

# Look for quality renovations in old homes

*Cheaper work will show up*

"There are places I remember all my life, though some have changed. Some forever and not for better. Some are gone, but some remain." So stated the late John Lennon in his song "In My Life," a life that ended too soon 24 years ago next week.

There have been many interpretations of this work and mine is that Lennon was referring to the renovation of residential properties, particularly in Nashville. There now exists a large group of renovators with Mark David Chapman tendencies that are assassinating innocent homes. Unlike Lennon's killer, these people are out to make a quick buck.

Most recently, a favorite ploy of this group is to boast of hardwood floors, when in fact the flooring is plastic, or some sort of laminate. Perhaps they are influenced by another Lennon line, "Imagine these are hardwoods. It's easy if you try." As elementary as it may seem, hardwood floors should be made of wood that is hard. The floor should be sanded, perhaps stained, or have Polyurethane Pam stop by and do her thing.

The manufacturers claim that the laminated surface is more durable than wood even though hardwood floors can be found in houses that are over 100 years old. The fact that an oak tree can provide more strength than a one-sixteenth inch sliver from some hybrid tree with no botanical lineage is not debatable. All we are saying is give trees a chance.

The renovators use carpet rather than hardwood whenever possible in order to save a nickel. Another trick of the carpetbaggers is to use textured ceilings rather than finish the drywall like in a manner similar to

COMMENTARY



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the walls in the room. Many refer to this treatment as "popcorn" or "cottage cheese." In his song "I am the Walrus," Lennon refers to a substance he calls "yellow matter custard." In the song, this goop is dripping from a dead dog's eye. In Nashville, the yellow matter custard is dripping from the ceilings of some homes.

And oh the landscaping! There is tundra with more vegetation. There are no tangerine trees, bent backed tulips or strawberry fields here. These people boast thumbs of blue rather than green. OK, maybe the thumbs are purple, black or blue — the result of missing their marks with their recently acquired hammer. Their hammers usually still carry the price tags, ala Minnie Pearl.

In these rehabbed homes, there is seldom a need to smoke anything in order to achieve psychedelic utopia. Simply plug in a toaster or a hair dryer and the new homeowner will meet Lucy in the sky with diamonds, complete with the plastocene porters with looking glass ties. Everything will be seen through kaleidoscope eyes after receiving the force of several hundred amps.

In "Glass Onion," Lennon refers to the act of "fixing a hole in the ocean, trying to make a dovetail joint."

Therein lies the rub. A dovetail joint should be used in woodwork or carpentry. Some renovators take Lennon literally and attempt to use dovetail joints in plumbing. That can result in a hole in the ocean, or so it will seem, as the basement will begin to look like a scene from *The Titanic*.

In fairness to the trade, there are good renovators out there too. Some are craftsmen and artisans spending hours and hours to bring quality harmony to construction and décor. Their miter sets are as finely tuned as John Lennon's Rickenbacker, and they have rehearsed for years and paid their dues.

In attempting to determine the quality of the renovation, look for continuity. Is the trim consistent? How about the doors? Hollow core doors in a 1930s renovation may not work. A sloppy renovator will leave the original 8 inch baseboard in some rooms, then opt for the more modern, less expensive baseboard in rooms where he ruined the original. It's the difference between Herman's Hermits and the Beatles.

The two bands looked somewhat similar, sang some nice little songs, and invaded us from Britain. After that, they were as different as a hard day's night and day. With the remodeled, renovated, restored houses, look for the depth and scope of the owner. Is he John Lennon or Herman?

If he's competent, creative and doesn't tell you why he's better than anyone that ever hammered a nail, the project could come together nicely. The cleanliness and neatness of the site will let you know whether he is building a helter skelter shelter.

Just a bit of advice I'm sending along from me to you. CP

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