

BARN ENVY

by Erin Gilmore



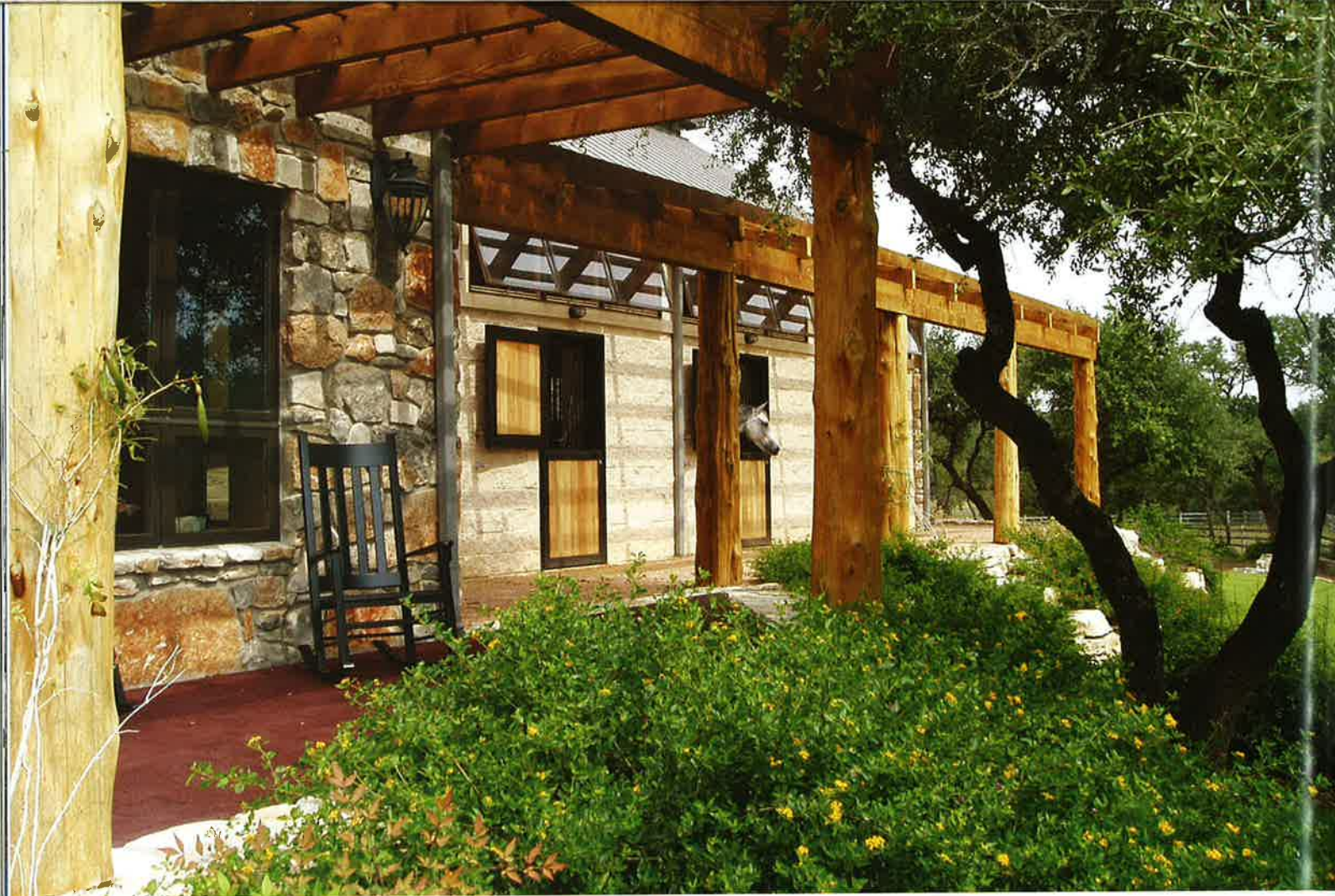
During the dead of summer in Austin, Texas, there's one thing that's at the forefront of everyone's minds, and that's the weather. Finding comfort despite extreme temperatures is a real challenge that affects horse and human alike. While we can step inside an air-conditioned room for relief, for the horses, natural air conditioning is as good as it is going to get.

