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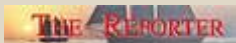
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Swift: Get a 'Real' life

By Alyson Matley amatley@keynoter.com
 Posted-Saturday, August 27, 2005 2:14 PM EDT

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Businessman sues, says show is a nuisance

Key Haven resident Ed Swift filed suit against MTV Thursday for invading his real world.

He charges that producers of the 17-year hit show "The Real World" have created an unbearable nuisance next door to his Driftwood Drive home on Key Haven.

The suit, filed in Monroe County Circuit Court, requests an injunction against filming the program until a final hearing can determine whether the use of the property is illegal.



This is the home where 'The Real World' is filming. Neighbor Ed Swift has sued, citing what he calls numerous nuisances related to the show. Keynoter photo by ALYSON MATLEY

According to the suit, RW Productions is leasing a home and two adjacent lots in the upscale Stock Island neighborhood to produce the new season of a show that throws together a group of twenty-something strangers in one house and films their every interaction.

According to the suit, filed by Key West attorney Jim Hendrick, the lease between property owner Andrew Lippi and the producers runs from June 28 until Dec.1. After that, it can be renewed for up to a month.

The property includes a house that is nearly 6,000 square feet in size, a tennis court and a vacant lot that sits on the corner of a canal and open water.

Among the complaints listed against the use of the home:

- The production company installed about 70 new outdoor lights, "enough exterior lighting to light the property brighter than the Key West High School football field during a nighttime game."
- The installation of numerous outdoor video cameras that are capable of rotating toward Swift's home.

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- Twenty outdoor commercial halogen floodlights affixed to poles that range from 20 to 30 feet high.

- Five "commercial-sized" air conditioners were added to the home "to overcome the heat generated by the lighting and other equipment associated with a commercial film studio."

- Signs were installed around the tennis court promoting commercial products.

- Producers signed a commercial contract with Keys Energy Services for the neighborhood house.

- The vacant lot is being used for parking upward of 30 cars on a continual basis.

The suit charges that local zoning does not allow commercial use of Key Haven homes. In addition, Swift notes that the neighbors on his street got together and did away with street lights "because the residents in that neighborhood sought to avoid light pollution and allow for an unobstructed view of the nighttime sky."

County code allows some minor uses in the neighborhood with county approval. But according to the suit, variances would be for schools, parks and small satellite earth stations.

The Swift family "can no longer enjoy entire sections of their home for fear of ending up on national television," reads the suit. In addition, it charges that the noise and lights, once filming begins, would keep the family "from enjoying normal daily activities including sleeping, relaxing, reading, working, and quiet conversation."

Representatives of the program spoke last week to the Key West Attractions Association, assuring business owners that the filming and national attention the program would bring to the Keys would be a boon.

Producers of "The Real World" were unavailable for comment Friday.