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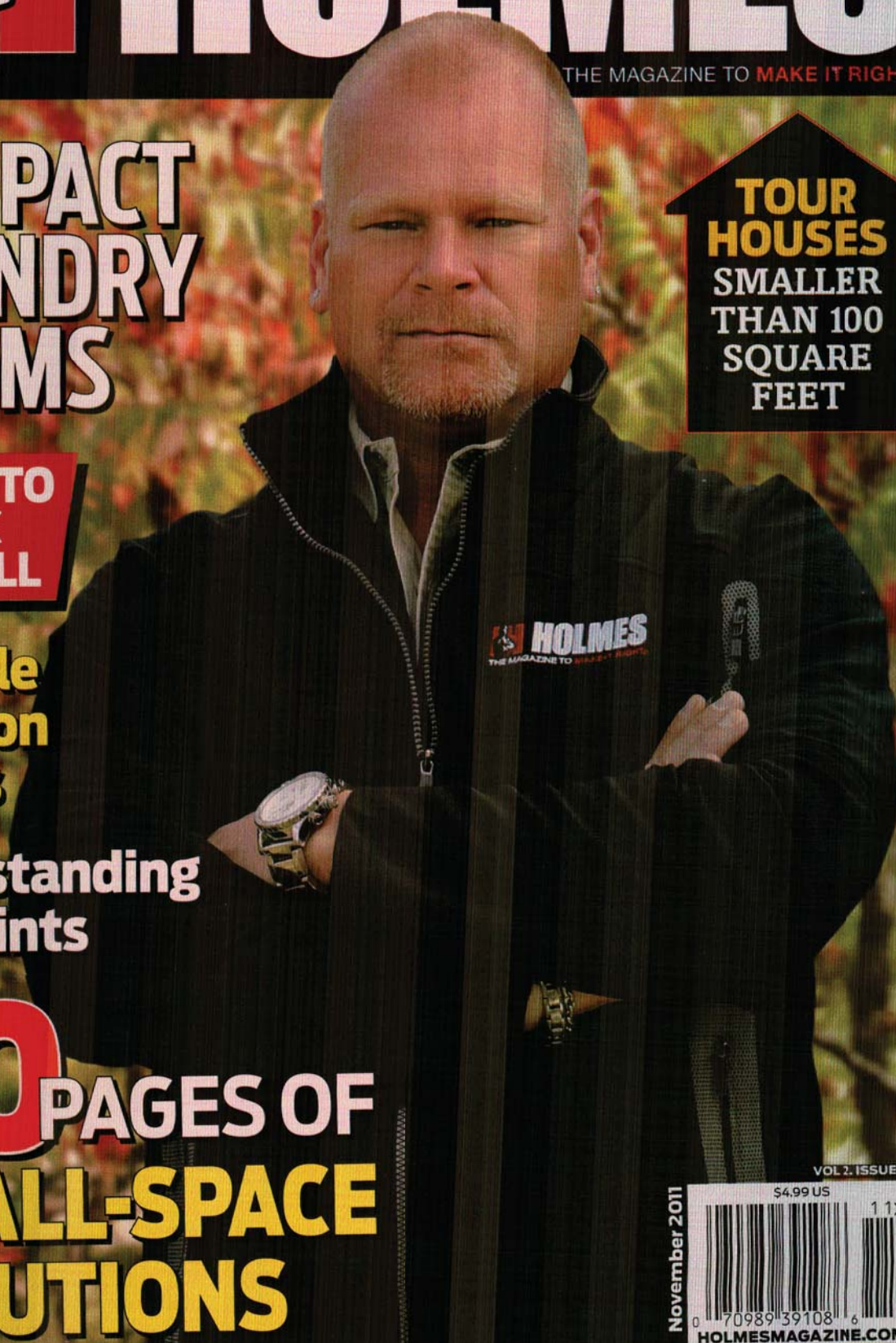
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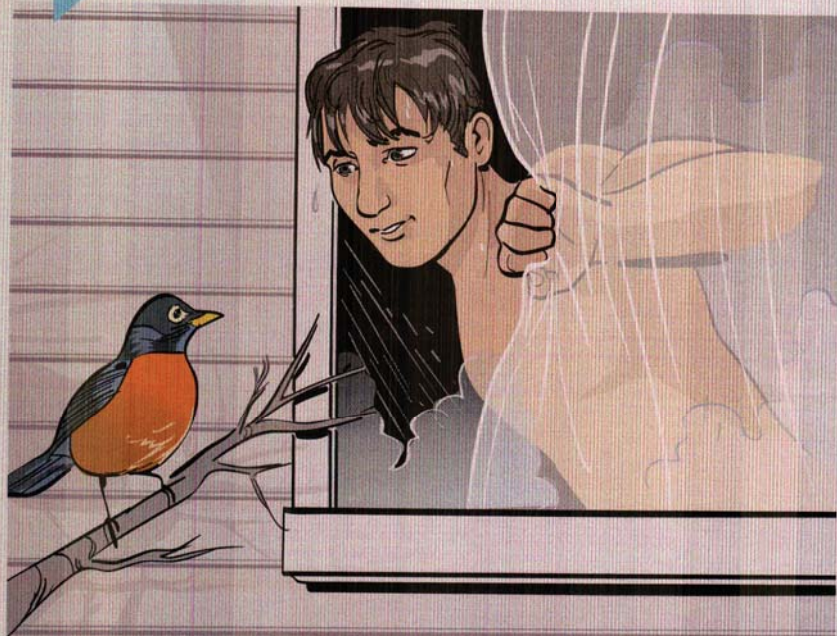
VOL 2, ISSUE 10

