



Full Synopsis

When **Bob Harrison** created *Confidential Magazine* in 1952, he gave the public gossip, humor, and sex. But he also offered something totally unexpected: The TRUTH about the rich and famous. It quickly became the #1-selling magazine in America. Soon Bob wasn't just TELLING the story, he WAS the story, with headlines, scandals, and a wild ride of his own. But in contrast to the stories in his magazine, just about every story Bob told about himself was a fantasy, from a Jungle Love Triangle to the Vine that makes you Virile.

TRUE STORIES were Bob's currency. The 24-hour news cycle of scandal and half-truths is his legacy. Would he be happy if he were alive to see how things turned out all these years later? Maybe, maybe not. But he wouldn't be at all surprised...

Mr. Confidential is a giddy, vibrant tale set in New York and Hollywood at their most glamorous and dangerous. Fast, fluid and sexy—with just a touch of burlesque. But look beyond all the tabloid scandals, beneath the whipped cream and diamonds, and you find something truly shocking: in fact, this is a story about family, dreams, innocence, and love. Go figure.

Bob is obsessed with his creations. They take him inside a dream world where fantasies come true—where he is the essence of Café Society and can live out his Man-About-Town desires. Yet he is also a deeply generous spirit, who rarely understands that his actions can have disastrous consequences.

Big Bob's dazzling rise, desperate fall, and spectacular comeback take him to triumph beyond even his own imagination, as *Confidential Magazine* becomes the top newsstand seller in America, with over 5 million copies of each issue flying off the shelves. Celebrity scandal is the goose that lays the golden egg. But it soon grows into a veritable dragon that doesn't just bite Bob in the ass—it swallows him whole.

In the end he must choose between fantasy and reality; family and infamy; legacy and longing. And no matter how the story ends, Harrison is always the first to shout, "Hooray for Hollywood."

NOTE: Song Titles with hyperlinks connect to the demo recordings featuring Christine Ebersole and Howard McGillin.

ACT I

Dramatic music. Huge blowups of tabloid newspaper headlines: Bob Harrison is the “Tabloid Titan” and the “Sultan of Sleaze,” he is shot in a “Jungle Love Triangle,” is involved in solving a “Commie Kidnapping,” he is sued by movie stars and politicians, and he is charged by the State of California with Obscenity and Criminal Conspiracy to Commit Libel. Then a total change of tone as Bob Harrison, dapper and cheerful, comes in singing about hot nightlife, million-dollar deals, and how much fun it is to be famous and what he's got on the line. He draws the audience into the story – [Song: BET IT ALL \(BOB/COMPANY\).](#)

Then we jump back to the beginning of Bob's story, in his Manhattan pad. He's in the middle of a photo shoot for one of his girly mags, *Titter*. He happily uses himself as a model for the spread “Gals Like It Rough,” spanking his girlfriend JEANNIE, who is wearing the skimpiest of lingerie. There's a set, a crew, and sexy models everywhere, but Harrison is also surrounded by family—his doting older sister EDITH, and Edith's two children, MICHAEL and MARJORIE – [Song: ONE OF THE FAMILY \(BOB, JEANNIE, FAMILY, GIRLS\).](#)

Bad news arrives: the Postmaster General has branded the magazines obscene, and is going to shut Bob down. Bob wants to fight, but Edith has an admission, the mags are losing money anyway. Bob is dejected. He is failing but vows to figure something out – [Song: FOUR AND TWENTY KARAT \(Bob\).](#)

Jeannie plants the seed that will grow into *Confidential Magazine* without even knowing it, when she tells Bob about a scandalous story at the Stork Club she heard about involving Walter Winchell and Josephine Baker. It begins to crystalize in his mind as being about a world where we tell the truth about our personal lives without judgment – [Song: NOTHING TO HIDE \(Bob\).](#)

With Jeannie as his muse, he begins creating the magazine, but realizes he will need a great of money and the support of someone powerful. As a publicity stunt, he registers Jeannie on the stock market and plants the story “Showgirl Sells Shares in Self,” ostensibly to raise money for the magazine – [Song: BLUE CHIP BABY \(JEANNIE/BOYS\).](#)

His real target is Walter Winchell—the world-famous columnist and radio host whose combined readership and listening audience is over 50 million people every day. Jeannie remembers hearing about a Winchell protégé named HOWARD RUSHMORE, who was recently fired by Senator Joe McCarthy. – [Song: AMERICAN MAN \(RUSHMORE\).](#)

Bob offers Rushmore a job and offers to pay for him and his wife FRANCES to move to New York. They start figuring out what kinds of stories they want to tell, and they vow to tell the truth, “Naming the Names and Telling the Facts” – [Song: HERE TO STAY \(BOB, RUSHMORE, FAMILY\).](#)

He launches the magazine and it is a huge hit, far surpassing his wildest expectations – [Song: MR. CONFIDENTIAL \(COMPANY\).](#) But early on, there are rumblings of trouble from the alcoholic, drug addicted, red-baiting Howard Rushmore. True celebrity scandal is far more interesting to readers than Howard's mostly fictional anti-Commie stories, and Bob cuts Howard's stories again and again. *Confidential* is a hit, and Marjorie, growing weary of her life as a wife and mother, wants to be more involved in the magazine. If people want the girl next door, they should indeed, go next door. – [Song: GIRL NEXT DOOR \(MARJORIE/GIRLS\).](#)

Marjorie hatches plans with some shadowy sources. Stories about gay and mixed-race liaisons among the rich and famous rule the print line-up. The escalating emphasis on Hollywood means someone must head up operations there. Bob chooses Marjorie, who heads for the west coast, leaving her husband and kids to fend for themselves (at least for the time being).

