

Jodie pictured on cover of *Daily Telegraph Home Magazine*, 6 March 2004

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home

Help at hand

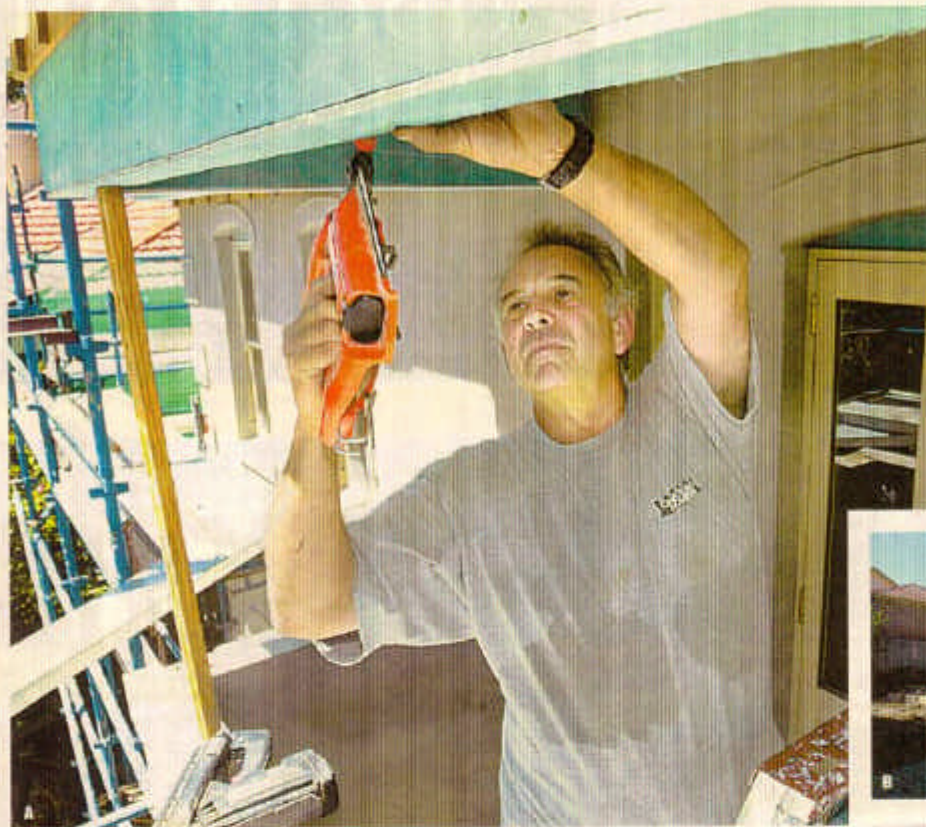
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A COMPLETE GUIDE TO DISPLAY HOMES **PLUS** DIY, GARDENING AND HOMEWARES



THE BRIEF Replace a tired old house that had been in the family for years with a more spacious model

THE BUILDER Chateau Constructions

PROGRESS REPORT The walls are plastered, roof finished, lights installed and tiles laid

WHAT'S NEXT The kitchen and bathrooms will be installed and plans made for the gardens

Now for the inside

As her new home nears completion, **ANITA CATALANO** calls in an expert to help choose everything inside – including the kitchen sink

The old house has gone; the new one is nearly finished. We're finally up to the fun part. Or are we? When the house was knocked down last August, I was devastated – not just because I was fulfilling my late mum's wish but I was moving back to the street where I grew up.

In anyone's book, that's a tough call. Today, eight months later, I've changed my tune.

The house is just months from being finished and looks sensational. The staircase went in last week, the walls were plastered and tiles laid in the laundry and bathroom.

It's now a race against time to choose virtually everything in the house, including the kitchen sink. I've spent the past few months traipsing through kitchen showrooms and lighting shops – and found myself swathed in paint swatches, still none the wiser as to what to choose.

Confused and overwhelmed, I knew it was time to call in the experts.

An inside job

It may sound indulgent but take it from me, hiring an interior decorator is a good investment.

Jodie Dawson, from Room Interiors, has been my saving grace. Initially, I hired Jodie to help establish the colour scheme but she's ended up advising on the kitchen cupboards, benches, bathroom tiles, vanities, lights, inside and outside colour scheme as well as the curtains.

For an investment of one per cent of the cost of building, she's walked me through some of the biggest decisions I've ever had to make.

