

# NO GIRLS ALLOWED...

## in the Ultimate Man Cave

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK

**Y**ou hung that sign on the tree house you shared with your buddies when you were little, and things really haven't changed that much. No Girls Allowed is just one of the many unwritten rules guys keep in mind when designing their own personal space, better known as a Man Cave. No doilies, no baby toys, no candles, no perfume scents, no fluorescent or pink colors – the list goes on and on, according to Jason Cameron, who shares hosting duties with Tony “The Goose” Siragusa on the DIY Network’s “Man Caves” series.

“We want our own space,” said Cameron, and guys are finally speaking up to the domestic goddess to ask for—and receive—a little bit of privacy. “Guys got tired of being pushed to the side. We tend to appease the wife when it comes to decorating the house, but we don’t really have a space to call our own. That’s all changing. We’re excited about creating a space where we don’t have to answer to our wives. It’s all about us.”

A man cave is best described as a place a guy can go to be himself, surrounded by what he likes. Depending on his hobby, the focus may be sports, cars, music, cigars or fine wine. One thing is certain, the man cave boasts at least one large flat screen TV, and generally a bar.

“Every guy is unique, but there’s obviously a manly look to the place,” continued Cameron. “You’ll find lots of clean lines, leather furniture, rocks and earth tones. Man caves are pretty simplistic, but they turn out amazing.”

Typically, the man of the house is relegated to his workshop in the garage if he wants a private space. Nowadays, he’s claiming it as his own territory. The technology and products being developed are making it a welcome part of the house. It’s not just a matter of adding built-ins, painting the walls and sealing the floor. It’s about creating a dream come true.

Chad Haas of Vault Brands views the garage as the final frontier. The changing garage industry is akin to where home theaters were about 10 years ago, according to Haas. The garage is a substantial footprint that often dominates the architecture in the front of the house. And, when you open the door, your neighbors see into your dirty, embarrassing, disorganized unfinished soul. When the garage is welcomed into the heart of the homeowner, the possibilities become endless. What a perfect place for a man cave.

“At Vault, we’re focused on making the garage an essential part of the house,” said Haas. “People generally see it from the street, so it should be properly furnished. To homeowners, it’s the main entry to the house. The front door is reserved for guests. We want to design an entire space that exudes your personality and your interests, and carries the design of the rest of your home into your garage.”







Photo courtesy of Michael Sypniewski for DIY Network



Photo courtesy of Abbott's Technology Design Group



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Haas's first customer was the founder of a sportswear company. "He told me, 'This is my refuge. This is the place for me to hang out with my friends.' When he invites his friends over, he opens up the whole house. The car barn became an area where he and his friends can hang out,

talking about cars, smoking cigars. It's like his art collection. He exhibits his cars."

Another of Haas's customers is an attorney who is passionate about Ferraris and Italian architecture. He wanted something elegant and Italian, to carry the same feeling and design from his house to the garage. And that's exactly what he got.

Haas didn't leave all the fun for his customers. He created his own special retreat. "People from all over fly up just to see my garage," said Haas.

Even though it's a man cave, the women are involved in a good portion of the development. "Men probably think of the garage as their space. This is their room that they can have fun with," said Haas. "Surprisingly, women are driving the change more than guys. About half of our customer base is women. They want it to be a beautiful place where guys want to hang out and entertain."

Michael Rhodig of Garage Mahals strongly supports the 'last frontier' status of the garage, and focuses on creating a complete custom environment for men and their toys.

"At Garage Mahals, we go out of our way to find custom items you just can't find anywhere else," said Rhodig. "I want everything to go together, and I don't want you thinking you can

find it at Home Depot."

Rhodig works very closely with his clients to determine the exact look and feel for the man cave. "Regardless of the theme the client wants, we can provide it," said Rhodig. "Our clients are high net worth individuals. They want to live. They want to have it all. They understand they can't take it with them. Our work can be done anywhere in the world, as long as we have a local contractor. We can even do airplane hangars.

"Our clients will come to us and say, 'These are things I want to have in here. Can you build me a space that has all that stuff?'" continued Rhodig. "We sit down and have a great conversation. I come well equipped with images, sample materials and lots of ideas. Some of the best ideas come through these conversations. I look at who they are, what they have and what they'd like to have, what they'd like to do."

One of Rhodig's clients wanted his office built in his garage, where he could view his prized automobile—suspended above the floor. Another client is a frequent visitor to Las Vegas and wants that fun, exciting vibe built into his private domain. Still another wanted something a bit more peaceful, so Rhodig designed a Zen garage.

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Photo courtesy of Garage Mahal



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Rhodig's man caves aren't just about cool finishes and custom appointments. They also include personal collections, artwork, the now-infamous flat screen television, a humidifier, a bar and any other little thing the owner desires. Oh, and they are all heated and air conditioned, as well as have a custom lighting plan.

