



The Corvette man cave.

It's A Cave New World

It's time for men to have a place of their own.

By Susan Kehoe, Ph.D.

The old phrase, "A man's home is his castle," does not always ring true. Many men want a private space of their own where they can pursue their interests, hobbies and passions without being disturbed. They call this place a "man cave," and it has become a growing concern in the past few decades. Some women say it's simply a metaphor for a room where guys can do what they please and leave a mess.

Others contend that man caves have been around for a long time, in one form or another. Wouldn't Ernest Hemingway's hideaway in Key West, complete with wall-mounted hunting trophies, qualify? There he drank scotch, smoked his cigars and wrote about bullfights and "men being men" on his Royal typewriter. And what about the art studio that Winston Churchill had built in his garden? He retreated there to put brush to canvas whenever he felt the "black dog" of depression tailing him. Even Charles Darwin's private study, lined with books and

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Man cave:

a male retreat or sanctuary in a home, such as a specially equipped garage, spare bedroom, media room, den or basement.

— Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

animal specimens, could be considered a man cave, if not a predecessor to one.

POP CULTURE PHENOMENON

The actual term “man cave” is thought to have evolved from the 1993 book by John Gray, *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*, which is another phrase that has worked its way into the popular imagination.

While Gray did not exactly coin the term in his book, he stated that when men’s tolerance to stressful situations is exceeded, they withdraw temporarily, “retreating into their ‘cave’” so to speak. He continues that “in their ‘caves,’” men are not necessarily focused on the problem at hand, but they get some time and perspective to deal with it later.

Hence the man cave, a phenomenon that has given birth to an industry with merchandise such as man cave bumper stickers, stores, paid memberships and a magazine. The “Official Man Cave Website” (www.mancavesite.org) boasts of 7,000-plus members, and a DIY TV show (www.diynetwork.com/shows/man-caves) demonstrates how to build, transform and decorate a man cave.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE MAN CAVE

Creating a man cave is not a simple thing. In fact, the way a “cave dweller” decorates and improves his cave can go hand-in-hand with building his identity. There are, however, fundamentals that apply to all caves: a large-screen TV and a comfortable place to lounge where they can enjoy male camaraderie, possibly with a drink and a good cigar.

According to Clearview Electronics (clearviewelectronics.com), a Keego Harbor store that often helps with the build-out of man caves, the most important element is the biggest TV the space can hold.

Store manager Mike McElyea says, “We sell and install TVs as large as 85 inches in man spaces. People once used projectors to get a larger screen, but with 85-inch TVs that are four times the resolution of standard HD TV, the projector at 90+ inches doesn’t offer much more screen space, and it’s a trade-off in picture quality.”

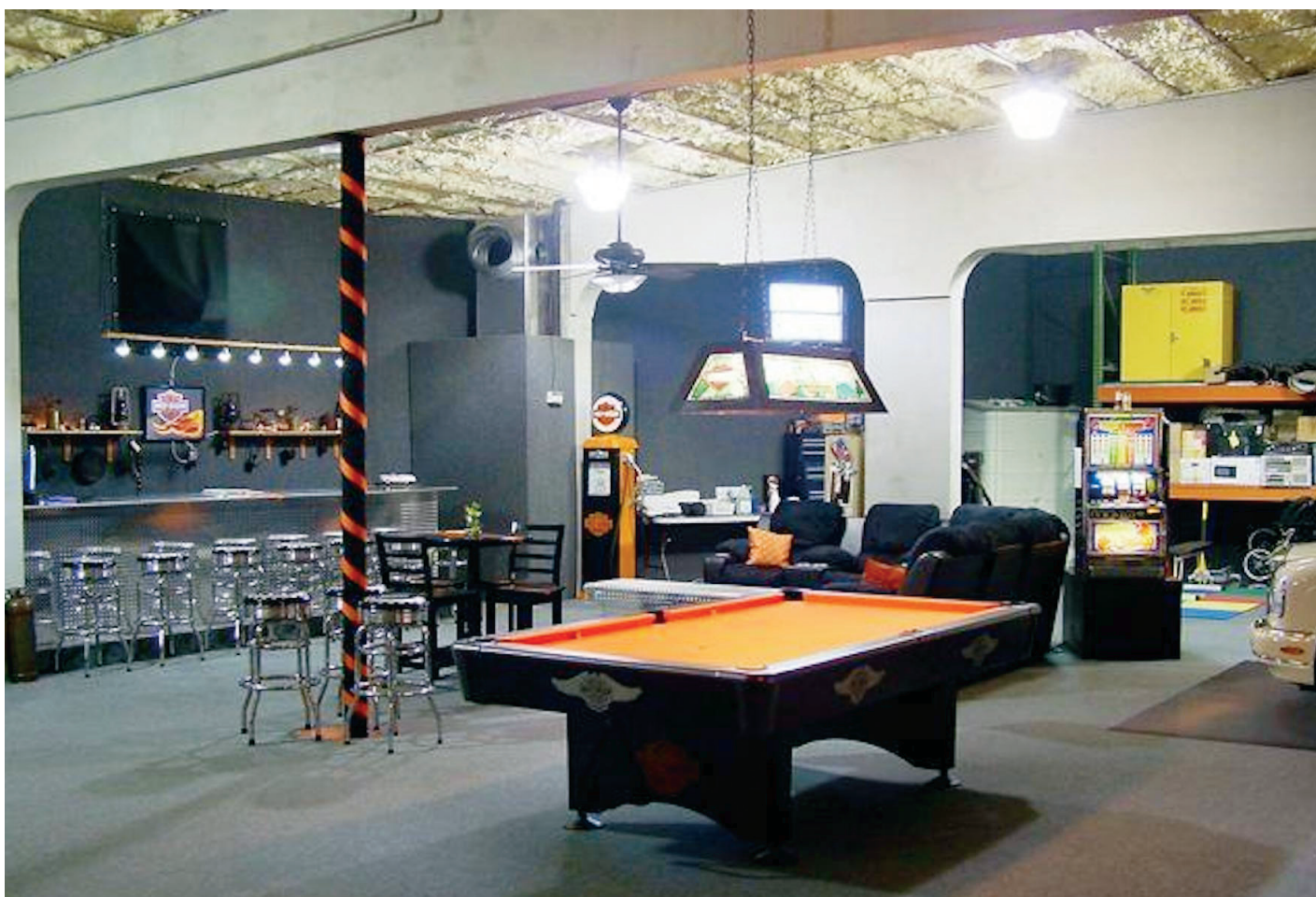
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Top: Motorcycle man cave with great bar space. Bottom: Man cave of Jimmie Johnson, first NASCAR driver to win five consecutive championships. The cave reflects his love of racing motorcycles on weekends near his home in Charlotte, N.C.

