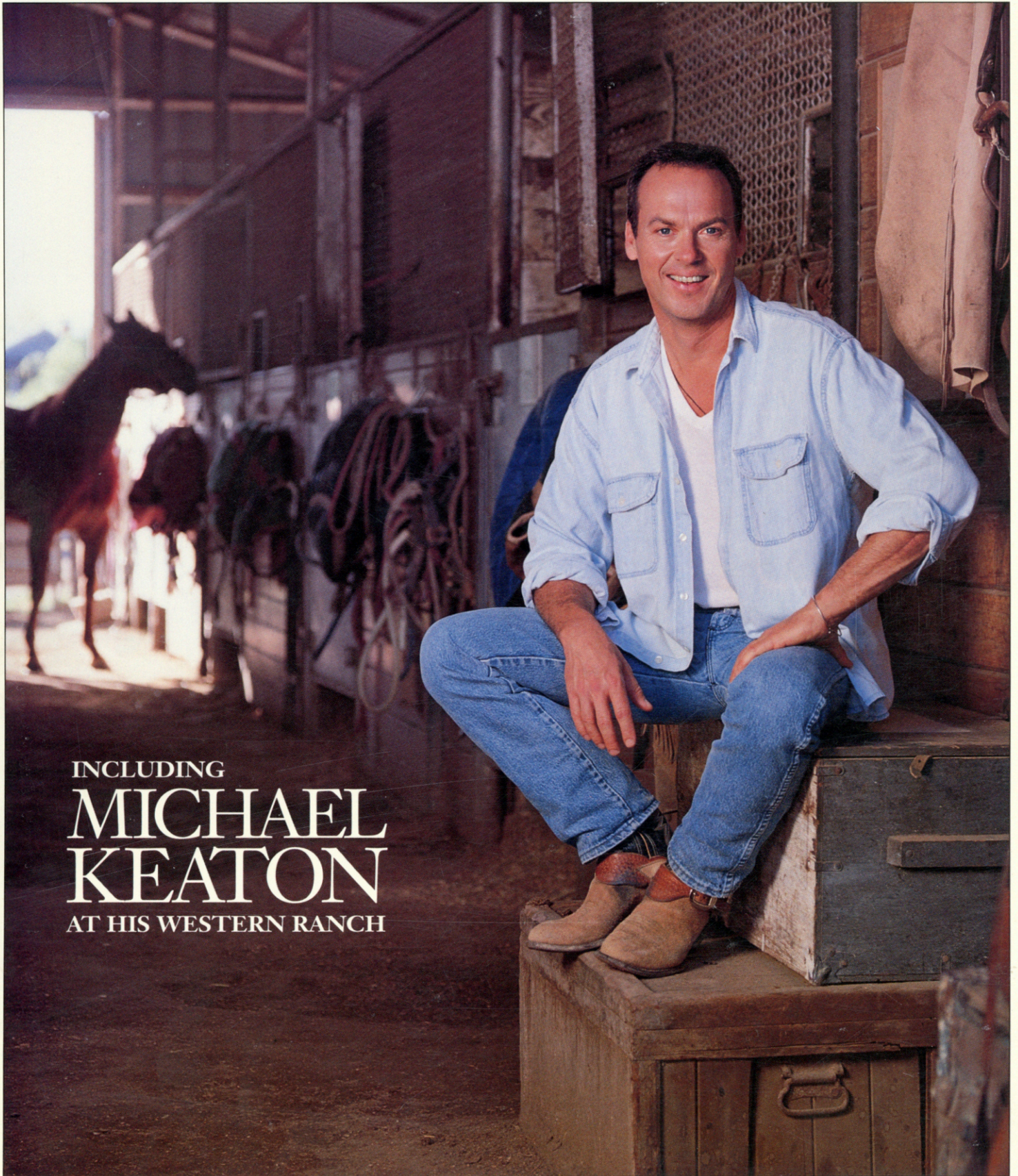


ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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ALL-AMERICAN COUNTRY HOUSES!

