

**April 11, 2010**

**'Real Housewives' cash in with book deals**

**CELEBRITY | 'Housewives have more to say, so they cash in with books**

Heidi and Spencer Pratt did it. So did Kate Gosselin and Omarosa.

These "reality stars" have all published books, extending by another minute or two the 15 minutes of fame that Andy Warhol once predicted for everyone.

Now trying to stretch those minutes into hours is some of the current crop of "The Real Housewives." Eight women from the Bravo franchise have penned books — most with the help of a ghost writer.

Jill Zarin from "The Real Housewives of New York" got the idea to write a book from feedback she received on a scene last year in which her mother gives advice to cast member Bethenny Frankel. "Secrets of a Jewish Mother" comes out Thursday, April 15. In it, Zarin, her mother, Gloria Kamen, and sister Lisa Wexler share stories from their own lives and dispense advice on everything from friendship to money.

A recent episode of "The Real Housewives of New York City" (now in its third season) features Zarin, her mother and sister at a photo shoot for the book cover.

Barnes & Noble's vice president of merchandising, Patricia Bostelman, expects Zarin's book to do well.

"The books that have done the best are the books that are really woven into the plot of the show," Bostelman said.

If that's the case, then Danielle Staub of "The Real Housewives of New Jersey" should have a best-seller. Her book "The Naked Truth" will be released in June. Much of the New Jersey show's first season focused on the discovery of a 1995 book that revealed Staub's 1986 federal prosecution for possession of cocaine and extortion.

"Danielle's story is incredibly moving and inspirational. ... Her book 'The Naked Truth' is just that — a no-holds-barred account from a true survivor," said Jennifer Bergstrom, vice president and editor-in-chief of Gallery Books, a division of Simon and Schuster. The book

has a first printing of 150,000 copies.

Fellow cast mate Teresa Giudice is releasing a book of Italian recipes in May called "Skinny Italian."

Like Warhol's ephemeral 15 minutes, the "Real Housewives" books are merely a short-lived trend, Bostelman said. They can sell well, but their shelf life tends to be short. The most important factor is whether the books have broad appeal.

"The first question," Bostelman said, "is who is the customer? Is there a customer? Will someone be interested in buying this book?"

If ratings are any indicator, fans will at least be curious. So far, the third season of "The Real Housewives of New York City" is up 15 percent among total viewers. And numbers increased for the recently aired fifth season of "The Real Housewives of Orange County."

Still, the only real publishing success story so far is Bethenny Frankel.

Frankel, who appeared in the 1994 teen slasher movie "Hollywood Hills 90028" and the 1995 comedy "Wish Me Luck" and was a contestant on "The Apprentice: Martha Stewart," has written two best-sellers: "Naturally Thin" and "The Skinnygirl Dish."

Booksellers are likely to order more copies of a book such as Zarin's than one written by Alex McCord, also in the New York cast. McCord and husband Simon van Kempen wrote about parenting in an urban area. "Little Kids, Big City: Tales From a Real House in New York City" comes out this month.

But it hasn't always been easy for the "Housewives" to get publishers.

Vicki Gunvalson of the Orange County cast acknowledges that shopping her idea around fell flat.

"At that time, NeNe Leakes' ['The Real Housewives of Atlanta'] book had just come out, Bethenny Frankel's book was out," Gunvalson recalls. "I think they were in 'Housewife' overload and it just didn't work. I started a company called Woo Hoo Productions and self-published it. It's been fabulous! I don't have to share the proceeds."

Gunvalson said she sold more than 1,500 copies in March and is working with Borders and Barnes & Noble to get copies in stores. It is available on her Web site and Amazon.

Leakes' "Never Make the Same Mistake Twice" has sold 9,000 copies since it hit stores last August. "Class With the Countess," out in April 2009, by New York housewife LuAnn de Lesseps, has sold 6,000 copies, according to Nielsen BookScan.

The Housewives aren't the only ones writing books. Chronicle Books will publish "The Real Housewives Get Personal" in June, written by the series creators. It promises to be a tell-all providing what happens behind-the-scenes with anecdotes from cast members.

