

# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

September 18, 2019



**WRITERS, AGENTS,  
SECRETS & LIES**  
Six months into the  
standoff, 'hypocrisy'  
all over the place'

**PROUD AS  
A PEACOCK**  
NBC's streamer  
takes shape

**EXCLUSIVE  
ELIZABETH GABLER**  
Dropped by Disney,  
an exec reborn at Sony

**TORONTO PORTFOLIO**  
J.Lo, Hanks and  
50 stars of the fest

## EMMY PREVIEW 2019

The insider guide  
to all the parties and  
preoccupations  
of TV's big weekend

**PLUS**

*Succession's*  
Cousin Greg enters  
*THR's* Style Clinic

## FLY PRIVATE? SHAME ON YOU

By Gavin Polone

## THE RETURN OF *BREAKING BAD*

Star **AARON PAUL** and creator Vince Gilligan reveal  
why they risked messing with their defining drama,  
how they shot the movie follow-up, *El Camino*, in secret –  
and what's next for one of Peak TV's most innovative auteurs

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• \$65M

Chris Cortazzo holds the listing on this three-bedroom Malibu oceanfront home designed by Guy Dreier.

## Hollywood's Top 30 Real Estate Agents: How Luxury Pros Ride Out a Market Dip

There may be a chill in the L.A. housing market, but the dealmakers on *THR*'s annual list have the experience — and the muscle — to make the most of the hot properties A-listers want (or want to unload) for millions *By Peter Kiefer*

Just when it seemed L.A.'s luxury real estate market was cooling off — the median home price in the second quarter of 2019 was down 7 percent over the same period last year, according to Douglas Elliman — some eight- or even nine-figure deal closes, upending that narrative. In July, the Manor in Holmby Hills sold for \$120 million, setting a new L.A. record, and a month later **Ron Meyer's** Malibu compound sold for \$100 million. "All of us have had to adapt," says Hilton & Hyland's **Jonah Wilson**. "We felt it slow down, but what's interesting is that there are still these 'Oh my God!' sales, which make it hard to define the market." There are currently more than 91 active listings over \$20 million, well above the 79 that were available at this time in 2018. So *THR*'s top 30 agents — selected for 2018 sales volume (according to industry tracker Real Trends), entertainment clientele and quality of listings — have had their work cut out for them. Here, 2019's standout sellers (dubbed the \$250 Million Club), power team leaders (Brand-Name Brokers) and 14 more of the town's top pros reveal their strategies in the face of a market chill.



Jade Mills sold this home on Beverly Hills' Laurel Way in March (it had previously been listed for \$32 million in January 2018).

### THE \$250 MILLION CLUB

While a broker can't be judged on sales volume alone, these eight standouts who surpassed a quarter-billion in 2018 earn membership in this exclusive crew.

**Santiago Arana**  
*The Agency*

With more than \$340 million in sales, one of the Westside's top brokers had to set aside the autobiography he's been writing. "The market's been on fire," says Arana, who's also two-for-two with his side hustle developing homes. He sold his first spec mansion to **LeBron James** in 2017 and in June sold another on Tigertail Road to heiress **Petra Ecclestone** for \$23 million.



## Drew Fenton

Hilton & Hyland

"I'm fortunate to have the reach and diverse client base so that I'm not limited to any single neighborhood," says Fenton, who surpassed \$400 million. He has the co-listing on Bel Air's \$190 million Chartwell Estate and had the listing on the \$8.5 million Beverly Hills home that **Justin Bieber** bought in March.

## James Harris & David Parnes

The Agency

Harris and Parnes were involved in the biggest sale in L.A. history (the Manor, sold in July for \$120 million) and the biggest in Beverly Hills history (406 Robert Lane, which sold for \$72.5 million to Uber co-founder **Garrett Camp**). The duo credits their years of outreach to developers with helping them amass a \$1.5 billion, 60-listing inventory.

## Linda May

Hilton & Hyland

Selling **Johnny Carson**'s former Malibu home for \$40 million in June helped push May's volume to a touch above \$258 million. She was also the agent on the \$33.5 million sale of a 1940 Georgian Regency by **James E. Dolena** in Brentwood.

## Jade Mills

Coldwell Banker

With clients that include Petra Ecclestone and **Lindsey** and **Kristen Buckingham**, Mills — who was



Arana



Fenton



Harris



Parnes



May



Mills



Offer



Rappaport



B. Williams



R. Williams

one of three agents handling the \$120 million sale of the Manor in July — isn't chilled by a cooling market. "When the market gets more challenging," she says, "more experienced agents flourish."

