



# Opening the Garage Door To Go Where Few MINIS Have Gone Before

by Barry Brazier

**Y**es, that “black hole,” we call a garage, where you’re supposed to park your cars. If only you could get the MINI under its protection, out from under the baking sunshine, acid rain, tree sap, kids with loose softballs, birds with precision aim and a dozen other possibilities bent on damaging your investment.

The stunning fact about the American garage is it’s full of everything but the car. For many of us, it’s the place to store the little-used pieces of our life, the garden gear and, in the case of small businesses like MC2 magazine, it’s where we store some of the inventory of back issues and other magazine materials we’re getting into. There are weeks we have just enough room for the wife or I to squeeze through the car doors or get out the groceries.

Like most of you, I have dreamed for many years of a really organized garage and made the edges ragged on several books on the topic of garages. From the truly useful, to the “garage mahal” with garage gear priced at “You have to be joking!”, I’ve been looking into spiffing up my space for the last several years. Yes, I said my space, not my wife’s.

Yes, it can be called a male bastion, though that depends a little on where you live. In the Southwestern states with single-family tract housing, it’s often attached to the home, so the garage door is often open and the family enters into the kitchen and home through the garage. This is where women are

often in charge, as they don’t want the mess associated with the house.

In other regions, like here in the Northwest, guys have a place we can call ours. It’s detached, and it’s our mess – and our responsibility. To fix up my place the way I’ve always dreamed, my wife and I are going to be embarking on a little investment with the help of Bill West, the author of *Your Garagenous Zone* ([www.garagez.com](http://www.garagez.com)), a soft cover book I found a few years ago, now in its second printing. Bill has become “the go-to-guy” for information and seminars in the multi-billion dollar garage industry that is growing like the proverbial weed.

The bug to make their garage useful has bitten many of our

readers. Two of them, Guss Menendez of Florida and Jan Tubbs of Texas, recently contacted us with some photos showing subtle differences of where the organization and beautification of the garage is going.

Guss finished his two-car garage where his GP MINI and BMW reside (shown at left) with a full flooring from Racedeck, and then painted the walls and picked out details to accent the GP’s red side mirrors. Installed with a decorator’s eye, the Griot’s Garage cart for car care products, the Gladiator Garageworks aluminum-faced cabinets and the Racedeck edging are used as accents. Yes, it sounds artsy, but it’s all about the garage details.

Another reader, Jan Tubbs of Texas, is not yet finished with his garage, but took the vinyl tile approach for his flooring, with a price point of about \$1 per 12x12-inch tile (vs Racedeck’s and other brands of about \$4-\$5 apiece). Jan had to thoroughly clean his garage floor as he used contact cement to secure the tile.

As with all garage flooring, there are some details we have to deal with in automotive oils and road grime that make upkeep, even of industrial vinyl a minor problem. Using contact cement to glue them down, and not having any seepage problem between tiles like some snap-together tiles can have is great, but Jan found that his hot

*Above and below:* Gus Menenez’s garage in Florida was designed to store and display his GP, but give him some space to do basic maintenance like cleaning and detailing. He accomplished a lot with Racedeck Tile, Gladiator Garageworks cabinets, and some Griot’s Garage products plus his own artwork, including a poster-size print of his car and a dealer banner he managed to find.





Jan Tubbs of Texas has gotten a good start on making his garage look nice, but used vinyl tile for the floor. It looks nice, but is sensitive to the coating on his tires.

Texas tires left brown tread stains on the tiles as he coats them with a surface wax that reacts to the Phenaline Diamine put into some higher-cost tires.

According to Milo Cripps, president of Floor Surfaces ([www.floorsurfaces.com](http://www.floorsurfaces.com)), this compound is used to inhibit the aging and improve the appearance of some tire sidewalls, especially the better quality ones. It's this UV-repellent chemical that interacts and stains white and lighter-coloured PVC tiles, leaving a brown residue that sometimes disappears in bright sunshine.

Floor Surfaces believe they've found the cure for this annoyance by using Polagard AG, and at the same time, made garage floors quicker and easier to install. In May they will have ABS tiles in 24-inch squares ready for market. Made of harder ABS plastic, they'll install in much less time, are almost unbreakable and will not have the problems associated with the PVC compound tiles. They will also be available in several colours for a checkerboard black and white or in other coloured patterns we are told.

If you want to beautify and organize your MINI's garage you can Google a lot of words with garage (such as garage cabinets, garage storage...) and you'll overflow your PC's screen with answers from simple accessories for storage of your family's needs, to companies that can coat your floor with what appears to be Italian marble. This is where you start thinking of garage cabinets and other gear as furniture for your garage!

The high quality and staggering

variety of companies making garage cabinetry and storage and those offering installation services for their garage gear have become almost stunning over the last few years. Most of them are using furniture-grade MDF (medium-density fiberboard) with simple laminate sides and edging for cabinetry. Some of the home stores offer a dense plastic/resin compound, and there are even solid wood cabinets with beautiful wood grain ([www.completegarage.com](http://www.completegarage.com)) made of quality birch and maple.

We found our choice of Redline Garage Gear ([www.redlinegaragegear.com](http://www.redlinegaragegear.com)) after extensive Internet and personal research. We'll hopefully show you the whole system and installation in our next issue of MC<sup>2</sup>. In an exclusive process, Redline powdercoats their cabinets, creating not only a very durable surface that's chemical, stain and water resistant, but they offer their counter tops in a urethane coating process similar to what is sprayed into truck beds, only thinner. It's impervious to almost everything- I should know, I had my Ranger truck sprayed in 1996 and it's still just fine 11 years later.

My garage is detached and not insulated, and the Seattle climate is cold and moist, but with their very durable coatings, these cabinets are well-protected against Mother Nature as well as against any spill of the usual automotive fluids and garden chemicals. The unprotected kitchen-style countertop (commonly known as Formica brand) just wouldn't stand up to our gardening and auto hobbies.

Companies like JNK Products ([www.JNKProducts.com](http://www.JNKProducts.com)), Racor ([www.racorinc.com](http://www.racorinc.com)) and Hyloft can supply everything you'll need to organize your garage- short of the nails and screws. Then you can think about diamond tread-plated refrigerators from Gladiator Garage Works, and the final touch, the garage door itself.

One of the interesting facets of today's garage business is that you can buy all sorts of products over the Internet, buy them direct from showrooms that are in nationally-franchised retail frontages (like The Complete Garage), and you can have trained professionals install assorted cabinets and wall storage with a multi-year warranty.

No matter what you choose, the improvement will pay off for the family not only in usability of this large space but also in the sale of the home itself, as the garage improvement is likely to add double the cost of the project to the home's value, just as it would with a kitchen renovation. Many high-end custom home companies are now offering



Redline Garage Gear offers a line of cabinets that are powder-coated, and have urethane work surfaces for durability, as well as including a variety of convenient modules.

garage packages of varying cost for their homes, just as they would interior décor, according to John Davies of Metalline Cabinets ([www.metallinecabinets.com](http://www.metallinecabinets.com))

Did you know that Walt Disney, Hewlett-Packard and Westinghouse all started in their garage? As a new and ongoing feature in the pages of MC<sup>2</sup>, we will bring you some great MINI garages, companies and DIY features that will help you all build the garage of your dreams, or simply make it easier for the family to access their "stuff." After all, the driveway's a path, not the final destination!