

A HOME *Run*

Round Rock Express owner Reese Ryan and his family have
a contemporary house that's a hit in Rollingwood





In 2011 when Reese Ryan—yes, *that* Reese Ryan: owner and CEO of the Round Rock Express and a son of baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan—and his wife,

Alison, purchased the 1950s Rollingwood home that they would eventually remodel completely, the neighborhood was eclectic. It was filled with everything from Hill Country- to Mediterranean-style houses, boasting large archways and steep, sloping roofs.

Today, with their warm-modernism/contemporary house having been completed for a year, both the Ryans and their architect, Michael Antenora, have noticed something different about the neighborhood: “The houses being built have started getting a little quieter, a little more contemporary,” Antenora says. His comment prompts the Ryans to exchange a glance and laugh. They agree that the newer Rollingwood houses have the same style as theirs. “Flattery,” Ryan says.

And the four-bedroom home is indeed a design worthy of imitation.

The trend-setting house started with a desire: The Ryans, who had been living in a more traditional house in Tarrytown, wanted a more contemporary home for themselves and their two daughters, Caroline and Julia. Two years ago, the Ryans found and purchased the 1952 Rollingwood

home from the original owner. The man who sold it to them had grown up in the house, which his parents had built.

Because the existing foundation was in excellent condition and because the house’s

STORY BY
Jaime Netzer

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Brian Mihealsick



footprint made logical sense on the slightly hilled lot, the Ryans and Antenora decided to keep both. They chose to remodel the place entirely—taking down the white Austin Ashlar limestone piece by piece—and also add 1,735 square feet of space (in the form of a new guest house, garage and workshop, new second floor and first floor additions), increasing the number of bedrooms from three to four and the square footage to 4,380.

It should be noted that Antenora, the principal and founder of Antenora Architects, had worked with Ryan to design the 10 local Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf shops that he owns. (He also owns four R Bank locations.) But while the two had worked together on business projects, Ryan quickly realized that building and remodeling a home was going to be a more emotional process for him. “If I’m building a bank, I don’t come home and talk about building the bank,” he says. “But Alison and I found ourselves going to dinner and talking for two hours about the house.”

The details in those conversations ranged from exterior finishes to where to put the appliances. The Ryans devoted themselves to the process, which surprised Antenora. “We started getting into more of the detail, and that’s where Reese and Alison actually took a bigger part of the workload,” he recalls. “A lot of people stand back and say, ‘Well, show me something.’ But they didn’t do that at all. They brought tiles they liked, pictures of their friends’ homes, and that made our job easy.”

Alison concentrated on interior finishes and design, while Reese cared about exterior finishes and practicality. They balanced one another, with impressive results both inside and out.





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Stainless steel panels behind the stove hide cabinets for spices.

OPPOSITE PAGE

The breakfast nook opens up to the back of the house.





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The staircase, which uses pecan from the Ryan family ranch, adds to the contemporary style and is Antenora's favorite part of the house.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Cypress that was charred through the *shou sugi ban* process has a gray-brown look that complements the rest of the exterior.

The exterior of the home boasts the Austin Ashler limestone that builder Brad Marshall removed piece by piece, power-washed and re-mortared with white instead of gray mortar.

The house also utilizes cypress that has been charred using the Japanese process of *shou sugi ban*, which is becoming increasingly popular in the United States. In this process, the cypress is first charred, then treated with a penetrating oil, which stabilizes the wood, and finally sealed. The result is a beautiful gray-brown color that provides appealing contrast to the limestone and stucco, which Reese wanted. But the choice of finish is about more than just looks. *Shou sugi ban* also renders the wood rot resistant and nearly maintenance-free.

The house is composed of at least three more types of wood, including pickled oak for the floors, western red cedar for under the eaves and a very special crop of pecan that came directly from the Ryan family ranch in Junction, 140 miles west of Austin.

"We had a pecan orchard that died during the drought, so we were forced to take the orchard down," Ryan says. "So we harvested [the trees], milled them, kiln-dried them for a month and let them stabilize, and were able to get enough to do the treads and the landing out of it."

The staircase uses the pecan in floating treads and in combination with more modern glass and is the perfect example of the kind of contemporary look the Ryans aimed for. It's a family home designed around the kitchen, but the house also has the space to feel open and clutter-free and allows the materials to speak for themselves.

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—MICHAEL ANTENORA

“In a truly modern home, the materials are the ornament,” Antenora says. The home doesn’t need a flashy paint job or even window coverings because the materials have such character on their own.

The staircase is Antenora’s favorite element of the house. “The design of the stairs started with conversations and some cell phone pictures of stairs that Reese had seen over the previous few months,” he recalls. “It really became a collaborative process with Reese, me and the welder. We started with a rough idea and the desire to reuse some reclaimed wood from the drought-ravaged pecan trees. Through some hand sketches I created at the site, phone calls and the necessary waving of our hands in the air, the stair evolved into a very nice sculptural element that anchors the interior of the house.”

The Ryans don’t need window coverings because the house is designed so that they do most of their living in the back half of it. Whether the girls are doing their homework or Ryan, the family cook, is whipping up a brisket, the family spends much of their time in the kitchen. So the kitchen is at the back of the house, opening up to the pool area and backyard.

“Our other kitchens had been chopped up,” Alison says. “In our last house, we had a galley kitchen. Now our family gathers around the kitchen island all the time.”

And the space is remarkably clutter-free. In the kitchen, for example, stainless steel panels that are made to look like walls behind the stove are hidden cabinets for spices. Also, instead of leaving appliances on the counter or in an appliance barn, the Ryans store them in an abnormally large pantry. It, too, can be closed off by a door. “When I come home, I just want it to be peaceful,” Alison says. “When everything’s clean, it makes me feel better.”

The garage is used as an air-conditioned space for storage—and for Reese’s projects. “I’ve got a TV in there, and I can go out there and tinker with bikes or whatever else you don’t want in the living room,” he says.

And because the Ryans often have company, the guest house is designed to double as a poolside cabana. The space comprises a bedroom and spacious bathroom, so that guests might have some privacy while still maintaining close access to the kitchen and pool areas—within an arm’s reach of where the Ryans can almost always be found. ■





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The guest house (top) also serves as a poolside cabana while the master bedroom gives Alison the peace that she wants.

OPPOSITE PAGE

The master bathroom has a tub with a river rock bottom and a shower that can be entered from either side.