



CALIFORNICATION

Mariah O'Brien creates a Malibu family dream home for Red Hot Chili Pepper drummer Chad Smith.

By Abigail Stone // Photography by Marcia Prentice

To interior designers, every home they create is a calling card that may lead to the next job. This definitely proved true for Mariah O'Brien. A party at a house she designed led to an introduction to architect Nancy Mack, whose husband, Chad Smith, is the drummer for the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The two had an immediate rapport but, due to the Malibu home needing a total overhaul, it would be five years before the actual work commenced.

"My impression when I first walked into the house was: 'This kitchen is in the wrong place,'" remembers O'Brien. "It was in the middle, and it didn't have any windows. Can you imagine living by the beach and having a kitchen that doesn't look out onto the ocean?"

In fact, the entire home, inside and out, was a jumble of rooms and styles. "The floor plan was very confusing," O'Brien quips. "You couldn't even find the bedrooms! It was an old California ranch house that someone had decided to turn into a Spanish-style home so they slapped on a red tile roof."

The home's living room boasts ocean views and comes complete with a custom steel and stone fireplace, midcentury lounge chairs and a Noguchi coffee table.



Clockwise from top left: Owner Chad Smith's music room; the kitchen features clean lines and an oversized island; the outdoor patio; Smith's son's bedroom is decorated to channel a whimsical ocean theme; a look at the master bath.



With the help of architect Douglas Burdge, the house was given a complete makeover. "We did this beautiful stucco, which gives it a modern hacienda feel," says O'Brien. Inside, a mix of traditional and modern elements creates a warm and welcoming space. Materials and finishes were chosen for both their aesthetic value and their functionality. "You don't put dark floors by the beach where every grain of sand stands out," O'Brien explains.

The new kitchen commandeers the spot formerly occupied by the den. A reclaimed wood ceiling ensures that the grand room feels cozy and inviting. Shaker cabinetry and subtle nautical touches—including unlacquered brass fixtures that will weather in the sea air—nod

to Mack's upbringing in Sag Harbor, N.Y. It also has the home's best view. "Everyone always ends up in the kitchen, so we deliberately put the dining table in there." The custom 10-foot-long table is only 29 inches wide, ensuring lively conversations. In the new powder room, leftover wood scraps were salvaged to cover the walls, and the formal dining room is now the music room. Two drum sets and a collection of black-and-white photographs of rock icons point to Smith's profession, but the focus of the home is on keeping the family of five—Mack and Smith have three sons—and their friends connected.

"Now you can be in the kitchen and give a shout, and somebody can actually hear you," says O'Brien. The boys have their own area: The old kitchen is now a TV room, complete with a long custom-designed desk that's perfect for homework. On the other side of the home, the master bedroom suite communes with nature. A free-standing tub seems to sit among the olive trees, while a door leads from the shower to an enclosed patio with an infrared sauna. A door in the patio's fence leads to the garden. "You can let your hair down here," says O'Brien, "but you're living really well." ■