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SOME CAR FANS' ENTHUSIASM GOES WAY BEYOND THEIR RIDES.

BY PAUL HODGINS
STAFF WRITER

In Southern California, the garage is the Rodney Dangerfield of rooms: a bedraggled sad sack that gets no respect. It's the place where unwanted gifts, tawdry room glasses and last year's fashions go to die alongside the broken lawn mower, the unused bikes and the worn infant car seat. In a land where usable attics and basements are rare, the garage is a humongous, homely catch-all.

Unless, of course, that garage belongs to the home of a car nut.

"It doesn't matter if they're rich or poor or somewhere in the middle—they tend to spend a lot of their money on the garage and the car," said Don Webberg, editor, publisher and founder of *Garage Style Magazine*, a La Habra-based quarterly that caters to exactly that kind of person.

Webberg has seen some pretty impressive home garages in his day, including millionaires' spreads that could park a jetliner.

Some are full-on man caves. The testosterone level is sky-high in Billy Skeffington's Villa Park garage, where he rotates his E-vehicle collection of 1960s American muscle cars through a couple at a time; the rest stay at a rented facility in Santa Ana.

"I wanted a getaway, kind of a man-cave feel," Skeffington said of his automotive inner sanctum, home to a TV viewing area, a collection of model speed boats, a chandelier and a fascinating collection of photos and other memorabilia detailing the lives of famous American gangsters.

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Billy Skeffington rotates vintage cars through the garage at his Villa Park home, at left. In the bays: a yellow 1966 Chevelle, a lime green 1964 El Camino and a red 1968 Camaro RS5.

The workbench in Barry Megular's Balboa Island garage, above, has a selection of car care products made by his family-founded company.



LEONARD ORTIZ,
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

GARAGES *gone glam*



PHOTOS: LEONARD ORTIZ, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Weberg admires the cavernous automotive shrines, but he's equally impressed with smaller Garage Mahals, too.

"I've seen a lot of really nice garages built by people in law enforcement. They make a regular salary. They did some work themselves and invested in their garages little by little over the years and ended up with something really nice."

Some middle-class car aficionados finance their dream garages through their automotive hobbies, Weberg said.

"They'll buy a vintage Camaro, they'll fix it up a little bit, then they'll sell it for a bit of a profit. Either they buy another car or they put the money into a garage."

In densely populated Orange County, sometimes the limiting factor isn't money but space, Weberg said.

"Some of the garages we've featured belong to guys who live in Huntington Harbour or Balboa Island, where land is at a premi-



Barry Meguiar's gleaming Balboa Island garage reflects the show-car shine of his car-care products. The walls display neon signs and paintings by automotive artists.

um. They've got a large house on a small lot; the garage is really small, usually only two cars. What do you do?"

**SPACE AT A PREMIUM?
GROW YOUR GARAGE.**

Barry Meguiar faced just such a dilemma when he was redesigning his home garage a



A vintage Eco Tirelator air meter is one of the many cool items in Meguiar's three-bay garage.

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few years ago.

"Square footage is a precious thing in my neighborhood," said the Newport Beach resident, well known for his family's name-sake car-care products company (started by his grandfather in 1901) and his popular TV show, "Car Crazy." "Everything you [build] here is a real challenge. But I still wanted the biggest garage I could possibly get."

Meguiar's three-car attached garage, finished in 2012, managed to meet Newport's strict requirements and serve his needs. Working with contractor Tony Valentine, Meguiar fashioned a cleverly designed space with three bays that are slightly offset from each other.

Meguiar wanted the interior to reflect the qualities of his company's products. "Our claim to fame is creating a show-car paint finish. I wanted a high-gloss look." Cabinets were custom finished to achieve a brilliantly reflective sheen. The floor, covered in a black-and-white checkered design reminiscent of a finish-line flag, needed to be reflective, too — a tricky quality to pull off.

"We had to find flooring that was impervious to gas, oil and tire tracks — a floor that could take a beating and remain high-gloss," Meguiar said.

The walls are covered with original oil paintings by automotive artists. And there's an eye-catching collage on the far wall. "It's a tribute piece to the Beach Boys. We had them play for our award ceremonies at the Kodak Theater about a dozen years ago. That one's special." (The annual Meguiar's Award honored an outstanding car hobbyist.)

Weberg enjoys details like that, but insists that a dream garage doesn't need to have rare art on its walls to look and feel special. "Whenever I talk with these owners I realize that these projects are the great equalizer. Whether you're a Ferrari guy or a Ford guy, everyone appreciates what you've done with your garage. It doesn't matter if you're Jay Leno with a 100,000-square-foot garage or a guy with a one-car garage. There's mutual interest and respect."



The garage has overhead doors on two sides so cars can be moved easily, and a side door across from the front of the house offers a peek into this man cave, where Skeffington parks his '68 Camaro.



A chandelier illuminates the man cave area in Skeffington's garage, and a model boat collection lines one of the walls.

PHOTOS: NICK KOON, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER