

# Home Movies

*Lemont couple turns the building and buying of a house into a cable TV show*

**FOR DEB AND OZIE BALDWIN**, the building of their Lemont home was the realization of one dream and the possible start of another.

"I've always been about documenting the progress of our life," says Ozie, an award-winning news photographer. So recording the building of the couple's dream house from start to finish seemed only natural.

After filming the home's progress, Ozie thought other people might be interested in the concept. So the Baldwins began seeking out builders doing unique projects. Deb pre-scouted construction sites, then the never-shy Ozie talked to the builders.

The result: Builders & Buyers, a monthly cable TV show

## BUILDERS & BUYERS

The documentary-style show highlights the process of building custom homes throughout the western suburbs.

**Airs on Comcast 100 and Comcast On Demand**  
[www.buildersandbuyersstv.com](http://www.buildersandbuyersstv.com)

"Our plan is kind of HGTV meets MTV," Ozie jokes. After the initial series is completed, the couple hopes to market the package more broadly.

Robert Lord of Robert Lord Builders, whose environmentally friendly home was profiled on Builders & Buyers in a recent "green" episode, sees the show's potential. "It's going to take off," he predicts. "They have a niche, and they have so much talent."

Why another home show? "I'm so tired of seeing homes in Florida, California, New York," explains Ozie. "Illinois has much greater diversity in styles. We have better homes because they're built for a difficult climate."

And unlike another slightly more high profile home show, Builders & Buyers will emphasize the quality of construction, not the speed. "You can't build a good home in a week," says Ozie, adding, "We hope to set a new standard."



*Deb Baldwin likes to ride her motorcycle around the area to scout out possible homes to feature on Builders & Buyers, the cable TV show she hosts and husband Ozie films.*

Though Builders & Buyers has a broad appeal, the Baldwins have been trying to target an especially elusive audience — young men. "And we've gotten them," says Ozie.

Deb nods in agreement. "A lot of the feedback we get comes from men who appreciate that it's not just about the frou frou decorations of a home but a real journey."

The show's male audience appeal is undoubtedly due at least in part to Ozie's emphasis on spotlighting the work of craftspeople. "At least 250 people have touched your home by the time you move in," he explains. "All have their story. I love to give them a platform to show that talent and dedication."

In fact, the Baldwins hope to do an entire show this summer on "a day in the life of the trades," allowing people to see the details that can be the difference between good workmanship and great workmanship.

Another objective — not surprising given Deb's position as founder of Human Resources Diversity Advisors — is to feature a diversity of both buyers and builders. "We like to show other people of color that they don't have to compromise," she explains. "That anybody, regardless of race, age or other factors, can aspire to their dreams."

"We give a lot of consideration to who is telling the story," adds Deb. "When we have someone for whom English isn't their first language, we've encouraged them to tell it themselves. No one can tell your story like you can."

Carol Nelson of Naperville, one of their buyers, says that it was easy to share her story with the Baldwins. "He really knows how to ask the right questions," she says of Ozie.

Deb is quick to point out that just because Builders &



Buyers focuses on “dream homes,” it’s not just for rich people. Viewers of all economic strata will enjoy the show, “not only for the pleasure of seeing inside custom homes, but to gain information for their own situation,” she explains. “Viewers get a grasp of what good workmanship looks like and can adapt it to their own budgets.”

The Baldwins take pride in the fact that what the viewers see is unvarnished reality, not scripted or pre-packaged in any way. “It’s a true reality show. The builders and buyers don’t know when I’m going to show up,” says Ozie.

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“Sometimes I don’t know when I’m going to show up. So I get whatever’s going on when I get there. We don’t have scripts. I don’t believe in manipulation of any sort.”

From the blueprints, to filming, to Deb’s interactions with the people — even to the point of getting her hands dirty side-by-side with the tradespeople — the objective is to tell the story of each home’s builders and buyers with truth and integrity.

“We take no money,” says Ozie. “Everything we do is above board, and people get a sense of that.”

Ultimately, the Baldwins’ primary goal is to inspire, they say. To inspire young people to save and plan for their future hopes and dreams; to inspire craftspeople to take pride in their work; and to inspire people of color not to compromise on pursuing their passions.

—Jill Richardson



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