



FLA HOME

WHAT MEN WANT IN BED (and No, it's not what you are thinking.)

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We all have one of these in our homes, if there's a man around.

You know, a place where he loves to go.

Maybe it's a recliner in the family room, ratty from years of use, ugly as sin.

But it's his.

Maybe it's a dark paneled room at the far end of the house — a place he calls his own — with a giant TV and a bar and a tap that spews golden lager on game day.

But now the man cave is inching its way, big time, into the his-and-her bedroom. Always looking for a way to increase sagging sales, bed and mattress manufacturers are bringing us the man bed.

Today, there are beds with muscle-relaxing qualities — the mattress is designed to relieve pressure points, especially in the shoulders and the hips — and mattresses that reduce sweating. (It's all in the anti-wick properties, we're told.) You can dock your iPod, stash a gun in a built-in safe under your pillow, connect to your computer, grab chilled champagne from a cooler or prop yourself — comfortably, we

presume, on a pillow perched over the safe that contains the handgun — as a flat screen television emerges from the foot of the bed.

What woman wouldn't want all this stuff, too?

And with mattress sales down dramatically in the past two years — by some industry estimates, almost 18 percent — that's kind of what the companies are counting on.

"The conventional wisdom is that the woman makes the buying decision for the mattress, and we think the majority of the purchases are going to be made that way," said Mike Zippelli, CEO of Classic Sleep Products, which makes foam mattresses.

"However, we do think there are a rising number of beds that are starting to cater to more of a male buyer," Zippelli said. "He is involved in the buying decision."

Zippelli's company is making headlines these days with the "cool technology" mattress. The design uses "wool and natural fibers to create an air layer" that allows for better circulation.

"It's not necessarily just for men, but we think it will attract men," he said.

Zippelli agrees that the design might be good for menopausal women, but company researchers — and early sales — have found that, frankly speaking, maybe the guys are the sweaty ones. The mattresses are about twice as much a top-end box spring and mattress. The Dormia brand, the one sold by Zippelli's Classic Sleep Products, tops out at about \$2,000. A quality box spring and mattress runs around \$900. The company started in 1991 and is headquartered in Jessup, Md.

"I have to tell you, it's still very new," said Zippelli, who said they've just been picked up by a store in Miami. "But we have totally used information we've gained at trade shows."

And, guess what?

"The beds have been perceived as hot," he says.

While Zippelli's company concentrates solely on the mattress itself, another company — Hollandia International — is making an industry splash with its innovative gadgets that apparently appeal to the male customer.

Hollandia got its start in Israel in 1981, and remains big in the foreign market. "Russia is our best market," says Hollandia vice president

Maya Ben. "They want only the best. They don't even look at something that doesn't seem expensive enough. They want to add every feature they can."

And Hollandia, sensing they are onto something, are the ones to really add on every feature. Their top-end bed — the Sphere — can cost more than \$50,000, Ben said.

It's the Sphere that can come amped up with the iPod dock, the safe, the cooler, the computer plugs, the TV that comes from the end of the bed. Ben says it's the guys who love the bells and whistles.

"They want to know what kind of screws we are using," she says. The women pick out the color of the mattress, the color of the bed, the color of the paneling. There is also a button that raises the bed "so you can clean under it."

"The wheels come down," Ben said. You push a button, and they raise the bed."

Men, she says, "push it only because they like that feature."

"I see it in the store all the time," she said. "They want to see it again and again."

Ben said the company has no research on who actually cleans under the bed.

In the United States, Hollandia sells their beds at stores in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and are about to open in New York. And when Ben spends time on the sale floor, as she often does, she said "it's very difficult for our customers to leave without buying something."

"I think the women enjoy the gadgets as well," she said.

Still, it's tough out there right now, and the mattress giants know this. An Italian mattress maker, Magniflex SpA, has teamed up with car maker Lamborghini, (owned by Volkswagen), on the Lamborghini mattress. It features the car logo, signature colors and sells for \$2,000.

They've stopped short of an ad campaign that says "do it on a Lamborghini" — although that's probably the subliminal intent.

Ben said they're already developing new concepts that she hopes will be received well at the industry trade shows, and then succeed on the retail sales floor.

They're working on a bed with different lighting systems. "There is a lot of research on what color will make you more relaxed," she said.

And they are also developing "a bed that you can use outside the home."

It will have "the same features," she says, but you could use it "perhaps even under water."

And we don't think she's talking about post-hurricane.