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Ocean's Eight

Eight best friends. Four couples.
Two architects. One designer.
And a one-of-a-kind vacation
home in Maui with jaw-dropping
views and resort-worthy amenities.

By Melissa Larsen Photography by Augie Sambosa

"WE HAVE TO BUY THIS"

Many mainlanders like to spend a week or two each year vacationing at one of Maui's many upscale resorts; but these four pairs decided that annual retreats simply weren't enough to quench their thirst for The Land of Aloha and the Pacific blue. Consequently, these couples—eight friends from California and Arizona—collectively embarked on a custom vacation-home project on a cul-de-sac peninsula in West Maui.

Two of the Santa Barbara-based couples happened upon the oceanfront property during a 2005 spring break jaunt to the island. Their first thought: "We have to buy this." It didn't take much convincing for them to wrangle the two other twosomes for a partnership of eight. "We have all been going to [Maui] for years," says one of the homeowners who, along with his wife, hales from Paradise Valley, Ariz. "We just love Maui."

Regardless of how much these couples adored Hawaii, taking on a homebuilding project with people of varying decorative preferences and lifestyle needs was no easy feat. Even their primary residences (a 1924 traditional Spanish abode and a modest-size ranch house sitting on two acres, both in Santa Barbara; an art-packed hillside estate in the Sonoran Desert; and a spacious contemporary dwelling in Camarillo, Calif.)





differ greatly from one another. However, for this bunch, collaboration was the key word; plus, it didn't hurt to have a few extra eyes on the prize during the lengthy construction process. "All of our houses are extremely different and all of our tastes are extremely different," says the Camarillo resident. "But I think we did a great job with what would be good for all of us." The result of this group effort is Kahana Paradise, a 7,000-sq.-ft., five-suite contemporary beach house.

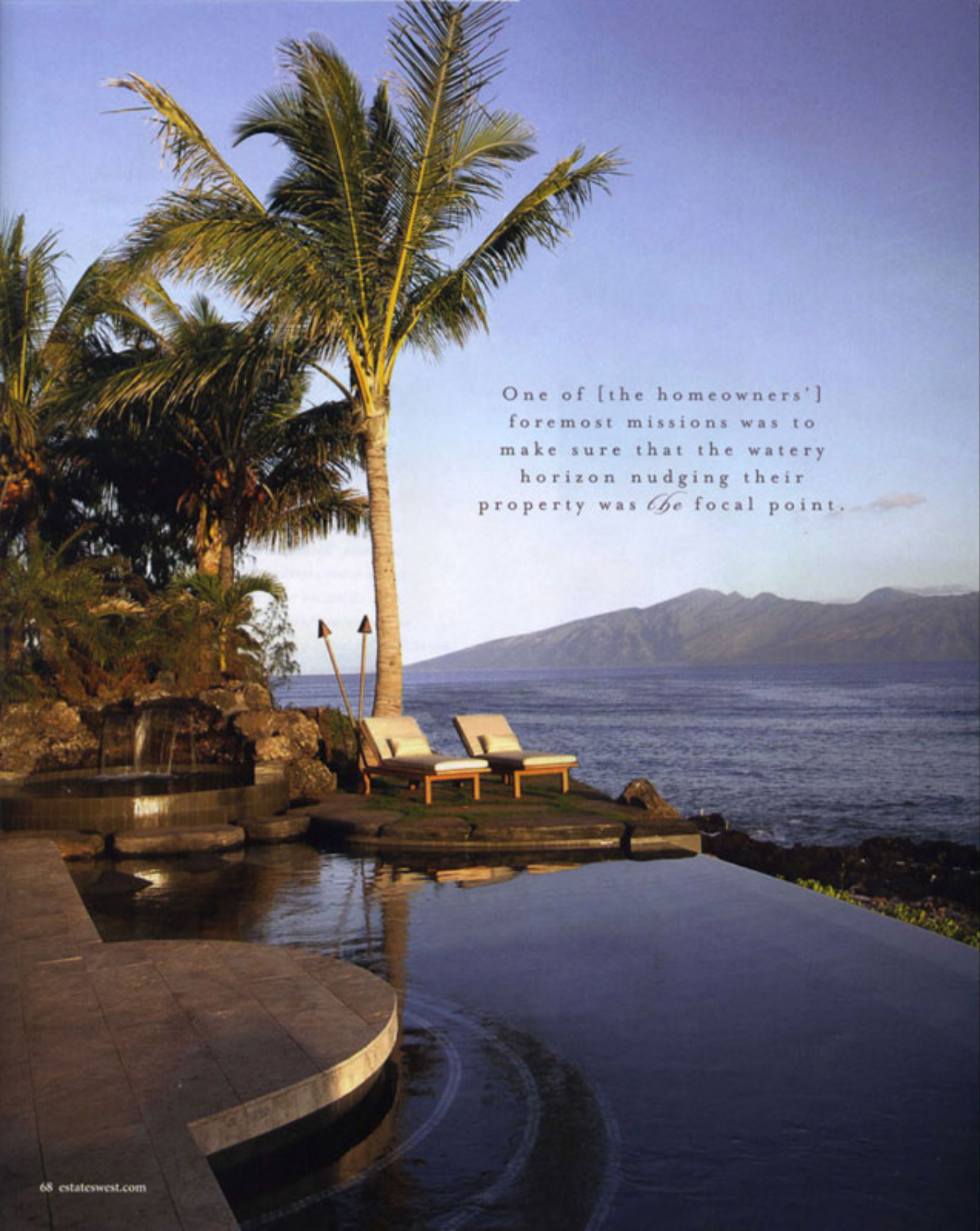
"IT IS ALMOST LIKE LOOKING
AT A MOVIE THEATER SCREEN"

