

ISSUE 01

THE Directory

Your First Build: What to Expect

What Nobody Tells You Before Your First Construction Project

Competition: Win with Five Iron

Be in with a chance to win a fantastic day out with Five Iron

Spotlight: Dubai Fit-Outs

Residential & Commercial Projects That Raise the Bar

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 **Contractors
Direct**



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Directory Magazine.

Brought to you by Contractors Direct, The UAE's leading matchmaking platform for anyone who's ever looked at their kitchen and thought, *"This is fine, but wouldn't it be better with a wine wall and a waterfall countertop?"*

We connect the savviest clients with the region's top-tier fit-out contractors—for residential sanctuaries, commercial empires, and everything in between.

What's Inside This Edition?

We're rolling out the proverbial red carpet for the crème de la crème of Dubai's fit-out scene. Expect:

- Featured Projects that'll make your living room feel inadequate.
- Behind-the-Scenes interviews with the project managers who make the magic happen.
- Trends to watch if you want your space to look to the future.

Whether you're a property developer, a retail visionary, or just someone who's had it with their interior, this is your one-stop shop for turning Pinterest boards into reality.

Enjoy the read. Learn something. Laugh a bit. And when you're ready to tackle your next project, you know where to find us.

— The Editor
Contractors Direct

David Cook
Editor-in-Chief

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COMMERCIAL FIT OUTS IN 2025: WHAT'S TRENDING?

2025: The Year of Smarter, Faster Commercial Design.

It is also the Year of the Snake. And while snakeskin should stay firmly in the 70s (alongside shag carpets), the symbolism fits. Agile. Sleek. Strategically coiled. This year's interior designs are shedding the old, revealing smarter, sharper spaces beneath.

From what we've seen this year, commercial fit-outs are doing just that: spaces built for how we work now. From hybrid-ready layouts to wellness features, at Contractors Direct, we've seen it all. If you're planning a fit-out or a rethink, get these images pinned on your Pinterest inspo boards!



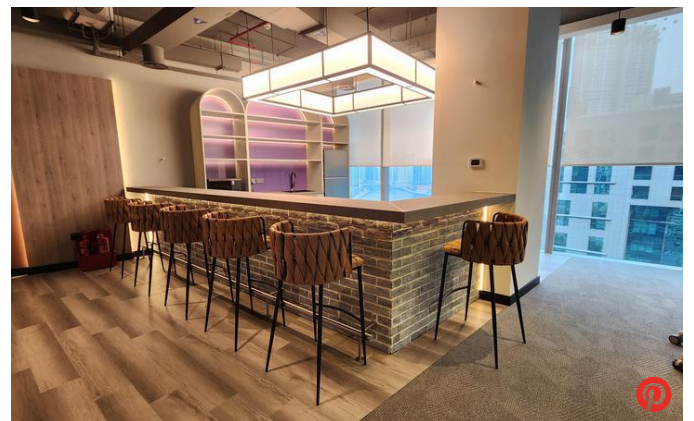
Wellness as a Priority

No longer a wellness “moment” — it's now a workplace baseline. Soft lighting, biophilic touches, prayer rooms, and better airflow are here to stay. As we predicted in our [blog](#), teams that feel good, perform better — and smart design is the new staff benefit.



Hybrid-First Design

Open-plan is over. Now, workspaces are zoned for real life: solo focus, team huddles, quiet calls, and casual collisions. Layouts now support how we actually work, not just how we look on a floor plan. Acoustic comfort and movement flow are just as crucial as the furniture.



Tech With a Light Touch

2025 isn't about flashy innovation — it's about frictionless function. From sensor lighting and plug-and-play video calls to AI-assisted HVAC, the best tech quietly makes your day easier. Spaces are getting smarter — without showing off.



Warm Minimalism, Maximum Impact

Forget the cold, corporate cube. This year, minimalism comes with texture, tone, and tactility. Think warm wood finishes, soft light, and simple spaces that invite calm. The result? Less visual noise, more mental headspace for you and your staff.



WHAT'S NEXT ?

Hospitality-Led Workspaces

Think less grey carpet, more hotel lobby. Offices are borrowing from boutique hospitality: ambient lighting and lounge-style furniture, concierge-style reception desks. The goal? Impress clients, relax staff, and make Mondays a little less painful.

