

**ELECTION UPDATE:
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SPECIAL ISSUE

HOLLYWOOD POWER

The Industry Comes Out

**MOGUL MANAGER
SANDY GALLIN**
by Jonathan Van Meter

**AMANDA BEARSE
STAR . . . WITH CHILD**
by Sue Carswell

**PLUS: A roundup of film
developments large and small,
Jackie Collins, Herb Ritts,
and Gloria Estefan**

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OUT POWER
IN HOLLYWOOD

Sandy Gallin Mogul Manager

In a rare interview, the man who oversees the careers of Michael Jackson, Dolly Parton, and other household names offers his insight into the gay players among the industry elite. JONATHAN VAN METER reports from the inside on deal-making, being out, and boyfriend trouble.

THERE IS NO WAY TO TELL, really, whether this is a typical day in the life of Sandy Gallin. He looks so comfortable, so happy. It is 1:30 p.m. on an unusually hot Friday in August, and Gallin is lying on a pristine white sofa in his gorgeous new home perched high up on a bluff at the northern end of Malibu. The house, with its white shingles, green shutters, dark wood floors, wainscoting, and traditional antiques, is more old East Hampton than new Hollywood. Outside, past the lap pool, past the rolling green lawn, past the wildflower gardens, past the hammock swaying in the breeze, is a view of the Pacific so breathtaking that for a moment it is possible to forget all about California's troubles.

Gallin is wearing little blue-flowered cotton shorts, a white T-shirt, black penny-loafers, and an expensive-looking silver watch. His tanned, fit, five-foot-nine-inch body neatly fills the sofa. There's a phone near his head that rings constantly, tortoiseshell reading glasses sitting on the end of his nose, and a fax in his hand. And there are people working everywhere—gardeners out back, construction workers out front, a cook in the kitchen, a cleaning woman ironing upstairs, another bringing faxes and answering phones—all of them buzzing about in what can only be called elegant pandemonium.

He doesn't get up as I walk in the front door and take a seat on a chair facing the sofa. In fact, he barely moves, peer-

ing at me over the top of his glasses. It is not often that you meet people—especially powerful Hollywood moguls—lying down, so to speak. But it is an odd and interesting gesture—or non-gesture—and it speaks nicely for him. Here, it says, is a man who pursues comfort vigorously, who is totally calm amid chaos. During my first three-hour visit Gallin spends more time talking to other people on the phone than to me.

"Should I send a check for \$800,000 with it? . . ."

"Yes, Neil Diamond would *love* to do the Hanukkah special! . . ."

"Michael and Lisa Marie? Dolly Parton? . . ."

"Roseanne, I haven't seen you in a hundred years! Yes! I wanted to help your career so badly in the beginning. . . ."

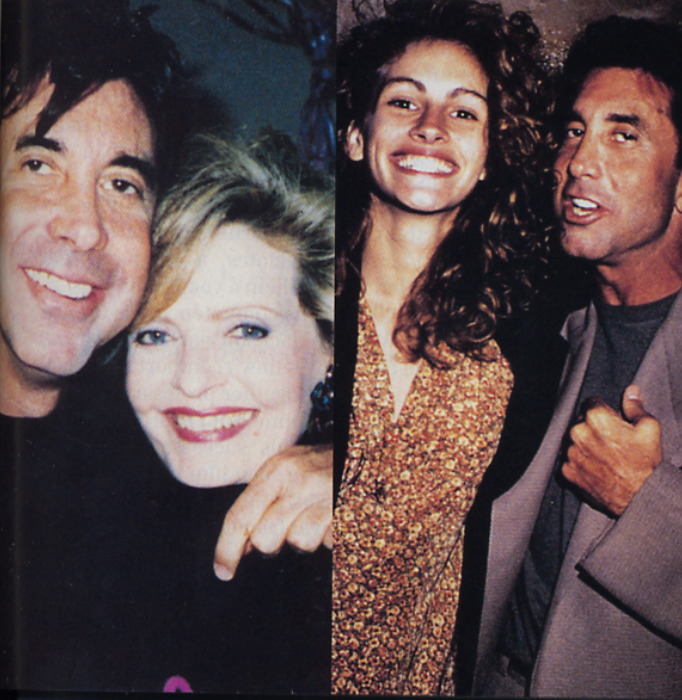
"It's over, finished, dead. You're *very* lucky. You're *very* welcome. And you know what? Just thank me when you pick up your third Academy Award . . ."

