

The New York Times

More Than a Place to Rest



Ronda Churchill for The New York Times

By [JOYCE WADLER](#)

Published: February 10, 2010

PAGE 1, SECTION D

Las Vegas

Multimedia



Slide Show

[Eye-Opening Beds](#)



THIS is the good news in bedding from the 2010 winter Las Vegas Market furniture show: You no longer need to be shackled to your partner's annoying sleeping preferences. If he or she wants the bed warmer than you like it, you can make your side cooler. If he or she wants the mattress softer, you can order it half-and-half, like a pizza, firm on one side for you, softer for him or her. Your beloved keeps you up all night with tortured breathing? There's an app for that.

“Say your partner is snoring, what do you?” asked Emily Lauer, a publicist for Leggett & Platt, the country’s leading manufacturer of adjustable bed bases, in the jolly atmosphere of the L & P showroom, where — as is apparently the norm in bedding shows — visitors were flinging themselves onto the mattresses.

Finally a question even a newbie bedding reporter could answer with confidence: You kick him.

“Exactly!” Ms. Lauer said. “You elbow them or you kick them. Well, we have a function that raises them seven degrees and stays in position for 15 minutes — it gets you into the right position to stop you snoring.”

Sounds great. How do you do it?

“You sneak over to their side and use their remote,” Ms. Lauer said. “It has a special button for snoring.”

What can compare with a bedding show in Vegas?

Sure, you could catch [Bette Midler](#) ending her two-year run at Caesars Palace with a stage full of showgirls in mermaid tails ripping about in wheelchairs and then grab a drink at the top of a fake Eiffel Tower while watching the fountains in front of Bellagio erupt in synchronized spurts to [Elton John](#).

But the bedding — displayed far from the Strip last week, in the still somewhat desolate acreage that surrounds the World Market Center buildings — could more than hold its own.

There was Archie Manning, the former quarterback for the New Orleans Saints, meeting with the anointed at a private reception. Elsewhere, sales reps were whipping out bedding cross-sections and speaking in devotional tones of the mysteries of mattress innards: “honeycomb gel,” “pocketed coil springs,” “Mongolian pony hair.” If the words “memory foam” were shrapnel, they would still be removing it from this reporter’s head.

True, business has not been good for the mattress industry — according to the International Sleep Products Association, unit sales were down 6.6 percent in 2009 compared with the previous year. In a panel discussion with top executives from Serta, Simmons and Sealy, chaired by David Perry, the bedding editor at Furniture/Today, an industry magazine, no one

predicted a dramatic recovery in the coming year. Furniture/Today's own forecast for 2010 is that mattress sales will increase by 2.5 percent.

But for the consumer, there was still much to be excited about. And so, our report:

Adjustable Beds — They're Not Just To Support Granny as She Writes You Out of Her Will

Three years ago, Leggett & Platt, which makes bedding accessories like frames and box springs, razzle-dazzled the market with the introduction of Starry Night, an adjustable high-tech bed with surround sound, a video projector and a romance button. Press the button, and the mattress reclined, vibrated and, on the demo model, [James Brown](#) began crooning, though with 1.5 terabytes of disc space, there was room for plenty of other choices. The price range was to be \$20,000 to \$50,000, but the bed never came to market.

Adjustable bed bases, which must be bought separately from mattresses, have not sold well in this country — Leggett & Platt estimates that they represented about 1 percent of bedding sales in the United States in 2009.

But now, apparently spurred by the increasing number of people who are using their laptop computers in bed, that market seems to be poised for growth. At World Market, a number of adjustable models were on display, including several made by Carpe Diem, the luxury Swedish manufacturer. Its adjustable king-size bed, which retails for about \$13,000, is being sold in the United States for the first time this year.

The Europeans seems to love adjustables. Jeffrey Klein, president of Carpe Diem Beds of Sweden USA, said that in Sweden, they account for 25 percent of the beds sold, while in the Netherlands the figure is 70 percent.

Now, Leggett & Platt is pushing the adjustable bed as the new place to work and relax. Their latest model, which includes the fabulous snore button, is called the Prodigy.

“It's not so much for grandma and grandpa anymore,” said Ted Singer, a director of sales at the company, after installing the reporter in a split king, which starts at about \$3,200. “It's the young professional, with disposable income, the ones that are buying flat screens for the bedroom. They work in

front of the TV, they relax in front of the TV. They're using beds as workstations for their computers."

He demonstrated the features on the remote: the head up-down button; the foot up-down button; the head massage. One can set the massage to act as an alarm or use the sleep timer to gradually shift oneself from one position to another (gently, of course; were it to slam you down in two seconds, the mood, as one says in bedding, would be broken). There is also — something the reporter considered genius — a button on the base of the unit that helps locate the remote when it is misplaced.

