

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

Fathers & Daughters Nevada, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

DOES 1-13, anonymous BitTorrent
users participating in file-sharing swarm
identified by hash ending in DC8F,

Defendants.

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Case No. 4:16-cv-1968

PLAINTIFF FATHERS & DAUGHTERS NEVADA, LLC'S
COMPLAINT AGAINST DOES 1-13, UNKNOWN
PARTICIPANTS IN FILE-SHARING SWARM IDENTIFIED BY
HASH 6891D2D926CF288A517471D34419A95354D3DC8F FOR
COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

COMPLAINT

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

1. One 2011 study showed that nearly 14% of all internet traffic in the United States constitutes illegal distribution of copyrighted content such as films, television episodes, music, and software via BitTorrent, a peer-to-peer file sharing network used to distribute data over the internet.¹ This report also found that of the most popular 10,000 pieces of content managed by the largest and most popular BitTorrent “tracker” worldwide,² film content is by far the most distributed of this material, all of which was copyrighted and shared illegitimately.³
2. Since this report, the volume of films being illegally copied and distributed has only gotten worse,⁴ with 46% of the U.S. population

¹ *Envisional Estimates Infringing Use*, YALE J.L. & TECH. 183–85 (2011), available at <http://www.yalelawtech.org/p2p-law-piracy/envisional-estimates-infringing-use/> (citing *Technical report: An Estimate of Infringing Use of the Internet* at p.3, available at http://documents.envisional.com/docs/Envisional-Internet_Usage-Jan2011.pdf) [hereinafter *Envisional*].

² PublicBT (publicbt.com). *Id.* at p. 4 n. 2.

³ *Envisional* at 4.

⁴ See follow-up report, *Sizing the Piracy Universe*, *Envisional* (Sept. 2013), available at <https://copyrightalliance.org/sites/default/files/-2013-netnames-piracy.pdf>.

COMPLAINT

having illegally copied, shared, or “downloaded for free” music, movies, and TV shows.⁵

3. And the next generation of Americans is poised to engage in such illegal copying to an even greater extent, with 70% of adults under 30 indicating that they copy, share, or download media “for free,” and 37% in this age group having acquired most or all of their digital music/video collections or a large collection in this way.⁶ As noted by Senator Levin in Congressional hearings on peer-to-peer Internet piracy, “it is unfortunate that the software being used—called ‘file sharing’ as if it were simply enabling friends to share recipes—is helping create a generation of Americans who don’t see the harm.”⁷

⁵ Copy Culture in the US and Germany, Columbia University, at 5 (2013), *available at* http://americanassembly.org/sites/default/files/download/publication/copy_culture.pdf.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Privacy and Piracy: The Paradox of Illegal File Sharing on Peer-to-peer Networks and the Impact of Tech. on the Entm’t Indst.: S. Hrg. 108–275 before the Permanent Subcomm. on Investigations of the Senate Comm. on Gov’tal Affairs, 108th Cong. 90 (2003) (statement of Senator Levin), *available at* <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-108shrg90239/html/CHRG-108shrg90239.htm> [hereinafter *Privacy and Piracy*].

COMPLAINT

4. But the damage being done to film producers and distributors due to this rampant infringement is tremendous.⁸ The US theatrical and home video revenues changed for the worse in the 2003–04 timeframe, coinciding with the development of the BitTorrent network that has made swapping large movie files practical.⁹ Indeed, according to Texas Representative Lamar Smith, “IP theft costs the U.S. economy more than \$100 billion annually and results in the loss of thousands of American jobs.”¹⁰

BitTorrent Operation

5. A sister district court describes BitTorrent and the anonymity of its operation as follows:

⁸ See, e.g., Ambassador Froman, 2015 Special 301 Report, Executive Office of the President of the United States (noting that unauthorized recordings of first-run motion pictures that are distributed worldwide via the Internet result in economic harm not only in the market where the film was originally shown, but in other markets as well), *available at* <https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2015-Special-301-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

⁹ Zentner, Alejandro, *Measuring the Impact of File Sharing on the Movie Industry: An Empirical Analysis Using a Panel of Countries*, at 2 (Mar. 22, 2010), *available at* <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1792615>.

¹⁰ Smith: Law Needed to Control Cyber Piracy, *Austin American-Statesman* (Nov. 28, 2011), *available at* <http://www.statesman.com/news/news/opinion/smith-law-needed-to-control-cyber-piracy/nRhYk/>.

