LOOK WHO'S TALKING

BY KOREY KARNES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS CHADWICK

SPACE INVADER *As the quirky new host of one of cable's most popular home design shows, Brice Cooper brings a refreshing edge to some Chi-town digs*

Brice Cooper, the 25-year-old host of HGTV's *Design on a Dime*, isn't what you'd expect from the star of a home makeover television show. In fact, he's about as different from Paige Davis as one could be—so if you're picturing an overly perky, traveling-with-an-entourage type of guy, think again. The Elgin native, who races motorcycles and flies planes in his free time, never received any formal training in design. "I'm just a real guy who got a very lucky break," he says, referring to his chance encounter with a talent scout two years ago at the Merchandise Mart, where he was searching for materials for his waterfall design business. "This woman in the elevator asked if I'd be interested in auditioning to host a design show, and one week later, I got the job." Though his first gig, as host of Fox's *Design Invasion*, only lasted one season, Cooper has parlayed his serendipitous elevator experience into a successful career. In mid-December he hit the airwaves as the host and head designer for *Design on a Dime*, a Chicago-based series in which Cooper and his two co-hosts are allotted $1,000 to completely remake a room. "Unlike other design shows, we actually talk to the people and figure out what they want," he explains. "We're trying to bring back the fun and create projects that viewers can try at home. Everyone needs some inspiration." *Design on a Dime airs Saturday at 9PM on HGTV.* ■

HOTS: ***Freaks and Geeks*** **on DVD; theseunitedstates.net; anything handmade; vintage British motorcycles and sports cars (I own both!); the girl next door with a twist; Lucinda Williams' new album; estate sales; slotcars; the History Channel;** ***North by Northwest*** **NOTS: Chicago parking; the tollway; wearing motorcycle jackets if you don't ride or own one; reality television;** ***The O.C.*****; overly P.C. people who get easily offended; MTV role models like Jessica, Britney and Paris; fake hoo-has; girls who smoke; Ugg Boots; the haircuts on those damn Gotti kids**