

THE BILLIONAIRES' BUYER

Robert Bailey, 42, has a jet-set lifestyle few estate agents can ever expect to emulate. A regular at Sir Elton John's White Tie and Tiara balls, Bailey is on speed-dial terms with movie stars, Russian billionaires and people who most Londoners might have never heard of but who now own a chunk of their home town. 'Wealthy people like using property consultants because we're on their side,' he explains. 'Celebrities will use me to negotiate on their behalf because, very often, if the person they're buying from has heard they've just signed a £10 million contract, they'll inflate the price.'

Bailey, who lives in South Kensington, worked at estate agents Chestertons and Knight Frank and now has an office with four staff. He charges anything up to 2.5 per cent and includes Madonna among his clients.

He will normally view a property on behalf of a buyer. 'Some genuinely want to show their home themselves, but others just want to meet a famous person. You have to judge what's best,' he says.

One up-and-coming music star, for example, was keen to be shown around by the owner of a house that had been a music school. 'Another seller insisted on showing a famous actor around



her lovely kitchen, but I knew that he was planning to rip the whole lot out,' says Bailey.

Although he won't comment himself, one Chelsea homeowner tells how she made an appointment to show Bailey and a client he refused to name around her home. When she opened the door, she found Bailey with Jemima Khan.

If a celebrity wants to view, Bailey often uses subterfuge to protect their identity. 'We might take a group of people and put the famous purchaser at the back in dark sunglasses and a hat, or even a wig,' he explains. 'An assistant will lead the group and talk to the vendor while the client looks on, hidden among the others.'

Celebrities make the same mistakes with properties as the less moneyed. 'When Robert Hanson and Sophie Anderton moved into a house in Belgravia,' he reveals, 'she turned it into a kind of Moorish nightclub with glass mosaics everywhere. When they managed to sell it, the buyers had to gut it.'



Robert Bailey (below) lists Jemima Khan (left, with Hugh Grant) among his clients. Below left: one of his properties in Eaton Square

