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OPINION

Ryan Serhant's flashy 'Owning Manhattan' raises bar for reality TV

The Netflix series focuses on Serhant's agents and lifts the stakes on real estate-focused reality TV thanks to high production values and sophisticated plotting, reporter Lillian Dickerson writes



Ryan Serhant in *Owning Manhattan*, Season 1, Episode 3 | Image by: Netflix

BY [LILLIAN DICKERSON](#)

Today, June 28, 2024 [S](#)

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Owning Manhattan, Ryan Serhant's flashy encore following the runaway success of reality shows *Million Dollar Listing New York* and *Sell it Like Serhant*, raises the bar on the [genre](#) by amping up production values and focusing on agents, not drama.

The series dropped all eight episodes Friday on Netflix — a shift from Bravo, where Serhant's previous shows aired — and offers viewers an unflinching look at what it takes to become a successful agent in one of the most competitive markets in the world. The series follows Serhant as he aims to prove he can lead a stable of agents including Chloe Tucker Caine, Nile Lundgren, Tricia Lee Riley and Jade Shenker as they seek to climb New York City's luxury market.

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What sets the show apart from other real estate-focused reality television shows is a plot that remains focused on real estate (and, yes, a little interpersonal drama), quality production, and a wider-lens view of SERHANT's business.

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Take a look below at five factors that put *Owning Manhattan* in a different class than its competitors.




Tricia Lee Riley and Jeffrey St. Arromand in episode 2 of “Owning Manhattan” | Credit: Courtesy of Netflix/© 2024 Netflix, Inc.


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with hungry agents, and *Owning Manhattan* reflects their drive to succeed in the industry.

For the brokerage to succeed, Serhant makes clear in the episode that he'll need to perform at the highest level, both as a CEO and as an agent on his own listings. The series follows him as he recruits agents and races to ensure they're matched with the right clients and listings.


Pressure mounts, not just for Serhant but the cast of agents, who take pains to show they belong at the brokerage and can survive in a cutthroat market. That's not to say there isn't drama between strong personalities, but real estate is at the center of the show.

The listings on the line are also huge: A \$195 million penthouse at [Central Park Tower](#), and another at the Jardim, an Isay Weinfeld-designed luxury building in Manhattan, where a major celebrity scoops up a rental in one episode.


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wood desks, please knock on it. It's just a targeted marketing process, which I think is why we get hired.

Quality production

Over the years, Serhant's calling card has been his focus on social media and video content, so it's hardly a surprise that production values in *Owning Manhattan* are superior to similar shows.

With **SERHANT. Studios**, the firm established its own video production arm to help agents highlight their brand and listings. That dedication is also reflected in *Owning Manhattan*.

From cinematography choices to music, the series emulates prestige TV, even hinting at HBO's *Succession* thanks to a soundtrack that sounds a little bit like that show's [hit theme song](#). The elevated details are subtle, but add up to something that feels like a cut above other real estate-focused shows.



"Owning Manhattan" cast members at a premiere event in New York on June 20, 2024, including from left to right, Genesis Suero, Jordan March, Tricia Lee Riley, Savannah Gowarty, Jessica Taylor, Chloe Tucker Caine, Ryan Serhant, Nile Lundgren, Jessica Markowski, Jeffrey St. Arromand, Jordan Hurt, Jonathan Normolle and Jade Shenker | Credit: Jason Malihan

Highlighting commercial real estate

Commercial properties tend to get ignored on reality TV. But SERHANT's Shenker, who founded the firm's commercial division, blows preconceived notions about commercial real estate out of the water.

Exuding confidence, Shenker gets energized talking about the sector and shares her innovative ideas for marketing the assets. Shenker grew up among a family of developers so she's had time to cultivate her own ideas about the industry.

Her approach, which receives the screen time it deserves on *Owning Manhattan*, could be one path into the future for aspiring young commercial agents and is worth paying attention to.

Spotlighting agents of a variety of niches, experience levels, market areas

The agents highlighted in *Owning Manhattan* are a refreshingly diverse bunch. Some agents have been in the industry for 17 years and some are still in the first couple years of their careers.

They also represent a variety of backgrounds, races, personalities and market niches.



Chloe Tucker Caine, Jessica Taylor, Jordan Hurt and Genesis Suero in episode 8 of "Owning Manhattan" | Credit: Courtesy of Netflix/© 2024 Netflix, Inc.

Getting a glimpse into the larger firm

The cast of *Owning Manhattan* is about the same size as other reality TV shows, with a core group of 13 people. It's large enough for a variety of storylines while careful not to spread them too thin.

For the most part, the action of the show follows these core cast members. In addition to Serhant, Caine, Lundgren, Lee Riley and Shenker, the cast features agents Jessica Markowski, Jessica Taylor, Jordan Hurt, Jonathan Nørmølle, Jordan March, Savannah Gowarty, Jeffrey St. Arromand and Genesis Suero. Across the brokerage, SERHANT. boasts approximately [600 agents along the East Coast](#).

Serhant, meanwhile, offers his own insights on the growing pains that inflict CEOs like him. At one point, he marvels at how eager his agents are for one-on-one mentorships — something he doesn't have the bandwidth to provide.

"It's been a learning process for me," Serhant told Inman.

"For a while, I thought that I could lead and manage because that's what I did when I had my team. But the team was much, much smaller. And as the company scales, you have to make a decision: Do you want to be a leader or do you want to be a manager? You can't be both. And I think leaders do the right things and managers do things right. And I've had to learn that the hard way as we've grown and scaled. It's been fun, but man oh man, is it a lot."

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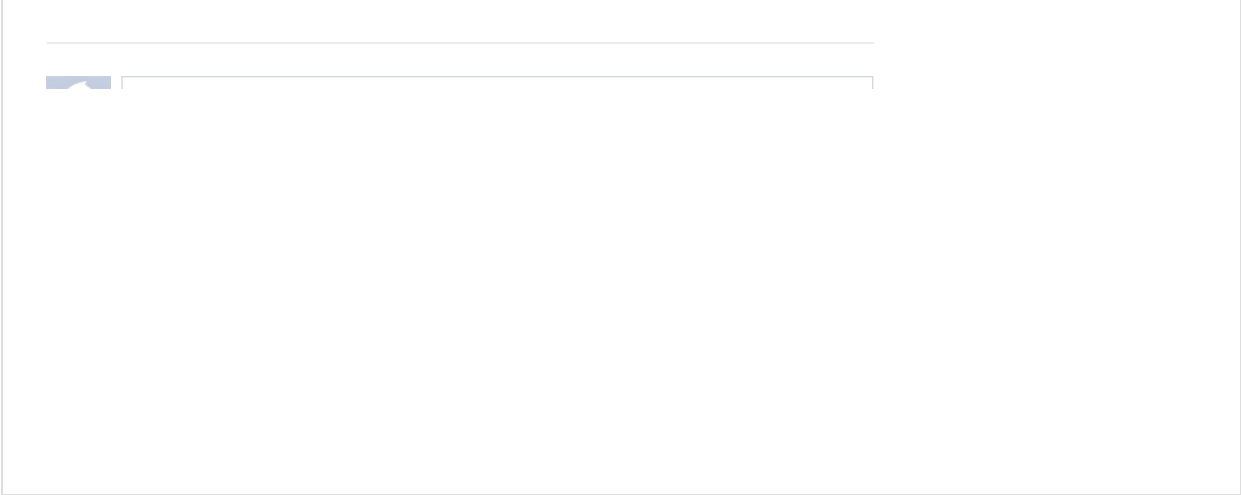
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