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## Another world

Cast of MTV's 'Real World: Denver' lives in unique, only-in-Colorado style

By Jay Dedrick, Rocky Mountain News  
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It's your typical Front Range home: hardwood shuffleboard court upstairs, chairlift hovering over the staircase, custom Jeep barreling through the foyer.

And, of course, camera lights in every room.

All right, so there's nothing typical about this residence, the one that the seven cast members of MTV's *The Real World: Denver* called home for three months this year. The reality series shows off the surreal house starting Wednesday, when the series makes its debut, giving the nation a look at décor that's an eye-popping collision of mountain rusticity and urban chic.

"Living here is a trip in itself," says cast member Jenn, a 22-year-old Oakland Raiders cheerleader. (MTV won't reveal cast members' last names.) "It's not the real world at all. We were lucky: This house is very vibrant, very outrageous - and it's a lot of fun."

Most recently, the building at 1920 Market St. had served as a LoDo nightspot, B-52 Billiards. The cockpit of a World War II-era bomber formed the centerpiece of the bar. Los Angeles-based designer Chuck Aubrey scrapped that relic and everything else inside. The only stuff to stay was the wood-and-metal staircase and the exposed brick walls.

"We demolished the place in five days," says Aubrey, 29, who worked on several seasons of MTV's *Road Rules* before taking on his first *Real World* house from start to finish. "So I basically worked with a blank canvas."

With 12,000 square feet of living space, it's one of the biggest homes to be styled for the series, which throws seven young strangers together in a social incubator and lets the cameras roll. Aubrey came up with his design scheme in about three weeks, then followed it with five weeks of construction led by Denver-based ABL Construction.

With each *Real World* house, producers aim for design that reflects local flavor. For the first season to originate in the Rocky Mountain West, Aubrey looked to bring the outdoors inside. Thus a bright yellow Jeep facing the main entrance that appears to be careening out of a mine shaft, thanks to a mural. The vehicle is outfitted with a bar top, a handy place to set drinks while the cast members play at the billiards table in the foyer. A truck rack overhead suspends a tire, a gas can and several dangling mechanics' lamps.

"It's kind of thrilling to walk into a house and see a car there," Aubrey says. "It grabbed hold of the cast and got them really excited the first time they walked in."

A trophy head of an elk - mistakenly referred to as a moose by some cast members - is among the dozens of pieces from Ski Country Antiques that bring lodge style to the lofty home.

One of the house's biggest conversation pieces begins at a conversation area: two antique chairlifts on each side of a vintage sled that serves as a coffee table. Three more chairlift replicas - each increasingly smaller - wind along a cable from the downstairs room to above the staircase, where a wall-mounted painting of ski slopes and still more chairlifts completes the high-elevation optical illusion. There are even pine trees scattered about the staircase and the snow-like carpeting.

"Not being from Denver, I was inspired by just being there," Aubrey says. "I did a lot of research, looked at a lot of books. The simplest thing I did, which got a lot of reaction, came from a children's book on Colorado."

The image that caught his eye: the state flag. He imagined the red "C" and gold sun as a sitting area. The result: a three-dimensional rendering of the flag, with blue and white stripes in the carpeting, and a red semi-circle of Love Sac beanbag chairs hugging a yellow-carpeted center table. It sits upstairs, next to the small, modernly furnished home office, where cast members fought over the single PC. Furniture throughout the house came from Crate and Barrel's hip new spinoff, CB2.



Barry Gutierrez ©  
News

The cast of the 'Real World: Denver' lived in your typical Front Range home: hardwood shuffleboard court upstairs, chairlift hovering over the staircase, custom Jeep barreling through the foyer. Above, a trophy head of an elk from Ski Country Antiques, where many of the other Colorado-inspired pieces came from, dominates the wall near one of the conversation areas.

Walking through the home, there's no forgetting you're in an environment designed for TV. Camera lights are cleverly incorporated into the exposed ductwork. The couch in the living room, which faces the fireplace hearth, is set three feet from the wall, allowing a camera operator to walk behind. Shutters on windows to the bedrooms enable some privacy but also allow cameras to peer inside when needed. Still, Aubrey was looking to keep the comfort level high for the cast's May-through-August stay.

"It's more important to approach this project as a house or a home, rather than a set for a television show," Aubrey says. "If (cast members) are going to open up and let us know who they are on camera, you want them to be comfortable in their space. That was a challenge, because this is a large space, and people prefer to be sheltered. They want to go to a space where they can feel comfy and cozy.

