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HER STYLE

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Interior designer Kristy Kropat converted this four-car garage in Rancho Santa Fe into a plush game room and nuptial cave.

BACK TO THE CAVE

MAN SPACES AS DIFFERENT AND 'SLICK' AS THEIR OWNERS

BY CHRISTY SCANNELL

There were a lot of pluses that drew Russ Havens to the Kensington house he purchased with wife Judit a few years ago. But one quality far surpassed the others: its remodeled garage, the designated site for his long-awaited man cave. "I got really lucky," he says of the space he selected for his guy-friendly hideaway. "It was a perfect shell. It already had the epoxy floors and deep cabinets."

Havens plastered the walls with his collection of surf movie posters from the '50s and '60s, unboxed his extensive set of slot cars for display, hooked up the stereo and hauled in an old computer the family wasn't using. A dorm fridge provides cold drinks, while a shabby sofa and an IKEA rug add a touch of warmth.

"It's all stuff you would never be able to put in the actual house," Havens says. "I think it's a solution for happy couples—and an even

better solution for non-happy couples."

As Havens realized how much he was enjoying his man cave (he calls it his "decompression chamber"), he figured other guys probably were, too. In 2009 he launched checkoutmygarage.net, a social networking site where like-minded men can upload photos of their at-home getaways. Cavers from as far away as Europe have participated, showing off everything from banner collections to rare cars and vintage art.

"It's as unique to the space as it is to the person," Havens says of the man caves on his site. "Sometimes it's almost like a little boy's room—everything you had then somehow reappears in your cave, like those autographed hockey pucks."

Havens' philosophy is decidedly organic when it comes to outfitting his cave. He says everything in it he either collected or received free or at low cost. And he is still waiting for a good deal on a TV, a must-have for



Interior designer Tracy Lynn gave this 4S Ranch garage a NASCAR-themed makeover.

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—RUSS HAVENS, FOUNDER OF CHECKOUTMYGARAGE.NET

MAN CAVE TRAPPINGS

- DISCO BALL AND LAVA LAMPS
- AUTOGRAPHED PHOTOS FROM ATHLETES OR MUSICIANS
- POOL AND/OR FOOSBALL TABLE
- KEGERATOR OR OTHER BEER REFRIGERATION
- MUSIC SYSTEM—FROM AN IPOD TO SURROUND SOUND
- THEATER SEATING
- BAR, FROM STACKED CRATES TO CUSTOM CARVED WOOD
- PINBALL OR MACHINE VINTAGE ARCADE GAME
- TRAIN SET
- WOODWORKING BENCH
- AUTO SHOP
- STRIPPER POLE

Source: Russ Havens

An in-home theatre is one of the amenities in this Normal Heights home, featured on Page 43.



a fully functional man cave.

"If they're too slick, they lose their point," he says. "You've got to be able to not worry so much about spilling and creating a mess. If not, why not just stay in your house and let the family room be the 'man cave.'"

Not everyone agrees. When interior designer Tracy Lynn of Style on a Shoestring was working on a 4S Ranch home recently, she was asked to create a NASCAR-themed man cave in the house's garage (photo, top right).

"[The homeowner] loves to rebuild old cars and he wanted a space where he could have all his guy friends and his sons over to watch a sporting event, crack open a beer and work on the cars," Lynn says.

Lynn wouldn't divulge the room's cost, but she said similar cabinetry, lighting and flooring can cost upwards of \$20,000, depending on the room's size and scope.

"It's worth it because it's a space where they can really have their say

about what represents them and what they want," she says.

But compromise goes a long way, too. When Kristy Kropat of Kropat Interior Design was working on Richard and Jennifer Kim's Rancho Santa Fe home, the homeowners chose to convert their four-car garage into a game room. The couple—who met playing pool—agreed on a dark lounge theme with mood lighting, shag rugs, animal print sofas and chrome accents. The effect, Kropat says, is similar to a nightclub (photo top left).

"You go into that room, and it doesn't match the house. It feels like you are getting away from the normal space," she says.

"I guess that makes it kind of like a man cave, except that in this case it's a man and woman's cave," Kropat says with a laugh.