



Photos by NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

The ranching West and country-and-Western musician Johnny Cash influenced the home office's decor.

Trading spaces

Family makes its mark on Lakewood house swapped for 'cement jungle'

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Like many young, married couples in Dallas, Corky and Jonika Nix called a contemporary condo in Uptown home. But with a 1-year-old son and another child on the way, they ditched the small digs for a bigger spread.

"Corky surprised me," says Jonika, who was three months pregnant with daughter Gracelyn when they made the move. "I didn't want to bring another baby into a three-story townhouse. It was enough chasing one around that cement jungle."

Corky's gift was a 4,100-square-foot, Spanish-style house in Lakewood. Built by Joe Jackson of the Newport Group, the two-story is an updated version of the neighborhood's 1930s Clifford Hutsell houses.

Part of what appealed to the Nixes was the architecture, which looks like something plucked out of Playa del Carmen or Southern California, two of their favorite vacation destinations.

Although neither has professional training in the field, home design is a hobby for the stay-at-home mom and the commercial real estate broker. With Corky's demanding work schedule, Jonika makes most of the home-front decisions, although he likes to weigh in, whether it's selecting furnishings or sorting through fabric swatches.

This is especially noticeable in the home office. The barrel-vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams pays homage to Corky's favorite country crooner, Johnny Cash, with autographed black-and-white photos and "Flight," a limited-edition serigraph by Mr. Cash.

A custom cowhide chaise takes center stage in the window-filled room. Jonika had the piece made at Jones Walker Home on North Henderson Avenue. The piece was such a hit that the store now sells it in its private-label collection.

Other country-life symbols — a longhorn skull from Corky's family's ranch, embroidered ranch blankets, a framed cattle-branding certificate — make the Johnny Cash vibe sing.

"We're very much into Texas, but we didn't want anything too Texan, like stars everywhere," Jonika says. "We also incorporated a lot of things

from Mexico, where we love to vacation."

That's the case in the foyer, where Mexican tiles embellish the stairs. Along the walls, one-of-a-kind wooden crosses with hand-painted accents, religious imagery and metal markings make a statement.

As the family makes more trips south of the border, they plan to bring back more decorative arts to cover the towering walls.

However grown up most of the house is, both kids' rooms pack a playful punch. Two-year-old son Cash's bedroom plays up his namesake, Johnny Cash. Trying to avoid the "basic cowboy bedroom," Jonika toughened the space with red leopard curtains, a black denim glider chair and a cowhide rug.

The theme couldn't be more of a contrast to 4-month-old Gracelyn's shabby-chic nursery. Baby-pink walls and floral crib bedding work alongside feminine knick-knacks, including a bird painting and metal wall hangings from Uptown Country Home.

The rest of the house holds true to the Spanish-eclectic theme.

The dining room channels an old hacienda with iron candle sconces; heavy, maroon-upholstered chairs with nailhead trim; and a buffet made from the doors of an old Mexican dwelling. The family room has the same cozy tone thanks to a large leather sofa and a cowhide ottoman, both custom-made at Jones Walker Home.

"Obviously, we love cowhide," Jonika says.

"We have it everywhere. It's just so kid-friendly. And I've wiped red wine off some pieces before and you'd never know it."

As they wrapped up the decorating, (current project: master bedroom), the couple moved their design efforts outdoors.

Around the pool, designed by Corky, they planted Southwestern-style vegetation.

The adjacent covered patio functions as an outdoor living space with a leather-and-wood dining set, a barbecue grill, a television and even baby toys.

"We actually use every room in and out of this house," Jonika says. "There's no wasted space here."

Brittany Edwards is a Dallas freelance writer.



Corky Nix surprised his wife, Jonika, with a new house when they learned their son, Cash, soon would have a sister, Gracelyn.



Hints of old Mexico — handpainted tiles, ironwork and religious symbols — abound inside the new house, echoing exterior architectural details.



The dining room channels an old hacienda with iron sconces and heavy, nailhead-trimmed Spanish-style furnishings.

Raider Red

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could accompany teams to out-of-town games.

So Jim designed a secondary mascot based on a caricature by cartoonist Dirk West of the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*. As for the name?

"We decided on Raider Red," says Jim, whose four other children are not made of papier-mâché. "He had red hair. It was kind of corny. At the time, I was 24, so it was really corny for a 24-year-old."

He presented the character at an early fall meeting of the Saddle Tramps. As a 22-year-old freshman just out of the U.S. Navy, he had joined the spirit organization because he needed to feel a part of something at school.

Wearing the Raider Red costume, he strutted around the meeting room, talked a little and led a cheer.

"I remember being kind of embarrassed at first that I was making a fool of myself in front of all the Saddle Tramps," he wrote in a letter to the organization commemorating Red's 20-year anniversary. "Until I remembered I was not really me but Raider Red."

Raider Red was a hit at a pep rally. And the rest is, well, you know.

"We always thought in two or three years it would be gone," says Jim, vice president of asset management for an investment fund in Dallas. "Now, almost 40 years later, there are six of them. He travels, does everything. He's still not the mascot, that's the Red Raider. But he's become a little icon at Tech. For that, I'm proud."

Jim's enthusiasm for the Red Raiders and for Raider Red is exceeded only by his nervousness during crucial games. Take last week's game against the University of Texas. When it looked as if the Longhorns might win, Jim, who was watching the game on television, had to leave the room. And his house. And his block.

"I walked to Greenville [Avenue]," he says. "Every block or so, there were parties watching the game. I'd hear a roar and look at cars to see if they were for Tech or Texas. I could tell if they were Tech that something good had happened. If they were Texas, something bad."

"I went to Snuffer's, looked at their TV. I walked to another friend's house, and Texas had scored. I started walking back to Greenville and heard a big roar. I knew it couldn't be Texas because they had already scored. I went back to Snuffer's and saw Tech win."

Quite enough to make a dad proud.

HINTS FROM HELOISE

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Dear Readers: It is important that a bird's cage remains clean. Cover the bottom of the cage with newspaper or brown paper bags. Cut several layers so you can remove the top one, and the cage will be good until the next changing.

Specialists recommend thoroughly cleaning a bird cage at least once a week. Wash food and water dishes and perches. Use a spray bottle with a mixture of 1/4 vinegar and 3/4 water to spray the areas, wait a few minutes and wipe with a paper towel. *Heloise*

Dear Heloise: My dog had surgery and had to wear an Elizabethan collar. A few days after surgery, I would take the collar off and let him run around the yard. Then when we were watching TV, I would give him a neck massage.

Michelle in Fair Oaks Ranch, Texas

Write to Heloise at P.O. Box 795000, San Antonio, TX 78279 or fax to 210-435-6473.