## David Offer

Berkshire Hathaway

"I had one of my best years ever and accomplished this without screwing over other agents or stealing their clients," says Berkshire Hathaway's top performing broker for the seventh year running, with \$302 million in sales. He currently has the listing on L.A. artist **Billy AI Bengston**'s \$5.5 million Venice bungalow, which was once owned by the late *E.T.* screenwriter **Melissa Mathison**.

## Kurt Rappaport

Westside Estate Agency

The day after Rappaport sold **Ron Meyer**'s Malibu home for \$100 million in August, he unloaded **Ellen DeGeneres**' Beverly Hills estate for \$15.5 million. He also represented **Petra Ecclestone** in her record \$120 million sale of the Manor, and sold the **Bronfman** estate in Bel Air for \$85 million.

## Branden & Rayni Williams

Hilton & Hyland

The thriving husband-and-wife team sold 822 Sarbonne Road in Bel Air for \$75 million, pushing them to an astounding \$811 million. One client they say they love working with is **Ron Burkle**, who restored the **Frank Lloyd Wright**-designed Ennis House in Los Feliz. "It's a piece of art, and every time I show it reminds me how blessed I am," says Branden of the \$23 million listing.

The Williamses originally listed this Bel Air property (with car elevator) for \$88 million; the July buyer reportedly found the home on listings site Zillow.



\$21M

The Altman brothers sold this 10,600-square-foot La Jolla, California, mansion to **Alicia Keys** in early September.

## BRAND-NAME BROKERS

These sales stars and master managers have built brokerage teams of at least 10 people that give them major competitive reach.



J. Altman



M. Altman



Carswell



Cortazzo



Forster Jones



Kirman



Pardee



Rey



Umansky

## Josh & Matt Altman

Douglas Elliman

They'll open their new Beverly Hills office this fall, but this pair — whose clients include **Michael B. Jordan** — scored their biggest 2019 trophies outside of L.A. In August, they sold the Razor house in La Jolla (the inspiration for **Tony Stark**'s home in the *Iron Man* films) to **Alicia Keys** and **Swizz Beatz** for \$20.8 million. With their team of 20, they also have the \$41 million Residence 950 — the most expensive listing in San Francisco.

## Ernie Carswell

Douglas Elliman

The algorithms. The consolidation. The aggressive poaching of agents. None of it sits well with Carswell who, despite another banner year with his 18-member team, is worried his industry is losing its soul. "There's a great effort from technology to overtake the traditional real estate industry and morph it into something else," says Carswell, who sold Studio City's **Brady Bunch House** to HGTV and has the \$15 million listing on musician **Michael Feinstein**'s English Tudor Revival in Los Feliz.

## Chris Cortazzo

Compass

In August, Cortazzo had tongues wagging when he announced he was moving to Compass after 12 years at Coldwell Banker. For L.A.'s brokerage world, it was a seismic event, due to the \$5 billion in sales the



\$75M





Sally Forster Jones has the listing on this Beverly Hills mansion, where John F. Kennedy and Jackie Onassis honeymooned (it also was the backdrop for *The Godfather's* horse-head-in-the-bed scene); it sits on a 3.5-acre lot.

Malibu master has amassed over his career. He currently has listings for a \$65 million **Guy Dreier**-designed home, the \$62 million La Villa Contenta and **Cindy Crawford's** home — all in Malibu.

### Sally Forster Jones

*Compass*

During her first full year at Compass, where she works with a team of 30, Forster Jones continued to mine properties in her sweet spot: the Platinum Triangle (Bel Air, Holmby Hills and Beverly Hills). She currently is co-listing the \$115 million, 10-acre Owlwood Estate — once owned by **Sonny** and **Cher**. She also represents actor **Kellan Lutz** and producer **Vance Owen**, but the

cooling market is testing all of her skills. "People are looking for quality and location," she says. "Buyers don't want to see any flaws."

### Aaron Kirman

*Compass*

It's not inaccurate to call Kirman the "\$6 billion" man. That's the career sales threshold he's achieved leading his team of 60. "I want to use that to teach people how to make money and not lose it in real estate — because we're educators more than anything else," he says. He'll be educating a broader audience with his CNBC show, *Listing Impossible*, set to premiere this fall. In May he represented a Saudi buyer who purchased two adjacent Bel

Air properties — one designed by architect **Richard Neutra** — for a little more than \$52 million.

### Tami Pardee

*Halton Pardee + Partners*

For Pardee, the L.A. market's lull is an opportunity, not a worry. "The year we had the big crash in 2008 I doubled my business," she says — adding that she doesn't see a repeat of that dim year coming for her team of 26, which specializes in Venice properties. Still, challenging markets are when a top broker's mettle gets tested, says Pardee, whose team sold \$600 million in volume in 2018, with clients including writer-producer **Gary Auerbach** and the **Scissor Sisters** singer **Jake Shears**.