UNTIL THIS YEAR, 54-year-old Sandy Gallin had never given a full-length interview in all of his 30 years as a talent agent, manager, and film and television producer.

As the manager of Michael Jackson, Dolly Parton, Neil Diamond, Martin Lawrence, Oleta Adams, Margaret Cho, and Johnny Gill, among others (not to mention the one-time manager or agent of Joan

GALLIN'S GALAXY: *Sandy with (from top) Kelly Klein; Diane Von Furstenberg; Mac Davis and Joan Rivers; David Geffen, Barbra Streisand, Elizabeth Taylor, and Carole Bayer Sager; Florence Henderson; Julia Roberts; and Dolly Parton.*

Jonathan Van Meter was the founding editor in chief of Vibe. He has also contributed to The New York Times Magazine, Vanity Fair, and Vogue.



Gallin is the least gossiped-about member of the power clique referred to as the "gay mafia."

Rivers, Cher, Barbra Streisand, Whoopi Goldberg, Richard Pryor, Lily Tomlin, and Patti LaBelle), Gallin has remained impressively low-profile, always clear that he is paid well to make *others* famous, guiding his clients through complicated career choices and strategizing about their images. For example, when Jackson and his album sales were suffering from his reputation as a weirdo and recluse, it was Gallin who coaxed him into the spotlight, orchestrating his very successful series of appearances on all of the award shows last year, along with the Super Bowl, Clinton's preinaugural gala, and the Oprah special. It worked beautifully: Suddenly Jackson-defenders came out of the woodwork, and his *Dangerous* album zoomed back up the *Billboard* charts and went on to sell 25 million copies. On the other hand, during Jackson's more serious troubles—allegations of child abuse and drug addiction—Gallin flew overseas to be by his side several times and, said Elizabeth Taylor at the time, was "the best possible friend Michael can have." Gallin was the one who insisted that Jackson's world tour be canceled. "I look at the client as a business," he has said, "and the manager becomes the chairman of the board."

An indisputably powerful man in Hollywood, Gallin is clearly hungry for more. His efforts to expand his influence by forming Sandollar Productions with Dolly Parton in 1985 initially met with some resistance; the company produced only two notable projects in eight years, *Father of the Bride*, which earned \$90 million at the box office, and HBO's Oscar-winning documentary *Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt*. But now Gallin finally seems poised to become a real player: Sandollar has two sitcoms scheduled for the current television season—*All-American Girl*, starring hot newcomer Margaret Cho, and a Dolly Parton vehicle called *Heavens to Betsy*—and Gallin has four movies in various stages of production, including *I.Q.*, starring Meg Ryan and Tim Robbins, *Sabrina*, with Harrison Ford (coproduced with Scott Rudin Productions), and *Father's Little Dividend*, a sequel to *Father of the Bride*.

Despite his increasingly powerful presence, most people know very little about Sandy Gallin, even in many Hollywood and New York circles, except what they've seen of him during one of his big, fabulous parties in one of his ever-changing big, fabulous houses. One thing *everyone* seems to know, however, is that one of his longtime best friends is out entertainment mogul David Geffen. Indeed, Gallin has always been the least gossiped-about, least celebrated, and least vilified member of the Hollywood power clique that has been variously referred to in the media and in industry social circles as the "velvet," "pink," or "gay mafia," usually out of unfounded suspicion that such a strong concentration of wealth and influence among friends of the same age, background, and influence must indicate a hidden agenda. The two men are also close friends with the very high-profile Barry Diller, former head of 20th Century Fox and the QVC cable shopping network (although whether Diller is gay or straight is not part of the public record). Most who know Gallin agree that he enjoys his behind-the-scenes lifestyle, in the belief that it's good business for a manager not to hog column inches best re-

served for his clients; others have suggested that he's always wanted to be a star himself.

Gallin says he is doing this interview to let young gay people know that sexuality does not necessarily get in the way of career in Hollywood. Pushed a little on the issue, he acknowledges "the homophobic reality" for performers, "but I have not found it to be that way in the business end of the entertainment industry." He continues, more emphatically now, making his case: "Living out there between New York and L.A., people have a much tougher time being gay, and they think that's what it's like all over the world. And it's not." His voice goes up an octave: "I have a friend who just went home to Indiana, and he would rather cut off his balls than tell his family that he's gay!"