Sustainability with ROI in Mind

Sustainability isn't just the ethical choice — it's the smart one. From motion-sensor lighting to long-life materials and low-VOC finishes, more businesses are embracing fit-outs that lower overheads and raise ESG scores.

The Rise of Reprogrammable Spaces

In a world of shifting headcounts and hybrid everything, one thing is constant: change. That's why more spaces are being designed to adapt — modular joinery, demountable partitions, and layouts that evolve as fast as your org chart.

ADVICE FROM A PROJECT MANAGER

Stephan Labuschagne

*Project Manager, Project
People*

Taking on your first commercial renovation? It's exciting, overwhelming, and often full of surprises. Most clients start with bold ideas and Pinterest boards, only to hit walls (sometimes literally). But if this is your first rodeo, today's your lucky day. Prepare to have your gob smacked, your flabbers gasted, and your ass...tonished.

Here's what to know before the first hammer drops.

Budgeting Isn't Just About the Build Cost

Most first-time renovators underestimate the total cost. On top of the contractor's quote, you'll likely need to cover:

- Permits and inspections
- Design and architectural services
- Utilities and tech upgrades
- Office furnishings and décor
- Contingency (10–20% for curveballs)

Tip: Set a realistic budget from the start — and keep an eye on it like your quarterly targets depend on it (because they do).



It Will Take Longer Than You Think

Delays happen. It's practically tradition. Whether it's permits, material shortages or last-minute design tweaks from your CEO, build in extra time for things not going exactly to plan.

Tip: Ask your contractor for a timeline that includes buffer periods. Trust us, you'll need them.

Communication Is Everything

Renovations involve a lot of moving parts and people. Without clear communication, things can get messy fast. Misunderstandings lead to delays, mistakes, and budget surprises.

Tip: Schedule regular check-ins with your contractor or PM. Don't be shy: "basic" questions can save time and money.



You'll Make a Lot of Decisions

From flooring finishes to lighting, the volume of choices in a renovation can catch you off guard. Some decisions are time-sensitive, others require a bit of vision and planning.

Tip: Stay organised with a folder for your selections and explore options for materials and finishes early.

You're Part of the Team Now

Hiring a contractor doesn't mean stepping back. Your input, timely approvals, and quick decisions are essential and can significantly influence the pace of your project.

Tip: Stay engaged and responsive. A well-informed homeowner helps keep the project on track.

Your input, timely approvals, and quick decisions are essential and can significantly influence the pace of your project.

You'll Need to Understand the Basics of the Process

While you don't need to be an expert, knowing the general phases of commercial renovation helps. These often include:

- Planning and design
- Permitting and approvals
- Site preparation and core works
- Partitioning and framing
- Utilities and MEP (mechanical, electrical, plumbing)
- Interior finishes
- Final inspections and handover

Tip: Ask your contractor to walk you through the process. Knowing what's next helps you stay informed and prepared.

Need a Steady Hand on Your Project?

Your first construction project is full of lessons: some exciting, some expensive. It's a journey with a steep learning curve, but with the right expectations, a solid team, and support from people who've seen it all before, you can absolutely get it right.

That's where Project People come in. They help you plan smart, avoid the classic pitfalls, and keep your commercial renovation running like it should — without the chaos, corner-cutting, or budget blowouts.

If you're staring down a renovation and already feel your eye twitching, speak to the team at Project People.

✉ enquiries@projectpeople.ae



KEY FEATURES:

- Swimming Pool
- Gym
- Cinema Room
- Barbeque Area

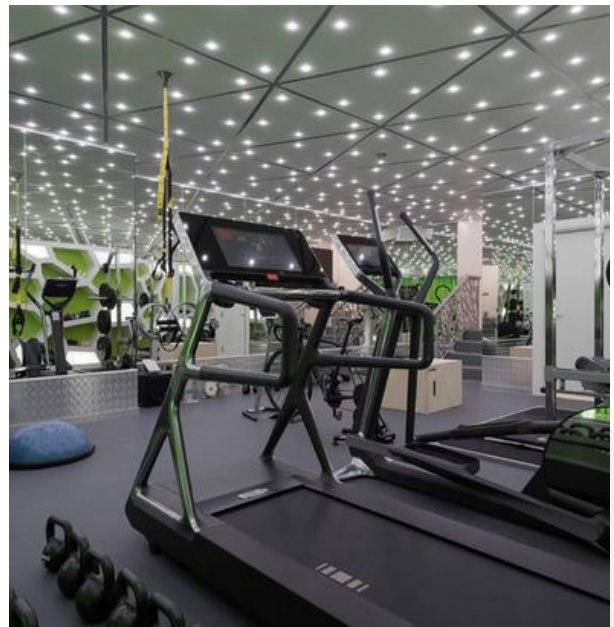
PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: AL BARARI VILLA

Al Barari is located only 15 minutes away from Dubai's major social hubs and amenities.