When it came time to design the home, only one pair of architects seemed right for Kahana Paradise: James and Karen LeCron of Santa Barbara's Arri-LeCron Architects, also two of the project's eight partners. One of their foremost missions was to make sure that the watery horizon nudging their property was the focal point. "Jim and Karen did a great job framing that view," says the Arizona resident. "This home is very uniquely positioned so all you see when you walk in is deep ocean... There are few homes like that in Maui. You [usually] will see one of the other outlying islands, Molokai or Lanai."

The airy great room, which soars 25 feet and is crowned by a mezzanine level, provides the framework for the ocean views with pocket doors and Kapalua blue-rock columns (the rocks were actually quarried from the homesite). "When you walk in, it is almost like looking at a movie theater screen," says a Santa Barbara partner. "That's how dramatic it feels."

To complement the stunning vista, an infinity edge pool was added to the backyard's bill of fare. "We [wanted to] incorporate the design around the ocean view, and blending the infinity pool with the ocean gives it a uniform look," Karen says. "The infinity pool is the linchpin," her husband adds. The backyard is also home to a hot tub with a waterfall; a barbecue area; and a swim-up bar—one of the many strewn across the Maui mansion. "You can't go 20 feet without hitting a bar," one of the partners jokes.

Incorporating a slew of bars throughout the house is just one of the ways the homeowners were able to shape a retreat atmosphere. "We were hoping to end up with a home that made us feel like we were in a resortlike setting," says the



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Paradise Valley partner. Karen adds, "The [master] suites were designed to be like hotel suites, equipped with [the same] room and bar and amenities that a suite in a hotel would have—other than room service." Like a luxury getaway, Kahana Paradise lodges plenty of self-sufficient areas where a couple can spend their entire vacation alone if desired. Or much like a hotel's lobby and gathering spaces, the home offers plenty of central spots where everyone can come together, including an upstairs sports bar that's perfect for shooting pool or watching a game.

"VERY NATURAL, VERY NEUTRAL, VERY ORGANIC"

To guide the homeowners in creating their five-star-worthy house, they called on Claire Ownby, founder and owner of the Scottsdale- and Kona-based Ownby Design. Ownby knew that she and this house were a match made in Maui, even though she joined the project after construction had already begun. "The exterior elevations were very clean and simple, which is our approach to design," she says.

In the firm's signature style, Ownby and her team kept the Kahana Paradise color palette "very natural, very neutral, very organic," she says. While the furnishings also remain in the neutral vein, the splashes of sage green and ocean blue found throughout help to harmonize the retreat with the surrounding sea and landscape. "The house is very focused

on the homesite because of its location and the proximity to the ocean," she says. "That dictated a lot—indoor/outdoor living." Much like the Kapalua blue rock, Ownby chose other organic materials to polish off the home, namely limestone flooring, Brazilian cherry hardwood and honed granite.

As the friends-turned-partners-turned-housemates prepare for their first holiday in their tropical pied-à-terre (sharing ahi turkey on Thanksgiving Day, Jim and Karen tease), they all agree, as does Ownby, that their piece of paradise exceeds any expectations they had when first visiting the site two years ago. However, the true measure of success for these couples may not necessarily be in the design itself. "We are all still friends!" says the Paradise Valley resident. EW

project pros

Architects: Jim and Karen LeCron, Arri-LeCron Architects, 805.966.4034, www.arri-lecron.com.

Builder: Bob Dezotell, Island Custom Homes, 808.875.6373.

Designer: Claire Ownby, Ownby Design, 808.322.7446, www.ownbydesign.com.