

THE RADAR REALTY!

BY LAURA MEYERS

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THE WHEEL DEAL: Scott Bader inside his under-construction parking palace (below).



THE GARAGE MAHAL

Tricked-out car caves rev owners, rile neighbors

It was only a matter of time before two of L.A.'s biggest obsessions—automobiles and real estate—entered the merge lane. Garage Mahals—gargantuan garages built by fanatic car collectors—are sprouting all over the area, but none are as controversial as the one that's rising just above Sunset Boulevard near Sunset Plaza. The 5,751-square-foot structure looks, basically, like a parking garage. Sure, the property's owners, Chi and Scott Bader (owner of slot-car purveyor Electric Dreams) are also erecting a 9,480-square-foot manse, but never mind—it's not visible behind their Taj garage, designed to hold, among other things, Scott's collection of vintage race cars. "All the neighbors hate us, but this is my husband's dream project," says Chi Bader, an interior designer. "A car collector's dream is to pick your car out and drive it on Sunset." She promises that "it won't look like a parking structure when we're done. It will be nicer than the house." Uh-huh. Until the garage's completion, Scott Bader's car collection—which includes a 1967 Shelby GT500 Mustang—is scattered across Hawthorne in industrial warehouses.

Bader is among the growing number of Angelenos who must have glorious homes for their auto fixations. For instance, former Gearys owner Bruce Meyer "pushed and stretched" his Bev Hills garage to squeeze in 12 to 14 collector cars, like Clark Gable's Mercedes 300SC. Jay Leno's 150-car collection—including his fave, a Duesenberg SJ—has exploded past his garage, and is now housed in two buildings near Burbank Airport. But none of these hold a candle to Gen. William Lyon's 137-acre Coto de Caza estate, which includes a private museum for his \$200 million, 60-vehicle collection.

These numbers explain why Mountain View realtor Bob "B.C." Cross started www.carproperty.com, an MLS-style listing of properties "Where the Garage Matters." Retired ad agency owner James Powers would agree. He purchased a mid-century office building in South Pasadena after years of warehousing his 26-car collection. Powers then converted it to mixed use, with office tenants in the front, a residence for himself, and a "museum" for his vintage autos. As he says, "even Jay Leno has to drive to an industrial warehouse to see his collection. I only have to go downstairs."



PARK IT: Customized space by GarageMahals.

AUTO-MINIUMS IN OVER-DRIVE

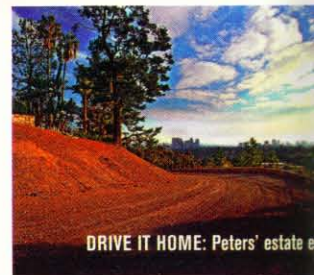
Keeping that priceless 1940 Lincoln Zephyr convertible under a tarp in your backyard? Ugh. Storing your Streetrod 1935 Studebaker Dictator roadster in a dusty warehouse?

Enter the newest car collectors' must-have: climate-controlled car condos, with 24/7 security, webcams, glass floors, built-in wine bars, entertainment centers, rooftop gardens, even concierge services, spa-like auto pampering, wine and cigar salons, and clubhouses where you can gather with fellow enthusiasts about, well, cars.

Call them "man caves"—the developers do. Although leased purchased parking spaces are nothing new in such crowded metropolises as Boston and New York—and outfits like GarageMahals (www.garagemahals.com) have sprung up to customize the spaces—Southern California is not left in the dust. While plans for Luxury on Main, a three-story, 80-unit minium (to be located near John Wayne Airport), are currently on hold, developer Jack Griffin—a collector, former racecar driver and owner of Dream Garage USA in Dallas—is racing to have the first L.A. facility. South Bay car condo project. But don't expect to pay the \$225-per-square-foot price tag of Griffin's first project near Dallas' Love Field. "We'll only pay more for land in L.A. than Dallas," says Griffin. His target? Car collectors who "are not limited by the money, but by their space. Or by their vanity who don't want all those cars on their property."

FOR SALE: PALATIAL PARKING

Forty million dollars for a garage? How much more L.A. can you get! In 1996, producer Jon Peters acquired the former King Vidor-John Barrymore aerie at the top of Tower Lane for about \$4 million. (His ex, Barbra Streisand, had owned the property, nicknamed "Bella Vista," in the 1970s). Rather than restore the famous Wallace Neff hacienda, Peters razed the house and embarked on plans to build a 100,000-square-foot mansion as well as separate spa, tennis and guest houses, a waterfall. But he's just listed the place for sale, and the only car building on the beautifully landscaped, 6-acre site is a subterranean garage for 25 automobiles. Is there at least valet? **A**



DRIVE IT HOME: Peters' estate e