Enter, Blackburn Architects. Known for their green barn concepts and attention to detail when planning for healthy airflow and light, they were an easy choice to go with when owners Willie and Debbie Graves were looking to expand their Oakhaven Farm. A small barn originally occupied the wooded, 150-acre property, but as the Graves two daughters picked up riding, the family found the need to expand.

Above: A wide skylight runs the length of the 16-stall main barn, and full-mesh, stall doors and wall-fronts provide a friendly, atmosphere for the horses. Rubber brick pavers cover the barn aisle.

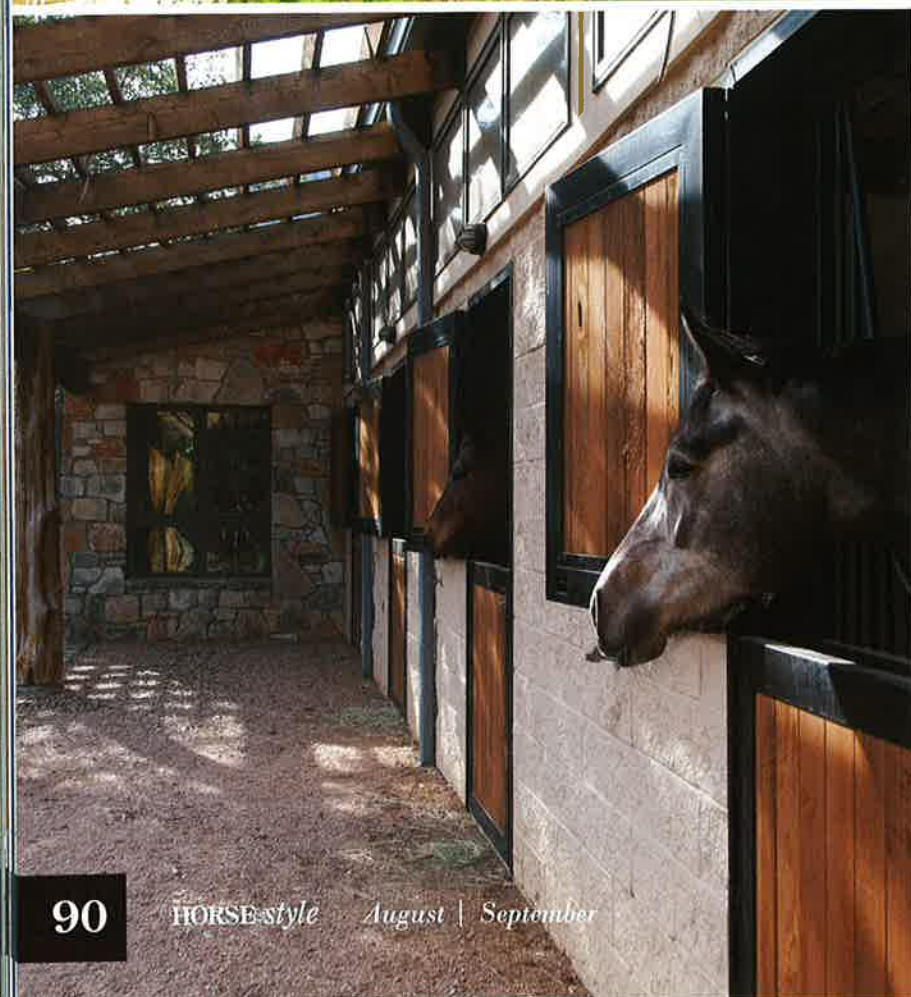
Oakhaven Farm





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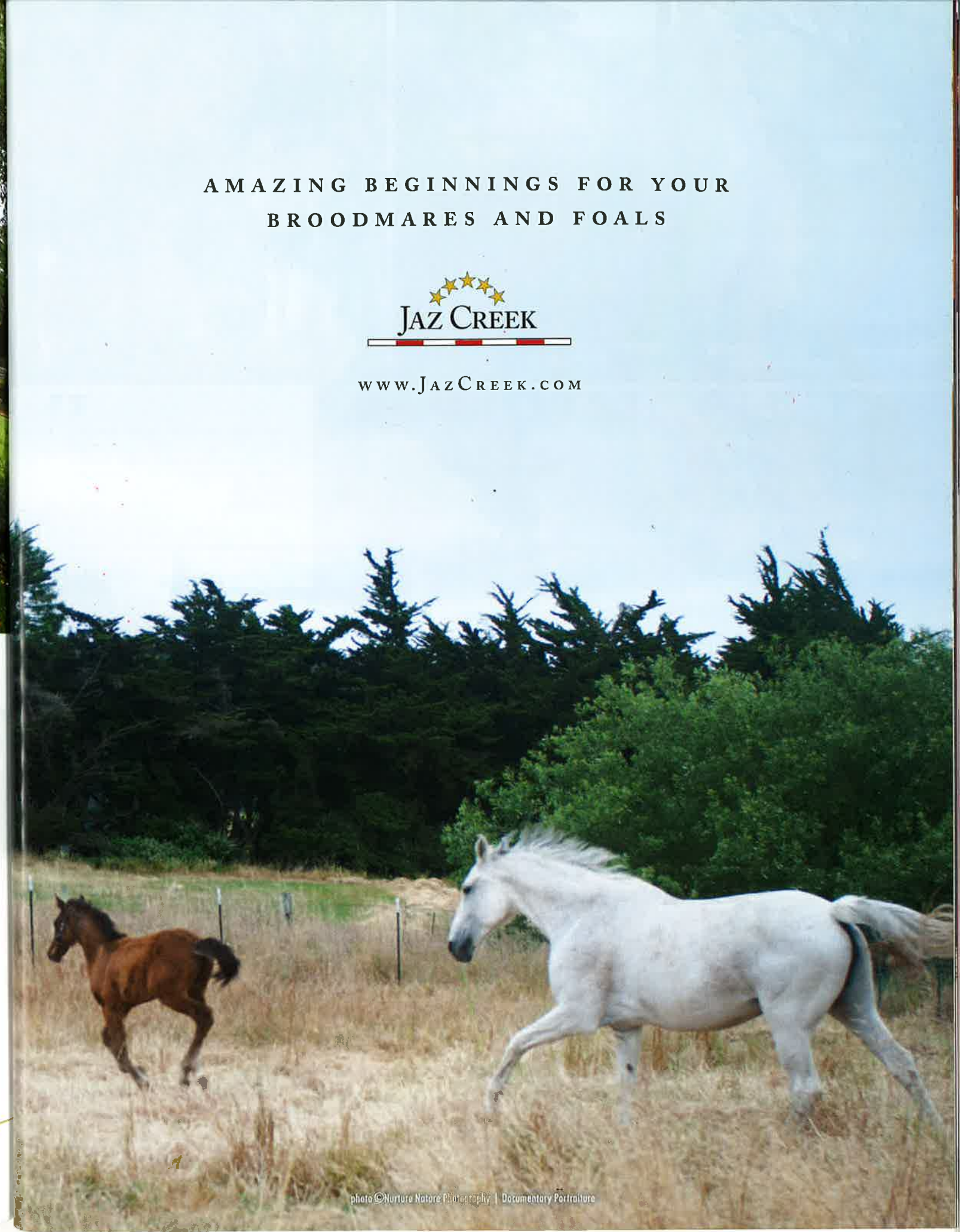

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“Our whole purpose in designing not only the barn, but the whole farm, is how do we protect the health and safety of the horse,” explains architect John Blackburn. “That begins in overall design, but it comes into factor with every little detail.”

The 16-stall barn that resulted sits atop a small rise within view of the Graves’ front porch. It is precisely oriented to run with the grade of the land and perpendicular to the prevailing breeze. A tall, sloped roof and aerodynamic ventilation work naturally to maximize air flow, and a long skylight that runs the length of the barn provides so much natural light that electric lighting is unnecessary during the day. In fact, the light inside the barn is so all encompassing

This page: The first time that architect John Blackburn drove onto the property, he noticed an old farmhouse with large cedar columns. When the farmhouse was taken down, those same columns were repurposed on the outside of the barn, giving it much of its character.





that the Graves have never had to put lights on their mares to bring them into season.