COMPLAINT

BitTorrent allows its users to download files more quickly and efficiently than its predecessor file sharing protocols. Rather than downloading files directly from centralized servers or individual users, BitTorrent allows users, or “peers” to split a file up into pieces and download multiple pieces simultaneously from multiple peers. Once a peer downloads a particular piece of the file in question, he or she automatically begins to share that piece with other peers. These multivariate connections between downloading and uploading users create a “swarm,” eventually allowing participating users to collect all pieces of a file and reassemble it into its final form. A peer who makes a complete file available to other peers is known as a “seed.” As the name implies, each swarm begins with a seed; however, BitTorrent users often remain in a swarm after they have completed downloading a file, thus becoming seeds themselves.

BitTorrent peers are identified to each other only by their IP addresses. Though an IP address, without more, typically cannot be traced back with certainty to an individual user, Internet Service Providers [“ISPs”] can generally link an IP address to its account owner. Moreover, commonly available free web applications can often trace an IP address back to a general geographic area, such as a city or postal code. Thus, BitTorrent users are partially anonymous to each other. While peers’ names and other identifying details are opaque, their IP addresses and (to some extent) their locations may be logged and tracked.¹¹

¹¹ *Funimation Entm’t v Does 1-427*, 2:11-cv-00269 (E.D. Tex. Sept. 16, 2016) [Dkt 43].

COMPLAINT

6. So, while a rightsholder can find the geographical location of an IP address and trace that IP address activity to an Internet Service Provider (“ISP”), only the ISP has the ability to find the account holder’s identity required to contact or name the individual in a complaint. And Tthe Cable Privacy Act prohibits cable operators, which includes the ISPs, from disclosing subscribers’ personal information without their consent or a court order.¹²

PARTIES

Plaintiff

7. Fathers & Daughters Nevada, LLC (“F & D”) is a Nevada Limited Liability Company with principal offices in Los Angeles, California.
8. F & D owns the copyright to the motion picture Fathers and Daughters, the work at issue as described below in paragraphs 30–37, having all pertinent copyright interests needed to bring suit.
9. F & D’s managing member is Voltage Films NCCF, LLC (“Voltage”). To date, Voltage’s films have been nominated for 15 Academy Awards, 5 Golden Globes, and won 9 Academy Awards and 2 Golden Globes.

¹² 47 U.S.C. § 551(c).

COMPLAINT

Several films were also nominated for, or won, PGA, DGA, SAG, BAFTA, Independent Spirit awards and other prizes.

10. Voltage typically budgets \$15M-\$40M to produce its movies.

Defendants

11. The Defendants are identified herein as Does 1–13.

12. F & D is currently unaware of the true names of Does 1–13. Due to the surreptitious nature of Defendants’ actions the identities of Does 1–13 are concealed from F & D , preventing F & D from identifying them by name.

13. The Defendants in this action are listed in EXHIBIT 2, which identifies each Defendant’s IP address, a specific time of observed infringing activity, and an estimated geo-located place of the Defendant’s conduct.

14. Each Defendant’s IP address has been observed and confirmed as distributing at least a part of Fathers and Daughters through the P2P BitTorrent exchange.

15. At the time of observed copying, each defendant’s IP address was managed, on information and belief, by ISP or ISPs, Comcast Communications Management, L.L.C. or its subsidiaries (“Comcast”), who, on information and belief, generally assigns an IP address to a

COMPLAINT

single party for extended periods of time, often for months, and provides Wi-Fi systems with pre-installed security and passwords.

16. The records maintained by Comcast should be able to identify either each Defendant, or a subscriber who contracted with Comcast for service who, in turn, is likely to have knowledge that will lead to the identity of each Defendant.

17. Plaintiff intends to seek discovery from Comcast for records or information sufficient to permit Plaintiff to identify and name the true defendant.

SUBJECT MATTER JURISDICTION

18. This is a civil action requesting remedies under U.S. Code Title 17— Copyrights, §§ 502–05, for infringement of copyright as provided by §§ 106 and 113–14 granting, among other rights, that “the owner of copyright under this title has the exclusive rights to do and to authorize any of the following: (1) to reproduce the copyrighted work in copies . . .”

19. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction at least under 28 U.S.C. §1338(a) providing that “[t]he district courts shall have original jurisdiction of any civil action arising under any Act of Congress relating to . . . copyrights . . .”

COMPLAINT

PERSONAL JURISDICTION

20. For an individual, the paradigm forum for the exercise of general jurisdiction is the individual's domicile; for a corporation, it is an equivalent place, one in which the corporation is fairly regarded as at home.
21. And geolocation identifies the IP address associated with each Doe as geographically located within this District where the subscriber is thought to reside.
22. Therefore, upon information and belief, this Court has general jurisdiction over Does 1-13 by virtue of Does residing in this district.
23. Further, specific jurisdiction arises if there was some act by which the defendant purposefully availed himself or herself of the privilege of conducting activities within the forum State, thus invoking the benefits and protections of its laws.
24. The geolocation information in conjunction with the observed infringing behavior also shows Does reproduced and/or distributed F & D's work in this district (as described further below), and thus purposefully availed themselves of the privilege of conducting activities in this district.

