

[Contact Us](#)[Advertising Information](#)[Online exclusives](#)[Cover Story](#)[Buzz Feature](#)[In Case You Missed It](#)[Vote 2009](#)[Bouldergeranic Fall 2009](#)[Student Guide 2009](#)[Boulder Weekly Sweet 16
Anniversary](#)[Bouldergeranic 2009](#)[Summer Scene 2009](#)[Email Newsletter](#)[Legal Services](#)[Best of Boulder 2009](#)[Annual Manual 2009](#)[Newspaper of the Future](#)[Kids Camp Guide 2009](#)[Wedding Marketplace 09](#)[Jobs available](#)[Student Guide 2008](#)[Best of Boulder 2008](#)[Annual Manual 2008](#)[Join Our Mailing List](#)

Local Guides
Business Services
Career
Construction
Education
Financial Services
Health
Home Services
Internet
Legal
Metro North Guides
Real Estate
South Metro Guides
Telecommunications
Wedding

December 4-10, 2008

buzz@boulderweekly.com

The odd couple*Sam Kent and his robot live in a world of their own*
by Dale Bridges

Believe it or not, there is a man in Boulder named Sam Kent who lives with an 8-foot-tall robot named Gort. At first glance, Sam and Gort do not seem to have much in common on which to base a friendship. Sam is small. Gort is humongous. Sam wears round, bookish spectacles, brown corduroys and Velcro shoes. Gort wears a helmet with a visor and is the color of a shiny new dime. Sam is witty and gregarious and has a mischievous twinkle in his eye at all times. Gort is more of the strong, silent type and — well, he doesn't really have eyes, much less ones that twinkle. However, despite their many differences, these two companions share a modest, two-story house near the downtown area. "He's not much for conversation," said Sam during a recent interview. "But he's a great listener. Besides, I probably do enough talking for the both of us."

Gort had no comment.

If you are ever invited to Sam's home, the first thing you will probably notice is that the doorbell plays an odd tune when you ring it. Instead of the usual *ding-dong* (which is not a very welcoming sound, when you think about it), you will hear the theme song to Steven Spielberg's famous extraterrestrial movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. When the door swings open, the second thing you'll probably notice is Gort standing motionless no more than five feet in front of you. Gort is a life-sized replica of a character from the classic sci-fi movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (the remake, starring Keanu Reeves and Jennifer Connelly, is scheduled to be released on Dec. 12). Sam found Gort at an auction in Newport Beach — where Gort was hanging out with other replicas of famous Hollywood robots, such as Robby from *Forbidden Planet* and R2-D2 from *Star Wars* — and decided a faceless, silver automaton would be the perfect addition to his foyer. Sam admits that it might be slightly unnerving for some visitors to be greeted by an enormous creature from outer space when they cross the threshold of his house, but he can't do anything about it. "That's the only spot where the ceiling is tall enough," Sam explained. "He won't fit anywhere else."

It's difficult to tell what the next thing is you'll notice after entering Sam's house. It might be the framed, wall-length poster in the dining room commemorating the 1977 film adaptation of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, or perhaps the incredibly realistic Frankenstein head in the work room, or the rotary phone in the kitchen shaped like Mickey Mouse, or the rare scale model of Captain Nemo's "submerging boat" from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. But one thing is certain: you won't have a problem finding something to notice.

Sam's passion for movies started when he was a child growing up in Chicago. "I had about 12,000 cousins living nearby at the time," he said, "and when we all became too obnoxious for our parents to handle, my older brother would take us to the movie theater around the corner. I was particularly fond of monster movies and the old, animated Disney films. I can't really explain why. Perhaps it was an escapist technique, although I'm not sure what I would have been trying to escape from at the age of six." Sam scratched his chin in faux contemplation. "I'll give you my therapist's number later, and you can ask him."

Not content to be just another voyeur in the audience, Sam was bitten by the performance bug at an early age. When he was 9 years old, he began frequenting magic shops, and would often entertain his family by pulling quarters out of their ears and producing floral arrangements from empty hats. "Is this your card?" became a common phrase in the Kent household.

