

Polka-dot prizes

Lavish yourself with some extra-special items, **N6**



ON ON2

LUXURY LIVING



The condos are all about extravagance, especially the ultimate luxury of space. Condos range in size from 818 to 4,808 square feet, with two-level penthouses measuring 3,350 square feet.

A balance of yin and yang

ALEX NEWMAN
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Parachuted into Toronto's buttoned-down Financial District, the whimsical Shangri-La Hotel & Residences offers an interesting bit of yin and yang.

Designed by Vancouver architect James Cheng, it's one of the tallest downtown buildings at 66 storeys, and with a glass, stone and brick exterior that appears to zip up one side and ripple down another, thoroughly modern. That's the yang.

The yin (literally "shady place" in Taoist philosophy) is the

heritage components the Shangri-La towers over. Such as Bishop's Block, a row of brick townhouses built in 1830 along Adelaide St.

SHANGRI-LA continued on N6

Shangri-La

Public art to be unveiled in May will set Shangri-La apart

Mid-size sedans offer value and luxury

A chauffeur is not required with these driving gems

JOHN LEBLANC
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

With many of the features found in more expensive full-size models, the mid-size luxury/sports sedan segment can offer a great deal of relative value.

Especially if you prefer to drive the car instead of being chauffeured around.

Here is a trio of such mid-sizers, each with four-doors, room for five, and the promise of driving fun. Plus, all three come with available traction:

THIRD PLACE: 2012 BMW 528i xDRIVE

Redesigned for 2011, the "big" news this year for BMW's 5 Series sedan is the introduction of the entry-level four-cylinder 528i model.

On paper, the turbocharged 2.0-litre matches last year's 3.0L six in horsepower (241), yet betters it in torque (258

to 230 pound-feet), and fuel-economy — obviously this model's *raison d'être*.

With a mandatory eight-speed automatic transmission, the all-wheel-drive 528i xDrive is rated at 8.8L/100 km in the city, and 5.9L on the highway. That's substantially less than the competition here — the Audi A6 3.0 TFSI Quattro and Infiniti M37x, rated at 11.3/12.0 city and 7.4/8.3 highway, respectively.

SEDANS continued on N6



The Infiniti M37x.

JOIN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

- ✓ INFORMATION
- ✓ EDUCATION
- ✓ ADVOCACY



BUILDING A GREATER GTA
Because the GTA is our home too

REASONS TO JOIN

- networking
- timely communications
- representation
- enhanced credibility
- trade with 1,350 member companies

CONTACT US: 416.391.5785 | MEMBERSHIP@BILDGTA.CA | WWW.BILDGTA.CA

ON ON2

LUXURY LIVING



These amazing ankle boots from the Surface to Air x Kim Gordon colab are \$565 at Jonathan+Olivia.



Navy polka dot board shorts \$92 at Jonathan+Olivia.

This bicolour long-sleeved ribbed shrug is \$485 at Jonathan+Olivia.



High street shopping at bargain-basement prices

Buy it at full price at some of T.O.'s most luxurious boutiques, or head to a consignment shop

RITA ZEKAS
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

High-end shopping is not about picking up some soy milk and bread on the way home.

It's all about buying something you don't need. What's need got to do with it? It's luxury.

The snob factor has always been a driving force in luxury shopping. Higher prices are considered synonymous with quality.

But everything has a best-buy date. The fabled Hermès Birkin, "the holy grail of handbags," is wait-listed for up to three years at Hermès (30 Bloor St. W.), and can run from \$9,000 to \$150,000 depending on the skins.

The crème de la crème of international brands is housed on Toronto's Mink Mile: everything from Chanel to Vuitton. Holt Renfrew (50 Bloor St. W.) and The Room at The Bay (176 Yonge St.), also carry them. Or you could alternatively blow out your credit limit at indie stores all around town.

Sermoneta has opened shop in the Colonnade (31 Bloor St. W.), the Canadian debut of the Italian glove

chain named after the medieval town near Rome. The glove affair starts at \$99 for driving gloves, rises to \$280 for opera length and escalates for fur and novelty designs.

119 Corbo (119 Yorkville Ave.) favours edgier labels like Alexander McQueen, Rick Owens, Dries Van Noten, Haider Ackermann and Martin Margiela.

R.A.D. (which stands for Research and Development) in the new über-cool section of town at 899 Dundas St. W., also carries Belgians like leather-crafter Nico Uytterhaegen, as well as esoteric lines like Lost and Found, not found anywhere else. R.A.D. had Rick Owens' iconic stretch denim and jersey leggings for \$715.

Jonathan + Olivia at 49 Ossington Ave. also carries ACNE and high-end brands like Alexander Wang, Band of Outsiders, Marc Jacobs, Rag & Bone and Surface to Air.

