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1stone. in love

When rock legend Billy Joel and his wife Katie Lee fell for this La Gorce Island manse, they made it their mission to own it. And now they do.

Text by Allison Edwards Photographs by Mark Surloff



An elegant driveway of gold travertine pavers leads to the home's entrance.



A view of the pool and spa in the back of the house, which is situated on Biscayne Bay.

When the man known around the world as the Piano Man — no further clarification necessary — decides he wants to buy a house, he does it. So when Billy Joel and his new wife, Katie Lee (of the Bravo television show *Top Chef*), set their sights on this stone mansion on La Gorce Island in Miami Beach this past April, they were determined to get it. Nevermind that the man who had built it originally as a spec house, the founder of Miami-based Insignia Construction and Development, was already ensconced inside. They wanted it, so when he set his asking price at \$13.5 million, they paid it. That was in April 2006.

The 8,881-square-foot, two-story residence contains seven bedrooms, eight bathrooms, and 150 feet of frontage on Biscayne Bay. Situated on a 30,310-square-foot lot, it's an outstanding structure, in no small part because it is made largely of stone. The palm-lined driveway is paved with gold travertine, and even the exterior columns, which are traditionally made of cast concrete, are composed of marble. All of the stone in the house came from Opustone. "There is a variety of stone used throughout the house," says Opustone vice president Eric Schiegel. "One bathroom is outfitted in onyx; another has European limestone throughout; and the windowsills and moldings are all imported travertine. There are semiprecious stones in other spots." In the living room, there's a hand-carved stone fireplace and mantel.

RIGHT: All the kitchen cabinets are mahogany with oil-rubbed bronze hardware and were custom designed and fabricated by Insignia Development Group. An iron chandelier hangs above an oversized island. **BELOW:** A view of the formal living room reveals a traditional decor and Mediterranean-style arched windows and doorways.



The master baths are outfitted with Bottocino and Koala natural stone flooring, along with Bottocino shower and bath surround and vanity countertops.



Schiegel, whose company has showrooms in Doral and Jacksonville, started the company just after graduating from Florida International University five years ago. After double-majoring in finance and international business, he started up Opustone, which serves both commercial and residential clients, and began traveling around the world to see what varieties of stone were out there. After six months, the company had 15 containers of stock on hand; today there are 650 containers of marble, granite, slate, limestone, coral and more. "This business is notorious for the bait-and-switch thing," he explains. "With us you can pick out the stone we have today at the

showroom and get it delivered tomorrow, and you know it's what you wanted."

No doubt a large part of the home's appeal for Joel was the juxtaposition of the beautiful natural materials. The interiors were designed by the in-house interior designer at Insignia, which is the parent company of Opustone. Joel already owned a home in Miami Beach, albeit a smaller one — 2,015 square feet, to be exact — but that house is now on the market. No doubt he and Katie will spend more time making beautiful music together — or even just kicking back and listening to it, waterside — in their new, luxuriously appointed stone palace on La Gorce Island. ♦