In high school, he found a place amongst the quirky, melodramatic teenagers known as "theater nerds," and this social outlet eventually developed into a bachelor's degree in the performing arts from the University of Colorado. Since that time, Sam has remained a fixture in the local arts and entertainment scene, albeit often in unorthodox ways.

"People sometimes have limited perceptions of art," said Sam. "They think if you're not dressed in tights performing Hamlet in the park, then you're not an entertainer. I don't like that. I say an entertainer is anyone who entertains you."

After graduating from college, Sam worked his way through a variety of jobs connected to the entertainment industry. He spent time booking shows at the Boulder Theater, attempted to broaden the public's awareness of Dracula movies at the Video Station, operated a movie-poster store in Denver, and even returned to his childhood obsession for a brief period.

"For a few years, I was a professional magician, and I spent my evenings entertaining audiences at birthday parties and weddings and bar mitzvahs," said Sam. "I mostly did intimate shows, where the audience was right on top of you the whole time — not that big, showy David Copperfield stuff. It was hard work, but I enjoyed it. During that time, I also owned a magic store in Boulder. That was really great. I had all kinds of neat things in there."

Like what?

**Featured Articles**[Take a mini-vacation to
Colorado Springs](#)[Double your bet on Boulder
County's ClimateSmart
Loan Program](#)[The Emmitt-Nershi Band
finds the zone](#)[Click to search for
Boulder real estate
Loveland real estate
Longmont real estate](#)

SWALLOW HILL
Denver's Home for
Folk, Roots &
Acoustic Music

**Check out
CONCERTS**



"Like trick knives and handcuffs and playing cards. I also had some white rabbits and some doves that I would let loose from time to time."

You let animals loose in the store?

"Oh, yeah. I think a magic shop should be magical, don't you? I think it should be more than just a place to buy things. It should be its own little world. It should be an experience."

Creating new worlds is another one of Sam's passions. He is a firm believer that reality is what you make of it, and Sam likes to make his reality as imaginative and whimsical as possible. In his house, Sam has created a tiny, carefully organized universe filled with all of the things he loves: miniature airplanes and boats and monsters and aliens and models of amusement-park rides and posters of anthropomorphized cartoon animals. Many of the items are rare or one-of-a-kind; almost everything appears to be in mint condition. Sam has no idea what his entire collection is worth, and what's more, he doesn't care. "I'm never going to sell any of this stuff," he said. "So I guess that makes it all worthless."

Sam does not look like the type of zealous eccentric who would own such an unusual assortment of pop culture bric-a-brac. In fact, he looks more like a landlord. In fact, he *is* a landlord. Currently, he makes a living serving the needs of various tenants under his supervision. However, Sam has a restless nature and seldom sticks with any job longer than five years or so. He is the type of man who's prone to flights of fancy, and recently, he developed a new obsession that might soon lead him down yet another track: trains.

"There's just something very romantic about trains," said Sam, holding up a caboose that he's been working on for some time.

"Historically, they represent innovation and connection. The United States is a big country, and railroads helped unify our nation — you know, back before we had the Internet. I think the sight and sound of a locomotive will always be an exciting experience."

How many times has Sam been on a train? Twice. But that's not really the point. Once again, it's all about inventing your own little world and finding new opportunities to entertain the public. Serious train modelers don't just build railroads; they create an entire landscape for the train to travel through, complete with cities and cars and people. In other words, they reconstruct our world, only smaller and with fewer lawyers.

This time, Sam wants to go public with his vision. "I would like to create a scale model of Boulder the way it was 50 years ago, when I graduated from high school. It was a different city back then. There weren't so many trendy restaurants and shops; it was just a town near the mountains. I would give tours and answer questions... I think people would really enjoy it. The thing is, I'm at a point in my life where I'm ready to settle down. I want to find a career that combines all of my interests and dedicate myself to it. I'd also like to get married some day. I'm really an old-fashioned kind of guy at heart." Sam paused here and glanced over at the large shadow near the front door. "Of course, I'd have to talk it over with Gort first."

Did you know?

Gort was created by the famous American robot artist **Fred Barton**, www.the-robotman.com, in Hollywood, Calif.

Respond: letters@boulderweekly.com
back to top