### Joyce Rey

*Coldwell Banker*

Rey made history this year when she listed the late Univision CEO **Jerry Perenchio's** Chartwell Estate for \$195 million — the most expensive listing ever in the U.S. She counts **Lionel Richie** as her all-time favorite client and at one point had the listing on **Michael Jackson's** Neverland Ranch. Leading a team of 10, she has the \$21 million listing on **Vincent Price's** former Holmby Hills property and the \$32.5 million listing on the **Harry Warner** estate in Beverly Hills.

### Mauricio Umansky

*The Agency*

Umansky kept it in the family this year, officially adding his two daughters — **Farrah Brittany** (see sidebar) and **Alexia Umansky** — and his father, **Eduardo**, to his team of 30, which cleared \$278 million. Umansky also continued to build his off-market online platform, ThePLS.com, and in July represented the buyer on Bel Air's 822 Sarbonne Road, which sold for \$75 million. "This year saw a slew of trophy properties," he says, adding that he has been working more closely with his creative team to push the boundaries on his listings' promotional elements.

## MOVERS, SHAKERS AND NEWCOMERS

Six new market superstars join *THR's* annual roster of the dealmakers you want on your side.

### Cindy Ambuehl

*Compass*

In April, Ambuehl jumped from The Agency to Compass, then promoted her assistant and hired her 24-year-old son, former college football player **Zander**, to fill out her team. "I thought it would give me a chance to step back, but they're both bringing in so much business — total hustlers," says Ambuehl, who has the \$17 million listing on the **Frank Gehry**-designed 600 East Rustic in Santa Monica Canyon (where she lives).

### Sandro Dazzan

*The Agency*

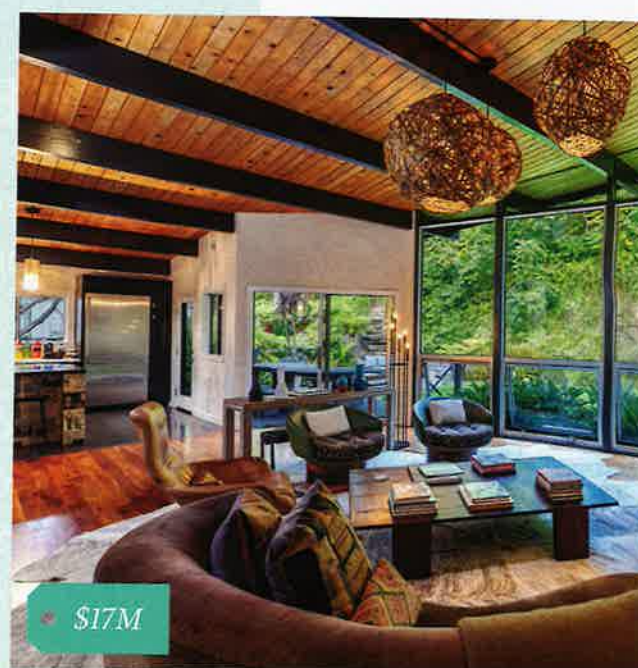
Dazzan, making his first appearance on *THR's* list, has seen a big boost in the past two years, which he credits to his jump to The Agency and

opening its Malibu offices. "Having a platform to grow my business the way I wanted to grow it with the marketing support was huge," he says. And even though November's Woolsey Fire shut down the Malibu market for a few months, the majority of his listings were in areas unaffected so he barely missed a beat. He currently has the listing on **Mel Gibson's** Malibu home and has worked with **Flea** from the **Red Hot Chili Peppers**.

### Josh Flagg

*Rodeo Realty*

The longest-tenured castmember of Bravo's *Million Dollar Listing*, Flagg had another stellar year with \$237 million in sales. Notable deals included an off-market transaction on North Alpine for \$14 million and a home in the Crest



This Frank Gehry-designed home on East Rustic in Santa Monica Canyon is listed by Cindy Ambuehl.



streets for \$17 million, with Flagg representing the buyer on both. He also helped land homes for *Family Guy* writer **Wellesley Wild** and *Glee* actress **Becca Tobin**.

## Tomer Fridman

Compass

While Calabasas and the **Kardashian-Jenner** clan put him on the map, Fridman has been busy cracking new ZIP codes. He represented **Kylie Jenner** and **Travis Scott** in the October purchase of a \$13.5 million Beverly Hills Post Office mansion and also sold **Barry Bonds'** Beverly Park home in August. He holds the listing on **Adam Lambert's** West Hollywood property and is co-listing the Owlwood Estate, which he calls "one of the biggest honors of my career."

