

FLOOR IT

THE GARAGE: IT SHOULD BE THE CENTERPIECE OF ANY GEARHEAD'S LIFE. YOUR CARS LIVE THERE, RIGHT? IN THE REAL WORLD, HOWEVER, THIS AREA OF THE HOUSE OFTEN GETS NEGLECTED UNTIL EVERYTHING IN THE LIVING QUARTERS IS UP TO SNUFF. ALSO TRUE: EVERY SPARE PENNY IS USUALLY SPENT FIXING UP THE CARS THAT GO IN THE GARAGE.

I grew up in a large city in the northeast. Not only didn't our house have a garage, we didn't even enjoy the luxury of a driveway. Now that I'm old, I relish having a place to keep and work on my classics. My garage means a lot to me, so while I could've left the floor bare concrete, why would I? There's a multitude of interesting choices these days when it comes to floor coverings. One friend used inter-locking plastic tiles in a traditional black and white check pattern, which looks fantastic. I was leaning in that direction when I learned about BLT Technology's vinyl parking pads. They not only look great and clean up easily, but are super simple to install. All you do is roll them out on the floor and trim them.

My house has a three-car garage, the larger two-bay area of which is for the toys ('72 Corvette coupe and '72 Nova SS. With the help of a friend, I was able to get two 20x10-foot mats down in one evening—and that includes emptying the garage, cleaning the old floor, and putting everything back in.

BLT has a wide variety of compelling options, everything from the mats you see here, to traditional black and white checks, diamond tread—not to mention peel-and-stick concrete tiles. I love the simplicity of the roll-out vinyl flooring, not to mention the look of BLT's new Corvette and Camaro logo mats (these are the only Bow Tie-specific logos at the moment). We recommend going to www.bltlc.com to examine the choices.

One I'd tossed a bunch of junk, moved some shelving, swept the space out, and cleaned up some old grease stains, we were able to get to work in earnest. The parking pads came in 10-ft long tubes and I opened one end of the Camaro tube, since that was the one we were putting down first. While one strong person can empty the mat by himself, these things are pretty heavy. I lifted the opposite end of the tube to shoulder height and walked backwards to get the mat out. As it comes out, it helps to have someone lift the mat in the middle (in this case my son Luke) to keep it from bending in



the tube. Once it's out, the job is as simple as unwrapping it and unrolling it on the floor. Luckily, the Camaro side required no trimming whatsoever, not even around the garage door sensors at the bottom of the tracks. (To keep the mats clean, we only walked on them with bare feet as we laid them down.)

The Corvette pad did require some trimming due to a section of wall that juts out between the two-bay side of the garage and the single-bay side. Our solution was to overlap the Corvette and Camaro mats slightly and trim the right side where necessary. These are made of heavy vinyl, so we picked up an extremely sharp cutting tool at Lowe's, which did the job easily. Be forewarned: Work slowly and carefully, as you can literally lose a finger with such an implement. Keep your fingers, body, etc., away from the blade as you cut. Now I have a floor I'm proud to park my toys on. Suggested retail pricing for the parking pads starts a \$239.14 for a 5x10-foot section, goes up to \$608.70 for a 7.4x17-foot mat and \$934.78 for the 10x20 we used. That being said, do a little research on the Internet and you'll likely find them for less.

Once I'd gotten the parking pads down, I went to the local used record store and picked up some frames for my automotive-themed albums: The Beach Boys' *Shut Down, Volume 2* and *Little Deuce Coupe*, and sounds from the '63 NHRA Winternationals. Once framed, I hung them on the wall. For not too much money, I replaced the old-style fluorescent fixtures with high-intensity fluorescents. Wow. It's like daylight in there no matter the time of day.

The old garage is really starting to look like something. Every time I go in there, I think about the hours I spent lying on my back as a young man, wrenching on my cars in the street (all the while praying no one ran over my legs or knocked the car off the jackstands).

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