

‘Vanderpump Rules’ Revenge Porn: Rachel Leviss Sues Tom Sandoval & Ariana Madix Over Scandoval Fallout



By [Dominic Patten](#)
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(L-R) Tom Sandoval, Ariana Madix and Rachel Leviss
Getty Images

EXCLUSIVE, UPDATED with Leviss’ lawyers’ statement: If you thought the blast radius from *Vanderpump Rules’* infamous “Scandoval” was contained, think again. In a blistering lawsuit filed Thursday in Los Angeles, [Rachel Leviss](#) is taking [Tom Sandoval](#) and [Ariana Madix](#) to court for claims of revenge porn, eavesdropping, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

And she’s pretty clear why.

“Scandoval” captured the public’s attention in a massive way, went completely viral, and injected new life into *Vanderpump Rules*,” declares the jury trial-seeking complaint filed today in Los Angeles Superior Court ([read it here](#)). “It also caused mayhem in Leviss’s life, culminating in months-long in-patient treatment at a mental health facility and her departure from the show. Fomented by [Bravo](#) and Evolution in conjunction with the cast, Leviss was subjected to a public skewering with little precedent and became, without exaggeration, one of the most hated women in America.”

While Bravo, NBCUniversal, [Andy Cohen](#) and other *Vanderpump* producers are not named in this latest legal action arising from the *Real Housewives* franchise, they are named all over it.

At the same time, as the behind-the-scenes machinations of the unscripted world is coming under increased scrutiny, and even as Leviss is centering her ire on Sandoval and Madix in seeking unspecified damages, the Bryan Freedman- and Mark Geragos-represented ex-VR star wants all copies of a NSFW Facetime video involving her and Sandoval destroyed, and an injunction to shut down anyone ever seeing it again — and that’s on NBCUniversal’s Bravo and producers Amazon MGM Studios’ [Evolution Media](#).

“It is clear that Bravo deliberately sacrificed Leviss for the sake of its commercial interests from its refusal to allow her the opportunity to tell her side of the story and defend herself, which she repeatedly begged for permission to do,” Leviss’ filing reads.

The 19-page complaint adds that what you saw on TV in VR’s 10th season may not have been all that was really going on:

Plaintiff Rachel Leviss is a former cast member on *Vanderpump Rules*, a reality television show produced by Evolution Media (“Evolution”) and broadcast by Bravo Media (“Bravo”), an asset of NBCUniversal (“NBC”) (together with Bravo, “Bravo”). This case arises from a scandal of epic proportions starting in March 2023. Stemming from an affair between Leviss and another cast member, Tom Sandoval, “Scandoval”—as it came to be known—went instantly viral and was the subject of extraordinary press coverage, even in the mainstream media. “Scandoval” injected new life into a previously faltering series, causing its viewership to explode to unseen levels and making its cast members mega-celebrities. Due to a narrative deliberately fomented by Bravo, Evolution, and the cast, Leviss became an object of public scorn and ridicule.

To be clear, Leviss has repeatedly acknowledged that her actions were morally objectionable and deeply hurtful to Madix. She has offered numerous apologies. There is more to the story, however. Lost in the mix was that Leviss was a victim of the predatory and dishonest behavior of an older man, who recorded sexually explicit videos of her without her knowledge or consent, which were then distributed, disseminated, and discussed publicly by a scorned woman seeking vengeance, catalyzing the scandal. Leviss ultimately checked herself into a mental health facility and remained there for three months while Bravo, Evolution, and the cast milked the interest her excoriation had peaked.

To make matters worse, Leviss was misled by Bravo and Evolution into believing that she was contractually barred from speaking out about her mistreatment. As a result, she suffered in silence as Bravo and Evolution watched viewership explode, and the rest of the cast enjoyed unseen levels of public recognition and professional opportunity. Meanwhile, Leviss, who was humiliated and villainized for public consumption, remains a shell of her former self, with her career prospects stunted and her reputation in tatters.

For those of you who missed it, “Scandoval” started when Sandoval, who was recently on the cover of the *New York Times Magazine*, cheated on his then-girlfriend Madix with one of her closest pals Leviss.

That’s pretty standard unscripted fare.

However, fueled in no small part by an explicit video involving Leviss that Sandoval seemingly secretly taped and supposedly circulated, Scandoval blew up last year right as *Vanderpump Rules’* 10th season was airing on Bravo. Madix found out about the affair from a so-called accidental look at Sandoval’s phone, and then all unscripted hell broke loose.

The fallout spilled over from Season 10 of VR to the currently airing Season 11 and has been the topic of a number of reunion specials. Not appearing herself in VR Season 11 so far, Leviss discussed the matter on Bethenny Frankel’s podcast last summer. In addition, claiming that the video was “done illegally without Raquel’s knowledge or consent,” lawyers for Leviss sent cease-and-desist letter to the concerned parties last year that the video constituted a violation of California law in regard to “nonconsensual pornography.”

In an environment that Frankel has called the “reality reckoning” about the way shows like *Real Housewives*, *Vanderpump Rules* and various spinoffs are made, today’s lawsuit is the natural next step for Leviss.

Bravo is not a defendant in this case, at least not yet, but being that the outlet is mentioned all over the lawsuit, Deadline reached out to the NBCU-owned channel about Leviss’ action. They did not immediately respond, but it and when they do this post will be updated.

A familiar face on cable TV as well as the courtroom, Geragos had more to say about Leviss’ suit and the larger picture of reality TV today.

“This lawsuit is squarely about illegal behavior and those who traffic in it and enable it,” the attorney told Deadline today. “Rachel has apologized for her part in an affair. That’s not a crime. Tom and Ariana are alleged here to have engaged in criminal acts. They then doubled down and used those actions to shame, bully, belittle, and intentionally try to destroy Rachel’s mental health.”

“The law makes it clear that recording someone without their consent and distributing that illegal recording is punishable by law; however, doing so while knowingly enticing them to engage in sexual acts deserves the harshest of penalties allowable under the law,” Geragos added.

Representing Frankel, Brandi Glanville and other unscripted stars in a [growing pushback against strict NDAs and alleged behind-the-scenes manipulations](#), Freedman also had something to say about today’s filing and the Bravoverse.

“For decades, a great deal of my life has been devoted to mental health treatment and recovery and helping others on that path,” the powerhouse lawyer said. “I’m outraged that NBC and Bravo have used illegal NDAs as cudgels to profit off their employees. The idea that human beings are expected to sacrifice their mental and emotional health in service of Bravo’s ratings is obscene. Many of their employees are suffering in silence due to brazen and calculated actions by NBC and Bravo. Hundreds of reality TV participants have reached out to Mark Geragos and myself, and we are committed to ensuring that they have zealous advocates to confront the damage these employers have wreaked on their lives. While coming forward can be terrifying and even embarrassing, I implore people not to suffer in silence. Reach out to my firm or Mark’s firm, and we will help you get the help you need.”

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