Chris Abbott of Abbott Technologies has been involved in creating a more typical idea of a man cave—an unused portion of the house, usually an extra bedroom or a game room—and supplying it with the latest and greatest technological components. Of course, that includes multiple flat screens positioned around the room so as not to miss a second of sports action, usually a gaming console, a theater system, a sound system, an iPod docking station, a PC hookup to the TV and a central control board.

"They are like their own little sports books," said Abbott. "Usually the main TV is at least 60 inches, and there are three smaller ones. Then add wood floors, a full bar, comfy chairs, and you have a great place to entertain your friends and relax and not be around the family."

If you're afraid that you'll miss that late arriving guest, not to worry. You can set up your system to see who is at the front door through your television then buzz them in without ever leaving the comfort of your man cave.

"It's a great way to decompress," said Abbott. "If you have to go to your room, what a fantastic room to go to!"

One of Abbott's clients converted an existing game room into his man cave. "I have two sons, so we all use it," he said, "but it's definitely No

Girls Allowed. It's self-contained. It has to be in order to be considered a man cave. During football season, I'll spend as much as 16 hours there on the weekend. My wife, on the other hand, could wait years to turn on the TV."

In this client's man cave, the TV is the center of attention. The room already had a refrigerator, sink and dishwasher, so it's easy to share some pizza and beers with the guys while catching a game or two. It boasts a 72-inch main TV, with two 27-inch secondary sets. It also has a DVD player, a CD player, a central control unit, and it's decorated with numerous concert photos.

"Anyone who asks me if they should convert their media room to a man cave, I say do it!" said the client.

Another Abbott client, Dr. Troy Watson, took the man cave idea to a whole new extreme by building a 14- by 20-foot addition to his house.

"I wanted a golf simulator for the room, and those were the dimensions we needed for one from Full Swing Golf," said Watson. "I work long hours and I'm not always able to make it to the course during the week, but I wanted to keep up my game. This way I can hit a few balls after work then catch a round on a course on the weekend."

Although it's his man cave, the man with the Matthew McConaughey voice has relented and invited his family to share in the fun. They also added a courtyard with lush vegetation to the front of it, to fully integrate it into the architecture of their house.

"My wife thought it was crazy to build an extra room on the house, so I had to come up with an idea to convince her," said Watson. "Now,



Photo courtesy of Garage Mahal

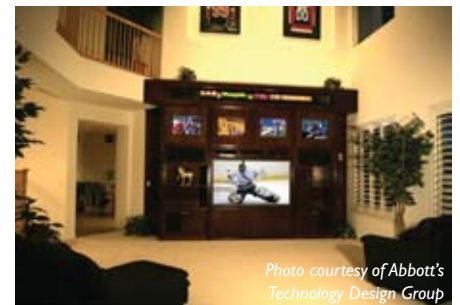


Photo courtesy of Abbott's Technology Design Group

it's not just a golf room, but a theater and game room as well. I'd say 80 percent of the use is just us guys. I'll have my friends over and we'll catch a game during football season and drink wine from the wine room that's attached to the man cave, and usually play some golf, too. However, it's also a great place for the neighborhood kids to hang out, catch a movie, play some video games, and just have a great time."

In addition to the dropdown screen, the room boasts a plasma screen on a side wall, and a TV over the bar. It also has a PlayStation, a Wii and a theater-style popcorn maker. "It took almost a year to complete the project, but it's

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now a very well-utilized room,” said Watson. “However, I told my wife that I didn’t want any flowers in there, but I’m almost certain they’re on the back of one or two of the pillows.”

Jon Watters, from Full Swing Golf, says his company started out selling commercial systems, but now sells more residential systems. “You can play an actual round of golf as if you were on the course,” said Watters. “You will use every club in the bag as if on a golf course. It’s not just about golf, it’s about having one room with unlimited entertainment so you never have to leave your man cave. Once you go in, you don’t have to go out.”

With the Full Swing Golf simulator, there are 60 different courses you can play, and you can even play with someone over the Internet on the other side of the world. “Vegas has been a great town for us. Guys either install the simulator in the house, or utilize an extra garage bay. Life is full of things to do. To be good at golf, you have to be hitting balls all the time. What they’re seeing in the simulator is exactly what they’ll experience on the course. They can save face when they play with the guys.”

However, the guys have to watch out who enters their man cave when they’re not at home.

Photo courtesy of Garage Mahal



Watters said one of his clients was married to a woman who was not very good at golf. She decided that while he was at work, she’d use the simulator. They next time they went out to play a round of golf, she beat him.

So, it appears that man caves are a growing phenomenon, and are definitely here to stay. But, how do you create your own?

According to Cameron, each homeowner

brings his own ideas to it. “The most important thing is to plan it out correctly because, once you get started, you just want to work straight through and get it finished. Make sure the space is mancaveable. Do the prep work. Plan accordingly, and just have fun.”

Okay, you guys can go ahead and have your man caves. We women have the whole rest of the house!

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