Suddenly he shoots me a sly look and confesses the other, less noble-minded reason he's doing this interview: "Advertising," he says, laughing, "for a boyfriend."

ALBERT SAMUEL GALLIN'S STORY is in many ways a classic. Born and raised in New York, the son of middle-class Jewish parents, he graduated from Boston University in 1962 and landed in the New York mailroom of General Artists Corporation (a predecessor of the now powerful International Creative Management). After less than a year at GAC, he was a junior agent, booking the Beatles for their now legendary 1964 American debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. By age 28 he had made it to the West Coast as senior vice president and a member of the board of directors of GAC. In 1970 he left the agency to become partners with his cousin Raymond Katz in Katz Gallin, a personal management company that lasted 14 years.

A week after I first met Sandy Gallin, we are on the phone when suddenly he says, "Oh shit! Hold on. This is going to be Michael Jackson calling." It's the day that the *National Enquirer* came out with exclusive "first official pictures" from "Michael and Lisa Marie's own photo album." "I think it's fantastic!" Gallin says when asked about the newlyweds. "I would bet every penny I have that their marriage is totally legitimate, that they're in love and that it's the best thing that's ever happened to him. He is happy and together and it is without a doubt a real marriage." It must be emotionally taxing to manage Jackson, I say. "No," he deadpans, as if I've asked a stupid question. "Not really."

Both clients and friends point to this stonewall-like discretion and trustworthiness as the cornerstone of his current business, Gallin/Morey Associates, a company that adds a reported \$3 million to \$7 million a year to his personal worth of about \$30 million. "His competence, his loyalty, and his honesty," said Michael Jackson earlier this year, "those three things you can't buy—they're important to me. It's very important not only to be together professionally but to be comrades." Joan Rivers, whom Gallin represented for 20 years, has another take on his success: "I've never known a salesman like Sandy. I've seen him in a room selling stuff that was worse than shit and everybody wants to buy a pack. And he's a good, loyal friend." Writer-producer Kenny Solms, Gallin's friend for many years, has yet another

“Keeping secrets about your sexuality is the most dangerous thing one can do,” says Gallin.

er view: “Sandy has a good street-sense. And he *loves* show business, to the point of having tunnel vision. He may think Rwanda is a singing group.”

Like all powerful people, Gallin also has his detractors. Says one longtime acquaintance: “He doesn’t ever talk about the fact that Cher left him, Joan Rivers left him, Lily Tomlin left him.” It was reported in the *Los Angeles Times* in January that he has lost big clients as a direct result of his close friendship and business partnership with Dolly Parton, a client since the ’70s.

About that accusation, Parton has said, “There’ve been some professional jealousies, and Sandy has lost some major clients because they feel he put me first. He doesn’t put me before other people. . . . They were jealous because we have such a great and rare friendship.”

SITTING ON A SMALL TABLE IN A COZY ROOM off the living room of Sandy Gallin’s Malibu home are two large red leather-bound photo albums embossed with gold letters that read 54TH BIRTHDAY PARTY. Inside are photographs from a party that Parton threw for Gallin in May at his New York apartment. There are, of course, famous faces smiling from every page.

Gallin calls this room “the bar,” but it is, in fact, the celebrity library. On one wall there are what seem like hundreds of small, framed photographs of mostly famous people among the tchotchkes, and on the opposite wall are shelves filled with about 80 photo albums—similarly bound and embossed—of past Gallin parties and events, from CHER ROLLER SKATING PARTY TO GORE VIDAL/HOWARD AUSTEN LUNCH TO CAROLE BAYER SAGER BIRTHDAY. Then there are two volumes, bigger than all the rest, dated May 27, 1980, titled MID-LIFE CRISIS. Inside are pictures of every imaginable star and power-broker of that year sitting at tables of 10 in a hotel ballroom, with nearly naked male strippers dancing among them. It was Gallin’s 40th birthday party.

After lunch on the deck, Gallin makes himself comfortable on a daybed in the bar, ready to talk. “I’ll never forget this,” he says when asked how he dealt with his sexuality early in his career. “This was around 1967–68, and Florence Henderson was a client, and she was doing *The Brady Bunch*. We went to dinner at the Polo Lounge, and Florence said to me, ‘You know Sandy, you have a fantastic future in front of you, people love you, people know that you’re a good person, they think you’re smart, and they don’t care what you do in your bedroom with a man or a woman. Just be who you are and be proud of who you are.’ I’ll never forget that. It was a major, *major* influence on my thinking. Because after that I told my family, I told my friends.” (Carol Brady!)

