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PUBLISHER Toute Bagai Publishing Limited

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Neysha Soodeen

MANAGING EDITOR Simone Gillette
simone@macomag.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Marie-France Aquí

INTERNATIONAL SALES Michelle Hart
michelle@macomag.com

JAMAICA SALES Nasma Mohammed-Chin
nasma2002@aol.com

BARBADOS SALES Vanessa Delany
vanessa@macomag.com

Nicole Hall
nicole@macomag.com

Rebecca Thani
rebecca@macomag.com

EDITOR Kathy Ann Waterman

GROUP FINANCE MANAGER Marlene Pires
marlene@macomag.com

**DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
& SUBSCRIPTIONS** Natasha Parris-Trimmingham
Natashaparris@macomag.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN Daryl Nagil
daryl@macomag.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Katherine Atkinson, Celine Barnard, Alexandra Edwards,
Henry Fraser, Catherine Mac Gillivray, Kamsha
Maharaj, Sharon Millar, Robert Oliver, Rosemary
Parkinson, Helen Pipins, Bekim Rauseo, Yara Sabga,
Garry Steckles

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS Appleton Estate Jamaica Rum, Julie Webster Chalbaud,
De La Grenade Industries, Danielle De Vaux, Vanessa
Hall, Cookie Kinkead, David Maros, ©istockphoto.
com [CactuSoup, Creative Web Designs, Lukasphoto,
Professor25, STYLE ENGINEERS, Viktar, zcapture],
Rosemary Parkinson, Helen Pipins, Steve Simonsen,
Virgin Atlantic, David Wolfe

ELECTRONIC PREPRESS & PRINTING American Printing Company
Contact: jo_annewalker@americanprintingco.net



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ABOVE Now or Never is a magnificent pavilion-style property

CAYMAN HOMEOWNER CREATES
RUGGED MASTERPIECE OVERLOOKING THE SEA.
BUT YOU CAN ALSO PUT YOUR FEET UP ON THE SOFA

now or never

RIGHT The house is constructed in a pie shape around the pool

RIGHT BELOW Now or Never is built on hidden stilts



AFTER A LONG TIME TALKING ABOUT BUILDING A HOUSE IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, NICOLE HOLMES AND HER FAMILY FINALLY DECIDED IT WAS "NOW OR NEVER".

Thus the magnificent pavilion-style property of that name came into being and three years later sits proudly overlooking the shimmering turquoise sea.

It's an indoor-outdoor house on hidden stilts, with an Indonesian influence designed to make the most of the location and Caribbean climate.

"The concept was to allow us to benefit from the natural elements, hence the elevation which permits better views and breezes," explains Holmes. "So many homes in Cayman dictate that the air conditioning is operated pretty much at all times. Now or Never is a house which nearly always has its doors open."

Designed by the architect John Doak, the house at Newlands, Savannah in Grand Cayman, was built in a pie shape featuring separate but linked areas for living, sleeping and entertaining.

Holmes took on the task of interior design herself, having a clear idea of what she wanted for the property.

The result is basic, rugged and rustic with a masculine overtone avoiding anything frilly or ornate.

"The build design of the house is what the eye should be drawn towards so the interior features merely complement this," says Holmes. "Fundamentally, I was desperate to achieve a homely feel since Now or Never is a family home. I want people to come here and feel free to put their feet up on the sofa and not stand on ceremony."

With this concept at the core, the Great Room has been created as the centre of the home, an all-in-one space to promote family living.

Doors span the length of the room, opening onto the terrace and infinity pool and framing the views beyond.

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LEFT Lights above 16-foot countertop are from Mexico via Arizona

WITH A SIMPLE AND EARTHY LOOK, THE KITCHEN FEATURES A 16-FOOT CONCRETE COUNTERTOP/BREAKFAST BAR WHICH HOLMES DESIGNED AS A SOCIAL SPACE THAT PEOPLE CAN HOVER AROUND WHILE SHE IS COOKING

Inside, the television area is at one end of the room with an extra deep sofa that people can slumber on, while the dining table is in the middle and the kitchen at the other end of the room.

