

HOMES & CONDOS

Some good news for crooner Matt Dusk

Designer Yanic Simard turns small bathroom into luxurious home spa

ALEX NEWMAN
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Heading out to Etobicoke, I'm wondering how much there is to say about a bathroom renovation. As it turns out, a lot. At 6- by 10-feet (about the size of an area rug), it's so small it generates buzz about how to visually expand a room.

But it's also where 32-year-old Canadian crooner Matt Dusk lives. Walking up the drive of his home, I wasn't expecting to hear a live rendition of "Fly Me to the Moon." But it fits. Dusk is rehearsing for his new tour, including renowned drummer Ben Riley.

In fact, this house — built when martinis first became all the rage — is a nice convergence of Dusk's life and art. He loves performing in Las Vegas, he's been known to wear a rhinestone tie — with red socks no less — and his preferred tunes, like "Cry Me A River" or "My Way," are ones his parents probably listened to (they live only six blocks away).

Which brings us back to the bathroom and designer Yanic Simard, whose inspiration for the bath was



RICK MADONIK/TORONTO STAR

Designer Yanic Simard, standing, with client Matt Dusk in Dusk's newly renovated bathroom.

the house. Simard, who's no slouch when it comes to the celebrity designer circuit, leads the way upstairs past workmen finishing up painting.

Even through the drop cloths and other paraphernalia, the floor is a show-stopper. Simard looks pleased when I squeal. Normally, I'm too old to squeal, but this floor is

something else. An echo of 1960s, but without the avocado tones, it's a series of concentric swirls of grey and white mosaic tiles.

Simard explains that three artisans took 10 days to assemble the floor in the workshop at Antica (a Toronto tile supply shop) before sending it over to Dusk's house where tile setters would spend an-

other week installing it.

Dusk had wanted something modern, as in mid-century, with a little pop feeling to it, but didn't want to fight the more traditional feel of the house. So Simard toned it down a little to create something modern, but classic.

Simard says he definitely drew inspiration from the rest of Dusk's

home — the two met a year ago and discovered they had mutually agreeable design sensibilities. The house, when Dusk purchased it, had not been touched since the late 1980s. But he didn't want to change a thing, especially the kitchen with its Mexican inspired arched stove workspace, terra cotta floor tiles, and stucco features. It's a room with "a lot of personality," Simard says, and Dusk didn't want to tamper with the great feel of it, especially since it opens to the backyard and pool via a series of sliding glass doors. It's where he and his girlfriend spend a lot of time, especially in the summer entertaining friends.

Simard wanted to translate that comfortable feel in the bath as well, although Dusk was pretty clear he was interested in something modern. With a 1960s-'70s twist.

The floor definitely dictated the rest of the decorative elements, such as the sleek wide chrome and porcelain sink and the mirror-fronted tub: "I wanted to double the impact," Simard says. "Mirrors give the floor's artistry as much play as possible."

First step in the design, though, was tackling the layout. Originally there'd been a closet in the bath, but the previous owners gave the space to the bedroom on the other side of the wall. Dusk wanted it back — in fact, it's the one thing he was insistent on, Simard recalls.

Dusk interrupts: "I need the storage — have you seen my girlfriend's stuff?"

With the space constraints, including the new closet, laying out the fixtures was a little challenging. Simard kept the tub, sink and toilet in their original locations — not only did it make sense from a logistical standpoint, but also saved on plumbing and construction costs.

And rather than a separate shower stall, they opted for a tub and shower combination. Tub-shower combos don't usually score high on the looks scale, so Simard headed to Caml Tomlin where he found a sleek cream acrylic tub with latched door that allows you to walk in, rather than climb over. The technology that makes it water-tight, though, is pricey, and with the glass doors, the unit is about \$10,000.

Choosing the tub wasn't just for looks but practicality as well. At some point Dusk expects he'll have children in the house, Simard says, and they'll need a tub.

The fixtures are equally gorgeous — all chrome handles and shower heads from Toto. Walls of grey marble slab tile with delicate charcoal veining.

The sink, a long sleek creation from Weststyle with the look and feel of matte porcelain, has stainless legs and a slick little shelf underneath. Above it, a tall mirror from Lumidesign with sandblasted top and bottom act as a valance to conceal under lighting.

"The only thing we didn't agree on this project at first," Simard says, "was the mirror. It was supposed to go with the sink but it was too small for Matt." Dusk cuts in to say that "it was beautiful but the area wasn't right, very wide, but now tall, and my girlfriend is only 5'2" I'm 5'9" and a kid will be much shorter."

For the one small window Simard designed an ingenious treatment. "I could have suggested roman blinds, but you see them all the time, and with the floor and the tub being so unusual, I really wanted to do something different."

He took a picture frame the size of the window and stretched a shimmering translucent silvery-white fabric on the back, then attached it to the window with hinges. "When it's closed you see the fabric, but you can still pull it back to open the window and then the breeze flows through the fabric."

The fabric, Simard says, is perfect for the bath because of the pale silvery grey palette and the barely there pattern. "It's almost a piece of art, like the floor and the sink we chose."

Though Dusk teases Simard every chance he gets, everything on his wish list is there. "The best thing about it is we compromised really well." Glancing at Simard, he quips: "At least for the interview let's say that."

Matt Dusk's Canadian tour has begun, with several dates throughout Ontario, including Toronto on April 9. For more information, go to www.mattdusk.com. For more information on Yanic Simard, go to www.tidg.ca.

Go to www.yourhome.ca to see more pictures.

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