An optional feature, which costs between \$200 and \$400 depending on the model, allows the user to control the bed with an [iPhone](#) or iPod — very helpful, the sales people explained, in reaching the young consumer.

This reporter was most interested in the snore button. Remote in hand, she hit it, and up went the top of her mattress, while the mattress beside it remained flat. This brought home a brutal realization: the ability to commandeer one's partner's remote and lift one's partner to elevated ground until his or her snoring subsides comes with a cost: the mattresses are separate.

A retro bedding memory, circa 1974, popped up in the reporter's head: two twin mattresses shoved together in a guest room, with a crevasse in the middle that discouraged romance.

How are you going to make love? the reporter asked.

"You each have your own island," Mr. Singer said. "Or you can put a king-size mattress on here and sync both bases to do the same thing."

What does he do?

"I have a split-top king mattress, so the top part can separate, but the bottom stays the same."

One should not, Ms. Lauer, the Leggett & Platt publicist, emphasized later in an e-mail message, let this double-mattress business detract from the possibilities the bed offers.

"As it relates to intimacy, adjustable beds give couples of all ages options that flat beds do not," she wrote.

This required a follow-up phone call. Could she elaborate?

“It’s all about position,” she said. “With a flat surface, you can only be so creative. We have a client contact at Leggett & Platt that has one, and he is very forthcoming about the benefits.”

Or Is the New Inside, Formerly the Old Outside, the New Sleeping/Living/Working Space?

You may want to skip this part if you live in Maine, but apparently the old outside — which for a few heady years, before the financial meltdown, was the new inside, complete with kitchens, fireplaces and sofas — continues to carry on a flirtation with the bed. Blame South Beach.

At times, it can be difficult to distinguish an outdoor bed from a chaise, but we have devised a system: If it has a canopy or is big enough for you and the dog to sleep on, or if it’s so nice you’d kick the dog off, it’s a bed.

Nancy O’Dell, the former “Access Hollywood” host, who has just introduced an outdoor furniture line, was showing a king bed under a half-canopy. The retail price is \$7,000, according to Curtis Shin, president of Red Carpet by Nancy O’Dell.

“With people not traveling as much, they have made the decision, let’s bring Cabo to our backyard,” Mr. Shin said. “They’re just bringing the resort home.”

Deesawat Industries, of Thailand, was showing a square wooden gazebo — essentially a self-contained bedroom — with two lounge-like recliners, a pop-up table and pull-down shades that could be used to shroud the box, so one might have the privacy required when, say, reading an excellent book. The suggested retail price is \$2,370.

Debbi Somers, who lives in Las Vegas and is an owner of Somers Furniture, was displaying the Dream the Day Away collection, which includes a six-foot outdoor lounge-bed, with two end tables and a teak cabinet big enough to hold a small refrigerator, which retails for about \$5,190. You can buy a matching dog bed for about \$140.

Ms. Somers was also showing what she called a round bed — and what you might call a weatherproof ottoman — that comes with either a drinks stand and an umbrella in the center (tough to sleep on, we’d say), for \$1,135, or a

dance pole, for about \$860. On the other hand, if you want to dance in bed, you won't damage it.

“We built and maintain Rehab at Hard Rock — their pool,” Ms. Somers said, noting the reporter's pathetically blank stare. In “most of our nightclubs,” she explained, the beds are used in pool lounges. “When we first started, we noticed these round holes — stiletto heels. I called up my niece, she thinks she's [Paris Hilton](#), and I said, ‘Why would you stand up on it?’ She said, ‘To be seen.’”

Right. But is it really a bed?

“A six-foot-diameter round bed, an outdoor bed, but it has a table in the middle. At lunch time, we take it out and the dancing pole goes in.”

Of Course, This Assumes They Will Change Their Own Sheets

Yet another exciting development in bedding: the decorative mattress. Serta has teamed up with Nickelodeon and is doing SpongeBob SquarePants and Dora the Explorer on its children's line, with a suggested retail price of \$199 for a twin inner spring and \$299 for the mattress. Magniflex, the high-end Italian manufacturer, has a new line, with images of oversize red lips or a heart or peace-sign graphics, which sell for \$2,499 for a king mattress. Magniflex has a mattress with the Tonino Lamborghini logo, which has a suggested retail of \$2,999 for a king. That seemed to excite one male visitor, Bryan Umiker, who turned out to be a buyer for Bloomingdale's.

“If I buy the bed, do I get the car?” Mr. Umiker yelled, doing a back sprawl on the bed.

Andrea Mugnai, the general manager of Magniflex, was, of course, delighted.

