

bedspreads, mirrors galore. Not that such eyesores particularly matter, especially in the chummed shark tank that is the Hollywood housing market.

"This," says Wilson, taking in the domed ceiling, "is valuable property." He knows he could get a phone call in a week from someone fantasizing about a place like this. He also knows that a week will be far too late (and indeed, Dice Clay Manor is snatched up for nearly its asking price the next day). But that's okay, because if that prospective buyer is smart enough to call Wilson in the first place, he already demonstrates a keen understanding of the L.A. real-estate scene.

In the ongoing nationwide realty explosion, Los Angeles is the luxury-home WMD. Last year the city topped the country with a median sales price of \$1.63 million for high-end housing, and in general luxury-home prices have leaped 63 percent since 2000. All this has magically transformed the lowly broker, who used to have all the social juice of a Starbucks barista, into a bona fide star—the guy everyone in the most image-conscious city in the universe wants to know. In a sure sign of their newfound prominence, brokers are the subject of a slew of TV shows currently in development.

"Real-estate agents are celebrities unto themselves right now," says Andrew Plotkin, a co-producer of one such program, an ABC pilot tentatively called *Westside*. "You end up knowing all their names." Of course, he doesn't exactly mean all their names; the sad truth is that the brokers who phone Jack Nicholson with the news that a Rudolph Schindler in newly hot Trousdale has come on the market are not the same shlubs who get stuck giving condo tours in Manhattan Beach.

"The successful real-estate agents now are suave, hipgo-getters," says Gail Hershowitz, an L.A. escrow officer for over 20 years. "There are so many agents out there that if you're going to be successful, you really have to have that extra bit of charisma."

A celebrity pedigree doesn't hurt either: Wilson is the son of the late Beach Boy Carl Wilson, and being a scion of rock royalty gave him his start. He earned his real-estate license after a brief stint in 1989 as the tour manager for Wilson Phillips, the band his cousins Wendy and Carnie formed with Chynna Phillips. His first three sales were the houses that "Hold On" paid for—one for each band member.

Wilson's roster has significantly expanded since then, and now includes Courteney Cox and David Arquette, Stephen Dorff, Anthony Kiedis, Adam Duritz, and Jonathan Davis of Korn, among many others. The agent's specific charm rests in a teddybear cuddliness more often associated with kindergarten teachers than salesmen.

"I'm a pretty mellow person for this career," Wilson admits. "A lot of agents are hustlers and movers and shakers. I can turn that on when I need to, but my nature isn't like that." Wilson sold roughly 30 houses last year, totaling approximately \$45 million.

"Some real-estate brokers are very cocky, but Jonah's someone I want to spend time with past the signing on the dotted line," says Courteney Cox,

#### JONAH WILSON

WILSON, 35, SOLD HIS FIRST THREE HOUSES TO THE MEMBERS OF WILSON PHILLIPS. HIS CELEBRITY CLIENT LIST NOW INCLUDES COURTENEY COX AND DAVID ARQUETTE.



on the eighties soap *Capitol*, he soon realized that a lifestyle charted on *Entertainment Tonight* wasn't in his future, and he signed on to become photographer Greg Gorman's assistant. When he made the jump to real estate, famous referrals from Gorman, like Raquel Welch, put Lawyer on the money train. But despite long-running relationships with his clients—he and Welch have done seven deals together—Lawyer, who now works at Sotheby's In-

#### RICHARD EHRLICH

BEFORE BECOMING A BROKER, EHRLICH, 35, WORKED AS A CLUB DOORMAN AND AN ACTOR. LAST YEAR HE SOLD OVER \$50 MILLION IN HOMES FOR WESTSIDE ESTATE AGENCY.



**"REAL-ESTATE AGENTS ARE CELEBRITIES UNTO THEMSELVES RIGHT NOW," SAYS TELEVISION PRODUCER ANDREW PLOTKIN.**

who has done five deals through him. "He's patient, he's fun to hang out with, and he's got fantastic taste: He can just pinpoint what people want."

Wilson's style is far more casual than that of one of L.A.'s other celebrity brokers, Brett Lawyer. The two actually came up together, first at Prudential and then at the boutique agency Nourmand & Associates. But where Wilson is the go-to guy for the Grammy set, Lawyer, 43, has cornered the market on hipster Young Hollywood: His clients include Leo, Tobey, Keanu, Cameron, Ben, J. Lo, and many other pretty young millionaires, as well as Barry Manilow, Mel Gibson, Ricki Lake, and Al Pacino.

Originally from southern Ohio, Lawyer came out to L.A. one summer to be an actor. Despite a run

ternational Realty, mostly keeps his personal and professional lives separate.

"I think part of the key to my success is that I'm not that close to my clients, and have no desire to be," he says, gazing out at the city from the pool deck of a \$7 million Hollywood Hills house he's listing. "I'm not out there working the scene."

The discretion that Lawyer practices on behalf of his clients is one reason that he sold 26 homes, worth nearly \$80 million, last year. Real estate is a spectator sport in Hollywood, and transactions serve as tea leaves in which to read the rise and fall of personal fortunes. Consider also that buying or selling a home frequently accompanies a sensitive life transition like a divorce, and you can see how a