This extensive design and build project involved the complete transformation of a 6-bedroom villa in Al Barari, originally spanning just over 15,000 sqft and in fair, original condition. The client envisioned a timeless, luxury 'Western-style' home with an undeniable wow factor.



The scope included three major first-floor extensions and the conversion of the roof into a bespoke bar and social terrace, increasing the built-up area to nearly 18,000 sqft. The property was stripped back to its bare shell and meticulously rebuilt inside and out including full interior upgrades, pool redesign, and complete landscaping. Delivered over 12 months, the result is a stunning, resort-style residence that blends elegance, function, and lasting impact.



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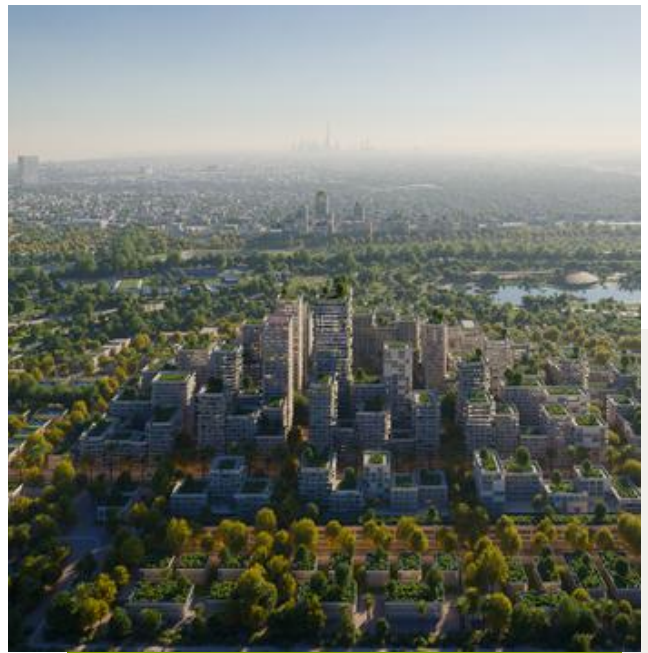
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DUBAI'S BOLD NEW VISION FOR JEBEL ALI RACECOURSE SITE

Dubai's iconic Jebel Ali Racecourse is set to become the heart of a visionary 5 sq km urban development, as A.R.M. Holding teams up with global architecture powerhouse BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group. The transformation, aligned with the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, is expected to begin in early 2026.

The masterplan reimagines the historic site as a sustainable, human-centric city, blending modern living with Emirati heritage. Designed as a “living landscape,” the development will feature interconnected “urban islands” with parks, homes, and hubs for culture and wellness – all within a five-minute walk.



Key Features:

- Green-first design: 100% of residents within 5 minutes of green spaces and essential services
- Wellness focus: “City-as-gym” approach with next-gen healthcare centers.
- Sustainable architecture: Climate-adapted design and passive cooling systems
- Cultural integration: Emirati-first housing, equestrian facilities, and community markets

With a strong emphasis on walkability, wellbeing, and local identity, the project is built around four pillars: Modern Living, Culture & Community, Wellness, and Sustainability. It aims to set new benchmarks for life expectancy, health, and urban connectivity in the UAE.

“This isn’t just development — it’s placemaking,” said H.E. Mohammad Saeed Al Shehhi, CEO of A.R.M. Holding. “We’re creating a city with purpose, where people and heritage thrive together”.



The background of the advertisement features a collection of teal-colored boxes and containers for Wallace & Company Fine Fragrances. In the upper right, a teal box is open, revealing a teal cylindrical container with the company name and 'FINE FRAGRANCES' printed on it. Below this, in the center, is another teal cylindrical container, also with the company name, resting on a teal box. To the left and right of the central container are more teal boxes, some of which are open, showing teal-colored candles or diffusers inside. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a focus on the teal color palette and the company's branding.