"So by putting the fireplace in the middle of the room, it sections that area off from the kitchen. The bedrooms are tight and smaller so it feels more intimate."

The cast's three bedrooms are upstairs; the women shared a three-bed room; the four men bunked in two rooms, each with two beds. The twin beds are lined up in rows to facilitate conversation. Each room boasts its own color scheme and bright murals depicting Colorado themes: groves of aspen, dense forests of evergreen, snowcapped mountains. Unconventional closets are built into the beds' backboards; set back from the walls, they allow privacy for dressing.

No such luck in the bathroom shared by all seven: A pair of powder rooms are mercifully doored in, but the pair of showers, each with three shower heads, are walled off by mostly transparent glass. Only strategically placed, opaque images of mountains afford any screening.

"You could see our heads and our feet, and not anything else," says Colie, one of the three women in the cast. "It was good to have three shower heads. We did a lot of showering together - just for time's sake. And fun."

Also upstairs: an aspen-themed "confessional" room, where cast members could privately record entries in a video diary; a laundry room; a workout room; and a shuffleboard court with bold orange, green and yellow stain on the hardwood floor.

On the main floor, the ski-lift conversation area adjoins the telephone room, with the only phone in the house, and an antique wood-burning stove. A single-bed bedroom provides a crashing spot for overnight guests; it's near another bathroom where, again, the sink and the vanity are out in the open.

The kitchen, in bold blue and yellow finishes, sits at a diagonal, with a long marble-topped island. The dining room boasts a parquet wood floor and a blond wood table.

The adjoining living room sits next to the foyer, which leads to the home's one outdoor space, an urban courtyard outfitted with a narrow lap pool, a hot tub and a basketball court - again emulating the Colorado flag. Aubrey wanted to add a climbing wall, but code concerns and budget balancing eliminated that idea (MTV won't reveal the project's total budget). Instead, a mural by Keith Price boasts abstract "climbers" of yellow wire making their way up green wooden slats anchored to the brick wall. It's one of several eye-popping works by Colorado artists throughout the home.

"It's sort of like a really glamorous fraternity house," says Steve, 22-year-old cast member attending Howard University, in Washington, D.C. "It's the coolest house I've ever lived in."

"That's great," Aubrey says upon being told of the comment. "That was the whole purpose, for it to feel young, hip, cool.

"Unfortunately," he adds with a chuckle, "they wrecked the house, which is what college kids do."

Fortunately for Aubrey, the stained carpet and filthy kitchen that broke his heart were cleaned up between the time shooting concluded and when MTV brought the cast back to town for the photos that appear here.

"I can't live in a normal house anymore," says cast member Davis, 22, earning nods of agreement from his housemates. "I'd have to decorate it. I felt spoiled here."

Aubrey knows that his work was meant strictly for the show's shooting time, but he'd love the décor to live on with whomever winds up buying the place, whatever they wind up doing with it.

"It would be a great residence for someone who could afford it," he says about the house, which was on the market for a reported \$3.3 million last month. "Or it could go back to being a restaurant. I've always thought they should open up a chain of *Real World* restaurants and bars."

## Blasts from the past

Since the series made its debut in 1992, *The Real World's* homes have all included fish tanks. Designer Chuck Aubrey originally wanted the Denver fish tank to be part of the Jeep display in the foyer, but when building codes precluded his crew from installing a working fireplace, Aubrey moved the tank into the hearth. He likes the result better than he'd originally planned. Other noteworthy features of past *Real World* locations:

- **Key West, 2005:** Spanish Mediterranean-style house sat on waterfront property.
- **Austin, Texas, 2005:** The warehouse now houses a location of the Colorado-based Rio Grande restaurant chain.
- **Philadelphia, 2004:** Neoclassical structure built in 1902; listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
- **Las Vegas, 2002:** Suite on the 28th floor of the Palms Resort and Casino
- **Seattle, 1998:** Pier 70 on Elliott Bay now houses retail and restaurants.
- **New York, 1992:** Two apartments were renovated to form a loft in this SoHo high-rise, the first *Real World* location. *Source:* [Realworldhouses.Com](#)

[dedrickj@RockyMountainNews.com](mailto:dedrickj@RockyMountainNews.com) or 303-954-5484

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