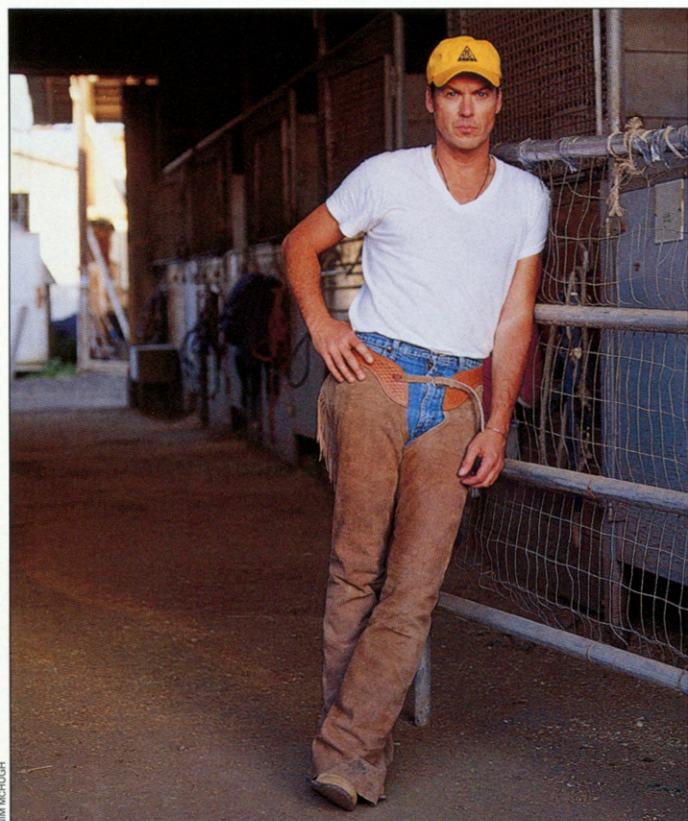


INCLUDING
**MICHAEL
KEATON**
AT HIS WESTERN RANCH

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST VISITS MICHAEL KEATON

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ACTOR'S WORKING RANCH OUT WEST

Architecture by Candace Tillotson-Miller, AIA
Interior Design by Helen Kent, ASID, and Julie Iverson, ASID
Text by Penelope Rowlands/Photography by Dave Marlow



"I didn't want a nouveau cowboy house—I wanted a place with its own personality," says Michael Keaton (top) of his western ranch. ABOVE: Stone and cedar underscore the rustic feel. "The house had to be roomy enough for twelve but cozy enough for one," says architect Candace Tillotson-Miller.

RIGHT: The house is set on a 1,000-acre working cattle ranch at the edge of a river where the actor often fly-fishes. "Everyone nowadays buys a chunk of land and builds a big trophy house," observes builder Terry Baird. "Michael didn't want to do that at all. He's created a classic homestead."