WALLACE AND COMPANY FINE FRAGRANCES

The Directory x Wallace & Company Exclusive Giveaway

Wallace & Company create bespoke scents for some of the city's most iconic hotels, including the signature Vetiver Cedar fragrance of Address Hotel JBR.

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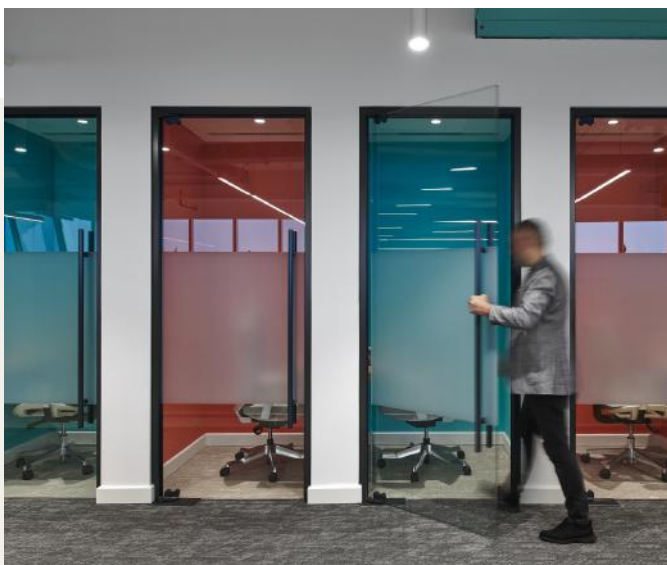
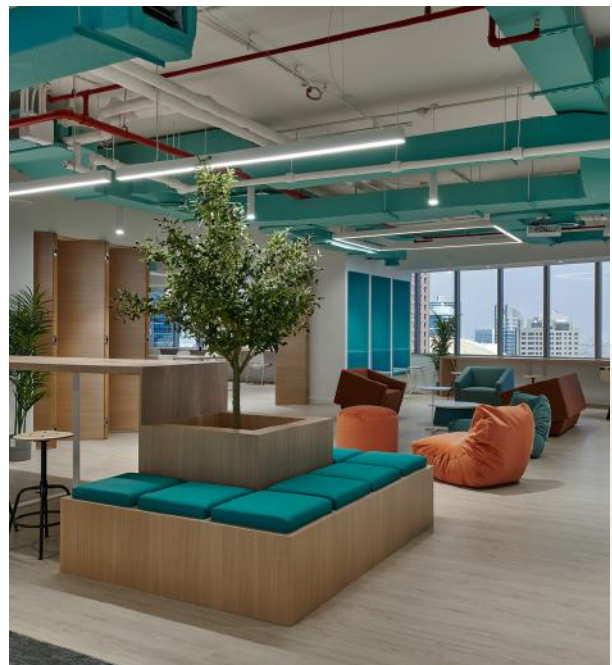


KEY FEATURES:

- Activity based
- Great flow
- Engaging design
- Cost effective

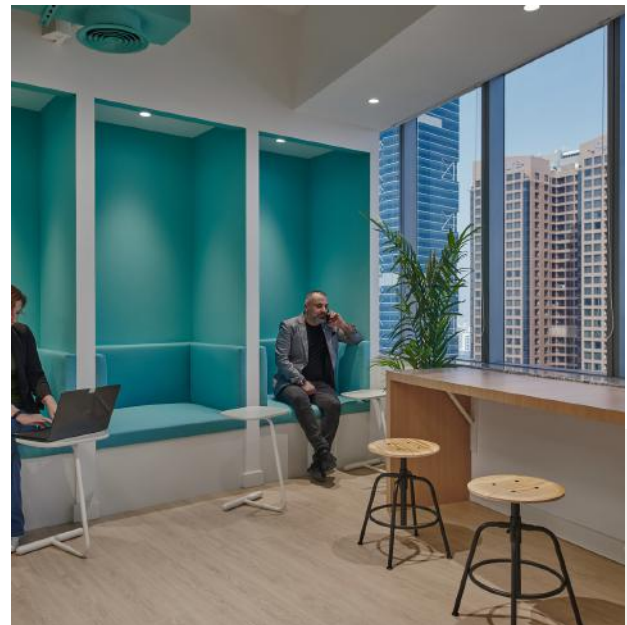
PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: EYewa

This fast-track design and build project in Media City, involved a full transformation of an 11,000 sqft office space, previously in a poor, dated fitted condition. The client required a young, vibrant environment that reflected their brand identity through bold, bright colours; while remaining within their budget.



