

See Houston's greatest man cave

Story by Diane Cowen, Photography by Karen Warren Updated 4:05 pm, Friday, December 16, 2016



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Retired Pittsburgh Steeler Casey Hampton had a six-car garage converted into his mancave at his Houston-area home.

On Super Bowl Sunday, you'd better not be sitting in **Casey Hampton's** spot.

The retired Pittsburgh Steeler, himself a two-time Super Bowl champion who played in five Pro Bowls, is a Galveston native who was a relentless defensive lineman at the **University of Texas** and first-round NFL draft pick in 2001.

Today he lives in the Houston area and can't wait for Super Bowl LI. If the **Steelers** aren't in it, he'll be watching it from his 1,000-square-foot mancave, renovated from a six-car garage underneath his

home. (No worries - there are still four slots for cars in his garage.)

"There will be a whole lot of drinks flowing. Everybody will have their gear on, feeling good," Hampton said of the party he'll host for friends and family.

Regardless of architectural or design style, one thing hasn't changed: Men want their space.

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Some man caves are single rooms, others are separate buildings such as a casita or even a party barn. What they all have in common is that they are places for intimate and lavish entertaining.

More Information

TV tips

Size matters: The size of your TV should be directly related to your viewing distance. The rule of thumb is viewing distance (in inches) divided by three. That means if you'll sit 10 feet (120 inches) from your TV, a 40-inch screen is ideal. A 50-inch TV works if you're 12.5 feet away; go 60 inches if you're 15 feet away.

Resolution: The bigger your TV, the more important its screen resolution. If you're buying a 50-inch or larger TV, aim for a 1080p resolution. (It's also called full HD.)

Decorate around it: If your home doesn't already have built-in

Crucial elements revolve around food (full kitchens), drinks (bars and wine rooms), relaxation (dining and living areas) and entertainment (the biggest TVs you can find). Beyond that, décor reflects each man's team loyalty and nonsports hobbies.

Interior designers often counsel their clients on the size of TVs appropriate to the space: Smaller rooms take smaller TVs, bigger rooms, well, you know where this is heading.

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bookcases with space reserved for a TV, try surrounding your TV with shelves filled with photos, books, baskets and other accessories.

Make a gallery: If shelves aren't to your liking, treat your TV as if it's part of a gallery wall, arranged with paintings, framed photos or other artwork.

Hide it: It's not hard to find cabinets with doors that close. You can put your TV inside for more discreet placement when you're not watching it. Techies might want to look for versions with hydraulic lifts that open via remote control.

Barn doors: Farmhouse style has made doors on a sliding track popular, so why not use them as a cover for your TV?

Go high end: Consider a retractable screen and hidden projector in the ceiling.

Hampton and others, however, will tell you there's no limit to the number or size of TVs they want. And under no circumstances are you to forget the surround sound.

In front of his roomy sectional sofa - the one with his reserved "spot" - is a 65-incher. Throughout his home, you'll find 15 TVs, including one with a 100-inch screen.

"Get what you want and make it fun. Also, no TV is too big - no matter how small your space. You've gotta remember that," Hampton quipped as his interior designer, **Angela Lee** of Evolution by Design, laughed and shook her head.

Matt Morgan has a home under construction in Fort Bend County, and among the many amenities in his "manplex," a two-story building with 1,100 square feet, are a waterfall from an upstairs balcony, 300-gallon aquarium with an 8-foot living reef, a fully functional bar with two beer taps and an outdoor kitchen with two grills.

"We built the house for entertaining," Morgan said matter-of-factly. "My manplex could be its own sustainable home. It has a full bath with a locker room so people don't have to go into the house. We really went all out. It's almost like a resort."

Hampton's mancave has a gym and poker table, so it's not just for watching sporting events, and despite a 12-year career in the NFL, there's very little sports memorabilia.

Morgan, who owns a hospitality-insurance business, says his manplex's décor will certainly nod

toward sports.

"The décor will be more sports oriented but not ridiculous. One wall will have a used high school football scoreboard that we refurbished," Morgan said.

"I'm a football fan. A humongous fan of the Texans, of course. I'm from Chicago, so I'm a Bears and Cubs fan," Morgan continued. "And I'm in love with **Tom Brady**, so I'm a Pats fan. If Tom Brady's there and the Pats play, we'll go to the game."

He expects to host countless Super Bowl and other game-watch parties.

No matter where you are in his manplex, you're bound to have a good seat for any game. On one wall with 28-foot ceilings, he'll have a 100-inch TV flanked by two 50-inch TVs, all artfully arranged by his interior designer, **Pamela O'Brien**.

"It will be like a sports bar," Morgan said. "I'm in six fantasy football leagues, so I want to watch everything that's going on."

Designer **Lynn T. Jones** helped **John Duffy** finish his 2,000-square-foot mancave/party barn in Richmond.

In his space, a separate building in his sprawling backyard - it shares space with a pavilion, pool and guest house - he and his wife are known to host all kinds of parties with up to 70 people.

The concrete-company owner is an avid hunter and fisherman, so deer trophy mounts line the walls. He has a full indoor kitchen, living room, dining area and bar.

On Thanksgiving Eve, he hosted a gumbo party for 70 people, and it was used for a rehearsal dinner when his daughter got married.

Duffy, a fan of LSU and the Texans, may tone it down for the Super Bowl with a simple game-watch party for 10 or 12 people. When the party's over, he can walk away.

"We can go back to clean it the next day," he said. "That way, we don't have to stare at it, and we can keep our house clean."