

RANCH & COAST

San Diego's Luxury Lifestyle Magazine

May 2008

Green Building

Outdoor Environments

Interior Design Trends

Stewart Copeland



Home &
Garden
Issue

\$3.95 US

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All The Bells And Whistles

It's not often that a restaurant's décor gets as much buzz as the food and drink. When the swank mid-century-inspired Starlite opened its doors last summer, the design team behind it became somewhat of downtown celebrities. Bells&Whistles, a design-build firm based in University Heights, suddenly had more work coming in than they could handle.

The founders, designers Jason St. John and Barbara Rourke, added a third full-time member, Jason Lane, who is in charge of the shop and construction. Design-build means they do everything in-house, from concept to construction of the furniture and interior.


"We'd love to expand," says St. John. "We'd love to get medium-sized, a little bit bigger than small."

Too much growth would dilute the Bells&Whistles aesthetic, which changes according to the client but tends to celebrate clean lines and exceptional wood craftsmanship.

Right now the trio is working on a number of projects, including The Loft at UCSD, a new on-campus wine bar/performance space. They're also designing Milo, a custom sneaker boutique in North Park, a "super-secret bar project," and a residential interior for Todd Swank, owner of Foundation Skateboards and Tum Yeti.

It still sounds like a lot for three people. "We work very long hours," says St. John with a smile. — *AlexaMarie Stephens*

photo by Kristy Ann Mann



Jason Lane, Jason St. John,
and Barbara Rourke at
Disconnected Salon in San Diego