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Above left: A “Record” man cave also filled with pinball machines and lounge chairs in front of the big-screen TV.

Center: The “Guitar” man cave has a practice place to jam with the guys. A couple framed records are displayed in the lounge area in front of the TV. A convenient billiards table ensures relaxing downtime. The bar is easily accessible to all three spaces. With a large, walk-out level, it has everything a cave dweller could want.

Above right: A luxurious man cave for the “video aficionado” has a sunken seating area with theater-style chairs and huge viewing area. The rough-cut stone around the bar picks up the mountain rustic theme, as do the wood ceiling and beams. An open concept room, it leaves plenty of room to enjoy the billiard table and a view of the wine cellar on the other end.

Left: An example of a well-furnished garage man cave with all the amenities and a little room for storage behind the dry-walled arches. The hobby car peeks out from a corner and the bar is hidden in the opposite corner. But, the pinball machine and billiard table attest to serious gaming. The old gas station pump sets the atmosphere. Nothing can beat the comfy chairs aimed toward what is undoubtedly a large-screen TV.

He says that Clearview is also installing more home automation systems in man caves so the cave dweller has the convenience of a single remote to control the entertainment system, lights, temperature and other electronics from the comfort of his lounge chair.

DECORATING THE MAN CAVE

When it comes to decorating, Ginny Snook Scott, chief design officer of California Closets, says, “Men are looking for amenities that give a special sense of reward.”

For example, the rustic and refined cave dweller not only has a TV, but a home theater with a sunken screening area and leather theater-style chairs. The open-concept room pictured includes a wine cellar and a well-appointed bar just a few steps from the

billiard table. The decor is “mountain rustic” with a wood ceiling and beams, and a stone facade around the bar.

A “sports” man cave may have multiple screens to view more than one game at a time with sports-junkie friends. Sports memorabilia will be a key decoration, or the entire cave may be decked out with a Michigan college theme and perhaps a beer keg for the right atmosphere.

Men who are 40-something and younger often want to have a “PC gaming” cave with multi-monitor battle stations, pinball machines and favorite posters. A three-screen setup allows play across all three screens, or the multi-tasker can play on one screen, video chat on the second and web browse or watch TV on the third.

The “Corvette” man cave seems to be a classic

in garage caves. With the car culture in the Detroit area, there must be a car cave for every model. Some dwellers like to tinker with the mechanics or detail their car, while others just want to bask in its beauty.

Other themes include the guitar or music aficionado, any collection, vintage toys or trains, work-out caves for the physically fit and, sometimes, a quiet space for a woodworking shop.

In a man cave, it doesn’t matter whether one has a mini refrigerator with a TV on top next to an old arm chair, or a mini tavern with a home theater and leather lounges. The point is — having your own space. The term man cave may be new as it relates to garages, spare bedrooms and basements, but as Hemingway once wrote, “A clean, well-lighted ‘place’ is a very different thing.” **NS**