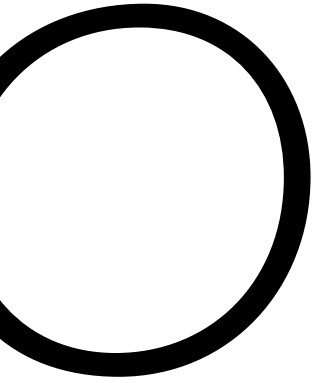


# Earth First

Eco-architect **Chris Sorensen** has big plans to make California even greener **BY NORA ZELEVANSKY**



ff a busy L.A. street, in the midst of an intricately designed eco-haven, stands a meticulously integrated recycled teak-and-stone home. The sleek but earthy abode's young LEED-accredited architect, Chris Sorensen, confers fastidiously with his client, and though the rising design star may have exchanged hippie tie-dye for a black blazer, make no mistake: He is an artist, environmentalist and true believer in all things green.

This particular project is almost complete, but there is no time to bask, as Sorensen has five others already underway. One is potentially Malibu's first Platinum LEED-certified home (requiring the most strident adherence to environmental regulations) and another is green upgrades (such as a carbon-footprint-free pool area) for Brad Pitt's palatial abode. Sorensen has definitely hit his stride. "Brad Pitt can hire anyone. He worked with Frank Gehry, and he's taking a leap of faith with me," he says. "I really respect Brad's passion for architecture, so I was honored to be hired."

But no one is doing Sorensen any favors. Hard work landed him in an unpretentious beachside Malibu office, surrounded by intricate models and flat screens proudly featuring high-definition images of projects for the likes of Pamela Anderson and Jane Seymour. Growing up in Chicago and Pasadena, the son of a remodeling-obsessed interior designer cum



Architect Chris Sorensen and the interior and exterior of a recent solar-powered Malibu Beach project.



A Sorensen-designed modern craftsman prefab on Point Dume, Malibu.

energy healer mother, he comes honestly by his worldly-meets-California aesthetic, do-gooder impetus and love of manipulating space.

His ecological interest was piqued while studying in Copenhagen and cemented while assisting Frank Lloyd Wright fellow Paolo Solari on the design of a utopian commune in Arizona. He landed in Malibu to work under architect Michael Barsocchini and soon opened his own digs, eventually advising the city council on eco-building matters. "Traveling around the world, you see how people live—what works and what could be

improved—from mud huts in Africa to tree houses in Indonesia," he says. "And, as an architect, you get to teach people to live differently."

Sorensen, who often bikes or skateboards to save gas, just moved with his fiancée to a Venice loft with concrete floors (sans secondary materials) and a backyard vegetable garden (complete with compost).

He built a recycled teak modular bathroom at his office and furniture from scrap metal and tractor wheels.

Whatever the project, Sorensen values a thoughtful approach above all else and looks to architectural icons for guidance. "Innovation is an odd word because we're also bringing it back to the old school," he quips. "L.A. is such a magical place that's supportive of innovation. We've built a body of work and now we're blossoming." ●

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