

## Beware of Home Improvement

"Home Improvement" is not just a TV show anymore. You can't pass a newsstand or change the channel with seeing at least one do-it-yourself home improvement offering. You can watch magical transformations brought about by simple work, that brings a new look and feel to a room. We're absolutely spellbound by the wonders that can be wrought by hammer and blade.

In fact, we are so spellbound, that we can imagine doing it ourselves. After all, that's what they tell us on TV. So, off to the hardware store or lumberyard we go. They had so much fun on the show, doing the project, and the pictures in the magazines were so beautiful - surely we can do that too # right?

What often happens is that we fail to see the reality for all the pretty pictures and well-paid TV personalities. You don't think that this is something they do for free, do you? All those cool gadgets and eye-popping images cost lots and lots of money. But when it's you (not a TV producer) paying for it all, it's not quite as good a time when you go overboard on the budget.

It's vital to prepare a good working budget before starting anything. If you can't, then don't start! The costs will be coming from your own pocket, not the pocket of some huge corporate sponsor.

You may figure that you can save a bit of money by doing it yourself. It sure looks easy enough. But if the work involved is not something in which you have experience, or you don't understand it well, don't even think about starting! A great deal of money is made by contractors who were contacted after the valiant (yet futile) efforts of some poor homeowner.

Marriages have even been torn apart by the repercussions of a botched makeover. Unless you know you that you can do it, conduct some diligent research and find a reliable contractor who can do the job within your price range. After all, you don't want it just to look good in the shows and in the magazines, you want it to look good in your own home.