November 2011

\$4.99 US



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Tub With A View

? I have a window in the wall of my bathtub-and-shower surround. We put a shower curtain over it to keep the water off, but I'm wondering what alternatives there are. If we decide to have the window filled in, is there a problem with not having a window in the bathroom?

MIA NIEMI-REIMANN, TORONTO

This is a common situation we run into when renovating bathrooms. Typically, it's preferable to have a window in there to provide ventilation, as well as natural light. But having one in the tub or shower area can be an issue, since any painted surfaces (the sill, jamb or casing) tend to require maintenance more often than elsewhere in the room.

Fortunately, there are solutions to this problem: Your first option is to replace the window with one that's inoperative or with glass block. Using this method, however, won't help with ventilation, and will require the installation of a fan sized to the space and vented directly to the outside. Airflow is extremely important in the bathroom, as it helps prevent mildew, which leads to mold. If installing a fan isn't an option, your other alternative is to leave the operative window as it is and open it during and after a shower. More importantly, the jamb should be made of a solid surface that won't rot, such as granite or marble, and protrude at least 1/4 inch past the finished wall surface, so the shower tile butts up against it. This should let a contractor properly caulk around it and create a watertight seal.

VINCE SPITALE, KITCHEN AND BATH GUYS, TORONTO

Ceiling Worries

? We had the vaulted ceiling in our master bedroom converted to a lower, tray ceiling to make the room warmer in winter. Our contractor left the original ceiling intact. Should we be worried about too much heat getting trapped in between the new ceiling and the old one?

CHRISTINE ORTIZ, BROADLANDS, VIRGINIA

The best-case scenario would've been for your contractor to start with a clean slate, but that doesn't necessarily mean you need to worry. There's something called "the building envelope," referring to the point where the inside and outside of your house meet. This originally was your vaulted ceiling.

If your builder properly sealed and insulated above the tray ceiling and had a qualified electrician bring the wiring down (without creating hidden junction boxes), then the old vaulted ceiling is now outside that building envelope. In this case, heat shouldn't be getting trapped in the cavity. However, if the contractor just framed and drywalled the ceiling without insulating it, you will have issues with temperature and humidity control.

It all depends on whether the insulation, vapor barrier and air sealing were done properly. If this is the case, then the temperature and humidity should be fine. If not, corrective work will need to be done. At this point, I would suggest getting an HVAC professional to assess the situation.

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