These days, the Graves' daughters are grown up, and their focus on the breeding operation has shifted to allow boarders at the farm. The facility has also become a popular location for various trainers to hold

Opposite page, clockwise from top: Trainer Susan Fuller on Zuri OPL in the covered arena; Primaballerina with her foal Penelope OPL; Trainer Senja Stevig on Eowyn OPL outside the main barn. Photos ©Monica Adams Photography

This page: Cedar-planked walls and smooth brick floors in the barn's tackroom are congruent with the exterior materials of the facility.



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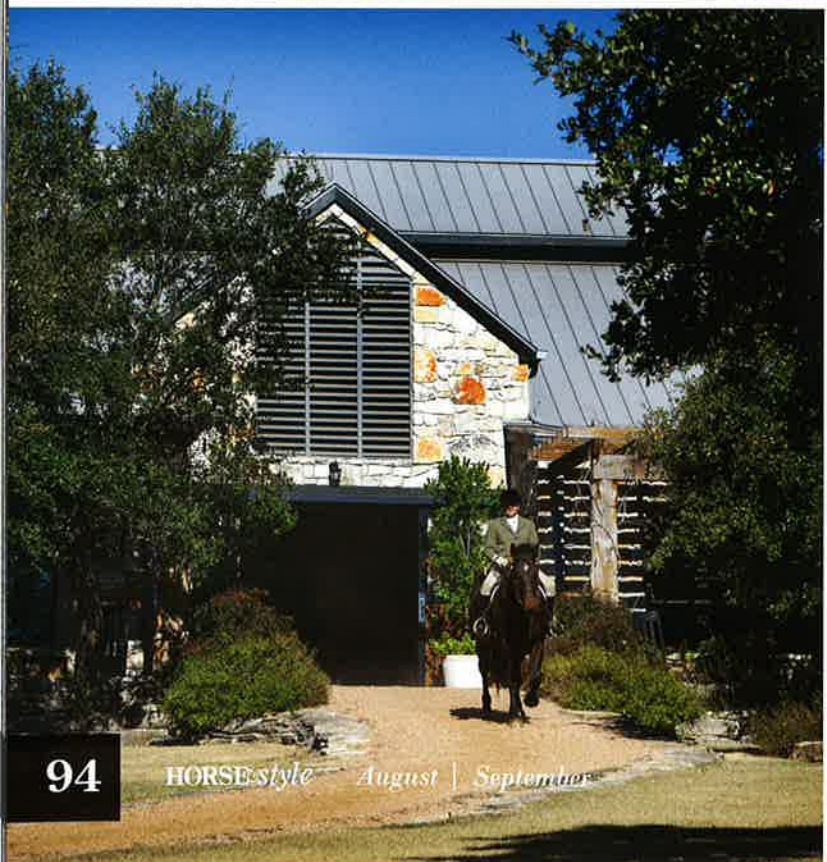
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Above left: A covered round pen is encircled by one of Graves' favorite features on the farm: the hotwalker. It holds six horses at a time and lets the horses walk and trot freely – a real timesaver!

Above: All of the rockwork was sourced straight from the property; the Graves employed a stonemason who dug up all the rock that makes up the low walls surrounding the barn. A stone picnic table and benches made from the same rock provide resting places for riders throughout the property.

Left: The prominent vents above the sliding doors at both ends of the barn act as a natural air-conditioning system, and actually help to pull air through the barn. "In the summertime you can go into that barn and feel your hair start to lift from the ventilation," says Blackburn.

clinics. They still produce at least one foal per year, and have a group of young horses by Contendor, Corland and Couleur Rubin.

"Most of our horses have gone on to have careers in the hunter and jumper world," says Graves. "This is an incredible place to raise young horses, there are trails where we handwalk the mares and babies, the stalls are extra large, and they are able to grow up with so much space around them."

The dry, rocky Texas landscape is incorporated into the barn's stonework and the cedar columns that support the trellis along the outside of the barn. In every element, Blackburn looked towards the environment for inspiration. In September, Blackburn Architects will release *Healthy Stables by Design*, a collection of outstanding barns that exemplify sustainable architecture practices in equine spaces. Oakhaven Farm is one of the facilities featured in the book.

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