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Alex McCord & Simon van Kempen: Real People from 'Real Housewives'

By Eiseley Tauginas

April 09, 2009



Last night, at an intimate reception for the affordable, precious stone-centered line Tana Jewelry at Soho's King of Greene Street Emporium (hosted by Annie Churchill, [Erin Fetherston](#), Dabney Mercer, and Susan Shin), we chitchatted with Alex McCord and Simon van Kempen of Bravo's reality gem, *The Real Housewives of New York City*. The Brooklyn-based duo held forth on *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*, raising youngsters in the public eye, and the prospect of more reality TV. Forever and ever and ever.

What's going on with the construction on your house? (in unison) You'll have to watch and find out.

How has life changed now that you're not filming?

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SVK: It's actually worse and harder.
AM: The easy part of the year is when we're shooting. The crazy part is when the show is on. Then you have to factor in extra time to get from point A to point B because you have to stop and talk to people. But that's great, and the moment that anyone starts complaining about that is the moment you have to stop and go home. It's a new layer to our life, and we get used to people coming up to us and knowing things about our family, our kids, our life. We film probably 5,000 minutes for a series and maybe 60 minutes of that actually makes it on TV. People see a snapshot and make opinions based on that, and who are we not to talk to them?

How do the kids deal with the time off?
SVK: Well, our boys were one and three in series 1, two and four in series 2, and they are now three and five.

AM: They are double the size they were on the current season.
SVK: And people think that Johan is Francois because before season 2 started airing, we'd be on the street and people would see Johan and say, "Hi Francois." Because Johan is the size that Francois was when we filmed two years ago.

AM: People don't take into consideration that the show was filmed a year ago. During the first episode of this season, everyone was asking, "Are you and Jill okay?" And I kept having to say, "That was eight months ago."

SVK: Someone said to me today, "That was a great tennis match last night." And I was like, "I didn't play—Oh, it aired last night." It's a whole time warp. We go through a sense of déjà vu when the show is airing. Last week at Francois's school, he and eight other kids in kindergarten and first grade had to film a documentary, and when Francois had to introduce himself on camera, he was shy and he was hiding behind a chair. So they are so young now, that they're not really affected by it at all.

How are they adjusting to growing up on reality TV?
AM: When we're filming, it's kind of like we're filming a huge family video with a huge crew of people. They're well aware that there is a show, and they understand that what we do when the cameras come in on TV, but they have absolutely no conception of the hype, the press, the reaction. They're insulated from that. Which I can't say for other people's children on the show, especially the ones who are 13, 14, 15. Simon and I said that if our boys were tweens or teenagers, we probably wouldn't have done it. We're comfortable with the way things are.

SVK: It is strange now that they don't think it's a big deal to see Mommy and Daddy on TV or the computer. They're used to this, and it's not exciting for them. It just is.

Are you afraid that they'll be jaded by the experience?
AM: They're certainly not at the point where they think that this is what everybody does. I don't think it defines them because they're so young. Johan was so excited today, because he was cutting out pictures in newspapers and magazines to make a collage—where there are a lot of pictures of us—he's not going for pictures of Mommy and Daddy, he's going for pictures of Superman.

Do you see *The Real Housewives of New Jersey* as competition?
AM: I haven't seen their show yet.
SVK: We met them last year at the [National Underwear Day](#). We turned around and there were all these cameras, and we're like, "No, no, we're not filming tonight." And then they came over to us and started chatting. It's funny because we know that you can't judge people too much by their reality television program, and that night, they seemed very pleasant.
AM: They knew who we were, but we didn't know who they were, because they were in production. They seem nice and normal.
SVK: They were also eager to find out what they were about to go through.

Instant camaraderie between Housewives?
SVK: There's a camaraderie through this shared experience. We even have that on our own show. There is no love lost between Alex and me and Ramona and Mario. However, they are going through the same thing we are. So when they're beat up for bad editing or for no good reason, we feel bad. Whether I feel like they're stupid people or not, on a personal level, it's not nice for anyone to get beaten up on the show. These shows are made to get good television, and they take the best bits and the worst bits. And it can be so much out of synch. I feel so bad for Luann this season because her whole countess shtick has been piled on scene after scene after scene, and she probably said the countess thing five times in the whole season, and that's all you see.
AM: Certainly our cast is one big dysfunctional family, and we have our ups and our downs ... we all have a shared experience that almost no one else can relate to.

More reality TV in the future, post-*Housewives*?
SVK: I would say, never say never.

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Posted by JoAnne Cadogan on Thu Apr 9, 2009 at 08.40 pm #1

Hi Simon & Alex,

The kids will be fine, look at Jon & Kate plus 8. The camera crew is now like their extended family. I got news for you, everyone's family is dysfunctional, just to what degree? Like you and the others have said over and over, "It is what it is." I can only hope to love someone as much as you two love each other. Keep up the good work. Love you guys.

JoAnne - Chicago

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