



Filed under: Interview, New York Author: Dayna

CityMommy enjoyed interviewing **Alex McCord and Simon Van Kempen** about their experience on the show "**Real Housewives of NYC**" as well as their parenting style.

1. How did you get involved with the **Real Housewives of NYC**?



Simon: Over a year before production finally started we were approached by the producers of a show tentatively titled "Manhattan Moms" as they were particularly looking for families with young children about to go through the madness that is the private preschool applications at NYC schools. By the time the show was finally greenlit Alex had returned to the full time workforce and we really wondered if we were still interested. After a lot of back and forth between us, Alex & I finally said "Oh, why not!" and we jumped in feet first.

Alex: We didn't know that the show was going to be a Real Housewives spin off until after the show was filmed and edited - we found out when Bravo announced it to the press. However, as Simon said when we made the decision to do the show to begin with, we had jumped in feet first, so we ran with the concept as it evolved.

2. Are you still close with any of your cast mates?

Alex: There's a real ebb and flow to our involvement with the others, just as in real life with anyone else. We've all spent time together off-camera and on.

Simon: We've just wrapped filming season 2 which will air in early 2009. The entire cast from Season 1 is back plus there's a new addition so you'll just have to watch what happens to see if we still are.



3. What do you think keeps your marriage so strong? How long have you been married?

Alex: We communicate constantly, we respect each other and are invested in each other's personal growth - we never let issues get between us and don't take ourselves too seriously.

Simon: Simply it's our friendship and the bond that we forged almost ten years ago when we first met that has grown stronger each day. For just over half that time we've been parents which is the most wonderful thing in the world but we've also been very adamant that the two of us spend time together each week where we can really talk and freshen our relationship the more.

4. How would you describe your style of parenting?

Alex: Hands-on. Although we both work full-time jobs, we make every moment with our boys count. We both strive to leave work at the door when we come home and focus on the kids and their needs. We both feel that respect breeds respect and communicate openly with our children much in the same way we do with each other.

Simon: Shared: On average we're home three nights each work week and rarely go out without the boys on weekends. So in the manic 2 hours we're all together each morning to the hours in the evenings and then the weekends we try to give as much attention to the boys as they need. Alex & I take it in turns to take Francois to school each day and make a habit to sit with him each evening to discuss what he learnt at school earlier. We also constantly challenge them with both word and math games as away to keep learning fun. When we're walking in the street either Alex or I might point out a sign and get them to either read it (Francois) or read the individual letters (Johan). And of course when they get it right the both feel so proud.

5. Do you see yourselves as always living in NYC?

Alex: Although we love to travel and will continue to do so, I can't see us ever living long term outside of New York. Have lived in many different places, NYC has been my home for 14 years and regardless of where I might be, will always be home.

Simon: One should never say never, but I can't see wanting to leave NYC; certainly not in the next 15-20 years. Having lived in Sydney, London & Paris before coming to NYC I can honestly say that those other cities might have some advantages over NY but overall NYC wins hands down.



6. Alex, how do you stay so fit and slim? Any diet or workout tips?

Alex: Most of it is genetic and beyond my control - pretty much everyone on both sides of my family is tall and thin. In an effort to eat naturally (and locally when possible) I've kept my food intake pretty free of overly processed foods, soda, fast foods, etc, which does make a difference. Also with life in New York City where everyone walks a lot plus having two young and very active children, I get quite a bit of exercise just going about the daily routine. At the office I constantly move between 2 floors & use internal stairs rather than the elevator, but that is really more for speed with exercise as a bonus.

Simon: N/A

7. What is the most interesting part of being on a reality show? What is the most difficult part?

Alex: Seeing how others perceive us and the other cast members. Two people can watch the same footage and come up with wildly differing opinions. It's an interesting sociological experiment!

Simon: It's great to capture a video montage of our lives and those of the boys. Since season 1 aired it's been wonderful to be approached by people who tell us how much they love Alex's and my relationship, our parenting skills and so on. The most difficult part is where something we've said on the show can be construed completely differently by different viewers. If someone holds a negative view of us then they can find more criticism because of our statement whereas if someone likes us then they can find the statement wonderful. Proof positive that you can't please all of the people all of the time.

8. Do you feel that you are portrayed realistically? Is there a lot of editing?

Alex: If the producers showed every bit of footage, the show would be about 72 hours long and no one would sit through it - also it would be contradictory as people typically respond to what's going on around them in the moment which changes constantly - true for everyone, not just us. The producers did their best to create the most viewer-friendly, entertaining show possible, and I think they did well.

Simon: The footage shot is of us and the words spoken are by us. We can't control how or what makes it onto the screen which makes watching each episode so exciting to see how we've been presented. Yes there is a lot of editing but only because throughout the season hours and hours of footage is taken and only a small percentage can make it to screen.



9. Anything else you would like CityMommy members to know about you?

Alex: I think that parenting, no matter where you live, involves a mix of discipline and stewardship. We're trying to provide our boys with as much information as possible to make choices as to how they want to live their lives. Until they are older we also guide those choices. The idea is eventually to let go and watch them fly.

Simon: Bringing up children in an urban environment particularly one as exciting as NYC can be daunting but by harnessing the best things from the City (and having a chance to escape it occasionally) your children can grow up with a tremendously diverse knowledge base that will hopefully stand them in good stead when they grow up and leave to strike it out on their own.

Read more about Alex and Simon and their family life in NYC [here](#).