## Carl Gambino

Westside Estate Agency

After graduating from high school in New Jersey, Gambino was in New York and he met a guy. "He told me I'd be excellent at sales. I went to his office and it was this ridiculous *Wolf of Wall Street* scene," recalls the 34-year-old newcomer to *THR's* list. "But they made mad money and so I started selling multi-family buildings in Manhattan." A few years later he headed to L.A. and hooked up with WEA's Kurt Rappaport and voilà. It doesn't hurt that his son's godfather is **Joe Jonas**. Clients include **Alex Rodriguez**, **Jennifer Lopez** and **Sophie Turner**.

## Mark Kitching

Douglas Elliman

In May, Kitching bucked the trend and actually left Compass for Douglas Elliman — bringing a dutiful, low-key approach and a client list that includes **Michael Ovitz**, writer **Allan Loeb** and actor **Zachary Knighton**. "The foundation of my business is hard work and referrals," says Kitching, a first-timer on *THR's* list who recently moved his family from Venice Beach to Topanga Canyon. He's sold homes by some of SoCal's most influential architects, including **John Lautner**, **Lorcan O'Herlihy** and **Thom Mayne**.



Ambuehl



Dazzan



Flagg



Fridman



Gambino



Kitching



Lavey



Leigh



Maize



Noah

## Eric Lavey

Sothebys

Before jumping to real estate (and landing a spot on *THR's* list for the first time), Lavey spent years as an agent at William Morris and UTA. "I look back to the days of handling talent and how they wanted to be treated — the expectation of white glove service," he says. "That's what I learned from the entertainment industry." It helped him land **Jason Blum's** historic \$9.5 million Fremont Place home. He sold actress **Ashley Tisdale's** house to singer **Ingrid Michaelson** last month.

## Jordana Leigh

Rodeo Realty

Leigh's work for a pair of clients who started a high-profile dating app in 2018 snowballed into a bevy of referrals to tech clients in 2019. "It wasn't a conscious move on my part, but it opened up a whole new world," says Leigh, who sold \$169 million in 2018. She's since done work for the founder of a drone company, the creator of a food delivery app, a Pinterest founder and a Snapchat exec. "They have so much money that if they see something they like, they buy it," she says of tech clients. "They don't nickel and dime you."

## Rochelle Maize

Nourmand and Associates

It was an experimental year for Maize. When she listed skin-care mogul **Howard Murad's** penthouse in Santa Monica, she hosted a party there for dozens of social media influencers. "It made the listing go viral," she says — and the 8,000-square-foot home was purchased by **Judd Apatow** and **Leslie Mann** for \$14.5 million. A few months later, Maize listed talent manager **Arthur Spivak's** \$11 million Beverly Hills home. "We created a dog spa for that one," says Maize of her marketing tactic. "And it sold in one day."

## Marc Noah

Sotheby's

Making his second consecutive appearance on *THR's* list, Noah says 2019 has been marked by numerous sales in the \$10 million to \$12 million

## TURF WARS



## Game of Homes: Brokers Battle Over Territory

The pricier the property (think something a Saudi royal might buy), the bolder the tactics and the fiercer the fight

"A rival agent used to come to my listings and crank the air conditioning up. It was winter so it would be freezing. I figured out who it was and followed them and approached and asked, 'How are you doing?' Then it stopped. But I remember thinking, 'This person's literally trying to freeze me out!'" — TAMI PARDEE

"Years ago, I was set to show a major property to members of the Saudi royal family who were in town looking at real estate. But the owner needed 48-hour notice. Meanwhile, a rival agent climbed the fence, opened the gates and took the Saudis through and sold it to them. Today that property is priced at \$65 million. That was my introduction to Beverly Hills real estate." — JOYCE REY

"To crack the market in Bel Air, **James [Harris]** and I would literally play rock, paper, scissors to determine who would have to cold-knock on the door to find new clients. We'd be parked outside **Keanu Reeves'** and **Leonardo DiCaprio's** house playing the game. I remember having to walk up to **Dr. Dre's** house and ring the bell. I was petrified and I could see James in the car laughing his head off. But that's how we broke in." — DAVID PARNES

Illustration by Mark Matcho



Jason Oppenheim sold this three-bedroom, three-bathroom on Harold Way in the Hollywood Hills in March.



range, which helped him reach \$79 million overall. “I just did a lot of volume,” says Noah, who adds that the job is simple: Find the best value and remember it’s all about pricing. “If it’s a good product at a reasonable asking price, it’s going to sell,” he says.

