

gonzo for garages

Tour the garage of a man who makes his living marketing gear for ultimate garages. You might be surprised by the practicality.

The sorry starting state of Chad Haas' garage will give hope to anyone considering a fix-up of their own. "It was pretty ugly," Chad admits. But his desire to fix up his garage not only led him to create a showcase for his vintage Pontiac GTO but also to found a company that builds all things garage-related.

"When I looked around for products, such as tool cabinets to outfit the perfect garage, I was not impressed by the quality of what was available," Chad says. "So I took the leap and started my own company to fill the void in high-quality garage gear. I've never looked back."



THIS PHOTO: Chad's own garage serves as a testing ground and photo studio for the products his company, Vault, makes for garages. The yellow steel cabinets and replica neon sign are some of his products.

INSET: Chad Haas calls himself Vault's chief gearhead, a fitting job title, as he's constantly changing the look of his garage to test new products.





LEFT AND ABOVE: Chad Haas' showplace garage was once a termite-infested, drab and dreary space with painted plywood interior walls, and a few cheap hanging fluorescent fixtures.

specs

TYPE: Detached garage

SIZE: 26' deep x 26' wide

CONSTRUCTION:
2x4 frame

HEATING & COOLING:
None required in Oregon's temperate climate

ELECTRICAL: 110-volt service from the house panel

LIGHTING: Two 4' fluorescent fixtures, each with two 54-watt bulbs; five in-ceiling halogen task lights



BEFORE

LEFT AND BELOW: Chad significantly upgraded the garage's doors with custom Western red cedar carriage doors. "Overhead doors are incredibly functional if you're driving in and out a lot," Chad says. "But I use this garage mostly for storing and working on my '67 Pontiac GTO, as well as entertaining friends. I rarely open the big door, so I opted for carriage doors." Another advantage: carriage doors don't block the ceiling lights.



AFTER



Chad chose porcelain tile for his floor. The installer centered and marked the design in the middle of the floor so that the partial tiles abutting the most visible wall would be triangles of the tiles cut in half diagonally, creating the diamond pattern Chad wanted.

Today, Chad's company, Vault (vaultgarage.com), supplies quality customizable cabinets, carriage-house-style wood doors, flooring supplies, lighting, and custom porcelain/neon reproduction signs (see page 93) from its headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon. And his garage serves as a photo studio to show the products his company makes.

Chad's own garage: humble beginnings

When Chad ripped off the plywood covering the interior walls to begin rehabbing his garage, he found termites. (See previous page.) He exterminated the termites with insecticide and replaced a few well-eaten wall studs.

With the critters under control, Chad next installed

new electrical outlets and wiring. Then he put up medium-density fiberboard (MDF) slatwall (shown above) on all of the interior wall surfaces. After priming and painting, Chad liked the look of those walls—for a time.

"I came out one day to find an old and valuable neon clock, weighing only about 10 pounds, had fallen because the MDF simply gave way," he says. "It chips and dents easily, and the tiny slats collect a lot of dust and spiders, making it hard to clean." If Chad had to do it again, he would install galvanized steel corrugated roof panels for greater durability and an industrial look.

Though Chad no longer recommends MDF products for walls, some MDF items

are a good choice for overhead surfaces. "I'm happy with the way the beaded MDF (available in 4x8' sheets) looks on the ceiling," he says proudly. "And the MDF crown molding gives the feeling that you're in a living area, not just a storage area."

Why a \$250 fluorescent light fixture makes sense

Fluorescent ceiling fixtures cost less than \$50 from a home center, so why spend five times that much for a Vault version? "What really makes a good fluorescent ceiling fixture is its ability to spread light evenly, and eliminate glare and harsh shadows," Chad explains. "Each fixture I had installed has a high-quality reflector and a polycarbonate lens that

creates a diffused, quality light that's pleasant to be around, even for hours on end. Also, the light is color-balanced to mimic natural sunlight so that it doesn't reflect as an off color." Just two of these units illuminate Chad's 520-square-foot space brightly.