Jodie says rule No. 1 is to choose the flooring first – it's then much easier to decide on the colours of the walls, ceiling and cornices.

"I get a sample of flooring, then take the paint swatches outside in the daylight and work through the colours to find what works best," she says. "I then look at them inside at different times of the day and night to see if the colours work together in different lighting."



A Carlos Itano, a carpenter for Chateau Constructions works on the house, which is reaching completion

B Five months ago, only the base foundations of the new family home were in place **C** The house began to take shape once the walls went up

If you're choosing the colours yourself, Jodie suggests you paint a large piece of cardboard with your chosen colour and put it against the wall, along with your floor covering. See how it looks in the light throughout the day and, more importantly, whether you can live with it.

To create a cosy atmosphere in our home, Jodie recommended a palette of colours that range from toffee and creams to granite and rich chocolate-browns to complement the parquet floor of English oak. In the family room and main bedroom, she's suggested a bamboo-style wallpaper to create a feature wall. My husband is yet to be convinced. Upstairs, the same colour scheme will be continued.

D Jodie Dawson from Room Interiors (pictured on this week's cover) created a series of storyboards on which she posted swatches of colour, fabrics, samples of benchtops, floor coverings and pictures of any furniture that will be placed in a room.

E Kitchen and bathroom designer John Gwalking with a client in the Italcraft showroom.



"We thought planning our garden would be fun but it's turned out to be very stressful. When the quotes started to come in we doubled over in disbelief"

Plan the perfect kitchen and bathroom

Our builder, Chateau Constructions, set aside \$23,000 in the budget to spend on a new kitchen and laundry cupboards, so it was up to us to go out and get the quotes. After picking out photos of kitchens from countless magazines, we finally settled on Italian-made laminate cupboards and man-made stone benchtops.

As I write, our kitchen is on a cargo ship from Italy and is expected to hit Sydney at the end of this month. Hmm... maybe that's why we've gone way over budget.

With the help of kitchen designer John Gwalking from Italcrafts Architectural Interiors at Annandale, we've designed a U-shaped kitchen with an island bench big enough to seat six.

Instead of cupboards, we've chosen pull-out drawers, as they offer loads more storage. Establishing how much storage you need is a key when planning a kitchen, says John.

"I often ask people to write out a list of their appliances and how often they use them," he says. "I also get them to list how many dinner sets, pots and pans and glasses they have."

John says people are afraid to experiment with colour in their kitchen. "You can get glass splashbacks in any colour of the Dulux range but people still think of

resale value and stick to the safe colours, such as white and neutrals."

We're in the play-it-safe crowd and have gone for neutral tones for both the kitchen cupboards and benchtops.

As for the bathroom, most people want one that's functional, easy to clean, modern and stylish. John says there's a big demand for frameless shower screens, white baths and basins, simple tap and shower fittings and neutral tones.

Our bathroom will be along similar lines – off-white vitrified porcelain tiles, a white bath and toilet and a wenge-laminated double-sink vanity unit. (Wenge is a dark, dense timber.)

How does your garden grow?

Landscape designers are a laid-back lot, we've discovered. We thought planning our garden would be fun but it's turned out to be very stressful.

Calls to prospective designers take days to be returned, quotes are slow to come in and when they do, we double over in disbelief.

The cost of landscaping is one of the biggest we've experienced in the whole process of building this house.

We failed to set aside enough money and it looks like our garden beds will be mounds of dirt for the time being.

Hints

- Don't let your new home drain your pockets of every last cent.
- Leave enough money aside for landscaping. It's the things you don't take much notice of that cost big bucks, i.e. drainage, retaining walls.
- Factor in money for window treatments – they cost an arm and a leg.
- Shop around for quotes.
- Forgo the designer brands for an Australian-made equivalent.
- Budget a decent sum for fitting out the home.
- Rome wasn't built in a day – you don't have to furnish the house all at once.

So far, the quotes have ranged from \$80,000 to \$100,000 – and we don't have a huge block.

Add another \$40,000 for a pool and it's starting to burn a serious hole in the finances.

We've decided to hire people to do the basics – build retaining walls, install the pool, get the paving done – but, with the inspiration of some home magazines – we'll do the rest ourselves.

I'm quite happy to spend my weekends for the next six months pottering in the garden. **E**

- Have you knocked down an old house? Tell us about it at home@dailyleg.com.au

repairs