Gallin fell in love with a man when he was in his mid-20s and it scared him so badly that he got married. “I told my wife before I got married that I was gay,” he says, carefully measuring every word. “It did not work out. We moved to California and I attempted to live a straight life, realized that I would be happier being who I really was, sexually, and I got divorced.”

He ponders for a minute, and then says, “Keeping secrets about your sexuality is the most dangerous and potentially harmful thing that one can do, because I think it separates you from the truth and from your family, which is a big price to pay. When I told my mother that I was gay, I explained to her that it did not mean that I was a drag queen, or that I hated women, or that I lived a completely different lifestyle, or that I was a stereotypical feminine man, that it has nothing to do with that. That it’s . . . uhh . . . what is it?” He laughs, and then, nearly shouting, says, “That’s when I lose my mind, when I try to explain what gay is! I mean that’s *really* what being gay is to me. That men turn me on more than women turn me on *sexually*. Not mentally, not socially, but . . . sexually. And *out* just means that I don’t keep it a secret. It’s really as simple as that. It’s not like some big complicated lifestyle, commitment, militant gay thing.”

“When David Geffen came out at that L.A. fund-raiser,” I say to Gallin, “it mattered to a lot of people.”

“But David never came out!” he shoots back. “He was never *in*. I must tell you that I was stunned by people’s reaction. I was sitting in my seat, shocked. Anybody who knows David, knew that he was gay.”

Geffen himself echoes this reaction. “Believe me when I tell you, I was *astounded*. I didn’t think I came out at that thing. I simply said, ‘As a gay man I’ve come a long way to be here tonight.’ It wasn’t a big deal to me at all, I promise you. I never thought about it. Other people made a big deal about it. There was no one in that audience who didn’t know that I was gay.” Then he adds, “Keep in mind, this thing about announcing that you’re gay is a very recent kind of occurrence. Sandy’s always been who he is and has never kept anything a secret, and both of us are entrepreneurs, so it may be easier for us. But, it’s a very ’80s, ’90s thing to be proclaiming, ‘I’m a fag.’”

Gallin and Geffen are both being a bit disingenuous in claiming not to recognize the significance of that moment, when someone of Geffen’s stature gave the world permission to call him gay. By making his sexuality a matter of public record, Geffen made himself invulnerable to the gossip and ugly rumors that spawn such titillating, if ridiculous, myths as “the velvet mafia.”

“It’s total, complete bullshit,” says Gallin. “David and I have laughed at it. Are we supposed to have sat down and had meetings about who we’re gonna have bumped off? Has anyone explained to you what the gay mafia is supposed to be? No one has ever said that the gay mafia has ever done anything, have they? In other words, it’s just that people know that David and myself are very friendly. I think it started at Studio 54 in the late ’70s. Somebody must have pointed to a group of people—and some of them could have been straight, because Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager could have been there, and Bianca Jagger and Diane Von Furstenberg are supposed to be a part of it—and said, ‘Oh, there’s the velvet mafia.’”

“It’s silly,” says Geffen, a little impatient with the subject. “Sandy and I have been very close friends since the ’60s, when all of us didn’t have a (continued on page 134)

GALLIN (continued from page 72)
 pot to piss in. So this mafia thing is silly. If they mean a group of people who are bonded to each other by virtue of friendship, *yes*, call it anything you want. What we really are is good friends. And this velvet mafia thing is just another homophobic, nasty kind of thing that jealous queens make up."

Says Diller: "I don't even know what it is or what it means, so I don't know how to respond to stuff like that. It's all silly talk."

IT IS EXACTLY 24 HOURS AFTER I first met Sandy Gallin and I am back at his Malibu beach house for a party. "A husband audition," jokes one of his friends. It is even hotter than the day before, and as with all extreme weather in California, everybody's in a dither about it. Everyone's also in as little clothing as possible. The party is casual, with people sitting inside and out, quietly eating food that they've helped themselves to from a fairly elaborate spread in the dining room. There are young male caterers in the kitchen busily preparing more food, and a self-service bar out on the deck. It takes me a minute before I realize that there is only one woman at the party and that most of

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the 40-some other guests are beautiful, predominantly gay, and under 30. A few of them have their shirts off. Barry Diller and David Geffen are there, as well, in shorts and T-shirts, milling about. Some of the guests seem to know them well, others stand in awe. And

Gallin is at the center of it all, in red shorts, a white T-shirt, sunglasses, and a big smile.

