

# Playing Housewives

Tiny dogs, epic catfights, waist-length hair. The *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* are deliciously superlative in every way—including their look. **By Alyssa Kolsky Hertzog**



Richards and Vanderpump get ready without the help of a makeup artist or hairstylist.

Grammer travels with her own hair and beauty team.

At 5 P.M., Kyle Richards is perched on the edge of a black marble bathroom counter at the Mandarin Oriental hotel, high above New York City's Central Park. Her feet rest in the sink as she leans in toward the mirror to brush violet eye shadow along her upper lashes, then deep purple liquid liner on top. "Shadow then liquid on top makes everything last longer and makes it easier to draw the liquid," she says. "It doesn't get as squiggly."

As adept as she may be with a makeup brush, Richards is better known for her swifty mane and tart commentary on the *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*. What elevates Beverly Hills above

the *Housewives* scrum is the cast's serious wealth. And with two seasons under their Hermès belts, the Beverly Hills women have picked up plenty of beauty tricks along the way. Richards and fellow cast members Camille Grammer and Lisa Vanderpump are in New York for a party for Bravo's executive vice president, Andy Cohen. They've allowed *Allure* to watch as they prep, but they have to be camera-ready by 7 P.M.—and the clock is ticking.

Richards grabs a tube of L'Oréal Paris Voluminous Mascara and starts swiping it on. Good lashes, it turns out, are imperative if you're living life on television. "You *really* need them for the camera," says Vanderpump, who is in her own room down the hall looking into a sizable magnifying mirror that she brought from home. "Otherwise your eyes look very small and weak." The trick: "You put individual fakes on and

clean around them when you take your makeup off," she says. "They will actually stay on for two or three days. Kyle taught me that."

Vanderpump has stationed herself by the window, her products spilling out from a ruffled pink Prada cosmetics bag. "I don't like hotel bathrooms because there's never any natural light," she says. She and Grammer flew in from Los Angeles this morning with their hair and makeup already pretty much done. "I'll just do a bodge job," she says, beginning to dot Yves Saint Laurent Touch Éclat under her eyes. "I'll use some foundation, take my lipstick off, add a little to the eyes, give my hair a quick zhuzh with rollers, and maybe put in a Ken Paves hairpiece," she says. Though it may seem surprising that Vanderpump and Richards are applying their own makeup, tonight



The trio travel by limo—to an event three blocks away.



Richards sits with her feet in the sink to get close to the mirror.



Grammer polls the room on which dress to wear.

Watch our exclusive video of the Housewives and their beauty routines at [allure.com/go/real-housewives](http://allure.com/go/real-housewives).

isn't unusual. "The truth is, it's not that difficult, I don't have the time, and I don't want to spend the money for something I can do myself," says Richards. Bravo only provides professional styling for the reunion shows and the sit-down confessional interviews (which may explain why the cast tend to look like caricatures). While they wing it on most shooting days, both she and Vanderpump bring in their own experts when taping the interviews.

But not everyone takes the DIY approach. "If I'm going to be filming, I usually have someone doing my hair and makeup, because I am really terrible at it," says Grammer, who is currently midprimp in her own room, a few floors away in the hotel. Makeup artist Joe Hubrich dusts her lids with a shimmering taupe shadow as she sits on a chair in the center of the room; her hairstylist du jour, Ashley Ohman, stands in the corner, twisting a length of blonde clip-in hair extensions around a curling iron. ("Ashley does Martha Stewart!" Grammer says proudly.)

But really, who can fault someone for seeking a little professional help when she's typically spending two to four days a week being filmed for the entertainment of millions—and in HD? "High definition is no friend to women," says Grammer. "Everything changes. You have to wear more makeup so you don't look washed out, but you have to find that balance so that it still looks natural. I definitely have to wear more makeup on the show than I do when I'm not filming, and I'm still not used to it." Regardless of who's applying it, the women say, the right foundation can help. Grammer uses two Giorgio Armani shades; Richards swears by Make Up For Ever HD foundation. "It's the best for filming, and it's the best for real life."

Grammer's makeup artist finishes

shading her brows with pencil, then applies Le Métier de Beauté lipstick in a rosy pink called Palm Springs and hands her a mirror. "Oh, gosh, I love it!" she says. "I love the eye shadow." (Later, before stepping onto the red carpet, she'll worry aloud that her hair looks "cheesy.") Hubrich takes a step back to check out his work. "She looks like a Housewife," he pronounces, satisfied.

That *Housewives* look, of course, is dif-

Richards hates being filmed from the left. "I call that one the Angry Nostril."

ferent depending on the ZIP code—and Grammer's is TV's stereotype of 90210. "The Beverly Hills look is very coiffed and over-the-top glamorous," she says. "I usually like a real natural look, but I've had to amp it up for the show." And when looking good is a job requirement, it seeps into real life, too. "I definitely feel a responsibility to have my hair and makeup done most of the time," says Richards. "I don't want to let anyone down."

Of course, if she does, she'll hear about it immediately. Though the women say that the commentary online tends to be overwhelmingly positive (usually of the what-lip-gloss-are-you-wearing variety), Twitter barbs can sometimes be constructive. "Last year, I didn't wear liner on the bottom of my eyes, and I got a lot of tweets saying, 'You look weird,'"

Grammer says. "I took the hint. This year I'm wearing liner under my eyes."

But Twitter jabs can pale in comparison to self-criticism, which reality stars (believe it or not) experience, too. Richards, for one, hates being filmed from the left. "I noticed it's a very angry side," she says. "I call that one the Angry Nostril." Having a second season has provided the luxury of do-overs. "I would look at the first season and think, Oh, wow, my hair looks flat," says Vanderpump. "Honestly, my hair *was* a mess, so now I pay more attention to it."

Lack of volume won't be an issue tonight. Back in Vanderpump's room, she is removing hot rollers when hotel room service arrives with a can of VO5 hair spray. (Vanderpump's own Got2Be spray exploded in her bag.) "My hair is so fine, it needs to be locked in, like glue," she says as that telltale *psssssssstttt* drones on and on and on from the bathroom. "Oh, good," she announces when she's finished. "I look like Nancy Reagan now."

Before long, Grammer and Richards have come into the room, and everyone is *oohing* and *ahhing* over one another's dresses. The trio heads downstairs and climbs into a waiting black SUV; three blocks later, the car stops in front of the Hudson hotel. "We're here already?" Richards asks, scrambling for her clutch. A group of passersby stops on the sidewalk, holding their phones at the ready, and the dolled-up Housewives prepare to tumble out of the backseat like some particularly glamorous clown car. "Ahh! My Spanx are coming out!" Richards shrieks as she takes a step. (The mystified driver innocently asks, "What's a spank?") Dress adjusted, Richards breathes in and quietly says, "Here we go." Then she steps out of the car and smiles for the cameras. —ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY KATE SULLIVAN