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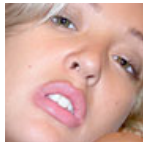
Bravo ★★★★★

## 'The Real Housewives of New Jersey' are fake but impressive

Monday, May 11th 2009, 4:00 AM

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#### Bam moves to block release of torture pics

President Obama is seeking to block the release of hundreds of photos showing U.S. personnel allegedly abusing prisoners.



#### The hottest woman in the world!

'House's' Olivia Wilde upsets Megan Fox on Maxim's Hot 100 list for 2009.



#### Teen killed by dad was carrying his baby

Bronx man who confessed to the murder of his pregnant 14-year-old daughter was also the father of her unborn child.



#### The stars' pose burning up red carpet

Sure, actresses flash the pearly whites on the red carpet. But lately, they've been giving photographers a different ... view.



Sherwood/Bravo

Pictured: (l-r) Jacqueline Laurita, Teresa Giudice, Danielle Staub, Dina Manzo, Caroline Manzo

So I finished watching "The Real Housewives of New Jersey," which is about as real as most of the cleavage on the show, and I was thinking to myself, "Good Lord, what a piece of trash. That was awful!"

Then I put on a Sinatra record and thought about it and realized the problem wasn't the show at all. It was me. I wasn't letting myself smell the roses.

What I should have thought was, "Good Lord, what a piece of trash. That was great!"

To confirm the obvious up front, "The Real Housewives of New Jersey" owes way more to the likes of "Melrose Place" and "Dirty Sexy Money" than it does to any actual New Jersey housewives.

If there's such a thing as a typical New Jersey housewife, she's a soccer mom who barely has time to brush her teeth in the morning. She's not a woman whose BlackBerry probably tells her that her first appointment of the day is phone sex at 3:30.

But then, the "Real Housewives" series has never been about "real" anything. The cast for a show like this, by definition, consists of exhibitionists.

The question is whether the dramas they create on camera, legitimate or enhanced, amuse the rest of us. With the Orange County and Atlanta groups, they did. The New York crowd has been mostly tedious.

The New Jersey quintet feels different, and not just because they look tough enough to level the defensive line of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

There's something in the way Teresa picks out \$120,360 worth of furniture and pays in cash, peeling the bills off a large wad, that sends its own sort of signal.

### Overview

**Cuisine:** Reality TV series

**Vibe:** A real-life soap opera in New Jersey

**Location:** Tuesday nights at 11pm on Bravo

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Something in the way that Caroline prefers her children go into the family business, not to college. "Being street-smart will get you further than book-smart," she says.

Something in the way that Danielle, now divorced, recalls the good old days when "my lifestyle was traveling and shopping" and adds that she got a platinum American Express card before Madonna.

Something in the way Jacqueline's daughter, Ashley, declares her mother must be "on crack" for suggesting Ashley make her own bed.

Oh, wait, that last one is a normal teenage reaction.

Still, Tuesday night's premiere packs a lot of trash into 42 minutes, between the quips about "jewelry whores" and an almost pathological concern with whose "bubbies" are and aren't authentic.

It plants the first seeds of drama, too, like Danielle's pique at not being invited for a girls' night out in New York.

The biggest danger for the New Jersey housewives, though, is peaking too soon — behaving so outlandishly, so fast, that they can't keep topping themselves and we get bored.

We'll know soon enough. However it goes, don't expect a lot of soccer balls.

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never got to make his case just because he hasn't made it lately isn't even a good lie.



**Tan-orexic stars: Orange you gonna click?**

Note to Hugh, Lindsay and others: Wear sunscreen!



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