

*Opposite page, architect Jonathan Tuckey's solid-fuel fireplace. This page, top, a gas fireplace creates a focal point in a master bedroom; below, a ceiling-mounted gas fire in North London*



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othing beats the flickering light and warm glow of a fire to evoke feelings of snug cosiness and romance. The downside of a solid-fuel fire has always been cleaning and building the fire; and of gas and electric models, the sheer unattractiveness of the designs. But that's all changed: the choice has never been greater, the fuel never cleaner, and the heat never so efficient.

But how do you choose the right one for your home? Suppliers now cater for all areas of the market, from specialist bespoke creations costing upwards of £1,500, to off-the-shelf new from as little as £250. And, while solid-fuel fires require a chimney and a flue, the latest flueless gas, electric and gel-flame technologies mean it is possible to enjoy a fireplace, even without a chimney.

#### WHICH FUEL?

● **Solid-fuel fires** require a suitably sized flue and chimney and, for safety sake, both must be in top condition. On the plus side, they are unmatched for atmosphere.

● **Gas and solid-fuels** produce more heat than electric or gel-flame fires, see below, so good for heating a large area. They need ventilation and this may involve installing a vent in the floor or wall. Not all modern flues are suitable for all types of gas fire. Some fires will run on Liquid ▶



Photograph by Alan Williams



## INSET GAS FIREPLACE

**Brief:** create a tranquil focal point for the master bedroom

**Budget:** around £4,000

**Location:** West London

**Architect:** Project Orange ([projectorange.com](http://projectorange.com); 020 7689 3456)

Interior designer Isas Sastraada's, *left*, memories of the open fireplace at his childhood home in Bali were uppermost in his mind when planning the master bedroom of his West London apartment. 'I had always found gazing at the glowing flames of a fire very relaxing and was really keen to get a similar effect in my bedroom,' he says. 'I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted but left the exact specifications to [architects] Project Orange.'

Cupboards, hidden behind doors and panels of richly coloured Black Bean wood, take up one wall of the bedroom, and the fireplace is inset into the central panel of this arrangement. 'I wanted a tropical wood because it is similar to that used in homes on Bali,' explains Sastraada. 'It was also important to me that the fireplace featured natural materials to complement the colour and grain of the wooden panelling, so I went for one with marble and pebbles.'

As the gas fireplace chosen was quite small, the chimney already in place could easily accommodate it and also meant the heat output wouldn't be too overpowering for the size of the bedroom. Sastraada wanted a natural, organic feel and, just as he hoped, the fireplace is calming in its simplicity. 'I lay back in bed with a good book, switch the fireplace on with the remote and the warmth and flames help me unwind after a hectic day.' ▶



## Fireplace jargon untangled

**Balanced flue:** pipe system designed to draw fresh air into a gas fire and provide an exit for combustion gas.

**Convactor:** creates a circulation of warm air into the room.

**Fireback:** rear elevation in the fireplace recess.

**Fire basket:** container with bars or panels made of steel or cast-iron to hold burning timber or coals.

**Mantelpiece:** shelf formed by the upper edge of the surround.

**Power or fanned flue:** vent with extractor unit mounted on an exterior wall.

**Register grate:** traditional one-piece unit of back, side panels and fire basket made of cast-iron.

**Slips:** flat panel or panels that cover the area between the surround and fire recess.