Wang's long-sleeved shrug is \$485; Surface to Air's booties are \$565.

George C (21 Hazelton Ave.) is arguably the best high-end shoe shop in town — if only for the Rocco P line of Italian boots. We love Rocco's

Bordeaux-coloured lace-up brogues (\$850) and the yummy Cesare Paciotti black suede stilettos with beaded embellishment and faux crocodile for \$995.

The women's section upstairs at George C carries couture pieces by Giles Deacon for \$34,000.

Hazelton Lanes (87 Avenue Road) is rather a retail wasteland but is still a go-to for TNT and the Fabrice Jewellery store. TNT (The New Trend) has been renovated to the size of Varsity Stadium. It is 18,000 square feet on two levels for women and a new free-standing menswear store on the second level.

They carry 350 brands of women's wear from all over the world — Comme des Garçons and Isabel Marant are huge sellers though we lusted after the tribal silk caftan by Matthew Williamson for \$1,495.

If we hang on, the caftan might be available in one of T.O.'s luxury consignment resale boutiques.

Shopee D'Or (18 Cumberland St.) stocks designer labels like Prada and Chanel, some of which still have the original tags attached. South Beach has come to Yorkville for spring: Shoppe D'Or has 700 pieces of summery cocktail dresses and gowns in vivid hues, prints and florals in sizes 6 to 14. Labels include

Valentino (\$189.50) and Carolina Herrera (a \$3,000 sample selling for \$295).

Haute Classics at 946 Yonge St. has a drool-worthy wall of designer bags — all the big guns from Balenciaga to Louis Vuitton. They have just unpacked a huge consignment of Dior bags from a "Dior obsessive" that will be priced in the \$650 range.

Cat's Meow Vintage Couture and Designer Wear at 180 Avenue Rd. has top-notch vintage, including Chanel jewellery.

OTC used to refer to over-the-counter drugs. Now it's Off The Cuff resale designer menswear at 5 Broadway Ave., which offers a laundry list of designers from Armani to Zegna. There are lightweight leather Prada and Dolce & Gabbana jackets selling for \$800 while retailing between \$4,000 and \$5,000.

Studio 1686 at 1686 Queen St. W. is the go-to for designer wear from film and TV productions at 60 to 80 per cent off retail. Sister-owners Marya and Irene Duplaga are stylists and wardrobe designers on films and television. A brand new Dries Van Noten blue print dress is \$495; as is a brand new Zac Posen dress.

Luxury with an Asian influence

SHANGRI-LA from N1

The hotel and condo complex is dramatically changing the street-scape, says Michael Braun, marketing manager of Shangri-La developer Westcorp. And yet, it will appear to be a "natural coming-together over time," with heritage brick at the corner juxtaposed against a glass tower with its intriguing angles at street level, outdoor café and an extraordinary art installation, "Rising," slated to be unveiled May 5. "Rising" is also an indicator of the level — and type — of luxury one can expect in both hotel and residences.

For starters, a restaurant will open by Momofuku, founded by celebrity New York chef David Chang. Condo residents can avail themselves of any hotel amenity, including room service from the restaurant, as well as maid service, use of the spa, concierge, valet parking, limousine service, indoor pool, a fitness facility, corporate function rooms and banquet rooms, 40-seat screening room.

The residences, too, are all about luxury, especially the ultimate luxury of space. Condos begin where the hotel leaves off — at floor 17 — and range in size from 818 to 4,808 square feet, with two-level penthouses on the top floors measuring 3,350 square feet.

A refreshing change from normal high-end fare, the 1,833-square-foot model suite is not only large, but airy and open, with the Italian Boffi kitchen as its centre hub, and dining, living and family room areas radiating out from there. This kind of layout affords great flow. Even with sunlight flooding through the floor-to-ceiling windows, it's easy to imagine a well-attended evening event, city lights twinkling.

It's also easy to see why the layout and design is such a game changer for the luxury market. Its designer, Anwar Mukhayesh, whose name was put forward by one of Braun's colleagues, is part of the hip and young The Design Agency.

Mukhayesh started with the kitchen — sleek wood cabinets, Miele and SubZero appliances — and designed the spaces around it. It dictated the spaces around, including the dining area which he



Living Shangri-La is 66 storeys with a glass, stone and brick exterior designed by James Cheng.

placed between the kitchen and the double balcony doors so dining would feel like "sitting in an outdoor pavilion." In like fashion, he selected modern furnishings — a white Saarinen tulip dining room, birch chairs and slim white-lacquer consoles against the wall.

Having two fireplaces also helped determine the seating of gathering spaces — living and family room. One fireplace is on a large support pillar at the end of the kitchen run of cabinetry, facing the windows — this is where Mukhayesh placed the living "room."

