

Recent Ruling Might Have Cued Up Music Suits

COPYRIGHT: Ed Sheeran, Justin Bieber cases follow 'Blurred Lines' verdict.

LAWYERS for high-profile musicians are singing a less than cheery tune after lawsuits targeting pop stars **Justin Bieber** and **Ed Sheeran** over alleged copyright violations were filed in recent weeks.

Though it's still early, entertainment attorneys worry the litigation could be the start of a bigger trend piggybacking on the \$7.4 million "Blurred Lines" trial verdict won by the estate of Marvin Gaye in December. That ruling, which found songwriters and performers **Robin Thicke** and **Pharrell Williams** copied Gaye's "Got to Give It Up," seems to have emboldened plaintiffs, according to **Larry Iser** of Santa Monica-based **Kinsella Weitzman Iser Kump & Aldisert**.

"You have to expect post-'Blurred Lines' that plaintiffs' lawyers are looking to file more of these suits," he said.

Sheeran was sued June 8 in Los Angeles Federal Court for \$20 million for allegedly lifting the tune for his single "Photograph," which spent 18 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart last year. Songwriters **Martin Harrington** and **Thomas Leonard**, along with their publishing company **HaloSongs**, claim in their complaint that the Grammy winner derived his tune from their 2009 composition "Amazing" without proper attribution or remuneration.

"Harrington and Leonard had to sit by and watch Defendants receive awards, acclaim, and compensation without any of the proper recognition being received, as it should have been," the complaint reads.

The Bieber suit – which also names



Facing Litigation: Musician Ed Sheeran.

DJ **Skrillex** as a defendant – was filed in Nashville, Tenn., in May by songwriter **Casey Dienel**, who alleges the pair's song "Sorry" infringes on her work in "Ring the Bell," which she composed in 2012.

The lawyer behind the Sheeran suit, **Richard Busch** of **King & Ballou** in Nashville, is the same attorney who sued over "Blurred Lines" on behalf of Gaye's estate. Busch did not return a request for comment.

Iser said the spate of high-profile copyright suits could be short-lived. The verdict in the "Blurred Lines" case, which is on appeal in the Ninth Circuit, could be overturned because the jury was allowed to consider the "vibe" and "feel" of the songs as part of their decision, said Iser, which is not typically allowed.

"Some of the evidence that got to the jury was not musicological evidence," he said,

adding most copyright disputes over songs were previously decided out of court.

Milbank Moves

After close to 25 years in downtown, **Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCloy's** westernmost outpost is moving, well, farther west.

The venerable New York law firm will take up residence in the north tower of the Century Plaza Towers in Century City over the July 4 weekend, according to L.A. co-managing partner **Mark Scarsi**. The firm will occupy two floors in the building.

"The Century City market has been an attractive place for us for some time," Scarsi said. "It's a really marquee place to be in L.A."

The move coincides nicely with the firm's decision to bump up the pay of its junior lawyers. Newly hired associates are set to make \$180,000 during their first year at the firm effective July 1. The salary increase came quickly after New York's **Cravath Swaine & Moore** set the market standard last week.

Law firms have since been scrambling to match that rate, with downtown L.A.-based firms such as **Munger Tolles & Olson**, **Latham & Watkins**, and **O'Melveny & Myers** following suit. Even some locally based litigation boutiques, such as downtown's **Hueston Hennigan**, have raised associate pay.

Legal Landscape

Locke Lord has shuffled leadership in its downtown office, naming **Nina Huerta** managing partner, replacing **Mitchell Popham**. ... San Francisco employment benefits law firm **Trucker Huss** has opened an L.A. office, helmed by partners **Nick White** and **Joe Faucher**. ... The Century City office of **McDermott Will & Emery**

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has poached partner **Michael Morgan** from downtown's **Jones Day**. Morgan will be the co-chair of the privacy and data protection practice. ... **Seong Hwan Kim** and **Rebecca**



Huerta

Edelson have joined **Sheppard Mullin** as partners in the firm's Century City office after departing **Steptoe & Johnson**. Kim was formerly the co-head of Steptoe's South Korea practice group and part of the firm's executive committee. Edelson led the firm's trade secrets practice.

... Century City's **Sklar Kirsh** has added former **Deluxe Entertainment Services Group** general counsel **Scott Ehrlich** as a partner. Ehrlich joins former **Relativity Media** general counsel **Michael Rosner** at the firm. ... **Spencer Kook** has taken over as partner in charge at **Hinshaw & Culbertson's** downtown office. ... Beverly Hills-based **Ervin Cohen & Jessup** has added three attorneys to its land-use practice, led by **Ellia Thompson**, who will chair the group. The firm also added **Jonathan Riker** and **Jeffrey Harlan**.

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