



Wolfson Entertainment *A Musical Hit*

HOW MUSIC AND FAMILY LED ONE MAN
DOWN A PATH TO SUCCESS

By Daniel Bret

"I knew how to play a song on a phonograph literally before I knew how to walk," recalls Jonathan Wolfson, founder of the wildly successful entertainment management, publicity and marketing agency that bears his name. From his earliest days in New York to the pinnacle heights he is now realizing from his Westlake, California offices, Wolfson is a true success story in the music management industry today.

"There is never an obvious path for a career in the music world, particularly if you're not a musician yourself," notes Wolfson. "My first big break came in 1995 when I joined Lee Solters Public Relations in Los Angeles. We represented such luminaries as Michael Jackson and Lollapalooza, among others. Lee was a genuine icon in the music representation business, and, frankly, he is one of the industry leaders who truly never 'sold out,' so I learned a great deal from Lee about hard work, commitment and connection."

When it came time to strike out on his own, Jonathan knew that the key to winning new public relations clients was building up a client list. "It is the classic chicken and egg scenario—you can't get clients unless you have them." So Wolfson took an unconventional risk and attempted to land his first big-name client, co-founder of Death Row Records, Suge Knight. The fact that Knight was serving a prison sentence at the time of their first meeting didn't deter Wolfson, and he recalls their first meeting with great introspection. "He looked at me that first day, and we both knew, from that very first look, that I was going to be his new agent. He knew that I had come all that way and that I was ready to work hard for him and, to be honest, that is the formula from which all of the success of Wolfson Entertainment has grown," he continues. It is all about clients who "put their trust in us to grow their careers," he states definitively.

The next big client who put his trust in Jonathan's hands was Daryl Hall of rock band Hall & Oates stardom. The band achieved its greatest fame between the late 1970s to the mid-1980s with a fusion of rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues, which they dubbed "rock and soul." When the band had a falling out with their manager, they turned to Wolfson Entertainment, and the rest, as they say, is history. Earlier this year in February, they sold out Madison Square Garden and for their upcoming Hollywood Bowl engagement in September, they sold out the Bowl's 17,000 seats in a matter of days. In both of these cases, the concerts were not part of a series but stand-alone concerts, making the sales performance even more impressive. Some music legends he calls clients include Loverboy and Nelson.



Top Jonathan Wolfson. Above, left Wolfson and his wife Melissa pose with the Obamas at the Governor's Ball in 2015. Above, right Jonathan Wolfson, Daryl Hall, Howard Stern and John Oates

One of the more surprising projects Jonathan has found himself managing is a television show currently airing on MTV Live and MTV Classics called "Live from Daryl's House." What started as a web series now has more than 80 episodes featuring an authentic music session between Daryl Hall and a guest music artist—ranging from music veterans Smokey Robinson and The Doors' Robby Krieger to Matt Nathanson and Chicago band Plain White T's—as they meet for the first time and play seven songs together in front of live (unedited) cameras. "The show has become a real cult hit for musicians and those who are passionate about the genuine music-making process," Wolfson mentions. "Think of it like a blind date for famous musicians."

As for what's next, Wolfson says, "Your guess is as good as mine. I've never really set out with a road map. I've listened to the opportunities as they have presented themselves and created a path where there never was one before."

When asked what advice he would give to a person who aspires to find a role managing in the music industry, he responds, "What I've always told my kids—and anyone else who has asked—is find something that you love, stick to it and be prepared to fail. But knowing that you're doing something you love will help you get through the tough times. The sincerity of that mission will reflect in your work ethic, your passion and ultimately the work product you put out. Also, find balance in life." In Wolfson's case, that means his wife of 22 years and his two children.

"I can't overemphasize what my family has meant to my ability to be a success in life. It is all for them and what they do to support me on my journey means everything. This is truly the meaning of life," he concludes. And hearing someone this successful express truth in such succinct form is truly music to one's ears.