

Famed deejay

# Rock 'n' Roll



rockstar favours a low-key style

# Haven



Story: Patrick Tivy  
Photography: Paul Chmielowiec



Forget your preconceptions about rock musicians and deejays when you call on Kim Mitchell. His home — a well-maintained bungalow on a quiet tree-lined street in Etobicoke — shows no sign of rowdy rockstar excess. Remarkably, considering the lyrics of one of his most famous songs, there are no patio lanterns in the secluded backyard. And don't expect the interior to look like the Trailer Park Boys party there every night, because Kim's home has the calming ambience of a Zen retreat. You can hear a radio when the front door opens, but it's softly playing a classical string quartet.

Kim laughs about the contrast between his life and the “toss the TV out the window” stereotypes about people in his business. As an icon of Canadian rock music

# Raised ceiling and lots of inset

who's still performing every weekend — and also the popular afternoon host on radio station Q107 — he knows the realities of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle. But if anyone on his street was concerned that a hard-rock hero was moving in, they didn't need to worry. "I'm really a disappointment to the neighbours," he says with a smile. "I know," he says, "it doesn't look like a rock 'n' roll musician lives here. There should be some empty bottles and a brassiere hanging from the lamp."

Kim bought the house last year and started a major renovation the day he got the keys. For four months he lived in the turmoil, sleeping in a basement bedroom and cooking his meals on a hotplate. "I was a squatter in my own house," he says.

The results are certainly impressive. The house had a cooped-up kitchen and the regulation L-shaped living-dining room that comes with most older bungalows. Kim had it all opened up to create one grand living space.

Making it happen was contractor Frank Cohn, whose company, Cohn Construction Ltd., has received several awards from the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), including BILD's top honour, Renovator of the Year. Frank, who had done previous reno work for Kim, was on the job long before Kim put in an offer.

Kim had asked Frank to inspect other houses for sale closer to downtown, which he rejected after Frank pointed out major problems. Frank knows what he's talking about — he's host of The Home Improvement Show on radio station CFRB. Frank urged Kim to check out Etobicoke, where resale homes are generally in good shape — and affordable. It was good advice.

Despite the awkward kitchen layout and the knee-knocking breakfast nook, the house Kim bought had a lot going for it. The previous owner had upgraded the main bathroom and had set marble tile flooring in the entry hall, which was carefully protected during the reno work.

The most challenging chore was reinforcing the roof after two supporting walls were removed. Strong roof beams were set in place to do the job. The elevated ceiling adds genuine "wow factor." Kim also got professional advice from the staff at Ethan Allen, especially style consultant Natalie Mirabelli. Explaining what sort of decor he wanted was easy — "I want a 'guy' place," he said. "It's just me" — which isn't quite true. Though divorced, Kim is still very much a family guy. His youngest son (20) lives with him every other week, and his oldest son (22) travels with him every weekend as his band manager.



Before: photos courtesy Frank Cohn; Styling: Jackie Glass and Pia Hugglestone

lighting create a real Wow factor



# Ethan Allen furnishings help

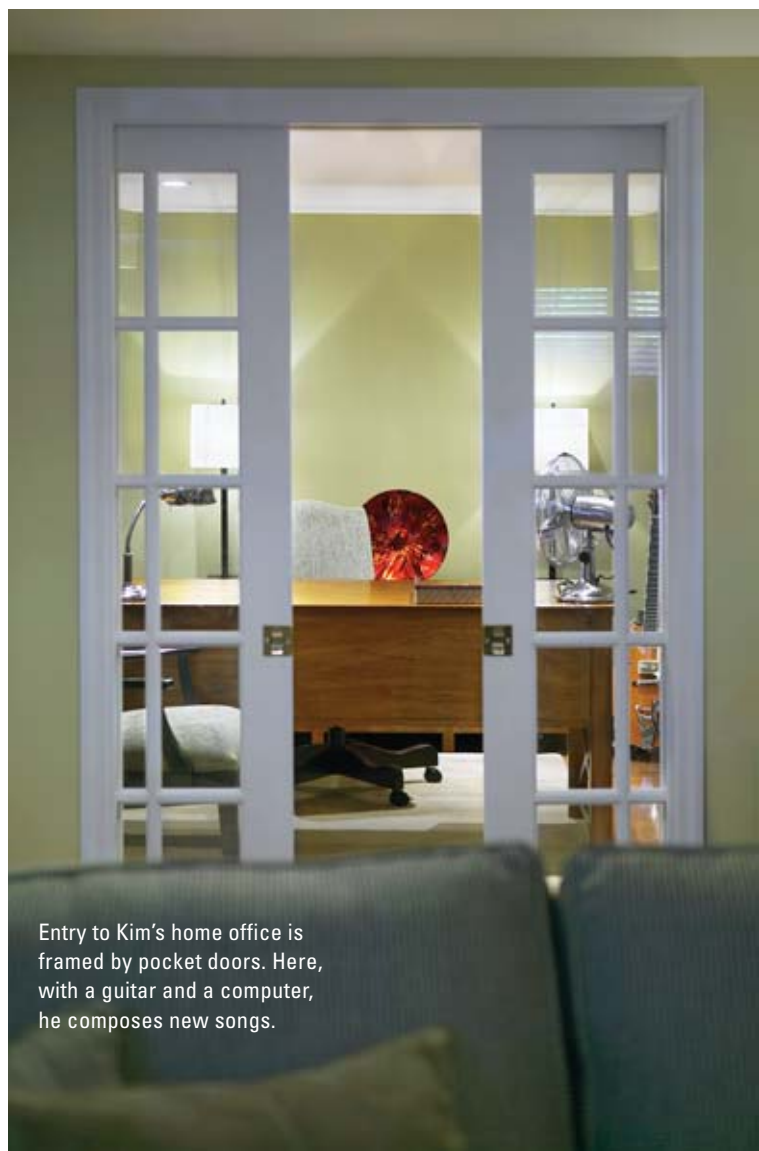
Although Kim found a few pieces elsewhere, most of the furnishings that create the calm, low-key mood came from Ethan Allen. “I don’t have a lot of time to go looking for things,” he explains. “I’d walk in and they’d show me stuff.”

Making a major complementary statement in the new space is the kitchen cabinetry from Arista Cabinet-Tree. Choosing handles for the cupboard doors and drawers offered an opportunity to add a whimsical and very personal touch — Kim selected a jeweled design that is as delicate and tightly-crafted as a guitar riff. Seen close up, the little knobs are the flashiest, most outrageous and flamboyant details in

the entire house — but step back, and they blend right in with the rest of the sedate decor.

Kim Mitchell works hard. At 56, he’s a grand master in one of the world’s most difficult professions, writing and performing songs that will be loved for decades to come. And he won’t stop — can’t stop — performing and pleasing his fans. At the same time he’s become a major player in the radio game, holding down a coveted job in the most competitive market in the country.

No wonder his home is a restful retreat. “I totally need that,” he says with intensity. “When I come home I want to come back to Earth — seriously.”



Entry to Kim’s home office is framed by pocket doors. Here, with a guitar and a computer, he composes new songs.

# create the Zen-like interior



Simple lines and neutral colours in the master bedroom provide the “guy” style Kim was looking for



# Relaxed atmosphere in the lower-



The basement “chill zone” is equipped with comfortable furniture and top-grade video and audio gear. On the right is the glass-paned door to the wine cellar.



# level media room is a restful retreat



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