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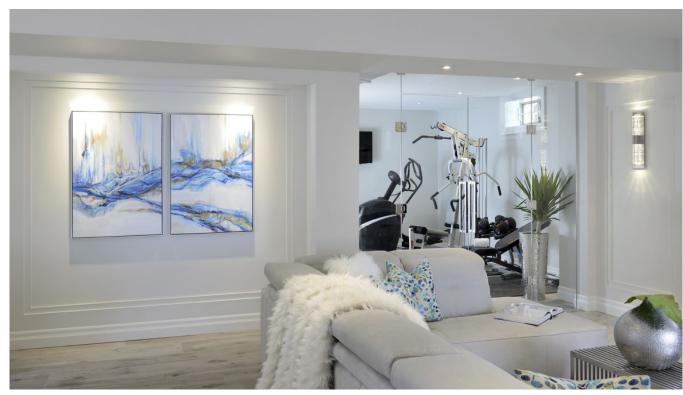
FIRST, THERE WERE FAMILY REC ROOMS — with their thrown-together look, beaten-up furniture and hand-me-down items. Next, came the themed man caves. Over the generations, basements have had different looks and functions. But never have these downstairs spaces been elevated in status quite as they are today. Don't think about going sub-class in the substructure any more; the bar is being raised in the basement.

Come this way, be careful on the stairs and behold: the lifestyle basement – the height of style on the lower level.

Gene Maida, owner of Georgian Custom Renovations, coined the term "lifestyle basement" to describe the project that transformed this 3,000-square-foot lower level in this upscale home in Etobicoke. The half-million-dollar makeover provides the homeowners with the perfect space for entertaining.

"They wanted their basement to be an extension of their home and backyard," Maida says. The family, which includes two children who both play hockey, have a hectic schedule during playing season, which means they do most of their entertaining during the summer. These events centre on the backyard; but the family also wanted a place that would lend itself to the task at times when the weather doesn't cooperate. [37]

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The pool table stands by the custom door that leads to the backyard, a space the homeowners often use for entertaining. Pendant light: Kuzco Lighting.

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Visual interest is added to this wall by the creation of a custom-built nook to showcase paintings by one  $of the \ homeowners. \ The \ area \ has \ dedicated \ lighting.$ 

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list - that included having a state-of-the-art tive edge on with a round of pool. gym. But they each wanted space for their the bar-kitchen area, where the beer for the central focus point of the whole room." guys is now kept on ice in a cut-out trough in "We had to balance the vision of the man the maple-top counter. For her, it would be of the house and the woman of the house." the inviting lounge area, where women can This his-and-hers oasis is an adult space family - which is everyone - and their friends he wanted and what she was looking for. join together in front of the 80-inch plasma

In addition, the homeowners, who are both screen TV to watch the game, pumping up the physically fit professionals who love to enter- volume in surround-sound amplified style. In tain, wanted the space to cater to their wish between periods, they can keep their competi-

"We incorporated the home theatre as part own entertaining focus. For him, it would be of the room," Maida says. "It's organic. It's a

gather for a chat in front of the fireplace. But designed with sophistication, offering what when it's game time, the hockey fans in this Maida calls "the best of both worlds" - what

An ice trough in the countertop keeps beer cold. The cut-out can be sealed with a piece of maple, converting the area to regular counter space.



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Caesarstone quartz tops the counter above the Shaker-style lower cabinets, while high-gloss cabinetry is mounted above. Faucet: Mini Culina by Blanco.

And it comes with a few personalized extras, Shaker-style trim in the wall," says Georgian the traditional sliding patio door. "It's such a nice finish."

Other features included in the remodel: Maida adds, such as a recessed nook along one radiant floor heating throughout under the wall with dedicated lighting, customized to large-slab porcelain tiles imported from Italy; showcase artwork. This was achieved by mov- a separate ventilation system for the gym area, ing the door to a bathroom and pushing the which also includes a mirrored wall; and a cuswall back slightly and applying detailed dry- tom-made heavy-duty door to the exterior that wall to create a wainscotting effect. "I love the accesses the landscaped backyard. It replaces

> Toronto home market, Maida says. "This is a no-brainer to finish the basement. You get a phenomenal increase in real-estate value because the space is already there." :-





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