Living with the Gods

Above the clouds, ocean views, eclectic, stunning design — can it ever get any better than this?

Luxury Home Design magazine gets to see the very best houses in Australia and around the world. Every now and then, however, even we catch our breath and this is one of those times. As you fly over the sub-tropical landscape below with the blue pacific glistening on your right, you circle around a soaring extinct volcanic cone mountain and land on the helicopter pad. The owners had the perspicacity to blend the multi-pod roof shape into the very landscape and this gives the house a daedal quality that inspires the senses.

Working with leading house designer Ben Thornton and multi-award-winning house builder Mick Devlin of Braeden Constructions, the owners brought the very best of a global and cosmopolitan lifestyle into this residence.

Already in contention for a number of awards, the house clearly avoids the pretentious nature that some houses on the coast suffer from. The list of key elements in this house that make it truly unique is endless. Soaring out from the ancient volcanic rock, the house is on four levels that flow easily from inside to outside, views that would inspire you to become an artist, a scale that intrigues, a fire pit that seems primordial, waterfalls, huge outdoor entertaining area, a premium kitchen, a technical spec that would be at home on a space shuttle, ancient timbers and Zen gardens. The qualities and aspects are seemingly endless.

Meticulously laid out to take advantage of its position and location, the attention to detail is nonpareil. The house has a clear concinnity. Even with the paint. As international colour consultant Laura Miller advises, "A lot of people think that all paint is the same and the only difference is the colour. Paint is visual and tactile; you see and touch it everywhere in a home and it can significantly add value to the resale value of a house if done well or make it unsellable if done badly!"

That is certainly not the case with this house. Such is the level of quality control that the owners appointed master painter and decorator Charles Zarafa of Colours Galore. Colours Galore is well known in the south-east Queensland area as





the expert to talk to for up-market homes and developments and has been associated with many multi-award-winning projects. The key thing to remember is that paints have changed a lot over the last few years," advises Charles. "They have had to become more environmentally friendly. Lead and other chemicals have been removed. This means that oil-based paints particularly are now vulnerable to more rapid yellowing."

This adds another area of confusion for the owner when renovating or building. We asked Charles for his best advice when reviewing paint quotes. "First of all, experience counts. Check the reputation, customer service and licence of the painter," he emphasises. "Consider acrylic-based paints to avoid the yellowing. Make sure the quotes you get are like for like. Insist on three coats. Some painters only do two and you will pay the price — lots of patchiness, poor washability, lustre and body. Also ask what preparation will be done. It's the biggest part of the job. Make sure your painter is not cutting corners to reduce costs."

All the tiles and stone finishes in the house were supplied by Ace Stone and Tiles. In fact, you could write a book on the finishes in this house — from the copper tile edges and highlights to the curved wall mosaic tiles in the shower, the floor-to-ceiling tiles and the limestone and mink marble. However, the piece de resistance is the kitchen. At the centre of the house is the kitchen bench in a stunning piece of CaesarStone the size



of a small apartment in London! It rises throne-like from the main floor area and features a raft of products specified by the Ingenious design team and supplied by Abby, including stunning Gessi tapware and sinks, and a gorgeous Bazzari cooktop. Also installed is a must have for any top-line kitchen — a Zip Hydro Tap. These units are just perfect — ice cold and boiling hot filtered water whenever you need it!

Of course, the technology is state of the art. For a house at this level one would only appoint super-smart consultancy Ingenious. "It was very satisfying to have the scope of this house to work with," says Ingenious system designer and director Deanne Axelrad.

Centre of the Smart House system is a stunning-looking HP Touchsmart PC. "We love this product," says system visioneer Alan Lawson. "It's a touch-screen media centre PC so you have all the PC functions you want plus TV and DVD, but by loading up some Ingenious software we can turn it into a fabulous touch-control panel. The house outline is displayed on screen and the owners can display any feature of the house and control it with a light touch. Lights, video intercom (the gate is half a kilometre away!) and video or audio in any area of the house. In addition the house has a 32-port gigabit network (for you technophobes that's fast) with cameras so the house can be checked from any PC in the house (there are six!) or with the right password from any PC on the planet! How cool is that? The house has more data points than the average office but the icing on the cake is that this is a Lexcom network. Ingenious is an accredited designer and installer of the Lexcom system. Lexcom is really the best network because in seconds any outlet can be changed to a data, telephone or TV point according to need. Very

As you can imagine, the AV system is state-of-the-art. The heart of the system is a Crestron logic processor, audio switcher and an AXA video switcher. According to Ingenious system engineer Andrew Roach, "At the top end there are only a couple of brands to choose from and Crestron as a total package is the best." The Crestron programming was done by Ingenious and Andrew advises that you make sure you have a certified programmer doing it.

