

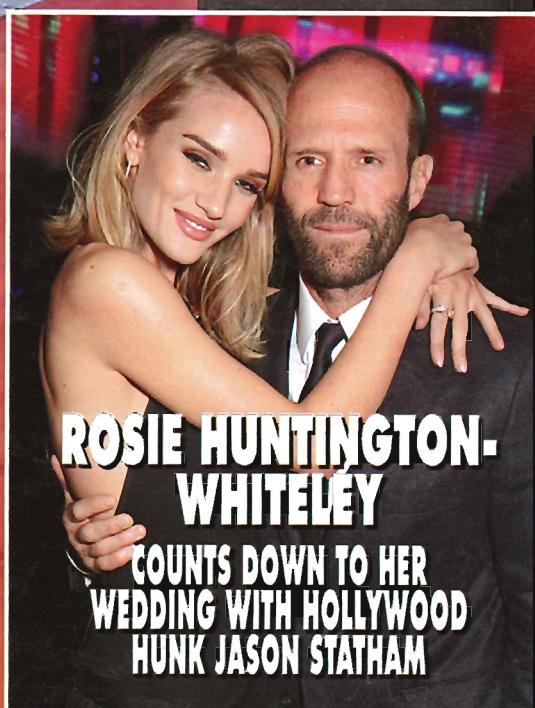
HELLO!

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'The support we've received has been such a blessing'

CELINE'S TEARS

THE SUPERSTAR SINGER ON HER FINAL FAREWELL TO SOULMATE HUSBAND RENE



ROSIE HUNTINGTON-WHITELEY
COUNTS DOWN TO HER WEDDING WITH HOLLYWOOD HUNK JASON STATHAM

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Brett's weekend home is set amid spectacular countryside (below), yet is just 45 minutes from Manhattan. "This area is marvellous at any time of year," says the designer (right, surrounded by her retro-style bags, now red carpet staples)

'The countryside is great for the children and us. Nature constantly surprises us, we literally see it change every day'



HANDBAG DESIGNER
TO THE STARS
**BRETT
HEYMAN**
SHOWS US
AROUND HER
COUNTRY RETREAT
IN CONNECTICUT



Taylor Swift, Miranda Kerr and Kate Hudson are all fans of Brett's Eddie Parker clutch bags, which are named after her young daughter



"The decor is inspired by the style of the 1950s – my weakness," says Brett, whose handbags hark back to the same period. Right: the entrance hall, with the garden visible in the background; on the right is an antique iron chair, while the doorway on the left leads to the main living room, which is seen in greater detail above and far right.



There's a phrase that crops up constantly when you talk to successful entrepreneurs and it goes something like this: "It seemed to me there was a gap in the market for my product." That's exactly what Brett Heyman thought, and thanks to her, we – and celebrities such as Miranda Kerr, Kate Hudson, Katie Perry and Taylor Swift – can all enjoy some extremely special clutch bags, similar

to those carried by stylish women in the US in the 1950s and '60s. Made by hand from rigid acrylic, just as they were back then, often adorned with rhinestones and given fun names, the bags are sold under the brand name Eddie Parker, in honour of Brett's six-year-old daughter.

We're chatting in her home in Connecticut, where the family spend their weekends. "My husband Greg

and I used to go to the Hamptons and rent a beach hut, but when the kids came along we realised it wasn't safe for them. And if we weren't going to be by the ocean, the Hamptons didn't interest us, so we looked for something else not too far from New York and found this place, which is 45 minutes from Manhattan. It's perfect. Everyone disconnects during the journey. Once we're here – we come

almost every weekend – the children play with the kids of our neighbours, who are also friends of ours.

"The countryside is great for both them and us. Nature constantly surprises us because we literally see it change from day to day. This area is marvellous at any time of year. And our house is very cosy, from the colour of the walls to the furniture, which is designed for





In one corner of the kitchen is a table for more informal dining, here set with a traditional apple pie (above). Below: the main dining room. Another living room leads off from the kitchen (right). The guitar resting against the wall of the library (below right) belongs to Brett's husband, Greg

'Our house is very cosy, from the colour of the walls to the furniture, which is designed for relaxation, for putting your feet up or curling up in a blanket'



relaxation, for putting your feet up or curling up in a blanket. It's inspired by mid-20th-century decor – my weakness – and the kids, Edie and my son Oscar, can do what they want and enjoy every single room, with no limits.

"It all began with Edie," says Brett. "I was on maternity leave. My baby girl was very good and slept a lot. At the time I was working for Gucci and, during my many quiet moments, I would think, 'What am I going to do now? Keep on travelling six times a year to Italy? Be away from home on countless occasions attending events around the US? If I must "abandon" this little girl, it has to be for something I'm passionate about or something that's my own project – but what?'"

