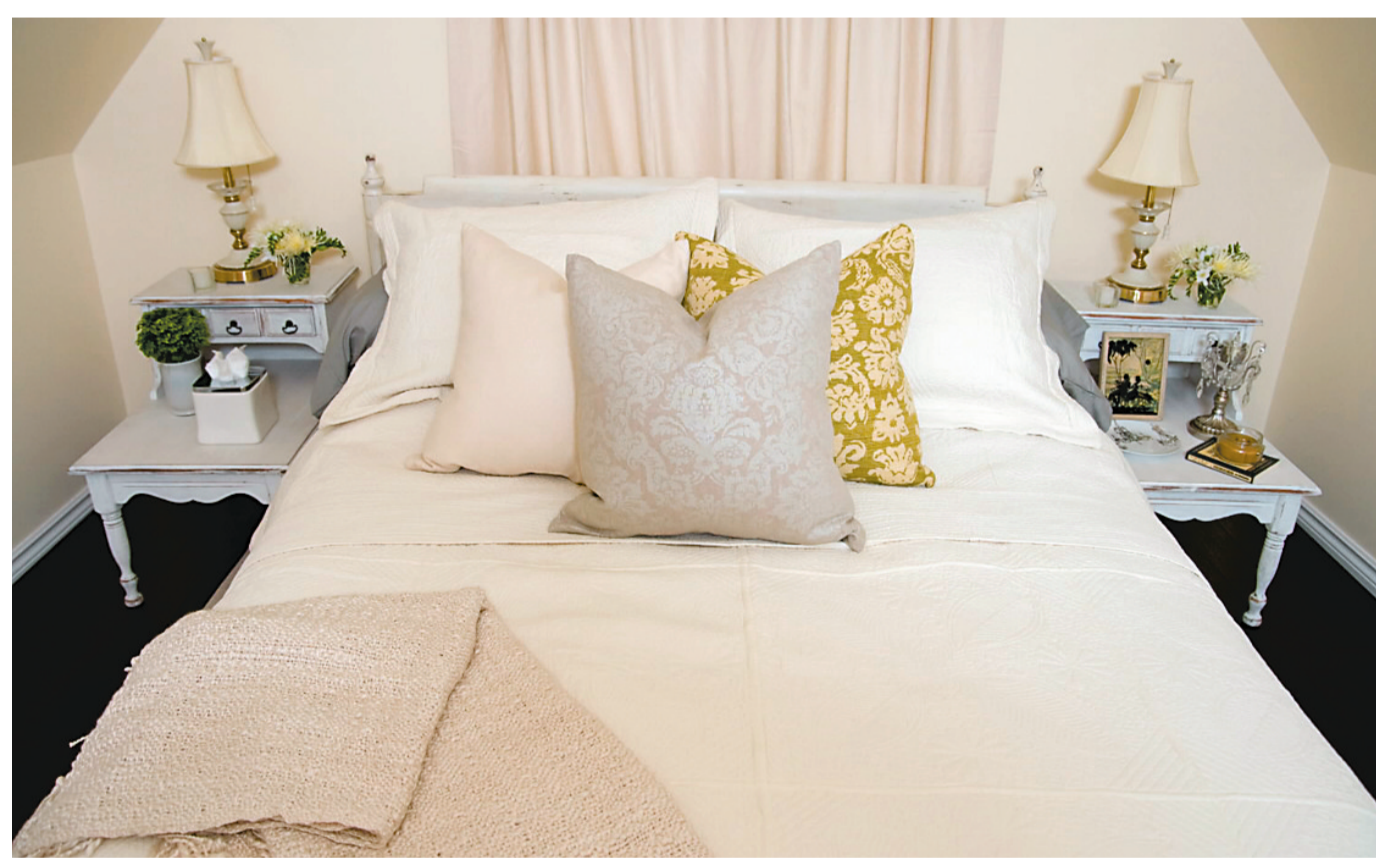


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FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC

A dusty, dank space blooms into a peaceful oasis for Billy Talent's leading man and his leading lady

BY JENNIFER FEBBRARO

The attic has a sorry reputation. Long-known for housing cobwebs and relics, the forgotten space has traditionally been viewed as a dust-ridden treasure trunk, often reached by a ladder and sheer will. But Eurodale Developments, which recently won a 2008 provincial best renovation award from the Ontario Home Builders' Association for its reinvention of this scary space, has changed that view.

