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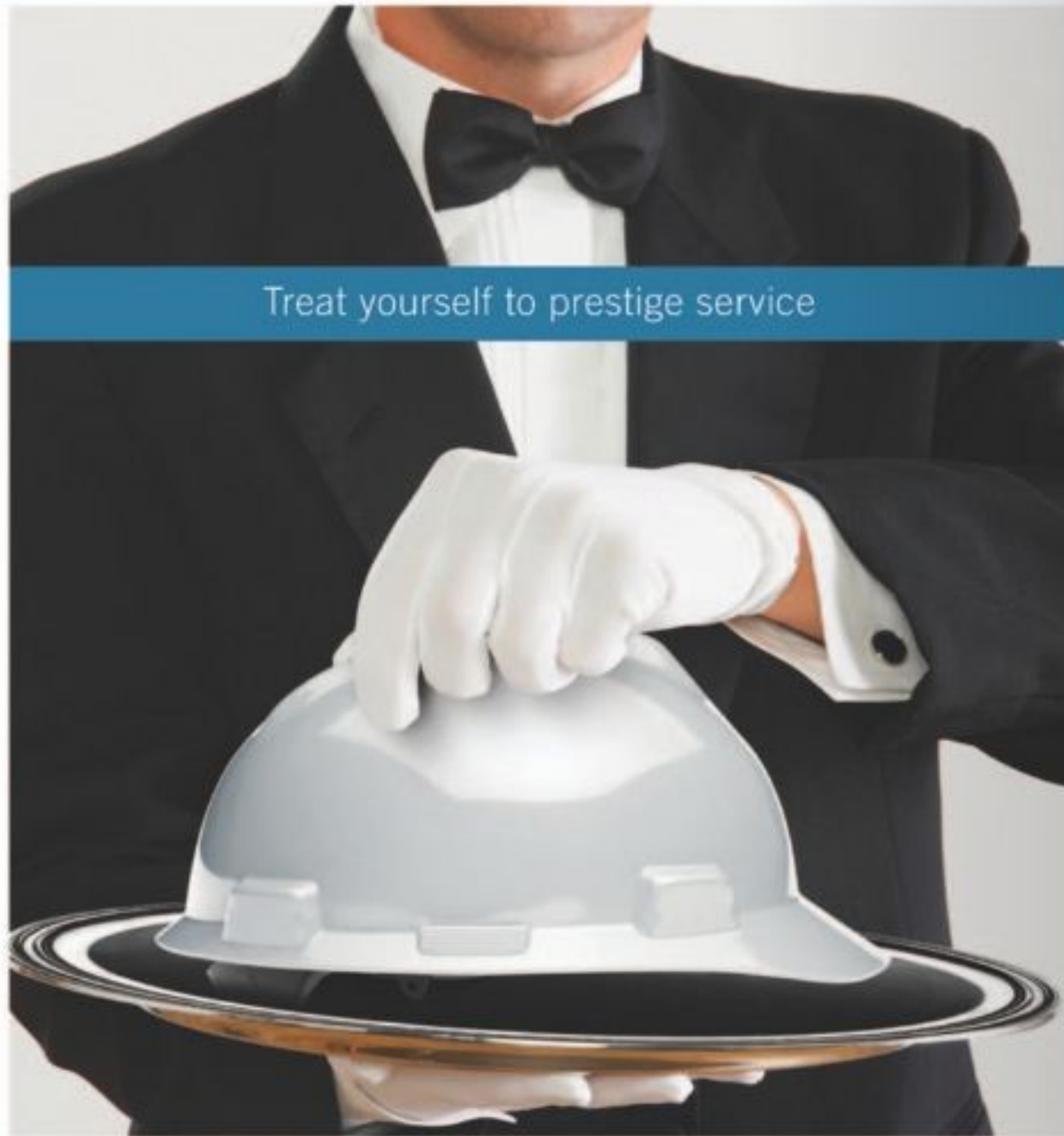
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Dan Muldoon
PUBLISHER

(604) 737-2874 T
d_muldoon@telus.net
www.builderarchitectmagazinebc.com #63-1415 Lameys Mill Road
Vancouver, BC V6H 3W1

This month, we are very proud to showcase VictorEric Premium Homes.

If you would like to be featured in *Builder+Architect* as a builder, developer or architect, submissions are always welcomed. We would like to hear from companies that would be interested in a company profile to be featured in *Builder+Architect*. We are always looking for submissions that offer new technology or insights for the construction industry.

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Dan Muldoon

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Greater Vancouver
Publisher: Dan Muldoon
Managing Editor: Bill Colus
Contributing Writer: Susan M. Boyce



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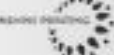
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VictorEric Premium Homes

By Susan M. Boyce



MOST CHILDREN PLAY with Lego blocks. Some successfully create fanciful objects from them. A very few, like the six-year-old Eric Lee, design with Lego blocks. Though he didn't realize it then, Lee's childhood discovery of this popular game was the catalyst that would propel him into the world of architecture, construction and custom home building.

Now principal of VictorEric Premium Homes, Lee radiates an irresistible energy and enthusiasm for cutting-edge design and architectural innovation. This is a man equally at home in his office surrounded by floorplans, renderings and material spec sheets as he is donning steel-toed boots and hardhat as he tramps across a construction site on a rainy Vancouver day.

