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# Fate of 'Real World' houses varies after filming

Plus: Why doesn't 'Supernanny' film in small homes? Running 'Hell's Kitchen'



ASK THE REALITY TV EXPERT

By Andy Dehnart

MSNBC contributor

MTV's "Real World" 2005 house in Austin, Texas, is now a chain restaurant called Rio Grande. The main living and kitchen area of the then home is shown.

Jack Plunkett / AP

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Wondering about how a certain reality show pulled something off? Have a question about a certain contestant?

Whether it's "Survivor," "American Idol," "The Apprentice," "Real World" or another show, send in your questions. Andy Dehnart, msnbc.com's Television Editor and creator of Reality Blurred, will try to answer them.

Q: What happens to "Real World" houses after the season is over? — Anonymous

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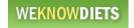
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**A:** The houses that host the debauchery that is MTV's "Real World" have varied lives once the show leaves them behind. Many return to being private residences or commercial spaces, and some are even open to the public, although only one looks like it did during the show.

Recently, most of the spaces haven't actually even been residential houses, starting with the firehouse used in Boston and continuing with the pier warehouse used for the Seattle season.

Of the 20 locations used for the 20 seasons that have taped so far, at least nine are currently private residences. Others have been converted to office spaces, while seven are open to the public in various forms. (The Chicago house is a gym; the Boston firehouse is a non-profit community center.)

Two recent spaces — from the Denver and Austin, Texas, seasons — are now both restaurants. In Denver, it's martini bar and restaurant Theorie, and in Austin, a chain Mexican restaurant called Rio Grande.



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Only one house has remained almost exactly as it was during production of its season, and thus that location is also the "Real World" house in which you can actually stay without being cast on the show. That's the "Real World" suite at the **Palms in Las Vegas**, which has rates that reportedly start at \$5,000 a night. Since the show filmed there, many celebrities have stayed there, including Britney Spears. She was there on New Year's Eve 2004, when she briefly married Jason Alexander.

For detailed information about all 20 houses, check out the Web site called, appropriately enough, The Real Truth Behind MTV's The Real World Houses. It documents the houses with detailed pictures, and frequently has reports about what happens to them after they're abandoned by the cast and crew. Among other things, the site says that the San Francisco house used for the show's third season caught fire in 2000 and suffered damages, while the "Back to New York" loft is "(a) vailable for special events and short term stays."

Q: On "Supernanny," why does Jo seem to help only families who live in big, beautiful homes? Surely, there are families out there in smaller, more modest houses and apartments who need her help. — Anna, Seattle

A: If there is such a trend on "Supernanny," the reality series where Jo

Frost helps parents wrangle their out-of-control children, it's coincidental and not by design. A staff member for the show said they have no such restrictions.

"Supernanny" casting producer John Magennis told me, "There is no requirement as to how big a family's house or living space must be in order to be cast on the show." He added that they are "casting all kinds of families from a variety of backgrounds across the country for the brand new fifth season of Supernanny."

That casting is currently taking place nationwide, with both open casting calls and faxed/phoned in applications. The actual application potential families are asked to fill out confirms what Magennis said, as it doesn't specify a requirement for certain kinds of houses. In fact, the application asks potential cast members to "describe your home," and offers "apartment, house, number of bedrooms, number of stories" as possibilities.

Sociologists might have theories to explain why featured families seem to live in nice houses; perhaps upper-middle-class families with those "big, beautiful homes" have more obnoxious children than people who live in less-glamorous accommodations. Or perhaps those homeowners are the ones more likely to let a television show film them, never mind call a TV show for help with their kids.

Now, go sit on your naughty step for five minutes for accusing Jo of only helping people in big houses.

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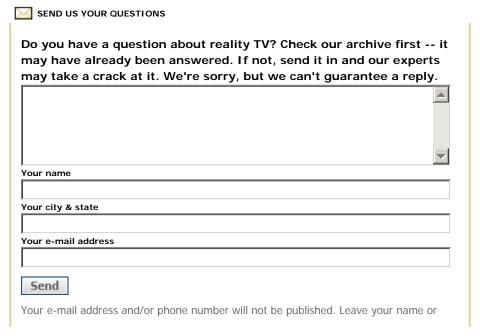
Q: I am curious about the show Hell's Kitchen. Does the restaurant operate when they are not filming and if it does, who runs the kitchen? —  $Steve\ S$ .

**A:** The restaurant called Hell's Kitchen featured on the FOX reality series "Hell's Kitchen" is not a real restaurant — or at least, is not one when the show isn't filming. It operates only when Gordon Ramsay and crew

are there, and its patrons are people who are paid to show up, as we've discussed before. Otherwise, it's an empty soundstage somewhere in Los Angeles — or, more correctly, soundstages, as the show has actually moved three times in its five-season history.

The first two seasons were filmed in a studio that previously housed a TV station, KCOP, and earlier, a number of game shows such as "Tic-Tac-Dough." Season three moved to a Century Studios soundstage, and for seasons four and five, which were filmed back-to-back ("Hell's Kitchen 4" is currently airing on Tuesday nights, and season five may debut in the fall), the show moved again. The new location is in Culver City, Calif., according to **Eater LA**, and it definitely looks different than previous ones, with a more expansive exterior entryway, and a new, long corridor that leads into the dining room.

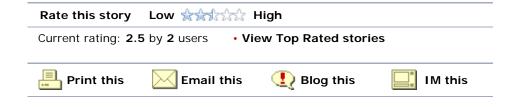
Behind-the-scenes clips FOX sent before this season premiere explained that the new location afforded more room, including for key components of the TV show: the cameras. Look closely during the next episode, and you'll see mirrored walls in the kitchen. Like the "Big Brother" house's mirrors, they actually have hallway-like spaces for cameras behind them, which is how the show gets great shots without having camera operators in the way.



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Andy Dehnart is a writer who publishes reality blurred, a daily digest of reality TV news and analysis.

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