With their existing lease nearing expiry, the programme allowed no room for delay. From initial engagement to final handover, the project was delivered in just 12 weeks which was an ambitious timeline rarely achieved in the market.

The result is a dynamic, functional workplace that balances creativity with cost efficiency, delivered on time and on brand.



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HIM. MAYBE YOU
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The Glorious Futility of Waiting: Why Delays are Just Life's Way of Bringing us Together

There are few things in this world more exquisitely designed to turn the human soul into a frothing cauldron of rage than waiting. Waiting in traffic. Waiting at the doctors. Waiting for the waiter (isn't that his job? It's in the title!). Delays, I am convinced, were not invented by accident. They are a feature, not a bug, in the software of the universe - a kind of cosmic prank designed to test just how close to insanity a man can get before he starts yelling at pigeons.

Now, I've spent a fair bit of time waiting. Airports. Motorways. For my so-called instant noodles to be ready. I believe I'm extra kind, patient, and generous. I have a heart twice the size of a normal person. It's called cardiomegaly, and it might very well kill me.

And while the British are supposedly famous for their patience, let me make one thing absolutely clear: that is a lie. We are not patient. We are polite. That's not the same thing.

I recall a time at a post office in rural Surrey. There's a queue. An old woman is trying to return a stamp she bought in 1987. Nobody says a word. Everyone just stands there, shifting slightly from foot to foot, like an audition for a retirement home version of Riverdance. Inside, of course, every single one of them is mentally composing an email to the Home Secretary demanding public hangings for inefficient service. That's the British way: suffer in silence, then go home and scream into a pillow. But proper, saintly patience, that is a different beast entirely. And it varies wildly across the globe.

Japan: Zen and the Art of Standing Absolutely Still

In Japan, for instance, patience is not just a virtue. It's a lifestyle. I once queued in Tokyo for ramen behind a man who had been waiting so long he'd grown a beard, gotten married, divorced, and taken up bonsai. And he didn't even flinch. No eye-rolling. No deep sighs. Just silent reverence for the process of soup.

This is a nation where people form lines for the emergency exit after an earthquake. If you set fire to a building in London, you'd see people trampling (on top) of each other to get out, like a stampede of wildly panicked giraffes. But in Japan (I'd assume) they'd calmly queue to escape death. That's not patience. That's black-belt-level waiting.

Italy: Waiting, But With Gestures

Contrast this with Italy. Italians do not wait. They pretend to wait, with style. You'll see a queue outside a bakery in Naples, and it's more of a loosely affiliated crowd of people waving their arms around like they're trying to land a plane. Everyone's shouting. Everyone's gesturing. No one is moving. Is it chaos? Yes. But it's Italian chaos, which somehow makes it charming.

If someone cuts in line? There's a dramatic monologue, possibly a fistfight, but they'll all be drinking espresso together by the end of it, reminiscing fondly, loudly, and with style.

Spain: Sleep it off

Nobody does the laid back approach to the working week like the Spanish. Monday morning kicks off regularly enough, with a strong start to the day, but by mid morning they are all safely back in bed. Just a short siesta I am assured, and normal service will resume about 4 o'clock. Now maybe I'm just jealous of this split shift approach to the day, and call me old fashioned, but I found myself rallying behind the small band of (mostly Gen Z) revolutionaries committed to pulling an all-dayer.

America: The Illusion of Now

Now let's look at America. The land of convenience, drive-thrus, and the delusional belief that the customer is always right. Americans do not like to wait, because they believe time is money, and therefore if you delay them for more than seven seconds, you've essentially stolen from them. This is why they invented things like "express lanes" and "two-minute oil changes".

Patience in America is not a virtue. It's a class-action lawsuit waiting to happen. If you tell someone their Amazon parcel will arrive in three days instead of two, you can expect to see your name trending somewhere.