COMPLAINT

25. Therefore, F & D's claim relates to Does contacts with this district, and also supports specific jurisdiction.

VENUE

26. Venue in copyright cases is governed by 28 U.S.C. § 1400(a), instead of the general venue provision of 28 U.S.C. § 1391.

27. Section 1400(a) allows plaintiffs to bring suit for copyright infringement in the district in which the defendant or his agent resides or "may be found."

28. The Fifth Circuit has held that a defendant "may be found" in any district in which he or she may be subject to personal jurisdiction, as analyzed as if the district were a separate state.

29. Therefore, venue is proper in this Court for the same reasons given in the Personal Jurisdiction section above in paragraphs 20–25.

WORK AT ISSUE

30. Fathers and Daughters ("Motion Picture") is a movie including actors Russell Crowe, Amanda Seyfried, Kylie Rogers, Aaron Paul, Diane Kruger, and Jane Fonda.

31. The Motion Picture portrays the story of a Pulitzer-winning writer who grapples with being a widower and father after a mental breakdown,

COMPLAINT

while, 27 years later, his grown daughter struggles to forge connections of her own.

32. Fathers and Daughters is scheduled to be released in the United States July 2016.

33. Fathers and Daughters is registered with the United States Copyright Office. See EXHIBIT 1 bearing Registration Certificate No. PAu 3-762-811 with effective registration date of March 30, 2015.

34. The Motion Picture contains wholly original material that is copyrightable subject matter under the laws of the United States.

35. The Motion Picture is currently offered for sale in commerce.

36. Fathers and Daughters includes a proper copyright notice advising the viewer that the Motion Picture is protected under copyright and other applicable laws of the United States of America.

37. Publication and advertising associated with the Motion Picture and packaging and copies bear a proper copyright notice.

JOINDER

38. Joinder in this action is made under Fed. R. Civ. P. 20(a)(2) (permissive) in that Plaintiff's claims arise out of the same occurrences or transactions, or series of occurrences or transactions and that there are questions of law and fact common to each of the Defendants.

COMPLAINT

39. Although the phrase “transaction or occurrence” is not defined in Rule 20(a), courts have analogously interpreted this phrase in the compulsory counterclaims Rule 13(a). The Supreme Court has stated that for purposes of Rule 13(a): “Transaction” is a word of flexible meaning. It may comprehend a series of many occurrences, depending not so much upon the immediateness of their connection as upon their logical relationship.” Thus, all “logically related” events entitling a person to institute a legal action against another generally are regarded as comprising a transaction or occurrence.

40. Specifically, Plaintiff has named in this Complaint the group of Defendants based upon observations that they copied at least portions of the same copy of Fathers and Daughters at or about the same time period, and on information and belief copied the entire work.

41. And the architecture of BitTorrent is such that each file or part thereof downloaded by a peer in a swarm is made available automatically for upload by other peers. While a peer may upload to a relatively small number of peers directly, those peers in turn upload pieces to other peers who join the swarm later. Thus, a defendant’s “generation” of peers—peers to whom a defendant uploaded the file directly—helps pass on pieces of the copyrighted work to the next “generation” of active peers.

COMPLAINT

42. Therefore, each Defendant engaged in a concerted action with other Defendants to reproduce and distribute Plaintiff’s Motion Picture by exchanging pieces of a particular copy of the Motion Picture, as identified by the same Hash Value (see ¶ 47 below), in a torrent swarm. And each Doe Defendant interacts, either directly or indirectly, with the other peers in the swarm in a series of transactions or occurrences that are logically related.
43. Permissive joinder in the instant case permits a more efficient management of Plaintiff’s claims against the several Defendants and to reduce the costs and burdens to Plaintiff, Defendants and the Court.
44. This Court has stated that the issue of “joinder is better analyzed once unknown Defendants have been identified and served.”

COUNT I—COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

Direct

45. Each Defendant, without Plaintiff’s permission or consent, copied and distributed a portion, and upon information and belief copied an entire copy of, Plaintiff’s Motion Picture, Fathers and Daughters, as described above in paragraphs 30–37 through a peer-to-peer network without authorization or right.

COMPLAINT

46. Plaintiff observed this infringing activity using forensic software to identify the IP addresses using the BitTorrent protocol to reproduce, distribute, display or perform Plaintiffs' Motion Picture via the Internet.

47. The forensic software identified the IP addresses shown in EXHIBIT 2 as uploading and consequently as having downloaded parts or all of the file identified by the hash value of:

6891D2D926CF288A517471D34419A95354D3DC8F

("Hash Value"). This Hash Value is a very large hexadecimal number, generated by the particular copy of the Motion Picture through an algorithmic function, such as SHA-1. The same file will always produce the same number using the same algorithm, and any changes to the file will almost certainly produce a different hash value. In this way, a hash value is the file's "digital fingerprint" uniquely identifying a specific file.