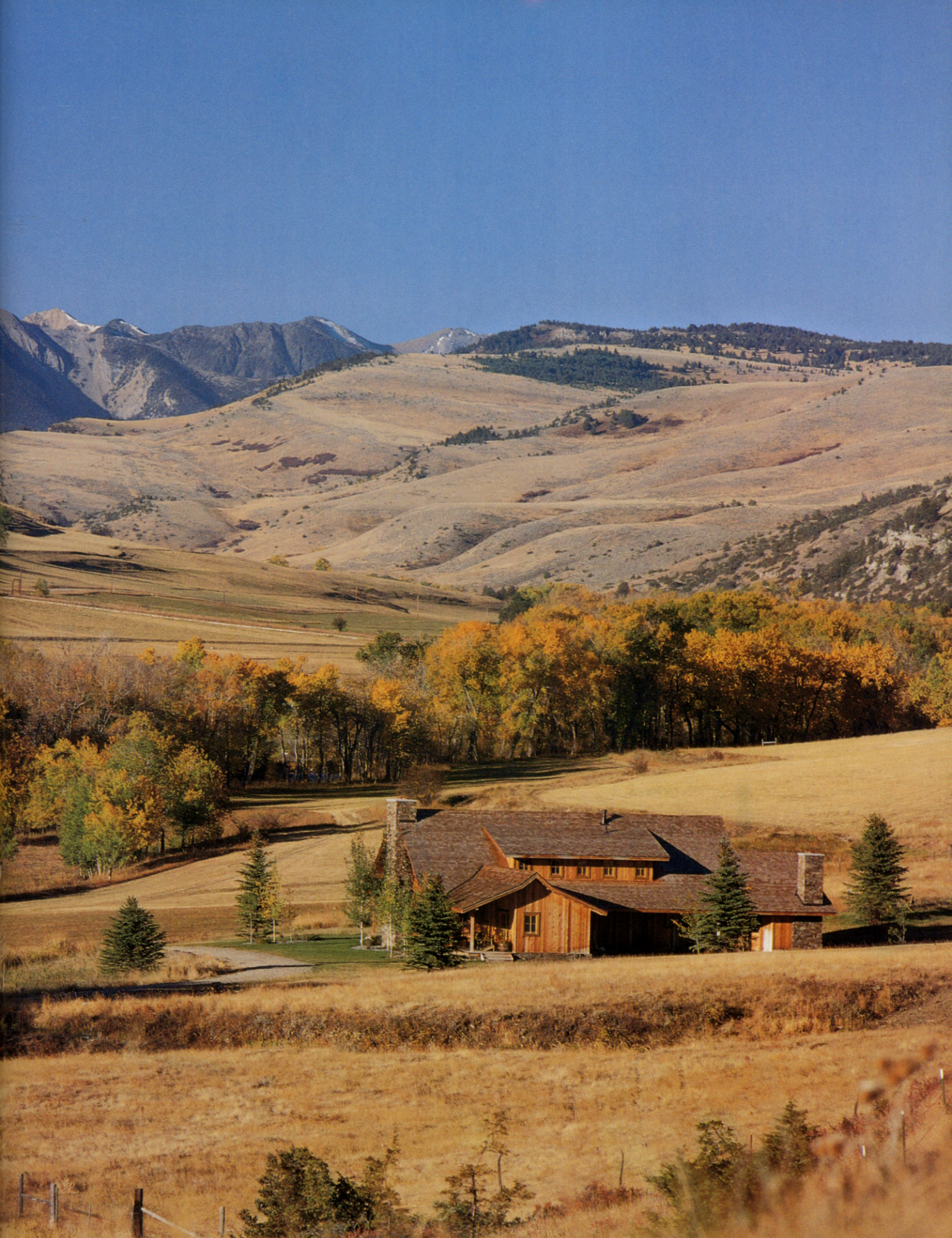
Just dig it," says Michael Keaton, talking about building. "I like the smell of it, the idea of it, the problems it poses. It's like putting up the ultimate shack in the woods." In pre-fame days, the actor once even held a job in construction. And it recently all came back to him as he oversaw—and took an active part in—the creation of his ranch house on a thousand rugged acres in the West. "In all reality, he was the general contractor on the thing," says Keaton's builder, Terry Baird.

For the past fifteen years or so Keaton, of course, has been working in a somewhat different vein, making his name as a film actor in roles that range from the unabashedly goofy (*Multiplicity*) to the Shakespearean (Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing*). In between he played the manic bioexorcist in *Beetlejuice*, the psychopathic tenant in *Pacific Heights* and the caped superhero in the first two Batman films.

When he's not working, Keaton is apt to head inland and north, into the wider spaces of the once wild West. His ranch is located amid enormous vistas and archetypal wildlife, from rattlesnakes to buffalo. The fishing is incomparable, skiing is near, and there's enough riding terrain to exhaust the most energetic horse. In short, it's a perfect place for a man who spends too much time in movie studios and on freeways to unwind.

"I wanted it to be comfortable, number one," Keaton says. "I wanted something that fit with the surroundings but wasn't overly 'done' in terms of a western feel." He also wanted a place that would be large enough to accommodate his extended family—including his six siblings and their families as well as his year-round staff







Interior designers Helen Kent and Julie Iverson used some of Keaton's Native American pieces in the rooms. An Indian figure in the living room joins Navajo rugs and a reproduction birch-bark canoe. An antique sled serves as a low table. Pindler & Pindler checked fabric.





ABOVE: Warmed by a fireplace of Chief Joseph stone selected by the actor, the dining room/kitchen is a favorite gathering place for friends and family. A Colonial design inspired the checkerboard floor stencil. Over the table is a whimsical iron chandelier that Keaton found.

of ranch hands—yet small enough to be inviting when he spent time there alone. A manageable size was key. “I don’t like those big cavernous lodge-type places—they’re very lonely.”

