

Essential essence

NAME:
Allen Altman

OCCUPATION: Actor

SUMMER RESIDENCE:
1800s beach house in Toronto's
Leslieville

IN RESIDENCE:
Since June

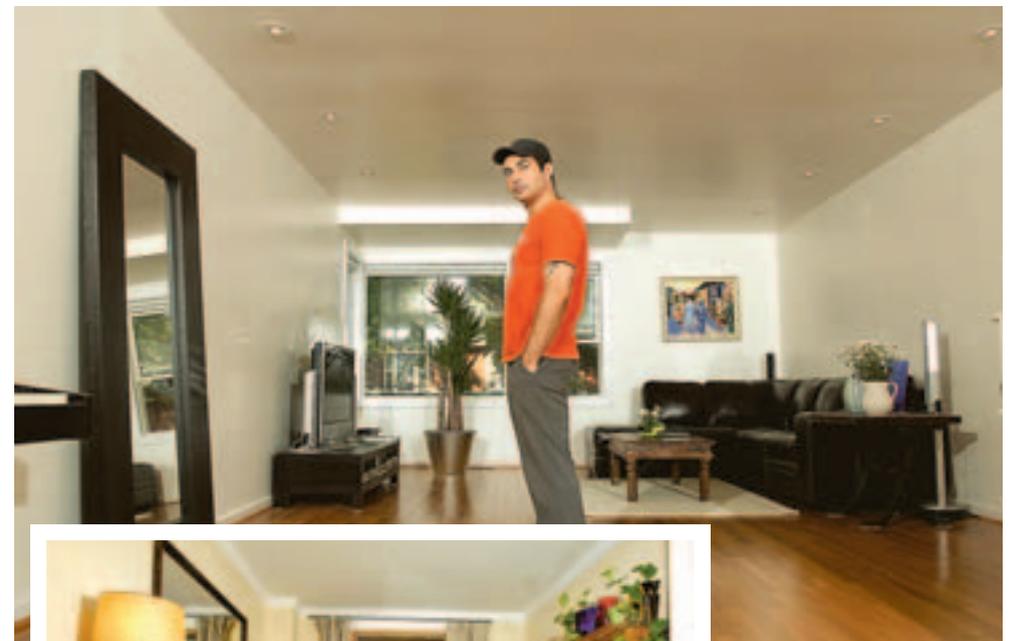
DESIGN STYLE: Eclectic

By Kathryn Kates

Montreal-born actor Allen Altman stars as artist Billy Hunter in Showcase's Gemini-award winning dramatic series Paradise Falls. He was also in the Charlize Theron feature film Head In The Clouds.

In addition to his busy career in television and film, Altman runs Allen Altman Design, a thriving design and landscape business. His clients include Paradise Falls costars Chantal Quesnel and Tammy Isbell and her husband Peter Outerbridge, the star of ReGenesis on Global TV.

Altman moved in June from a traditional, two-storey, three-bedroom semi-detached Victorian house in Toronto's Riverdale to a 1800s, fixer-upper beach house originally built as a one-storey cottage, in Leslieville east of the downtown core.



PHOTOS BY KAZ NOVAK,
THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Actor Allen Altman's home is neatly divided: downstairs (left) is traditional; the second floor (above) is modern and airy, and home to a gallerylike multimedia area.

Q: What's your house look like?

A: The outside is beige siding. The ground floor is painted warm neutral colours of French vanilla in the living and dining room, and the bedroom is cloud white. I've highlighted my crown moulding by painting it ultrawhite to make it pop. The flooring in the living room, dining room and the hallway is restored to the original tiger oak; I stained it dark gunstock, which is brown. The kitchen is a funky retro kind of space. My appliances are white; the walls are painted a warm beige/grey. From the kitchen you walk out to the deck, and there's a sprawling landscaped back yard and parking area, which are still a work in progress, since I just moved in.

The master bedroom and ensuite with a Jacuzzi tub is also on the ground floor. The second floor is open concept with an impressive gallerylike multimedia space where I house my office, television area and design studio. The lighting makes the room; I put in modern aluminum pot lights. I replaced veneer and put in light-stained oak hardwood floors to complete the flow of the room.

Q: What attracted you to this residence?

A: I was blown away by the design possibilities and the ways I could improve on this rundown fixer-upper. I felt it would be an amazing project and transformation. The openness of the second floor made (it) the perfect playground to experiment.

Q: Can you describe the decor?

A: I like to surround myself with colours, objects and textures that I love to look at; like bold and neutral colours, antique objects and leather, velvet and linen fabrics. My home is simple but eclectic. I to re-invent, re-mix, refine and incorporate.

Q: Did you renovate and design yourself?

A: I do most of the work myself, but subcontract whenever it's necessary. Recently, I waterproofed my basement with two friends, Greg Roycroft and Billy Irvin; I collaborate with them on design projects from time to time. On this ambitious waterproofing job, they came through and took charge.

Q: How did your home change from your first viewing to its present state?

A: It's a radical transformation. I think the previous owner had an idea in the '70s to use every colour he could imagine — navy blue, purple, orange, pink, lavender, acid green, yellow and multiple shades of salmon. It looked like an old hippie commune. Now, by using the warm neutral tones, the house has a much more contemporary, sexy feel.

Q: What about your house reflects your personality?

A: My home reflects who I am and how I want to live my life.

I believe that when you can look at your space and say you feel for the room, then it's a home. The traditional feel of the ground floor contrasts the modern, airy feel upstairs. Downstairs is all about function and necessity, and the second floor is all about play and creation, which are the real essence of my personality.

Acting has permitted me to travel extensively, therefore my home is full of artifacts and treasures that I have picked up on location. Essentially, my home is an expressive open space that suits my lifestyle and enables me to function and create.

Q: What home renovating challenges lie ahead?

A: I plan to open up the cathedral ceiling in the bedroom and expose the original oak wood beams.

Q: What is your fantasy home renovation?

A: I would put in an indoor lap pool in my basement.

Q: Do you have any tips for other home owners?

A: I would suggest that colour is the best solution to opening up a space ... if the tones are welcoming and they flow, the space will be inviting and warm.

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