

MIBS Alum Wins a House Plus a New Career: Jazz Vocalist

Cindy Scott (MIBS '90) speaks German and French, and she's been a project manager for multinational companies in Europe and America. But she also lays down a mean hardwood floor, can build a slate patio, install a bathtub, and cut through brick to set in a window.

As a result, Scott and husband Bill Fernandez are the new owners of a snazzy 3,200-square-foot home in suburban Houston, which the couple won in December on "House Rules," a new television "reality show" on TBS. Bill and Cindy also won \$50,000, all the furniture they selected while renovating the house, a shed full of tools, two trips to Jamaica (they gave one of them away to a newlywed couple they were competing against), and a fancy home entertainment system.

The 12-week show, which aired from October through December 2003, pitted three teams of amateur home remodelers against each other. Viewers voted to select the winning team, which was awarded the house they had renovated.

"I've gotten lots of e-mails [from Moore MIBS/IMBA grads] who said they voted for us," said Scott in a recent telephone interview. "One of the alums said their 5-year-old wants to come and live with us."

Scott, 38, and Fernandez, 46, had some previous remodeling experience: they had renovated another home themselves four years ago. The couple was looking for another project when she read about a casting call for the House Rules show in *The Houston Chronicle*.

"From the beginning, we addressed everything with a business type of mind," Scott says. "And I think our corporate backgrounds and ages helped. [They were the oldest of the three couples.] We kept our eye on the big picture, and we were prepared for the work." Both had to quit their day jobs in order to participate on the show.

Scott had previously worked as a project manager for a multinational company in Hungary, where she was on the job "seven days a week, 12 hours a day." It turned out to be good preparation for the TV show; for three months, Scott says, she and Bill worked 18 hours a day, almost every day, renovating the house room by room and also landscaping the yard.

"I have worked that hard before," she says, "but never for that long. It was exhausting." When the filming ended in October, it took the couple a month to recover.

Winning the house and the \$50,000 has meant an added bonus for Scott: she has decided to follow her heart and become a full-time jazz vocalist. For years, the redhead from Mississippi had done local jazz gigs as a hobby. "I decided a couple of years ago, after attending a jazz vocal workshop, that I would become a jazz singer—period—if I didn't have to worry about money."

So now, Scott is pursuing her artistic vision. She wants to "round out" her music knowledge, perhaps by going back to school. She is learning to play the piano (she already plays the flute), and recently recorded a debut CD of sultry jazz standards entitled "Major to Minor." That compact disc, Scott says proudly, was recorded at the same Houston studio where Destiny's Child records.

Her degree from the Moore School, Scott says, will be helpful in her music career. "It makes me unique, I think. I totally understand the money side of this business, and so that gives me a different

view of the industry."

In the meantime, Scott and Fernandez have not hung up their tool belts. "We're looking for some renovation projects right now," she says, "probably for investment purposes."

— Jan K. Collins

(To order Scott's "Major to Minor" CD of jazz vocals, visit her Web site at www.cindyscott.us, or e-mail her at cindy@cindyscott.us.)



Fernandez and Scott