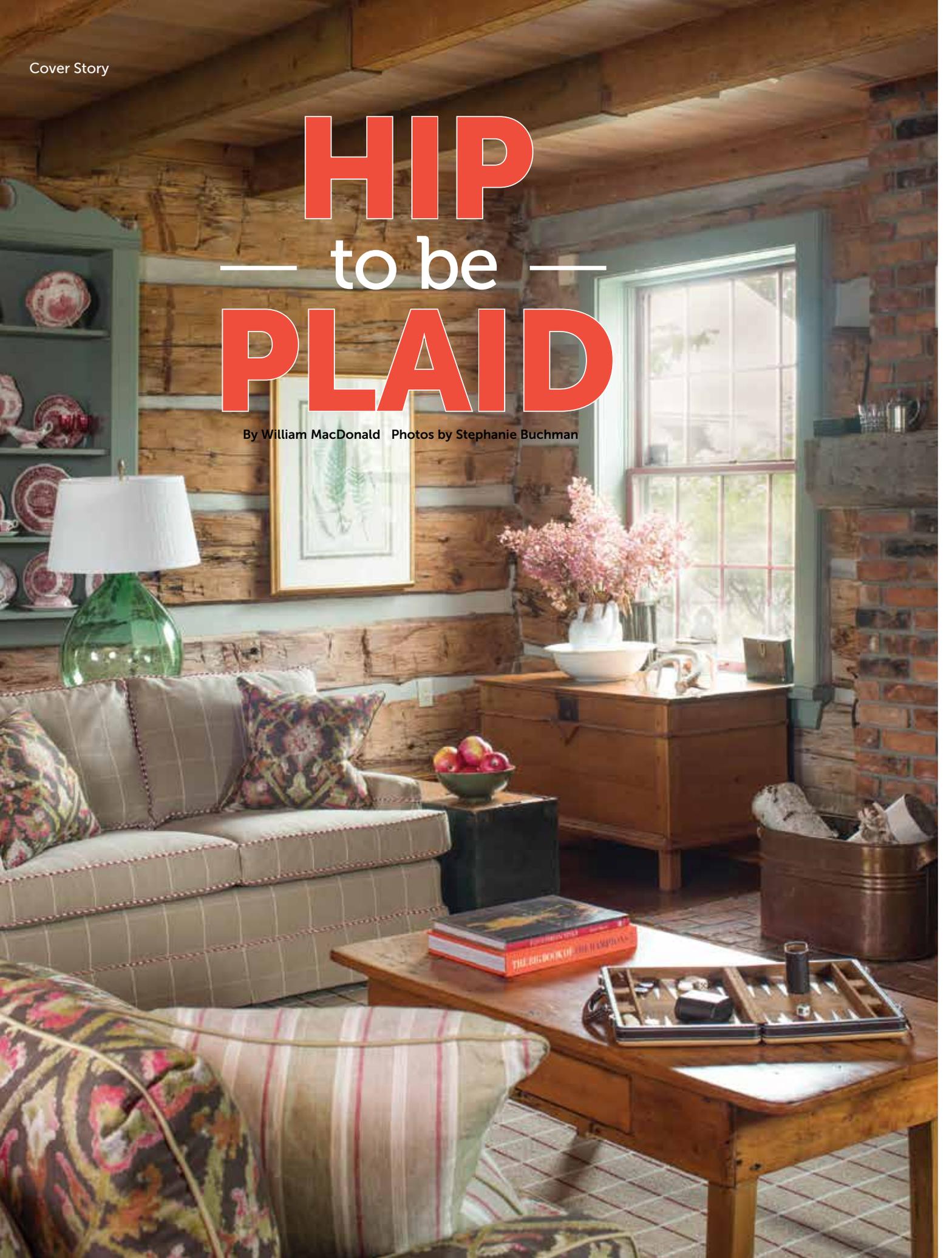


HIP — to be — PLAID

By William MacDonald Photos by Stephanie Buchman





ONE OF THE HOTTEST INTERIOR DESIGN trends happening this fall also happens to be one of my favourite design staples.

Plaid – or tartan as some like to call it – is, without a doubt, a classic design statement. It often evokes warm, cosy, fire-lit rooms perfect on cold winter nights. But that is only one take on the traditional fabric. Lately plaid, as well as check and gingham, has seen a revolution of sorts – particularly in fashion. It's being sported by the hip of the hip, the cool urban hipsters who run amok in most major cities. Along with their tattoos, beards and dour expressions they have ironically breathed new life into an ancient fabric.

Fashion is usually a good barometer of what will happen in interior design down the road, but one can argue that plaid has always been there. I know myself, as a boy growing up in the 1970s, that plaid seemed to be everywhere. We had plaid pants, jackets and suits and sofas, chairs, wallpaper and carpets.

As a 'child' of the excessive 80s, I remember how Ralph Lauren and the preppy look influenced me to the point where I still wear plaid and gingham shirts regularly. They are classics that make me feel comfortable and connected to a happy time. And that's why I think we still love plaid today. It has a resonance, an ability to connect us to the past that, for better or worse, we all seem to want to do lately.

I recently completed a project in which I was asked to create two seasonal living rooms, one for winter and one for summer. The house is set in the countryside, and part of it is a rare Ontario log cabin constructed in the early 19th century. The other part is an addition built in the early 21st century.

It was a challenge because the entire interior of the 19th century section was wooden, had very small period windows and was quite dark. I had to find the right fabrics and use them in a way that was current and comfortable.

As a designer I love to mix fabrics, it's a signature



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look for which I am well known. In this project I knew I would use plaids, checks and other bold fabrics to bring life and excitement into the heavily wooded traditional space. I settled on dark yet colorful graphic floral. I brought in a bold large check mixed with stripes and a small check, and use plaid accents. I also used large check/plaid carpet. The whole space came life and is a great success.

For the much brighter, modern summer living room, with its large windows and vaulted ceiling, I took the same approach – but used lighter colored fabrics. I still incorporated checks, gingham and plaids with colourful mid-east inspired florals. It too turned out extremely well.

Although a trend at the moment, plaid and all its relatives, are classic in the design lexicon. It can be used traditionally or in more modern 'hip' spaces and mixed with other equally bold or demure fabrics. Why not throw a little plaid into a room this fall and mix it with a floral or stripe and you'll be so hip it hurts.



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