With a simple and earthy look, the kitchen features a 16-foot concrete countertop/breakfast bar which Holmes designed as a social space that people can hover around while she is cooking.

As well as resolving not to have cabinetry hanging high on the wall, she had two dishwashers installed, her favourite design feature.

"I have a hatred for unloading a dishwasher so, essentially, one of them is used as a cupboard at all times—a great decision," she reveals.

The lights above the countertop were sourced from Mexico after Holmes spotted them hanging at the check-out in a furniture shop in Arizona.

They were part of the display but she managed to track down the supplier and had them shipped to Cayman.

All the furniture and nearly everything else made from wood, including the window and doorframes, was handmade in Guatemala.

"I designed all the furniture by sketching it although I sent some photographs of furniture which I spotted in a few house books I had on my bookshelf at home," she says.

All of the wood is mahogany apart from some bamboo inserts used for the master suite internal doors.

Not only was everything produced in Guatemala, the craftsmen travelled to Cayman and spent around a month installing it.

"There were some things which got lost in translation, such as my folding chairs which do not fold, my bamboo bar which is actually a mahogany bar with bamboo style carvings," says Holmes.

In the space linking the Great Room to the sleeping area, a spiral staircase leads to the roof terrace and stone steps provide internal access to the basement and garage.

The bedroom pavilion houses connecting rooms for Holmes' two daughters, Bethan and Tess, which are linked by a stylish bathroom, and son, Ben, has his own den upstairs.

The master suite is simply decorated but Holmes' bathroom has a walk-in shower space which she describes as "to die for" with pebbles on the floor and jets of water that seem to come from every direction.

Her bathroom basin surround was fashioned from the log of a tree that the Guatemalans designed according to an image she sent them.

There is also a freestanding bathtub with views out of the window straight to the sea.

The guest quarters, located beneath the entertainment room in the second pavilion, are equally enticing, with sliding doors opening onto the sand.

This suite actually has the largest bedroom, with a sitting area, sleeper armchair and desk space, and it has a blue and white colour theme to give a nautical feel.





LEFT Dinner parties are often held in thatched cabana
LEFT BELOW Linga Longa is the entertainment room that earns its name

The Linga Longa sign over the door was carved on a piece of discarded mahogany by one of the Guatemalans on his lunch break and even the backgammon table was made by the craftsmen, after Nicole sent them a photograph of the board as they were not familiar with the game.

And the bamboo ceiling in Linga Longa is perhaps one of the more innovative design details in the house, being made from material normally used for fencing.

The vessel sink in the Linga Longa powder room was another triumph for Holmes when she convinced the stewardess on a flight home to Cayman that it fitted under the seat after being told it was too large for the overhead compartment.

Dinner parties at Now or Never are often held in a thatched cabana close to the water's edge at a table made from a solid slab of wood with matching chairs carved from whole tree trunks.

"The chairs are so heavy that a friend of mine who once came to dinner said she felt like Baby Bear when she was sitting in one," says Holmes. "She was simply unable to move the chair without assistance."

Every inch of space in and under the house has been utilised, including the area beneath the Great Room which has been turned into a basement, often taken over by the children for parties.

There is also a three-car garage and an open space used for roller skating and playing football.

Nicole Holmes describes Now or Never as the perfect family residence. Just the place to "linga longa." M

Above it, Linga Longa, as the entertainment room is called, is where family and friends gather to socialise, have a drink or play a game.

"The name Linga Longa is one which I made up," explains Holmes. "I cannot remember when, but the name stuck as I wanted people to hang out in the bar and linger for longer."



DINNER PARTIES AT NOW OR NEVER ARE OFTEN HELD IN A THATCHED CABANA
CLOSE TO THE WATER'S EDGE AT A TABLE MADE FROM A SOLID SLAB OF WOOD
WITH MATCHING CHAIRS CARVED FROM WHOLE TREE TRUNKS