Talent and Training

Relying primarily on natural talent augmented by a few high school courses, Lee designed his first "real" house, his own family's North Delta home, when he was barely 18. "Can you imagine letting an 18-year-old design the house your family is going to live in?" He laughs. "I don't actually remember much detail now, but I did make my bedroom a bit larger than the others, and I do remember vividly being at the house one night just after it was complete. I looked around me, and I was awed that with a pencil and an idea — I'd been able to create this space. I still don't have a word to describe the feeling, but it's what I want my clients to experience when they see their thoughts and dreams translated into the physical, 3-D realm."

Now irrevocably smitten with design and building, Lee has discovered his passion and hasn't looked back. His projects have already garnered more than a dozen awards, including a 2007 Gold Georgie Award for Best Residential Renovation, and he's one of only

39 designers and architects to be featured in the lavishly illustrated, 2009 coffee table book *Spectacular Homes of Western Canada*.

Vision and Integration

A fundamental cornerstone of the company's success is Lee's philosophy that good design is first and foremost about meeting the client's expectations. "For most people, it's not a question of whether they can find a good designer; there are plenty of good designers out there," he says. "The bigger question for most clients is finding a design team with personalities that are compatible with their own. We look at the way each of our clients live — do they have art collections they want to display, do they need a home office, are they into sports — and then build a home that will allow them to achieve that lifestyle. Throughout the process, we constantly present options and explain the outcome of different choices, but the client always has the final decision."

Case in point is a just-completed, private residence in Vancouver's prestigious Southlands neighbourhood. "The client, herself a high-end developer, entertains frequently," Lee explains. "She wanted a resort-style ambiance but also wanted to maintain a clear delineation between public and private areas of her home."

The resulting 11,000-square-foot home left visitors at a recent open house gasping in amazement. At the entryway, concrete slabs appear to float over a pond, leading visitors to a soaring 14-foot front door that swings open with barely a touch — the first indication this is a house unlike any other. "The tallest wooden door you can get and still have a warranty is eight feet," Lee says. "So we sourced an aluminum door with a high-grade, wood-look print to mimic stained cedar." The result is indistinguishable from genuine wood.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICTORERIC DESIGN GROUP

Stepping inside, the foyer's left wall is a two-story water feature cascading into the interior pond where a gleaming ebony grand piano rests on a polished white concrete slab surrounded by water. Beyond, a great room spans the house's entire width and ultimately merges with an expansive deck overlooking the manicured backyard — just one of many outdoor living spaces. The house boasts five kitchens, including a wok kitchen and full barbecue pavilion, hot tub room with folding Eclipse doors and waterfall wall, sports court and a separate, self-contained wing including a fitness room for the eldest son.

One level is devoted exclusively to Entertaining — yes, that's with a capital E. Here's where guests can tempt Lady Luck in either the private poker room or billiards room, unwind with a massage or fulfill fantasies of stardom in a lavishly appointed karaoke room featuring a stage, fiber-optic sound system, backlit onyx bar and wine wall, mirror ball and even a dance pole. "The karaoke room is built under the garage and entirely encased with concrete — just like a 21x28-foot bunker — so there is no sound transference to other areas of the house," Lee adds.

Although the house is five levels — there's a 40-foot drop in elevation between front and rear property lines — there's a meticulously planned interconnectivity and visual balance. The space simply feels correct and comfortable from everywhere — inside and out. In fact, this house fits the client so perfectly that although she had an unsolicited purchase offer, she turned it down flat saying she loved the house far too much to sell.

Inspiring Future Generations

"I believe there's great value in developing a company culture, a working environment where everyone can pursue their specific



passion — whether that passion is dealing directly with clients, or solving technical problems or courting innovative, new materials,” Lee stresses. “I ask everyone who works here what they would like to learn more about — what they love doing best. We invest heavily in all our staff’s development because I believe when people are happy in their job, they will be more productive.”

He also wants to change the way consumers think about home building and renovation. “We want the building industry to be user friendly for all our clients. Streamlining the process by providing a complete range of services is the way of the future — a way to reduce the natural fears and concerns associated with taking on a project of this magnitude.”

Communication, he stresses, is the fundamental cornerstone that allows a client’s vision to be fully executed. “This is why we are taking the company in a new direction and now offer complete design-build services — everything from architectural design and securing permits, right through interior design to construction and landscaping as a single package. A client no longer has to deal with a series of individuals — architects, designers, builders, subtrades — the same team of professionals looks after everything.”

In all his business dealings, Lee takes a firm, plain-language approach. “If I talk jargon to a customer, it’s unlikely they will understand or be happy with the finished product,” he says. “One of the best compliments I ever received was when clients told me they couldn’t believe how easy it was to work with me because of the simple, straightforward way I explained each step. They appreciated knowing I was always open to questions and would always make the time to explain the design rationale, so they had all the information they needed before making their final decision.”

Looking Ahead

For the immediate future, Lee says he plans to focus on expanding the construction/build side of VictorEric Premium Homes. “I’ll need more staff, but we will be looking only for people who bring a strong skill, set and who embody the personality of VictorEric with strong communication skills, and we will remain extremely selective about the projects we do take on, so we can continue to deliver the same sophisticated level of quality and innovation people expect.”

Will Lee continue to follow the passion ignited by a box of Lego blocks? A smile lights up his face as his gaze is momentarily drawn toward the newest stack of floor plans under development. “I love the grand reveal — the moment when I see my client’s eyes light up because we’ve taken what they dreamed of and made it a reality, the moment they realize we have articulated something they might not have even been able to see for themselves. I consider myself truly blessed because my clients actually pay me to dream. How many people can say that?” ■



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