To focus additional light on the countertops, Chad installed four in-ceiling halogen task lights. (See photo on page 92.) "They put extra light right where I need it," he says. "The thing about halogens, though, is they get hot, so I avoid using them when it's warm outside."

DIY electrical = big savings

Looking at Chad's shop and its many outlets—24 in all—

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Wall outlets spaced 32" apart (except where the studs are spaced oddly) allow Chad to plug in tools and work right where he wants without the bother of extension cords.

The gearhead theme includes a crankshaft table lamp (campbelllevydesigns.com) and stools made from chromed wheels (hotrodbarstools.com).

Chad's cabinets feature heavy-gauge stainless steel, powder coated exteriors, welded joints, and heavy-duty drawer slides.

Stainless, or epoxy-based grout, prevents dirt or oil from collecting between the tiles.

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you might think he spent a bundle on the wiring job. He didn't. "Since I don't use any high-amperage equipment, such as a compressor, I didn't see the need to install a separate service panel just for the garage," Chad says.

"I know how to install outlets and run wire to them," Chad says. "So I did that part myself to save money. I then hired an electrician for the tougher tasks, hooking all the circuits up to the power, and ensuring the wiring was done to code."

His flooring choice: porcelain tile

Chad wanted a floor that he would never have to redo or repaint. Although most tile manufacturers do not recommend their products for use in a garage, Chad thought tile was the way to go. "For the home garage your most durable options are polished concrete or porcelain tile," Chad says. "They'll hold up for a lifetime."

Choosing cabinets

Chad's company offers three lines of cabinets: Forged,

Designer, and Professional, in increasing order of craftsmanship. A typical one-car-garage installation of a Forged-outfitted garage costs \$3,500-\$5,000; a Designer install runs \$7,000-\$14,000; and a garage outfitted with the Professional cabinets may come in at \$12,000-\$25,000. Costs vary widely based on the linear feet of cabinets.

What makes the cabinets worthy of those prices? According to Chad, who is admittedly biased, "The quality and construction of the materials is unmatched."

The Professional series is made using frames of 12-gauge tubular stainless steel. "You could drive over the tubing and not put a dent in it," he says. "The drawers can support 500 pounds and use high-quality welds, where other cabinets are bolted together. With all of our cabinets, we use a powder coating, and any custom color can be ordered."

Written by: **Bill Krier**

projects and ideas

Power at his fingertips



Because Chad installed his own outlets, he was able to afford plenty of them. "I don't like getting out extension cords, or tripping over them," Chad explains. "I want to plug a tool straight into an outlet and get to work, so putting in 24 outlets turned out to be a great decision."

porcelain/neon signs like they used to make them

For as long as he can remember, Chad has been fascinated by advertising signage, such as the classic petroleum and beverage signs of the 1960s, '50s, and earlier. "Those old porcelain signs, especially the ones with neon, just look fantastic in a garage or other man-cave setting," Chad says. "But the originals are getting hard to find, and as a result, are becoming extremely expensive. So we duplicate the old signs in our manufacturing facility in Beaverton, Oregon, making them with built-up layers of porcelain glass, just as they used to be made. It's labor-intensive, and somewhat expensive, but the final result is stunning." Vault also makes "fantasy" signs (ones that never existed but are customized to suit an individual's taste). The final price of such signs can vary tremendously depending on the number of colors, size, amount of neon, and overall level of complexity. "We've made signs for as little as \$500 and for as much as \$14,000," Chad says.



1



2



3



4

A Vault glassblower creates a replica of a classic Phillips 66 neon sign. 1) The glassblower draws a mirror image as a template. 2) He then uses a burner, gentle air pressure supplied by his own breath through a tube, and a light touch to shape the glass tubes. 3) As the glassblower works, he checks the shape of his work against the template. 4) The blower tests each section as it's completed.