Eurodale's Brendan Charters and Jim Cunningham worked with HGTV's *Designer Guys* to create an attic oasis for Billy Talent front man Ben Kowalewicz and his girlfriend, Rachelle Turner, owner of Hawk Eyes, a second-hand furnishing store on Roncesvalles. "Our aim was to create a sanctuary to retire to when Ben returns from the road," says Mr. Charters. "A separate space in the home that could provide all one needs to stay put for a while."

Mission accomplished: With a master suite, bathroom and entertainment room all just steps from each other, the attic has been transformed from dead space into a swish mini-apartment of sorts.

It all began with Mr. Charters and Mr. Cunningham sitting down to hear the couple's needs. Functionality was key. But making the small space work posed challenges. "The skylight installations were not for the faint of heart," quips Mr. Charters. "At a 45-degree pitch, the roof was a tricky space." But the payoff was big. Once installed, the skylight created greater light and headspace in the bathroom and above the staircase.

Another challenge was getting demolition materials out and new materials in. Since Mr. Kowalewicz and Ms. Turner continued to live in the first and second floors of the house, Eurodale did not carry building debris through the house (thus sparing the couple from living through typical reno hell that can go on for months and seemingly without progress).

The couple wanted new french windows in the attic, so the contractors removed the existing windows and removed debris through the hole. The opening came in handy when it came time to furnish the space. The sofa and mattress were installed using pulleys. "I'm sure if we ever move, getting the fur-

niture out will be fun now that there are new windows," laughs Ms. Turner.

The pulley-scaffolding system was a bit of a hindrance to the contractors, but worth it. "Honestly," says Mr. Charters, "even though it cost us a lot to do, it was worth it because I had no fear of damaging the gorgeous hardwood stairs or floors during the project."

A look through the attic reveals the extent of the transformation. Framed photos show before-shots of a dilapidated and bare-bones space. As with many old houses, the floors were the biggest challenge. With a good 10 centimetres off square, the floor joists all had to be adjusted.

The staircase now opens to a cozy living room with french doors leading out to a view of the backyard. Prints of Paris, glass canisters and white carpet lend warmth to the living room. Ms. Turner, an antiques scouter and furniture pirate (she's big on repurposing finds with a coat of paint, for instance), selected every element of the interior design — including the paint and the furnishings, many of which she'd sourced over the years from auctions, dealers and estate sales.

In the bedroom, built-in drawers accent the walls and maximize storage space. Slanted roofs lend a cottagey feel and the distressed wood floors are earthy, though luxurious. A retro chandelier hangs above the bed — another Ms. Turner special from her store. "Antiques are my passion," she explains. "I love the idea of giving an old piece of furniture a new lease on life."

It's something Mr. Kowalewicz is aware of. To celebrate their first Valentine's Day, he gave her the dainty vanity table with bistro chair in a creamy vanilla colour.

Between the living room and bedroom is a connecting hallway with a contemporary bathroom that is perfectly at home alongside the retro finishes in the rest of the space. Sunlight spills in through the skylight and reflects dramatically off the glass shower.

"This is a magic space for us," says Mr. Kowalewicz. "Actually, it's my favourite part of the house."

"When you come back from the road, all you want is some place to find peace and quiet," he says, "and to just chill."

That's exactly how it feels in this attic. Like curling up with a book — or a lover — and chillin'.

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From top: A skylight brightens this award-winning attic by Eurodale with the Designer Guys. An old-style bathroom sink is in keeping with the Arts and Crafts home. The curvy legs on the vanity table are echoed in the bedroom's side tables. Spring colours on the Rowe sofa, from Abacus Furniture Design, freshen the space.