It's always a little tricky to create living rooms in situations like this with so many windows, Mukhayesh says, because there are no walls to

anchor the furnishings. But rather than depend on walls to define space, he used floor lamps, area rugs and furniture.

Delving deeper into the suite, and around the "corner" of its L-shaped configuration, Mukhayesh placed the family room. It also has a fireplace and, to further enhance the intimacy, he wallpapered the fireplace wall in a black damask.

Although the Shangri-La brand is best known as international modern or minimalist style, Mukhayesh says he incorporated traditional pieces to add the unexpected and to infuse the space with warmth: a tufted oversized leather sofa in the family room; a large button-tufted ottoman; spindle-turned glass legs on the coffee table which rest on a cowhide rug; a cream Barbara Barry-like chair in the living room.

While the two bedrooms are meant to be oases away from the public space, one of them plays with small doses of boldness in the same way — a bright blue blanket and two purple pillows are all it takes in a soft grey room. And in the bathroom, a photograph of picnickers on a Mediterranean beach introduces colour into the pale grey and white marble tiled bathroom.

Like the block in which the condo is situated, the suite's juxtaposition of eclectic elements lend a sense of having been there awhile. It's extravagant for sure, but understated at the same time.

The residences, priced from \$993,500 to over \$9.3 million, for unit sizes of 1,537 to 4,431 square feet, are appealing to a wide variety of buyers — first-timers who work on Bay St, downsizing local couples, international families interested in Toronto's educational opportunities, Braun says. With 80 per cent of the suites sold, Braun is feeling confident about Toronto's market and economy, and its ability to support and willingness to embrace luxury hotel/condo projects.

The sales centre is at 200 University Avenue, Suite 301, open Monday to Thursday and weekends from noon to 5 p.m., and closed Fridays. Call 416-599-0333, 1-866-599-0333, or go to living.shangri-latoronto.com for more information.



The 2012 Audi A6 3.0 TFSI quattro.



The 2012 BMW 528i xDrive.

Skip the chauffeur and drive yourself

SEDANS from N1

However, what you gain with the BMW sports sedan at the pumps, you lose in performance and refinement.

Taking 6.6 seconds to go from zero to 100 km/h, the BMW is about one second behind the competition. And fans of BMW's silky inline-sixes will be disappointed. Compared to the Audi and Infiniti sixes, the BMW four is smooth, all right. But the sound it makes is more of a whine than its purring rivals.

Plus despite being down on cylinders and power, the 528i xDrive's \$56,900 sticker (all starting prices) is still more than the M37x.

Spun off the larger 7 Series, the 5er delivers a high level of refinement inside. But when driven with verve, it feels more cumbersome than its rivals.

SECOND PLACE: 2012 INFINITI M37X

Also all-new in 2011, the mid-size M is the antithesis of the limo-like BMW. With an aggressive handling setup, the Infiniti feels smaller than its size chart says.

When hustled, the M37x feels solid, and comers flat. I liked the way the car steers too: direct and accurate. I only wish the steering ratio was a bit more linear. And — at times — road imperfections were felt more readily than in the smoother-riding BMW and Audi.

I tend to favour naturally aspirated engines, like the Infiniti's 3.7L six. And with 330 hp on-board, it trounces the forced-induction BMW and Audi mills. Off the line, though, torque is what you want. And with only 270 lb-ft the M37x is 55 behind the A6.

Starting at \$54,900, the M37x has

the lowest MSRP of this trio. But I didn't feel it sitting in its cockpit.

Build quality and passenger comfort is excellent, and with an active noise control system standard, the Infiniti was by far the quietest mid-size sedan I've driven in some time.

FIRST PLACE: 2012 AUDI A6 3.0 TFSI QUATTRO

The last-generation A6 sedan was no slouch. Through the years it had been slowly creeping up the lists of critics like yours truly, with excellent cabin ergonomics, gutsy engines, and Audi's class-leading all-wheel-drive system: a.k.a. Quattro.

And now with an all-new model for 2012, you get a sense that Audi should be penalized for piling on, as the \$58,800 A6 3.0 TFSI Quattro betters the competition.

For starters, the A6's powertrain has been measurably upgraded. With 310 hp and 325 lb-ft (increases of 10 and 15, respectively) the Audi's supercharged six comes mated to an automatic gearbox, now with eight gears. That helps fuel economy and still delivers prompt responses.

Where Audis in the past have sacrificed ride quality for athletic handling, not so with the new A6. It offers a sinewy feel through the corners, but doesn't suffer some of the harshness the M37x exhibits. And this may shock Bimmer fans, but the A6's steering feels more natural and intuitive than the 535i xDrive.

With such an overall competent package, some drivers may ask for more power in their A6. That should be rectified when the 420 hp S6 comes later this year. But until then, know the current A6 is the best all-around mid-size luxury sports sedan you can buy.