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RICK ANDREOLI has his nails done by Naima Malone at the media opening for Hammer & Nails, which bills itself as L.A.'s first nail shop for men.

CITY BEAT

A MANICURE IN A MANLY MANNER

For any man who's ever wanted to be pampered, a new nail salon offers a truly macho experience

BY NITA LELTVELD

The new Melrose Avenue storefront is a man's world, make no mistake.

The theme could not be stated more bluntly.

Above the front desk: the rusted front end of a 1953 Chevy pickup.

Along one wall: a vintage sign whose faded red letters read AUTO.

Scotch is ready to pour, pending a liquor license. The lights are dim, the leather chairs deep.

This place calls itself the first man cave for ... manicures.

Its name is Hammer & Nails. It will welcome the hairy-chested public start-

ing Saturday. It offers repair treatments for mani-pedi first-timers and — in punny PR material — speaks of "Mangelinos" and promises to put "the MAN back in manicure."

Here, a macho sort who likes a buff can get his hands massaged and his cuticles pushed back while watching the game on an individual flat-screen TV.

Here, he won't have to suffer the stares of a salon full of women as his feet are gently dipped into paraffin wax.

The décor isn't prissy. It's industrial lamps and a row of hammers shadow-boxed behind glass.

The floor is concrete, stained black. A [See Manicure, A46]

Nail salon aims for masculinity

[Manicure, from AAI] punching bag hangs in the back.

Side tables hold virile volumes: "World Beer," "Whiskey," "Ferrari," "Mastering the Grill."

In truth, all this machismo could intimidate some on this fashionable stretch of street between Fred Segal and the Pacific Design Center.

Not to worry, says owner Michael Elliot. Those books? They're mostly for looks.

Elliot is a screenwriter who has had some movies made — among them, "Like Mike" and "Just Wright." He's the sort of casually cool guy who knows what he's wearing: corduroys by J. Crew, a Kenneth Cole watch, chukka boots by John Varvatos.

He's an HGTV junkie, into "Divine Design," who says he got the idea for the back wall covered in wide-plank flooring from an HGTV kitchen-makeover show, probably "Kitchen Crashers."

Guys don't have to watch sports on their TVs, equipped with cushy headphones.

"They may want to catch up on 'The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills,' and that's cool," he said.

But with his male nail salon, staffed by decidedly professional female manicurists, he thinks he's hit on an idea that can take off.

On Thursday, he opened the salon to the media, with the lure of free treatments. The appointment book included beauty and fashion bloggers and several writers for gay-themed publications.

Jay Shore, a screenwriter, said he'd been sent in by his wife, who has a blog, *Groomed L.A.* At first he didn't



BOB CHAMBERLIN/Los Angeles Times

MANICURIST NAIMA MALONE works on a patron at the media opening for Hammer & Nails nail salon for men on Thursday.



BOB CHAMBERLIN/Los Angeles Times

HAMMER & NAILS offers its patrons masculine amenities.

want to give his name, partly because his male friends would tease him. Then, somewhere around the hand massage, he loosened up.

"I have to say it's unbelievably pleasurable," he said of his first manicure. "I can't believe I've never done this before in my life."

As Elliot passed by his chair, Shore

— hands wrapped in warm towels — called out to him, "This is a great idea. I'd like to shake your hand, but" To which Elliot replied, "Look at you, you're chillin' in a chair."

Soon Elliot was perched on a stool sharing his franchise dreams for a Hammer & Nails in every major city.

"I just want taking care of your hands to be as comfortable as getting a haircut," he told Shore. "There's nothing feminine about the brand, you feel me? It's as manly as Gillette. It's as manly as Black and Decker. It's just a place that we go to relax."

It's also a place, by the way, for a man to put on polish, if that suits.

There are just three colors for now: black, blue, gray. Or rather: Black Velvet, Denim Du Jour, Sweater Weather.

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