When I first approach him, he is talking to a very tan, large man who has clearly made some time in his life for the gym. He is wearing running shoes and a very small pair of shorts. "I'm having a boy party," Gallin says to me. "I should tell you, I've never done this here before."

A day earlier, Gallin had told me, as we sat on the deck eating lunch, that he is still getting over the breakup of his eight-year relationship with Scott Bankston, who left him last March for Bryan Lourd, Carrie Fisher's ex and the father of her child. Apparently this party is part of the healing process. "I thought that it was forever," Gallin said, picking at a salad, "and I guess I hallucinated that we had this perfect, very happy marriage. He felt, I think, insignificant and unaccomplished." Bankston, who is 33, was only 25 when they met. He started working for Gallin as an assistant and then as an agent a few years ago, and continues to. "We were both at a Tony Robbins seminar," he went on. "We had done Date With Destiny in Aspen and then we were in Palm Springs doing Financial Mastery,



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and in both seminars Tony Robbins talks about your goals, how to get what you want out of life, how to stand up on your own two feet, and I think Scott realized that he wanted to be his own man. He definitely did not want to be Mrs. Sandy Gallin."

Gallin was diagnosed with cancer 10 years ago and had a fairly miraculous and complete recovery. "I think a lot of his energy comes from when he was sick," says friend Kenny Solms. Indeed, Gallin is so thankful to be alive that he puts on tefillin every morning and says a prayer, one that he recited for me—twice: once with the tape recorder off, once with it on. It is an odd combination of the Lord's Prayer, New Age jargon, and traditional Judaism. "And that," said Gallin, "more than anything, helped me through this thing with Scott."

There was a long pause as Gallin stared out at the Pacific, the sounds of waves crashing on the beach down below. Then he said, almost wistfully, "Somehow, a lot of gay men get stuck in liking young guys. I definitely got stuck there. I mean if I could wave a magic wand and say 'Wow, I'm really attracted to this 45-year-old, fat, dumpy, brilliantly smart, witty, successful guy and

I wanna live with him the rest of my life,' I would. Unfortunately I don't have that magic wand. I'm much more attracted to people between 23 and 30. Nothing turns me on more than going to a new place with somebody that you feel romantic about, and especially somebody young that's never been there. I love to take somebody to Paris, or St. Barts, or New York City, and see it again through the eyes of somebody in their 20s."

"But don't you think that, in dating younger men," I said, "there's a certain degree of control involved on your part, or..."

"Parenting," he said, finishing my sentence.

Back at the party, Solms is teasing Gallin about how young his guests are. "Sandy, your *children* are all so *nice* and well *behaved*." And then, turning to a guy who couldn't have been more than 19, "Make sure you wait a half-hour before you go swimming, honey." Gallin, taking it well, walks over to Solms, grabs him by the arm and says, "Does mama wanna go for a walk? Do you need the respirator now?"

As I am getting ready to leave the party, a nervous young guy who is clearly not from L.A. and appears dumb-

struck that he somehow found himself at this rarefied gathering, comes up to Gallin and asks if he could possibly have a minute of his time. Gallin, all nonchalance and what-can-I-do-for-you-young-man bravado, shoots me a look, as if to say "Watch this," and then tells him to pull up a seat. How old are you? Where do you live? What do you do? come the questions from Gallin. Turns out the kid is looking for advice. I want to be what you are, he says in far too many painfully awkward words. How do I get to the top?

Gallin's answer is one of the those numbered responses, 1-2-3, giving away that he has answered this question a lot. And he gives the answer that all people at the top give when asked: Start at the bottom. Go work in the mailroom.

After I've said goodbye and turn to walk out the door, Gallin calls out, "What about the ad? What should it say?"

"What do you want it to say?"

"Old, rich Jew with great house seeks gay male, 22 to 30: smooth, beautiful, great smile, smart, fun, lustful, sexual, adventurous, healthy." He laughs, and I can't help but noticing, as I leave Sandy Gallin's beautiful home, just how comfortable he looks, sprawled out in a big white chair, smiling.♥

NO MORE SECRETS



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