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Party people

You would expect Jill and Paul Geraghty's place to have a big impact – creating mood is their business. They've spent the past decade styling parties for a living.

Function Accessories, their business, dresses weddings and get-togethers held in all sorts of locations, from the ballrooms of leading hotels to draped garden marquees. Brides as far away as Los Angeles plan the dream themes for their Melbourne receptions through the company's website.

These masters of the wow factor chose contemporary simplicity as the mood for the renovation of their single-fronted Victorian cottage. It's a smart, elegant house that works like a charm.

The project was designed by David Norman, a commentator on radio 774's Saturday morning show. He's taken the biggest issue in single-fronted houses – space – and really worked it, making every metre pay its way. In my 20 years of covering the best homes for magazines, I reckon this is a standout.

Open-plan areas are often left as one big space. Here it's a much more subtle treatment. A shallow split level has been used to separate the dining area on the higher level from a lower, carpeted, cosy sitting area in front of the open fire. They are side by side in the big room. Looks terrific.

The low wall makes each area specific and special. Practical, too: when the parents are at the dining table, their two little girls, Madeleine and Georgia, can be playing on the sofas out of sight but within earshot. It's a simple idea that pays off brilliantly.

Jill's godmother had used David Norman with happy results, so he was

recommended. It was a fortunate lead. The design is caring, from the decks on both sides of the house that go to the fence to maximise outdoor usage, to the attractive look of the back of the place.

Paul says he hates feeling claustrophobic. Here it's not possible. Once inside the front door it feels airy, spacious, light; all you would want.

The second floor belongs to the parents alone. The master bedroom has big windows; there's a grand walk-in robe, a striking en suite and a study.

Not surprisingly there's a lovely feel for colour here – in their business they offer about 20 trendy colour themes. Here, bathrooms have been given



modern vibrancy: one is tiled in the new green, the other a Tiffany-like blue.

The look is uncluttered; there's good furniture, paintings and flowers. Even the bright-red folders in the study have been considered. It's just right, down to the last detail.

Renovations without some angst are rare, but builder Mark Crozier – who they also found by word of mouth – made the renovation process a joy and got them back into the house early.

Jill and Paul didn't want the project to take over their lives; Mark

made sure it didn't. So, with such a happy experience they are keen to renovate again.

I thought I'd seen it all when it comes to transformations of single-fronted cottages. Not so. Jill, Paul and their team have pulled one out of the hat with a very beautiful and interesting house. Love it. **mwb**

At a glance

7 Cambridge Street, Caulfield North

BEDROOMS Three, master upstairs, children downstairs

BATHROOMS Two

LIVING AREAS Two living areas, dining and alfresco dining

THE REST Study area, three decks, off-street parking

AUCTION June 5 at 1.30pm

PRICE \$690,000 plus

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