“It's a license that brings together the big performance of these cars with our brand,” Mr. Mugnai said. “We are targeting the men's market, which is growing, and men are taking more of the decision-making than they used to.”

The reporter was skeptical. The mattress would only be visible if the guy did his own housework, and that seemed unlikely.

Mr. Mugnai stood firm.

“The cover is removable and washable,” he said. “You could put a down comforter on top and have a Lamborghini night.”

A similar marketing strategy was going on at the Mattress Development Company, which is bringing out the Ecstasy series, with Playboy bunnies on the side of the mattress. The company will be doing a foam and a spring model. The prices will vary depending on the features, with the spring king retailing for about \$1,500. The gaggle of men clustered about the mattress — including father and son Larry and Philip Krim, of the Merrick Group in Texas, which handled the licensing, and Jerry Gershaw, the 85-year-old chairman of Mattress Development — seemed as excited as if they had been invited to dine with Hef at the Playboy Mansion.

The reporter was once again obliged to set them straight: [Hugh Hefner](#) is an old guy who prides himself on dating women in their 20s, often in groups of three. Why would any woman choose a bed with this association?

“Women are not the buyers,” Mr. Gershaw said.

“Sex is a big thing on the Internet,” Larry Krim said. “A lot of sex is state of mind. We felt like having the Playboy name, we’re creating the allure, enhancing it. We met with the factory and we’re using a different spring, a little more — — ”

“Bouncy,” said Ken Wilschek, vice president for sales and marketing for the mattress firm. “It’s been shown that a little more bounce in bed improves the sexual act.”

“We always joked that if anyone would ever come out with the bed that was actually better for sex, that would be a home run,” Philip Krim said.

“Leggett & Platt did a study on the effect of bedding and sex, but there was never a brand that was willing to step up to the plate the way we do.”

The Perfect Accessory for a Lamborghini Mattress Guy

Sam Montross, the president of Cadence Keen Innovations, proudly showed us her Bed MadeEZ, a plastic wedge with a handle that lifts the mattress up from the box spring, making it easier to change the sheets. It sells for \$29.95.

Isn’t There Going to Be Anything About Organic Bedding in This Piece?

No, not a thing.

How About That Split-Down-the-Middle Harder-Softer Business?

Serta — whose senior vice president for marketing, Andrew Gross, said they have found that 30 to 40 percent of couples shopping for beds want different levels of firmness — is introducing this feature in its Perfect Day line. Organic Mattresses' OrganicPedic 81 can be reconfigured even more elaborately. Unzip the mattress and there are 18 rectangular latex layers, each upholstered and embroidered, identified by firmness and softness, offering 81 sleep choices and an unlimited opportunity for domestic discord. The king retails for \$8,195.

Terrifying Bedding Fact from Rainer Wieland, Founder of “Ergonomically Correct” Somnium Mattress and Former Nationally Ranked Austrian Gymnast, Whom We Trust Because He Walked on His Hands for Us

“You lose about 460 gallons of sweat over 10 years — a pint a night. That’s the best food source for dust mites. Dust-mite droppings are the reason for allergies. There are more than 50 million people with allergies” in the United States. A nod to his mattress, which sells for \$3,600 for the king size. “With these beautiful springs, the air can fly and circulate. Additionally, we use only two inches of foam, which helps to avoid the moisture,” he said, by making it easier to evaporate.

Honey, My Feet Are Freezing, and I Never Loved You

Some things — like stealing the blankets and lowering the room temperature so much that your partner turns blue — are apparently not just a reflection of your own particular dead-end, rotten relationship, but are universal to dead-end relationships the world over.

The Hirakawa Corporation of Japan, however, has come up with a solution: It sells heating and cooling pads that require no power source. According to Shoichi Hirakawa, the president of the company, one million were sold in Japan in the last two years.

In the United States, Todd Youngblood, the founder of Chili Technology, sells a line of bedding pads that can be cooled to 46 degrees or warmed to 118 degrees. A king-size Chili pad is about \$700. Mr. Youngblood said it has

been a great success with people suffering from temperature fluctuations, including menopausal and pregnant women. When his wife was nine months pregnant, he said, she kept her Chili pad on the coldest setting, but after giving birth, she reset it at about 52 degrees.

According to Mr. Youngblood, only about 5,000 Chili pads have been sold in the last four years. He believes this is because many American consumers are unaware of the product.

It suggested to this reporter that if someone from Japan asks you to dinner, you should say yes.

A version of this article appeared in print on February 11, 2010, on page D1 of the New York edition.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/11/garden/11vegas.html?pagewanted=1>



Business has not been good for the mattress industry. But the beds on display at the 2010 winter Las Vegas Market furniture show indicated that there was still much for the consumer to be excited about.

Photo: Ronda Churchill for The New York Times