

## Press Releases

### 'Real' Talent: Chicago Scenic designs MTV's The Real World House As seen in *Screen Magazine* on January 28, 2002 By Claire Weingarden

Chicago Scenic Studios recently got a dose of reality -TV, that is. Over a six-week period last spring, the 23-year old design shop designed the set for the Chicago incarnation of MTV's long running reality show, "The Real World", which debuted January 15.

Chicago Scenic originally was tapped to simply measure and draft the 7,000 sq. ft. space, a three-story former Wicker Park factory on North Avenue. But once the show's producer, Anthony Dominici, learned that Chicago Scenic had a design department as well, he hired the firm to develop and design the show's set and living space.



"This was a unique project that was highly creative on the front end", said Chicago Scenic president Bob Doepel. "They wanted something out of the ordinary and I think we gave it to them". Chicago Scenic designers Tom Ryan and Ryan Hall first met with MTV's producers on May 8. By June 1, the architect/designers had final approval for their plans and were given three weeks to build. Chicago Scenic turned the space over to MTV on June 22.



"When we had our first on-site meeting and MTV gave us the overall definition of what they needed, there were no walls", Ryan said. "It was just the open space with the windows."

Once they created the original floor-plan and schematic design, Ryan and Hall spent the following six weeks working closely with Dominici. The pair put up walls, laid down platforms, and fixed stairs, all the while keeping in mind that the space needed to be functional both as a set and as a living space.



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International Contractors, Inc. served as the General Contractor on the job.

"On one hand, this was a typical job for us because we were dealing with camera angles and a theatrical space", Ryan explained. "But on the other hand, we had to create a living set".

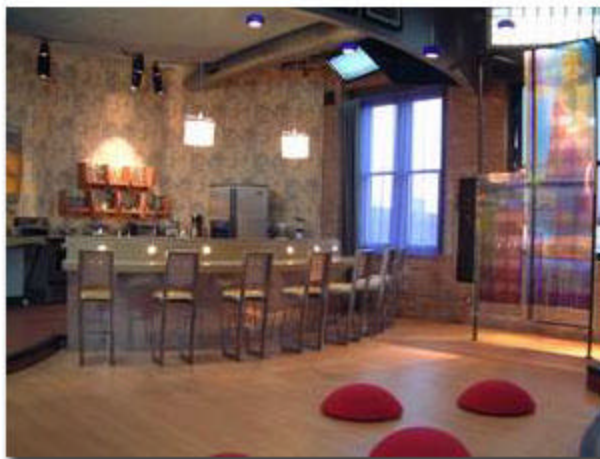
Project Manager Gary Heitz said the company had two completely different sets of problems to work around. "We needed to create a 24-hour-a-day functional living environment for a cast of seven that also needed to be a set for the production of a TV show", Heitz said.



In order to do this, Heitz and his six-person crew had to plan for every conceivable camera angle. "The cameras were wandering around, so the lighting needed to be concealed", Heitz said. "We wanted to make sure there were beauty shots from every angle, with lots of curves in the background to keep the eye excited".

Local designer Suhail served as an interior decorator of the three-story set. Suhail also designed the trendy Wicker Park restaurant, Mod, and the new Michigan Avenue offices of BBDS.

The top floor of the space includes a hip kitchen, fully equipped game room, office area/confessional cove for disclosing secrets on camera, and a living room area with spa access. The second floor had three funky bedrooms, a cozy phone lounge and a co-ed bathroom with changing area. Production officers were located on the first floor.



Also working on the job from Chicago Scenic were project managers Randy Bishop and Pete Rahill and lead carpenter, Dave Duwell.

Doepel started Chicago Scenic in 1978 as part of his senior thesis project in theater design and production at Carnegie Mellon University. The premise was to start an organization to design scenery for not-for-profit theaters in Chicago. Today, Chicago Scenic is a full-service shop with 40 employees that counts sets for Oprah, Good Morning America and seasonal décor at Navy Pier as its credits.