

Lou Pearlman Battles Boys' Touching Tales

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FRESH TOWEL? Pearlman Accused of defrauding investors of as much as \$500 million, boy-band impresario Lou Pearlman has spent the last four months quietly locked up in a Florida pen awaiting trial on federal charges. But he's not about to take the latest nasty allegations against him lying down. At issue is an explosive article in the November issue of Vanity Fair that claims the rotund producer who discovered such pop princes as *NSYNC, Backstreet Boys, and O-Town had inappropriate relationships with many of the young men and boys he made famous. Among other charges, writer Bryan Burrough alleges that Pearlman frequently groped his young band members, showed them porn, and, in one graphically described instance, suggests an aspiring young singer perform a sexual act on him in exchange for a spot in a band.

Since his incarceration, on the advice of his attorneys, the usually voluble businessman has kept remarkably tight-lipped, declining to speak to any media outlet besides Radar, which snagged a brief jailhouse interview with him in October. But in light of the "slander" generated by Vanity Fair, Pearlman says he can no longer keep quiet. "A great deal of that story needs to be corrected," he says, claiming that many of the magazine's sources had their own axes to grind, and he complains that he never had a chance to respond to any of the story's charges. "This article is clearly biased and one-sided without substantial evidence."

Radar reached out to the pop Svengali through a close friend of his this week, offering him a chance to correct the record. Asked whether anything sexual or inappropriate ever went on with his artists, Pearlman tells Radar, "We are all good friends and had a normal friendship with no inappropriate activity." Asked whether he's gay, Pearlman says straight up, no. "I don't think there is anything wrong [with having one's] own sexual preference, but no, I've never dated nor have I been interested in men sexually."

After the jump, we present Pearlman's point-by-point response to the story that is burning up the blogs ...

• On Phoenix Stone, an early edition Backstreet Boys member who claims Pearlman crossed the line with Nick Carter:

LOU PEARLMAN: "Phoenix Stone left the Backstreet Boys and was replaced by Brian Littrell. He came back years later, and I tried to help Phoenix again, but his fan base never materialized. He brought a frivolous [lawsuit] soon after when he couldn't find his fame. It was settled amicably, I thought."

• On Aaron and Nick Carter's mother's elliptical comment that "something happened" with Pearlman that almost tore her family apart:

"Jane Carter has been in and out of settlement agreements with my company. I'm sure her boys, like I, have no idea what she is talking about. She's just trying to get attention, as usual. Just look at her problems with her family. After Aaron left his mom as his manager, he came back to me for management until recently. Not only are Nick and I still friends, he was in our studio recording a duet with Aaron."

• On whether he had boys keep things from their parents, showed them porn, or took them to strip clubs:

"I never had secrets kept from parents. Especially since at least one parent was always around to chaperone and drive the boys. I never showed any of our artists any porn. In fact, if they stayed in hotels while traveling with us, we prohibited minors from accessing those channels. What strip club do you know that would let minors in? Therefore, NO, I never took any minors to strip clubs."

• On massages Pearlman allegedly gave to members of his bands:

"I paid for professional masseuses to give massages to our artists. I have no idea where this question is going? It is also true that I do not own a Neverland Ranch."

• On Steve Mooney, the aspiring recording artist who said he lived in Pearlman's home for two years and alleged that Pearlman is "absolutely" a sexual predator:

"Steve was a limo driver for our company and drove me around on various occasions. He was also a disgruntled wannabe recording artist that is jealous because he can't sing. He never lived in my home."

• On Mooney's description of Pearlman graphically insinuating that Mooney perform a sexual favor on him in exchange for a spot in one of the bands:

"This situation never happened. It's a shame he is resorting to slander and can't get on with his life. He never brought any legal action or discussed this with me at any time. No matter what he says, he still can't sing."

• On what he found so appealing about hanging out with the boys:

"I helped develop great artists, and I am proud of our success. I was affectionately called 'Big Poppa,' like a second dad or an uncle. Ray Kroc probably had the same feeling when he made so many millionaires with his McDonald's franchises."

• On why he's never had a wife or kids:

"I never got married because of my crazy travel schedule. However, I've been in a great relationship with my girlfriend ... for nearly a decade."

• On an incident described in the Vanity Fair story in which former Take 5 boy-band member Tim Christofore describes Pearlman swan diving on a bed full of boys and wrestling with them wearing only a towel (which falls off):

"T.J. [Christofore] is making up this story. He sued me in child labor court and lost. If what he says is true, you would think he would have brought it up to help his case. The fact that he never mentioned this in court should tell you where he's coming from. He's just trying to join the lynch party. Besides, I've never owned a towel that could wrap all the way around me anyway."

Vanity Fair's Bryan Burrough was not immediately available for comment, but a magazine spokesperson has told Page Six, "Mr. Pearlman's comments are ludicrous. We stand by our story."

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