France: They'll Wait, But They'll Complain

The French, meanwhile, have mastered the art of waiting while simultaneously letting you know they find the whole thing beneath them. Nobody waits with more disdain than the French. They'll queue, yes, but they'll do it with a cigarette, an exaggerated shrug, and the look of someone who has just stepped barefoot into *merde*. Delays are an existential affront. A betrayal. Proof that the universe, like most things, is terribly bourgeois and hopelessly flawed.

And yet... they do wait. Because deep down, the French enjoy the suffering. They've romanticised it. Every late train, every slow waiter, every union strike, is just more material for the next black & white movie.

India: The Quantum Theory of Waiting

Now, if you want to experience true chaos, go to India. Queues there don't exist in any form the Western mind can comprehend. They are a suggestion. A mood. A quantum state of potentiality. You may be first. Or you may be last. Both are simultaneously true and false.

The queue at a train station in Mumbai is a fluid organism, constantly evolving, occasionally sprouting new appendages. It's not impatience. It's simply a different way of understanding time - a sort of karmic Google Calendar where everything eventually evens out, possibly in your next life.

Delays and the Human Condition

So what does all this tell us? That the way people wait - or fail to - is not just about time. It's about how they see the world.

Patience, really, is about surrender. It's the moment you realise you have no control over anything. You can't make the traffic move. You can't make the barista go faster. You can't make your phone load that page any quicker no matter how many times you jab it. And that, my friends, is intolerable to the modern mind.

We live in an age of now. Of instant gratification. We want food in ten minutes and parcels delivered before we've even clicked "buy." We've trained ourselves to believe that delays are a personal attack. That waiting is a failure of the system, rather than just a fundamental part of existence.

But maybe - and I hate to say this - maybe delays are good for us. Maybe they remind us that time isn't just a resource to be spent, but a space to be. That there's something oddly liberating about staring into the void of inaction and accepting that you don't always have to do. You can just wait. Quietly. Patiently. Or, if you're British, by simmering in a silent murderous rage.

Bring a Sandwich

So the next time you're waiting an hour for your name to be called at the dentist while they play pan pipe covers of Coldplay - don't rage. Don't honk. Don't write a furious blog post entitled "The Tyranny of Incompetent Receptionists."

Just take a breath. Look around. Contemplate existence. Or better yet, take a hip flask and a copy of War and Peace with you, because chances are, you'll have time to finish it. Twice.

As for me? I'm still waiting for the flying taxis to arrive in Dubai. Until then, I'll be in the queue - at the back, muttering obscenities under my breath, pretending to be patient.

Now if you'll excuse me, my train was due 42 minutes ago, and I need to go and sigh theatrically in front of strangers.



BALCONY ETIQUETTE



YOUR LETTERS

Behind every fit-out is a story worth telling.
Send us yours: the good, the bad, and the
hilarious

Dear Directory,

This isn't a cry for help—just the final act of someone who's lost their patience, dignity, and, as of Thursday, most of the ceiling.

I manage a small office in Dubai, in what the developer called a “prestigious mixed-use tower.” I assume the “mix” refers to structure vs. chaos. We began a simple renovation: new floors, a few partitions, and air-conditioning that didn't sound like a dying helicopter.

Week 1: Imran arrived with a clipboard and the calm of a hostage negotiator. Promised “ten working days.” I now believe this was a riddle.

Week 2: A hole appeared in the floor. No warning. The foreman, who speaks in jazz hands, called it “part of the plan.” Someone fell in. We now call it the executive escape tunnel.

Week 3: A glass wall was installed—upside down. It magnifies crotches. Internal meetings feel like nature documentaries.

Week 4: Someone filled the lift with cement. Completely. When I asked why, the contractor offered me a samosa.

Week 6: Flushing the toilet now sets off the kitchen sprinklers. We've lost two laptops and half of Susan's birthday cake.

Week 7: They installed a fountain instead of desks. It plays pan flute music. No one knows why.

Then came the gym. We never asked for a gym. But now there's a treadmill on the balcony. It starts at 4 p.m. daily. It cannot be stopped.

Half the team works from home. The rest are trapped behind a wall. We communicate via air vents and thrown KitKats.

