



Stars

and their high-rise

Hideaways

Apartment living is now the top choice of many of our biggest stars, says **Jaz Allen**, thanks to the security, convenience and privacy ... when they can get it



Far Left: Russell Crowe Left: The Finger Wharf development where he owns a \$14m penthouse. Above: Cate Blanchett filming *Blue Jasmine* with Woody Allen and Alec Baldwin.

It's the stuff of pure fantasy: one day, you visit the spa in your apartment building and discover a near-naked Hugh Jackman sitting there.

But for residents of one luxury block in Sydney, that wasn't the only reason to call the place home. Also living there at the time was Todd McKenney – the original star of *The Boy From Oz*, the musical that Jackman later turned into the Broadway hit.

"It was a surreal experience," says the lucky lady who shared that spa with Jackman at the award-winning designer building Altair in Kings Cross, and then a lift with McKenney. "I tried very hard not to perve on Hugh while we were in the spa, but it was tricky! He was lovely; they both were ..."

Jackman was a regular visitor to the building where a friend resided, and *Dancing With The Stars'* McKenney was an owner-occupier, but both were celebrities who discovered that apartment-living often offers many advantages over freestanding houses.

The *X-Men* star, for instance, lived for years in an apartment in Melbourne. When he won his first big Hollywood role as *Wolverine*, he was stunned to discover his film trailer was bigger than his entire unit. "And they're apologising, and saying,

"The real trailer will be coming in on Monday!" says Jackman.

He now spends most of his time in an apartment in New York's West Village as a neighbour of Nicole Kidman, a well-known lover of apartment-living, who recently sold her unit there for a cool \$16 million.

Back home in Sydney, Nicole, mostly recently starring in *Grace of Monaco*, was besieged by paparazzi at her Darling Point house, but found life much more peaceful – and private – in an apartment at Pier 6/7 in Walsh Bay before later moving into two penthouses at the Latitude building in Milsons Point for a rumoured \$13 million, and then snapping up a third unit in the same block for \$2.7 million to serve as a home office.

"More and more celebrities prefer apartment living," says buyers' agent to the stars, Janne Sutcliffe of Change of Address. "They travel a lot so with an apartment, they can lock up and leave it. Also, they don't need so many staff or to do so much maintenance."

The stars who have made apartments their home over time have become legendary. *Noah's* Russell Crowe, for instance, broke the record for a Sydney apartment resale when he bought the \$14 million whole-floor penthouse of the Finger >



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Top row: the view from Cate Blanchett’s Elizabeth Bay apartment block; Todd McKenney; Hugh Jackman.
Middle: Nicole Kidman,
Bottom: the Latitude building, where Kidman owns three properties worth \$15.7m

Wharf at Woolloomooloo in 2003. More recently, *Blue Jasmine* Oscar-winner Cate Blanchett and her husband Andrew Upton bought a \$1.9 million apartment in an art-deco block on the harbourfront in Elizabeth Bay, reportedly as an investment for their sons, Dashiell, 12, Roman, nine, and Ignatius, five. Meanwhile, *Avatar* star Sam Worthington and girlfriend Lara Bingle inspected an apartment in Point Piper together, and she put her one-bedroom unit in Darling Point up for auction. She’s bought that quickly, after moving out of the luxury Bondi Beach pad belonging to her former fiancé, cricketer Michael Clarke.

Many well-known Australians have come to appreciate high-rise living even more after stints overseas where apartments are often far more popular than in Australia. Besides, if you want to live in the centre of the world’s biggest cities, apartments are often the only option.

United States of Tara’s Toni Collette, for example, had an apartment in London, while *Diana* star Naomi Watts lives in a US\$4m apartment in New York, in the hip TriBeCa neighbourhood, with husband Liev Schreiber and sons Sammy, five, and Sasha, six.

Another major appeal is the privacy and level of security in most good apartment blocks, with concierge providing the first line of defence against paparazzi, building security as the second, and restricted access to each floor as the final barrier.

“They also have to be careful of line-of-sight, to make sure people won’t be able to spy on them through telescopic lens,” says Chris Curtis of buyers agents Curtis Associates. “But then some stars, like Russell, seem to like to saunter through crowds at the wharf, to expose themselves, but then close their door on everything.”

Meanwhile, Chris “*Thor*” Hemsworth and his *Hunger Games* star brother Liam rented their first apartment together in Los Angeles before Liam moved out with girlfriend Miley Cyrus ... one move he may well now deeply regret.