Hoping to steer attention back toward himself, Howard stages a massive publicity stunt, claiming to have been kidnapped by Communists. The story is bogus, but it gets plenty of press attention, and circulation rises. Bob agrees to print more of Howard's stories, and seems to take Rushmore's burst of celebrity in stride. He sets off on a trip with Jeannie to the Dominican Republic—or he keeps emphasizing, "To the JUNGLE!" Then word arrives that Bob has been shot in a "Jungle Love Triangle" and is missing.

Everyone suspects a publicity stunt, but the family is genuinely terrified, and Rushmore's government sources confirm that no one knows where Bob is or what's happened. Could he actually be dead? — [Song: DEAD OR ALIVE Part 1 \(COMPANY\)](#).

ACT 2

Bob surfaces, the conquering hero with Jeannie at his side. He also manages to plug a new "Jungle Vine Discovery," a miracle precursor to Viagra called Pega Palo. Bob's adventures are an international news event—dwarfing Rushmore's kidnapping stunt — **Song: DEAD OR ALIVE Part 2 (COMPANY)**.

In private, Bob reveals to his family that it was all a hoax. He expected them to admire his chutzpah, but Edith is furious that he would put them all through the fear of not knowing whether he was dead or alive. He can't make them understand that *of course* he didn't tell them. He wanted their fear in front of reporters to be genuine. Marjorie takes it in stride.

As Bob loses himself further in the exciting world of his own success, he launches his campaign to make Pega Palo a national sensation, and Jeannie goes on *The Ed Sullivan Show* — [Song: PEGA PALO \(JEANNIE/GIRLS\)](#).

Marjorie grows distant from her mother, Edith, who thinks Marjorie might be doing something shady: Bribery? Kickbacks? She doesn't know. Edith and Marjorie's husband Fred approach Marjorie about it, but Marjorie blows up. She swears innocence but tells her family to butt out. In truth, her growing reputation, and being labeled by newspapers as the "Duchess of Dirt" and a "Flame-Haired Femme Fatale" is starting to give her pause — [Song: THE DUCHESS OF DIRT \(MARJORIE\)](#).

Bob's relationship with Howard Rushmore deteriorates. Rushmore's stories are increasingly bitter, badly sourced, and unpopular with readers. And Howard (along with his increasingly distraught wife Frances) is drinking heavily and popping goofballs with total abandon.

Bob forces Rushmore out, and Rushmore sets out with plans of his own. In short order, Bob, Jeannie, Marjorie, and the whole family are indicted by the State of California on multiple counts of Conspiracy to Commit Libel and for the distribution of Obscenity.

But New York won't extradite on obscenity and libel charges. At first it looks like Marjorie might be on trial alone—but Bob refuses to let her take the fall.

Bob and Jeannie head for Los Angeles, and he stands trial along with Marjorie. The trial captivates the entire world. It's a circus sideshow. One witness commits suicide. Another is murdered. The jury gets into a brawl. Prostitutes put out. The magazine is accused of being responsible for no less than death and the wanton destruction of Hollywood careers.

The trial's many twists and turns build musically through [Song: TRIAL OF 100 STARS \(COMPANY\)](#) where the case is made against *Confidential*; where Bob and Marjorie cheerfully defend themselves and do a soft shoe juxtaposed against Rushmore's bitter testimony; and Marjorie testifying in a simple shirtwaist dress with a Peter Pan collar, insists that she is just a wife and mother after all — **Song: GIRL NEXT DOOR-REPRISE (MARJORIE/COMPANY).**

Things take a serious turn as bribery, blackmail, and murder accusations start hitting home. In his own testimony, Bob makes his case. Every story of consequence in the magazine—anything that alleges an affair or something improper—EVERY SINGLE STORY—is true, and he can prove it — **Song: CONFIDENTIALLY SPEAKING (BOB).**

The buzz and excitement build to revealing the verdict: None. It's a hung jury, which leaves a bitter aftertaste for everyone involved. Will there be a retrial? Bob grows obsessed with winning the fight, to the detriment of his relationships with family and with Jeannie.

Jeannie tries to get Bob's attention; tries to make him understand that they could have a different kind of life. He won't listen and she feels abandoned. It breaks her heart to do it, but she decides to leave him — [Song: THE GIRL WITH YELLOW HAIR \(JEANNIE\).](#)

Bob insists that he doesn't care if he's burning bridges, he's going to stick with fighting for his magazine. Rushmore, in his own world, echoes the sentiment — [Song: BRIDGE ON FIRE \(BOB/HOWARD\).](#)

Whether there will be a retrial remains up in the air and machinations abound. The family is tired and genuinely frightened. Bob has grown so juiced up by his own success that they fear they are losing him entirely. Marjorie is terrified that she will go to prison. On the other side, the Hollywood studios and State of California are eager to find a settlement that puts *Confidential* out of business.

Then something unexpected and horrifyingly real: With his wife Frances trying to leave him, and in a drunken state of despair, Rushmore kills her in the back of a taxi. There is a gruesome (and erroneous) headline: **CONFIDENTIAL BOSS KILLS WIFE & SELF!**

Bob realizes that the monster tabloid machine he, himself, created, has turned against him. No matter the retractions and clarifications, Bob will forever be known as a man who killed his wife and himself. He weighs the options. He looks at what this is doing to his family, and to Jeannie.

He goes after her, determined to win her back. Giving up the magazine is nothing compared to losing her. As they reconcile and wedding bells loom, Bob has an aside to the audience. Yes, he may be giving up his magazine, but this world he created... (Projections of modern tabloid sensations fly in: TMZ, *E.T.*, *People*, the *National Enquirer*, and all the rest.) Yes, this world he created will last FOREVER! And does anyone really believe that Big Bob won't be back? Look out! — **Song: FINALE (COMPANY).**