Yours in dust and despair,

– Distressed from Dubai

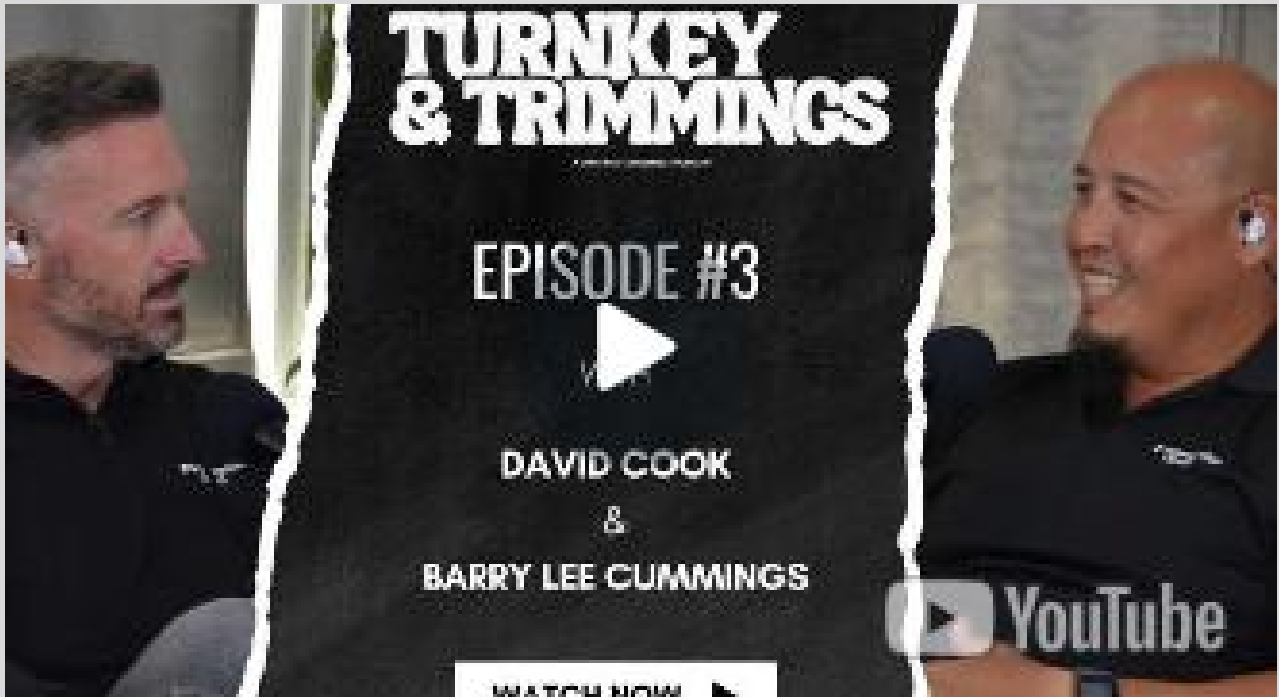
P.S. The ceiling fell again. We're using it as a ping pong table.

Disasters, triumphs, or surprise fountains — we want to hear it.

Email your story to directory@contractors.direct

TURNKEY & TRIMMINGS

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The go-to podcast for anyone who's ever tried to renovate, build, or fit out a space... and nearly lost their mind doing it.

In this episode, David and Barry unpack the chaos of the contracting world – dodgy builders, wild budgets, and how Contractors Direct is here to sort the mess.

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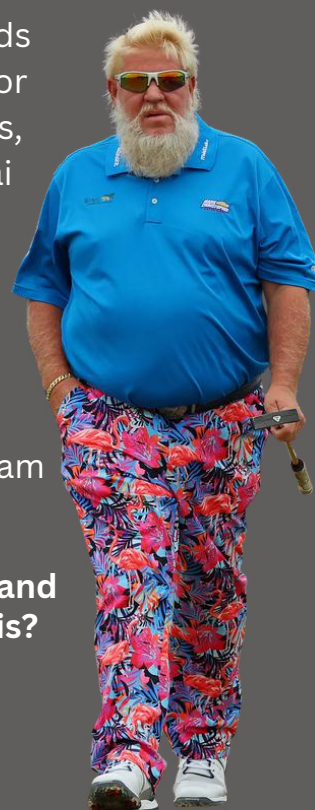
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page and answer this:

**Which famous maverick pro golfer, and
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Competition ends 15th August 2025



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