Superlative James speakers are used throughout the house. In fact, the home theatre has the same speaker setup as Carlos Santana and we can only assume he knows something about sound! In fact, the front speakers are bigger than most people! You can't buy James at your local stereo shop. These speakers are only available through high-end specialist dealers like Ingenious. Driving the awesome speaker setup in the home theatre are four Sherborn amplifiers. Again, you can't get these at your local discount store. They are only available from specialist dealers but believe us, when these are fired up with a movie on the 120-inch screen, you are IN the movie! The screen is an LP Morgan supplied by Herma. It has a very clever and patented system called EzyGrip. This means the viewing surface is always kept flat at every point along the frame. This is so good it took out the best new product award at the CEDIA convention. Very sleek. The projector is the latest Mitsubishi HC7000. Full high-definition quality with very high-end performance and it is

Music and video are stored up from a oneterabyte network-attached storage, that's big. Music is controlled from the Sonos network. Andrew advises that the Sonos music system still reigns supreme. Sonos takes all the music on your PC or a separate drive and will beam it effortlessly



to any location around the house, inside or out. In addition, if you can connect the Sonos up to your internet connection then you can pick up thousands of radio stations around the world. Just imagine sipping your first Mai Tai of the evening watching the waves hit the beach while listening to news of the rain and rush-hour gridlock in London.

The lighting design was of course done by Ingenious and the lighting control is of course Dynalite. Ingenious is a fully accredited supplier and installer of Dynalite systems. "If you are not using a lighting designer, please make sure you go through your lighting requirements carefully with your electrician," advises Alan Lawson. "As a lighting designer, Ingenious works in conjunction with architects, builders and electricians and can design whole-house programmable internal and external lighting systems. Ingenious provides full schematics for owners and contractors. Most electricians are professional but some are known to cut corners. Nothing will stand out more in a quality home than cheap lights and wall plates. There is a much wider choice these days so don't be passed off with the cheap stuff from the local discount electrical warehouse. You will regret it." In terms of control, future proofing and manageability, the Dynalite system is preeminent. Dynalite, unlike other systems, is a commercial system scaled down for domestic use. So it is very robust, reliable and flexible technology



Ingenious designs any-size lighting system
— this one has over 130 lighting circuits — and
also supplies a vast range of lights that you won't
find in the local shopping mall. Ingenious can also
design and supply custom lighting.

Talking of electricians, this house has some amazing special lights. Each of the main pods in the central living area has LED strips that reflect light off the ceiling. So what, you say? Well with these lights you can also change the colour to suit your mood or the occasion. Gazing out across

the main terrace there is a fan water feature with light rippling through it and the swimming pool has an effervescent blue glow from its LED wall lights. Edges are picked out in tiny LED strips and the very clever lighting design goes on and on. According to Deanne Axelrad, "A lot of our clients underestimate the importance of lighting design. Don't forget a large percentage of the time you will be in the house the lights will be on and that creates many opportunities to significantly change the ambience and therefore directly affect

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Above top With the Sonos music system, music can be beamed effortlessly to any room of the home. **Inset** Delivering whisper quiet high-quality theatre entertainment, the Mitsubishi HC7000 projection is second to none. **Above** Any feature of the house can be controlled by a simple touch with the HP Touchsmart PC.

the mood of the people in the house."

Talking of moods, the ultimate chill-out zone in this house is the main bedroom suite on the top level. Not only does it have a bed head made out of 100-year-old wharf timbers that are a work of natural art, but the bath in the ensuite floats out into space with a view across rolling hills to the ocean. LED uplights in each corner of the bath allow the bathers to set any lighting colour they like! All the bathware was supplied by Tradelink in oh-so-chic Noosa, although the stunning "wave basin", about the size of most people's baths, was

supplied by Apaiser and your mouth falls open when you see it!

Off this tranquil five-star spa experience is a walk-in robe the size of a small Sydney apartment, lined in sumptuous dark wood. You would never want to leave this level!

The clients asked Ingenious for recommendations for the house cabinetry. Ingenious suggested Jeremy Orchard of Bain & Co. Jeremy designed all the house cabinetry, which was then built, and he personally supervised the installation — and it shows! The choice of finishes

reflects the well-deserved reputation for the topclass work that Bain & Co does.

Even the door furniture was specifically chosen to follow a design theme that runs throughout the house and was supplied by Designer Doorware in Brisbane. The Designer Doorware was specified by Deanne Axelrad of Ingenious and Ingenious is the exclusive dealer for the Sunshine Coast. In fact, there is a large display of product on show in its showroom and it is able to specify door furniture for any residential or commercial building.

Of course, perched high up on the Sunshine Coast, this house does get some sun during the year. And when you want the best motorised blinds you have to choose Somfy Motors and Svensson Markspelle Fabric. Svensson has evolved the most sophisticated technical textile-producing facility in the world. In summer, the aluminium in its space-age blinds will reduce internal temperatures by up to 12°C and so reduce the cooling loads on your air conditioning (and wallet!). In winter they help reduce heating costs by up to 41 per cent. For the ultimate in innovation, Somfy's intelligent control can operate your blinds, curtains, awnings or roller shutters without you having to lift a finger.

The external blinds were specified by Ingenious and made by Scandico. The operation is integrated into the Crestron and Dynalite systems and the embedded astronomical clock lowers and raises the blinds relative to sunrise.

Everywhere you look in this house you find yourself smiling. It simply is breathtaking. You keep hearing yourself say "that's clever". But then you realise that Ingenious was the driving force behind this house and you understand why it has the reputation it does and why the company's clients keep coming back.

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