The house that architect Candace Tillotson-Miller designed seems both rambling and contained—a perfect setting-out point for fly-fishing forays and long horseback rides (several of the

actor’s horses summer at the ranch, spending the rest of the year in California). The architect aimed for a more elegant version of the log houses that are prevalent in the area. The wide porch allows a quick transition between the interior living space and the outdoors—an important consideration for a client who’s such an avid outdoorsman that, when he talks about his house, he praises its mudroom, a space with ample closets for fishing rods and skis, almost before he mentions anything else. Best of all, in Keaton’s view, the size is right. “It’s not a small house, but it doesn’t seem like a big house.”

Above all, the feeling is casual, and Keaton fits right in. He favors cowboy boots, flannel shirts and jeans and, when indoors, projects a cowboy’s restlessness; you sense that he’d much rather be spending his time outside. His place is rustic and decidedly unfrilly—“the kind of house you can walk into with mud on your feet,” as Terry Baird puts it.

The Far West has always held an allure for the actor, whose latest movie, *Desperate Measures*, will be released this summer. He grew up in a suburb of Pittsburgh, then moved to California in his early twenties to break into show business. Los Angeles

OPPOSITE: A log bed covered by a Pendleton blanket occupies the master bedroom. An antique fly rod case leans against an old trunk. The rugs are Navajo. The plaid pillow and bed skirt fabric is from Ralph Lauren, as are the club chair and ottoman and their fabric.

may be western and even wild, in its way, but it wasn’t exactly the Wild West he’d had in mind. In the 1980s, after such early successes as *Mr. Mom* and *Gung Ho*, he headed north to look for acreage. “I’d been cruising for land for years,” he says.

His search turned out to be almost comically exhaustive, with Keaton tramping through one property after another. “I would take real-





ABOVE: Not far from the house is an old homesteader's cabin that Keaton moved from a nearby property and, with Baird and architect Durward Sobek, reassembled on its present site. "We added the porch, a kitchen and a bath," says Baird. It's now used as a guesthouse.

RIGHT: Kent and Iverson found the hutch in the kitchen as well as the old cooking utensils and had many of the light fixtures rewired. Craftsman Bill Moore forged the ironwork and hardware throughout. Much of the furniture belonged to the cabin's former owner.



tors to places they didn't know were there," he recalls. Destiny also played a hand. "Ever since I was a small, small, small kid I've always felt like I kind of belonged here." He remembers fixating on a photograph of a western landscape when he was eight. Beneath the picture, in tiny letters, were printed the names of the county and state it depicted. It was only after he'd found the property he wanted and was signing the purchase papers that he realized he was buying a piece of the same landscape that had inspired him so long ago.

After he bought the land, Keaton spent time there, sleeping in a tent, his pickup truck or whatever was at hand, while he pondered the kind of house that might suit him best. When Baird, who specializes in restoring and relocating old structures, from homesteaders' cabins to sheepwagons (see *Architectural Digest*, June 1996), suggested that Keaton take a look at an old cabin he'd redone, the actor liked it right away. Baird calls cabin life "perfect, basic living," and Keaton agreed. They soon happened upon an old homesteader's cabin on a nearby property. As Baird remembers it, "Michael traded a hay shed for the place." Baird and Keaton took apart the cabin and, with architect Durward Sobek, reassembled it on its present site.

The one-bedroom cabin suited Keaton fine for several years. But then, with his visits lasting longer and more and

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OPPOSITE: "The kitchen was a challenge," notes Kent. "We combined contemporary appliances with an old sink." An antique table and chairs are by the window. Baird distressed the floors, of vertical-grain fir, to look original to the structure. Corian countertops.





ABOVE: Old photographs of Yellowstone hang in the loft bedroom. Keaton and Baird designed a dormer roof to give height to the space. "I told Michael if he ever quit the movie business he'd make a hell of a builder," says Baird. Kravet bed fabric. Duralee drapery fabric.

IT'S A PERFECT PLACE FOR A MAN WHO SPENDS TOO MUCH TIME IN MOVIE STUDIOS.

OPPOSITE: A willow love seat is on the cabin's front porch, where guests can relax in summer. Before he constructed the main house, Keaton lived in the cabin for about five years. "Building a house is so much more than building a house," he says. "It's basic. It's shelter."

