

Love It, List It or Lien It

By Reg P. Wydeven

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My wife loves the TV show 'Love It or List It,' which stars Hilary Farrand, a designer, and David Visentin, a realtor. The premise of the HGTV hit is that a homeowner, typically a married couple, is dissatisfied with their current house.

One of the spouses loves the home and with some remodeling, it could still meet the family's needs. So Hilary is enlisted to make some renovations to the house so they will end up 'loving' it and staying put.

The other spouse believes the house no longer meets their needs and they have to move. Enter David, who is tasked with finding a house that has everything on the couple's wish list so they want to buy it and 'list' their old home.

Hilary uses her talents to completely transform the family's home to meet their needs. However, during the construction, she invariably encounters a problem, such as a dying furnace or leaky roof, which needs immediate repair and eats into her reno budget. As a result, she is not able to address all of the needs on the couple's wish list.

Meanwhile, after showing the couple some homes that come close, David eventually finds the home of their dreams, only it costs a little more than they wanted to spend. So the show's finale is very dramatic as the couple ultimately decides to 'love' or 'list' their home.

Well, Deena Murphy and Timothy Sullivan, a couple from Raleigh, North Carolina, are definitely no longer fans of the show.

Murphy and Sullivan owned a rental home they wanted to remodel before moving into it with their foster children. In April of 2015, the couple were chosen after responding to an ad for 'Love It or List It'. They are now suing the show's production company, Big Coat TV, and Aaron Fitz Construction, a local contractor hired to do the renovation. While the couple decided to keep their home, they certainly don't 'love' it. They claim that the workmanship was shoddy, the show breached their contract with the couple, and also violated North Carolina's general contractor laws.

The couple asserts that because neither Hilary nor David were licensed in North Carolina, the show's producers did not employ a licensed architect for the renovation plans and did not have a licensed real estate agent to show them other properties.

"The show is scripted, with 'roles' and reactions assigned to the various performers and participants, including the homeowners," the lawsuit reads. "These characters are actors or television personalities playing a role for the camera, and in this case none of them played more than a casual role in the actual renovation process."

The couple alleges that they were left with "disastrous work done by Big Coat and its subcontractors" including an "irreparably damaged" floor full of holes "through which vermin could enter the house," unpainted surfaces, low-grade industrial carpet, and painted-shut windows. And despite having a reno budget of \$140,000, the contractor was only given \$85,786.50 to work with. They also believe that their option to 'list' was nonexistent because they were not shown homes by a licensed real estate agent.

Maria Armstrong, CEO and executive producer of Big Coat TV, issued a statement to the Charlotte Observer proclaiming, "We do intend to vigorously defend what we consider to be false allegations."

And here I thought that the drama was only in front of the camera...

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