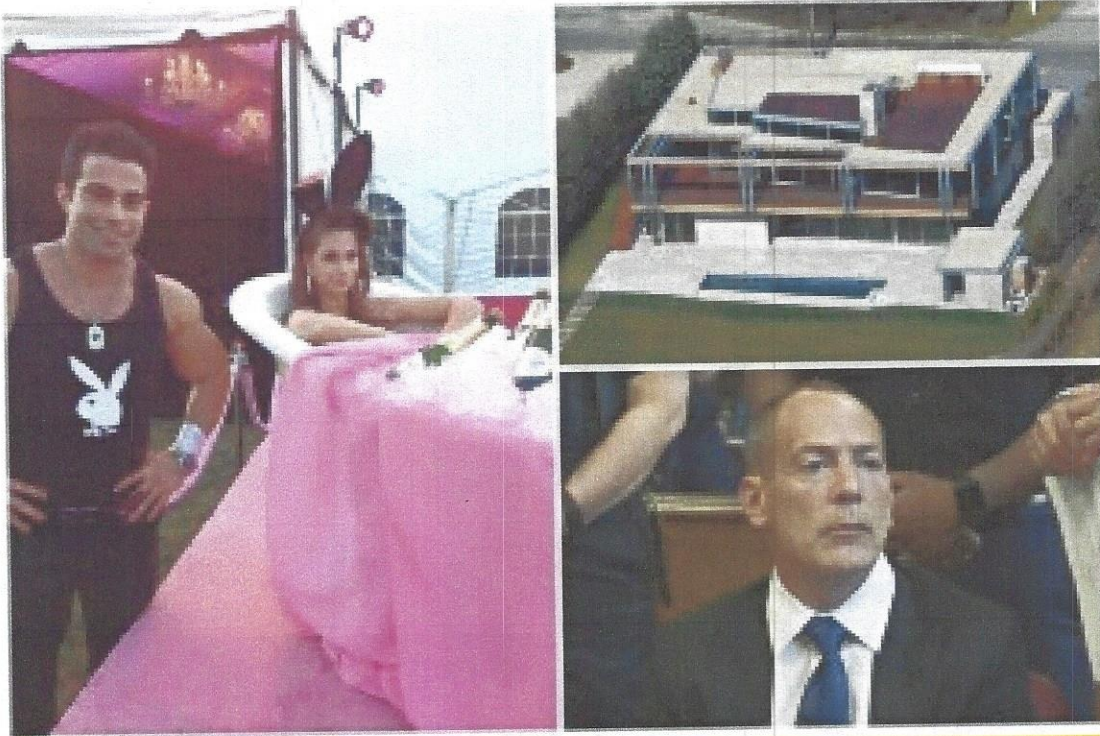


**EMILY SMITH**

# Inside the mega-parties 'Madoff of landlords' threw in the Hamptons

By **Emily Smith**

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Steve Croman (bottom right), who faces charges of running a \$45 million fraud scheme, is infamous for over-the-top parties at his Hamptons summer home.

Steven Hirsch; Hampton Pix

The "Bernie Madoff of landlords" has been living it up while running what authorities say is a \$45 million mortgage fraud scheme and using an ex-cop enforcer to scare his tenants out of their rent-stabilized apartments.

Disgraced real estate mogul Steven Croman, **who was busted Monday**, and his wife, Harriet, are infamous for throwing lavish, over-the-top parties at their Hamptons summer getaway — which sources said cost them nearly \$700,000 in rent one season.



As Page Six reported, in 2013 they turned the Surfside Drive spread in Bridgehampton into their own version of Studio 54 — complete with fake lines of cocaine and phony pills for guests, and a performance by legendary disco band Chic.

Guests included CBS 2 news anchor Chris Wragge, telecom mogul Michael Hirtenstein, ad exec-turned-TV personality Donny Deutsch and CNN boss Jeff Zucker.

The following year, they recreated Hugh Hefner's famed Playboy Mansion, including a replica of the "grotto" swimming pool and a full-size, Playboy-theme boutique.

That shindig drew celebs including TV chef Katie Lee (Billy Joel's ex-wife) and Scott Disick, Kourtney Kardashian's former beau.



Steve Croman and wife Harriet  
Getty Images

Last year, sources said, the Cromans replaced the ritzy rental with their own, custom-built megamansion in Sagaponack, which boasts the nation's priciest ZIP code for real estate. Meanwhile, they're waiting to move into a former apartment building at 12 E. 72nd St. that is being converted into the city's largest mansion, with more than 19,000 square feet of living space spread over eight floors — six above ground and two below.

Renovation plans include an elevator and swimming pools on the roof and in one of the basements, sources said.

Croman bought the building for \$5.5 million in 2002, then spent years removing the tenants from 23 rent-stabilized apartments.

The couple has a college-age son, Jake Croman, for whom there's even a website — [jakecroman.com](http://jakecroman.com) — devoted to cataloging negative videos and news reports about the “world class d—ebag,” including him caught in a profanity-laden video berating an Uber driver.

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Try watching this video on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), or enable JavaScript if it is disabled in your browser.

Another Croman son celebrated his bar mitzvah under the giant blue whale model at the Museum of Natural History several years ago, sources said. The event featured a sumptuous feast, free-flowing booze and a performance by singer Ariana Grande, who was paid \$500,000 to appear.

Sources familiar with the Cromans could barely contain their glee at Steven's arrest on charges filed by state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman.

“They are super-obnoxious. They have no class,” one source said. “They are very lavish people. They are not low-key. They brought it upon themselves.”

■ ‘They are super-obnoxious. They have no class.’

Another source said Harriet was “keeping her cool” and Steven

was downplaying the charges against him, which Schneiderman called “the most serious ... brought against a bad landlord in anyone's living memory,” while comparing him to Ponzi king Bernie Madoff.



"She is acting like everything is fine. He is acting like he didn't do anything wrong," the source said.

Croman, 49, was busted along with mortgage broker Barry Swartz, 53, on more than a dozen counts of grand larceny, scheme to defraud and other charges.

Croman — whose real estate portfolio includes 140 buildings — is accused of filing fraudulent paperwork that inflated his rental income so he could score bank loans.

He also allegedly employed an NYPD ex-cop, Anthony Falconite, as his "secret weapon" to help strong-arm tenants out of rent-stabilized apartments so he could raise the rents.

Croman's lawyer, Ben Brafman, who on Monday said he would respond to the allegations in a "responsible fashion," declined to comment.

*Additional reporting by Jennifer Gould Keil*