Then she recalled how she'd

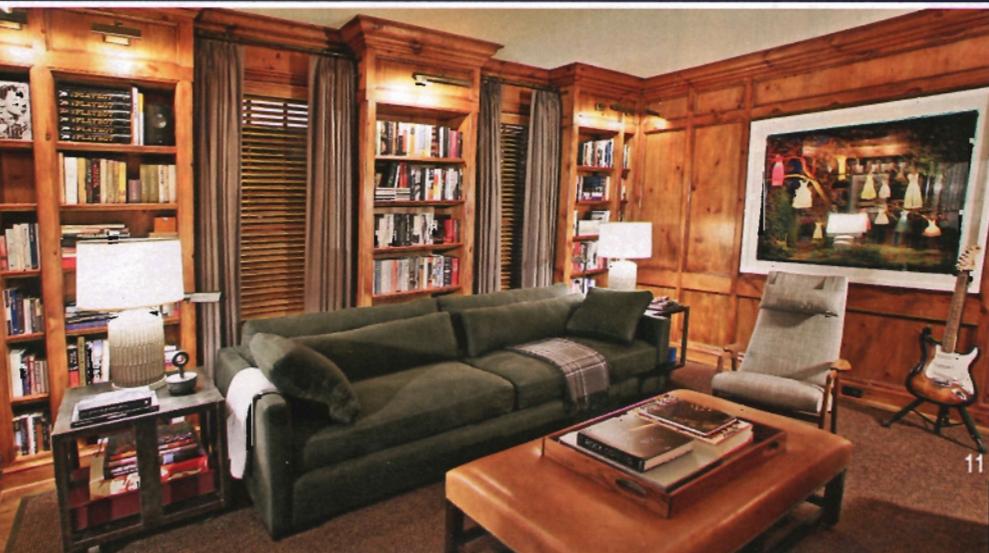


always liked those boxy acrylic bags that became fashionable after the Second World War.

Indeed, she used to collect them herself, along with books about them. Accustomed as she was to working non-stop, she found that time dragged during her maternity leave, so she began reading the various tomes – and suddenly realised: "Here's an opportunity!"

"It wasn't that I had a premonition," she says. "I knew what I was talking about. I'd been interested in fashion all my life, ever since I was a girl in LA, where we'd moved because of my dad's work. My mum used to receive *Vogue* in the post and I always wanted to be a designer, but my parents both said that wasn't a real job. So I studied communication and in the summers I would work as an intern, learning as much as I could wherever they took me on."

Brett worked in the VIP department of Giorgio Armani and later, after finishing her studies, with Dolce and Gabbana, until finally she wound up as director of PR for Gucci (US and





Brett and Greg's bedroom (above, below left) opens out onto a garden terrace, while Edie's bedroom (below right) features a poster for classic 1960s TV series *The Avengers*. Mark Cunningham, who created interiors for Ralph Lauren, is responsible for the decor of the 800sq m home



'I've been interested in fashion all my life, ever since I was a girl in LA'

Mexico)... Her experience there helped her discover what was missing from the market, since part of her job consisted of keeping track of what the competition was, or wasn't, doing. And during her months as a first-time mum who was planning to return to work, she came to realise that there were no chic evening bags for modern women.

"So I decided to design them," she remembers. "At first I thought about rehabilitating one of the old factories that made them and reviving its brand, but despite several attempts, that plan failed.

"That's when I thought that I'd have to set it up myself and that it would be easy, but it wasn't. Not a single company wanted to make the prototypes for me because they said it was a stupid idea. Finally I found one that would do it just as I wanted, traditionally and by hand."

Thanks to her job, Brett had a lot of contacts, so her first stop was Barneys, the chain of exclusive department stores.

"They loved them. 'We want to stock them exclusively,' they told me, which was a relief because by then I was heavily pregnant with Oscar and it meant that I wouldn't have to go round knocking on more doors."

Brett's next step was to drop in on her fashion journalist friends at *Vogue*, who also loved the bags. And then 2011's Metropolitan Ball came round.

Kate Hudson decided to ►



'We used to go to the Hamptons and rent a beach hut, but it wasn't safe for the kids. So we found this place... It's perfect'



carry one of my bags," remembers Brett. "She was six months pregnant and wore a beautiful Givenchy gown. She looked spectacular. There were photos of her everywhere – and of my bag too. It all took off practically at once.

"So you could say the ball was when it all began. Of course, I still had a long way to go but, as my dad said, 'No one can ever take that experience away from you.'

"Yes, sure, it was a good product, but I must also

add that it would've been much more difficult if I hadn't already made contacts through my job... and if I hadn't been nice to everyone from the moment I started out, because that is something that people always remember."

On top of that, Brett is fortunate that her husband is a financial expert who helps her understand and control the money side of her business. His office is opposite hers and he stops by every day to lend a hand. They've been

inseparable, in fact, since they met in 2005, tying the knot a year later.

Says Brett of Greg: "He's a great thinker, an intellectual who's interested in everything, as well as a great father and very good husband. A marvellous man."

INTERVIEW: VICTORIA DE ALCAHUD
PHOTOS: CESAR VILLORIA

DECOR: MARK CUNNINGHAM



Surrounded by trees and next to a lake, the house looks like something out of a fairy tale (left). The garden (below) is filled with toys and games for Edie and little brother Oscar (above)

