

# Scarface by the Bay

NESTING—PACINO-STYLE—ON AN OVERHAULED BERKELEY HOUSEBOAT.

BY LAUREN MURROW

**A YACHT, THIS WAS NOT.** After buying the decrepit '60s houseboat berthed at the Berkeley Marina a year and a half ago, filmmaker Zackary Canepari presented it to Oakland design firm Medium Plenty with an apologetic grin. “The boat resembled an old-school Howard Johnson: There was a lot of sad faux wood, disgusting old carpet, and broken laminate,” recalls principal architect Ian Read. “It had the essence of a 1970s rest stop.”

Here on the Marina, building permits are approved by the harbor-master, not the city, resulting in a hodgepodge, jerry-rigged fleet. In Canepari’s floating live-work studio, improvement projects were half finished, the floor was buckling, and water was seeping in at various points. “So we maintained the cool parts,” like the old portholes and the spiral wooden staircase, says Read, “and got rid of the sketchy, weird stuff.”

Read and project architect Sky Lanigan settled on a plywood palette for the 1,600-square-foot home, both to keep costs down and to honor the boat’s aesthetic roots. (“We liked how it had the feel of an old minivan,” says Read.) Apart from the boat’s structural issues, the ebb and flow of the water below presented a building challenge. The designers hid stacks of lead ballast in cabinets throughout the home to keep the boat from listing.

Though the overall design is muted and utilitarian, Canepari had grander visions for his living room. “Zack was like, ‘I feel like this room wants to be something,’” remembers Read. The sunset-printed wallpaper is a replica of that in *Scarface*, which happened to air on television while the team was finalizing the design concept. Gretchen Krebs, Read’s wife and design partner, “kept waiting for better taste to prevail,” Read says. “But I told her, ‘Comcast has spoken.’” ■



**1.** The living room wallpaper replicates the decor in *Scarface*, and Mike Meyer created the custom blown-glass portholes. “We did these exaggerated concave shapes,” says architect Ian Read. “They look like condoms.”

**2.** Though larger than many landlocked apartments, the houseboat has unusual proportions. In the bedroom, owner Zackary Canepari settled for a roll-up futon mattress—the only one that he could squeeze up the spiral staircase.

**3.** Apart from the red door, Canepari didn’t want to alter the boat’s facade too much. “He loves the idea of having an unremarkable exterior that gives no indication of what’s going on inside,” says Read. Next, the architects are adding a small deck, a garden, and a balcony to the boat’s upper level.

**4.** The custom dining room table by Llyr Griffith pivots to accommodate additional seating. James Luker of Luker Upholstery created the denim bench cushions.

(1,2,4) MELISSA KASEMAN; (3) ZACKARY CANEPARI