

National Harbor houses sparkle for cable TV showdown

Design challenge 'Showhouse Showdown' filmed at National Harbor

by ABBY BROWNBACK, STAFF WRITER



The floor plans were nearly identical, but the two houses showcased in Saturday's filming for HGTV's new "Showhouse Showdown" in National Harbor had quite different feels, said several of the 350 people who toured the homes.

"House B was more industrial," said Cynthia Corbin, of Mitchellville, who does interior design work herself. "House A was more inviting. I could see myself in House A."

The show, which premieres Sept. 12 on the HGTV network, gave two local designers townhouses with the same floor plan and \$112,000 to design five rooms, including the kitchen, master bedroom and patio, in about a week. The

first 100 people to view the homes cast a vote for their favorite, and the winner will be revealed when the show appears Oct. 31, said Dawn Stroupe, the show's executive producer.

"It allows the public to decide then and there which they like better," she said. "It's immediate gratification for the people who come."

House A, which designer Patrick Baglino Jr. labeled "urban sophistication," earned praise for the backsplash in the kitchen, but Janice Hall, of Temple Hills, said it felt like a dollhouse.

Voters liked the marble entryway in House B, described as "mixed metropolitan" by designer Darlene Molnar, but some said the furniture looked uncomfortable. "I loved B. She had marble used a lot of different ways," said Melissa Smith, of Chantilly, Va. "The color scheme was really cohesive."

The Chantilly, Va.-based Integrity Homes of Virginia built the townhouses and provided the designers' budget, said Dina Andrews, the company's chief financial officer. It now will list the homes including all décor for sale at almost \$790,000 each.

"We were proud of our product," Andrews said of why the company wanted to be part of the show. "We thought it was a distinct product for the area. It shows [National Harbor] as a livable community, a good urban location."

Bob Guiney, the host of "Showhouse Showdown" and a former contestant on ABC's "The Bachelor," said he's learned a lot about design during the filming of about two dozen episodes.



"The beauty of this show is it's all about the process," he said. "You're seeing two people take their visions from tip to tail. You're seeing two people's approach to the same rooms."

The show will feature homes from Newport Beach, Calif., to Tampa, Fla., Stroupe said. Producers will film two remaining shows in Pittsburgh and Boise, Idaho. The winners of each show will have their portfolio highlighted on HGTV's website.