48. The media file that corresponded to the Hash Value was substantially similar, if not identical, to Plaintiff's Motion Picture.

49. Plaintiff did not authorize, permit, license or consent to Defendants' copying of its Work.

COMPLAINT

50. Copyright infringement is a strict liability offense, and a court will not absolve a Defendant for copying a work unconsciously or truly believing the conduct was non-infringing.

51. As a result of the foregoing, each Defendant violated one or more of Plaintiff's exclusive right to:

- A. Reproduce the Motion Picture in copies, in violation of 17 U.S.C. §§ 106(1) and 501;
- B. Redistribute copies of the Motion Picture to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease or lending, in violation of 17 U.S.C. §§ 106(3) and 501;
- C. Perform the Motion Picture, in violation of 17 U.S.C. §§ 106(4) and 501, by showing the Motion Picture's images in any sequence and/or by making the sounds accompanying the Motion Picture audible and transmitting said performance of the Motion Picture, by means of a device or process, to members of the public capable of receiving the display (as set forth in 17 U.S.C. § 101's definitions of "perform" and "publicly" perform); and
- D. Display the copyrighted Motion Picture, in violation of 17 U.S.C. §§ 106(5) and 501, by showing individual images of the Work sequentially or non-sequentially and transmitting said display of the

COMPLAINT

Motion Picture by means of a device or process to members of the public capable of receiving the display (as set forth in 17 U.S.C. § 101's definition of "publicly" display).

Willful

52. Each Defendant's conduct has been willful within the meaning of 17 U.S.C. § 504(c)(2), intentional, in disregard of and indifferent to Plaintiff's rights, with notice, and with the intent to deprive Plaintiff of income and cause Plaintiff harm.
53. Specifically, each Defendant had to ignore the copyright notice advising the viewer that the Motion Picture is protected under copyright law found both in the Motion Picture and on all publication and advertising associated with the Motion Picture, install file distribution software on a computer, and search for and load a Torrent file to participate in the peer-to-peer distribution of Fathers and Daughters.
54. Additionally, multiple "take down" notices under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act have been sent to Comcast for Does 1 and 2, and, therefore, on information and belief, Does 1 and 2 have continued to share Defendant's Motion Picture after the notices were sent.

COMPLAINT

55. Plaintiff has suffered actual damages that were proximately caused by each of the Defendants, including lost sales, price erosion and a diminution of the value of its copyright.

Contributory

56. Providing the means for others to infringe creates liability for contributory copyright infringement.

57. Each of the Defendants were observed uploading file(s) corresponding to illegally copied versions of Fathers and Daughters. As such, Defendants provided other persons the means to infringe F & D's copyright, thereby inducing, causing or materially contributing to the infringing conduct of others and of each other Defendant.

58. Additionally, uploaded portions of Defendant's work remain on peer computers after a Defendant stops directly participating in a swarm. As such, Defendant's contribution also increases the over-all availability of Defendant's work via the BitTorrent network after any direct peer-to-peer transmissions. In this way, Defendants additionally induce, cause or materially contribute to the infringing conduct of others and of other Defendants.

COMPLAINT

Vicarious

59. Vicarious liability requires neither knowledge or intent, but only requires a financial benefit and the ability to supervise.

60. To the extent Defendant ISP subscriber allowed a household member to use the Internet connection to copy and obtain Fathers and Daughters, and thereby avoided cost to Defendant, Defendant is liable.

61. To the extent a child in Defendant's household committed the infringement, Defendant is liable for any property damage proximately caused as a parent or other person who has the duty of control and reasonable discipline of a child.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against each defendant as follows:

- A. Entry of permanent injunction enjoining each Defendant from directly, indirectly, contributorily or vicariously infringing Plaintiff's rights, including without limitation copying, distributing, or making available for distribution, Plaintiff's Motion Picture, except pursuant to a lawful license or with the express authority of Plaintiff;
- B. Actual damages and profits to be proven at trial under 17 U.S.C. § 504(b), including prejudgment interest, or, as Plaintiff may elect at

COMPLAINT

any time before final judgment is rendered, statutory damages pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(c).

C. If statutory damages are elected, a finding that Defendants' infringement was committed willfully, and an order increasing the award of statutory damages to a just sum of not more than \$150,000;

D. If statutory damages are not elected, a finding that Defendants' infringement was committed willfully, and an award of punitive damages.

E. Plaintiff's reasonable costs and attorney fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505; and

F. Such other and further relief as the Court deems proper.

Dated: July 5, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

s/ Joshua S. Wyde

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COMPLAINT

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