### Jason Oppenheim

*The Oppenheim Group*

Between takes on his Netflix show *Selling Sunset*, Oppenheim continued to service his A-list clients. In March, he listed **Orlando Bloom**’s remodel in Trousdale for \$9 million and in August he sold **Alex Rodriguez**’s Hollywood Hills home (previously owned by **Meryl Streep**) for \$4.4 million. He’s about to list a \$44 million spec home — the most expensive above the Sunset Strip — and is also making a push into the San Fernando Valley.

### Marc Shevin

*Berkshire Hathaway*

With brother **Rory**, he built a family-run brokerage that quietly dominates the market in Calabasas and Hidden Hills. They’ve sold homes to **Kim** and **Kanye**, **The Weeknd** and **Jennifer Lopez** and in 2018 eclipsed \$208 million in sales. Rory recently retired, making way for daughters **Sara** and **Hanna** as the Shevin team hits *THR*’s list for the first time. “Our goal has been to add something to the community and treat everyone the way we want to be treated — and it worked,” says Marc.

### F. Ron Smith & David Berg

*Compass*

This duo is certainly having a moment. In June they sold **Stephen Dorff**’s Malibu Beach house for \$7.5 million and currently have the listing on



Oppenheim



M. Shevin



S. Shevin



Smith



Berg



Wilson



\$46M

Left: Tomer Fridman and Sally Forster Jones share the listing on this 20,000-square-foot Beverly Hills seven-bedroom home designed by architect Noah Walker. Below: Marc and Sara Shevin sold this Hidden Hills new build, set on 7.4 acres, in June. The home has a 24-foot foyer opening onto its 14,000-plus square feet of living space.



\$22M

*Friends* creator-producer **Kevin Bright**’s Broad Beach home for \$14 million. “We were able to expand our reach outside of our primary market [Palisades and Brentwood] and into Malibu with the help of [former *Late Night With David Letterman* producer] **Robert ‘Morty’ Morton**. It’s a market we aim to expand our footprint in.”

### Jonah Wilson

*Hilton & Hyland*

As the son of a founding **Beach Boys** member, Wilson’s career has an inherently unique

narrative. “The band **Wilson Phillips** — **Carrie**, **Wendy** and **Chynna** — they’re my cousins, and those were my first three sales,” says Wilson, who grew up around some of L.A.’s most iconic artists. “I’ve been fortunate,” says the man who counts **Courtney Cox** and the **Osbournes** as friends and clients, though his highlight of 2019 involved more classic Hollywood icons: He sold the Laughlin Park home once owned by **Cecil B. DeMille** and **Charlie Chaplin**.

*Trilby Beresford*, *Tara Bitran* and *Kirsten Chuba* contributed to this report.

## NEXT GENERATION

### ‘There’s More People Vying for It’: 3 Up-and-Comers Make Their Mark on the Market

Last year, **Mick Partridge** was struggling through a tough escrow on 1130 Angelo Drive. He was working both ends of the deal — representing both the seller and the developer, who was going to scrap the house and rebuild. “It was tough, but going through it helped me solidify my relationship with the developer, and without it I wouldn’t have a number of listings today,” says the 33-year-old.

It takes persistence to crack L.A.’s luxury real estate world, especially

with brand-name brokers, reality TV stars and heavy-hitting teams gobbling up market share. But three emerging talents — Compass’ **Neyshia Go**, 29; The Agency’s **Farrah Brittany**, 30; and Hilton & Hyland’s Partridge — are poised to break in and break

out, even amid a rocky 2019 landscape.

“It’s infinitely harder even from when I started to become successful,” says Go, who notes that technology has changed just about every aspect of the business. Not only do clients expect an immediate response to any

communication, but building a client list is harder when buyers and sellers often think they can do the job themselves because of sites like Zillow.

Brittany, who is the daughter of reality star **Kyle Richards**, started out as an intern for stepfather **Mauricio Umansky**. She notes that reality series centered on real estate boost interest, but “what you don’t see are all the deals that *don’t* get done — they don’t show the boring parts of the job.”

All three upstarts have strong ties to the entertainment industry: Brittany grew up with an actress mother, Go was a 2014 contestant on *American Idol* and WME alum Partridge produced and directed the 2015 doc *Sneakerheadz*. “There’s a perception that there’s a greater ease of entry these days, but that means there’s more people vying for it,” he says. “That said, I think the advent of social media has made it easier for us to monitor trends [in a way that] wasn’t possible 15 years ago.” —P.K.



Go



Partridge



Brittany