

# Show House

Can your house pass a screen test? It can earn you \$100,000 a year, tax-free.

By Brigid McMenamin

**B**ECOME A STAGE MOTHER, NOT to a child but to a house. Renting your place out for movies or television ads can be very lucrative, as the income is tax-free if you rent no more than 14 days a year.

Homeowners Greg and Eric Wolfson-Sagot have earned \$120,000 per year since 1998 by allowing producers to shoot TV shows and ads in their three-story, center-hall colonial in Los Angeles. They bought the place in the West Adams neighborhood for \$369,000 in 1997. The fees have enabled Greg to give up his \$75,000-per-year job as a set decorator. While Eric works as a lighting designer, Greg stays home caring for their recently adopted toddler and seeing two older boys, ages 5 and 7, through private school.

What makes this house so valu-

able? There are lots of shoots in Los Angeles, but not many houses like this one, with its thoroughly midwestern design—brick exterior and interior in the simple, woody style of the early 1900s known as Craftsman. Eric and Greg can offer a roomy kitchen with nine camera angles and a black-and-white patterned floor (which a location scout suggested they install), a favorite backdrop for Kellogg's Corn Flakes ads.

At first Greg and Eric were reluctant to rent. They had seen film crews trash homes, leaving broken windows, pocked walls and dented floors in their wake. "There's always damage," cautions James Thompson, co-owner of Real to Reel, a \$2.5 million (revenues) Los Angeles-based outfit that matches producers with locations. Homes just aren't built to withstand dozens of people trooping around with muddy boots and heavy equipment.

What changed their minds was discovering how much money they could make by renting. Their fee ranges from \$5,000 per day for TV commercials using the kitchen to \$30,000 for *The X-Files*, which took



Action! With a movie-star house, Greg and Eric Wolfson-Sagot earn \$120,000 a year—tax-free.