

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

COOK PRODUCTIONS, LLC,

Plaintiff,

v.

DOES 1-5,

Defendants.

Case No.: 1:16-cv-1369

COMPLAINT FOR COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

Plaintiff, Cook Productions, LLC, by and through its undersigned counsel, for and as its Complaint against Defendants, alleges as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This is a civil action seeking damages and injunctive relief for copyright infringement under the Copyright Law of the United States (17 U.S.C. §101 *et seq.*). As set forth in greater detail below, this action involves the unauthorized acquisition and transfer of the copyrighted motion picture “Mr. Church” (hereinafter the “MOVIE”) by Defendants that is currently available for both purchase and rental at such outlets as ITUNES and Amazon Video as well as other retail outlets. The MOVIE is a major motion picture about a friendship that develops when a cook - Henry Joseph Church helps a little girl and her dying mother, and how what starts as a six-month arrangement becomes a lifetime family bond. The MOVIE features Eddie Murphy and Britt Robertson. The MOVIE has significant value and has been produced and created at considerable expense.

2. This Court has jurisdiction under 17 U.S.C. §101 *et seq.*; 28 U.S.C. §1331 (federal question); and 28 U.S.C. §1338(a) (copyright). In addition, at least one of the defendants reside in this Division and elsewhere in this Judicial District.

3. The manner of the transfer and copying of the MOVIE is accomplished by using a network called a "BitTorrent protocol". The BitTorrent protocol makes even small computers with low bandwidth capable of participating in large data transfers for copying large files such as movies.

4. A file transfer using the BitTorrent protocol begins when a first user accesses the Internet through an ISP and intentionally makes a digital file, or 'seed', of a work available to the public from his or her computer. Subsequent users, referred to as 'peers,' access the Internet and request the file. These users engage each other in a group, referred to as a 'swarm,' and begin downloading the seed file. As each peer receives portions of the seed, that peer makes those portions available to other peers in the swarm. Explanation quoted in part from *Patrick Collins, Inc. v. John Does* 1-28, No. 12-13670, 2013 WL 359759 at 5 (E.D. Mich., Jan. 29, 2013).

5. The BitTorrent protocol relies on reciprocity. To keep the torrent working at maximum capacity, the BitTorrent protocol uses a process called pipelining. Every active peer in a torrent maintains a continuously refreshed queue of requests for pieces, so that no connection is ever left idle after any one piece is downloaded. *Id.* at 5-6, quoting from Annemarie Bridy, *Is Online Copyright Enforcement Scalable?*, 13 Vand. J. Ent. & Tech. L. 695, 702 (footnotes omitted) (2011).

6. This distributed nature of BitTorrent leads to a rapid spreading of a file throughout peer users. Thus, every infringer is stealing copyrighted material from many Internet Service Providers ("ISPs") in numerous jurisdictions.

7. On current information and belief, personal jurisdiction in this District is proper because each Defendant, without consent or permission of Plaintiff as exclusive rights owner, within this District, reproduced, distributed and offered to distribute among other Defendants over the Internet the copyrighted MOVIE for which Plaintiff has exclusive rights. Plaintiff has used geolocation technology to trace the Internet Protocol ("IP") addresses of each Defendant to a point of origin within this District. On information and belief, each Defendant has an IP address based in this District and resides in or committed copyright infringement in this District.

8. Venue in this District is proper under 28 U.S.C. §1391(b) and/or 28 U.S.C. §1400(a). Although the true identity of each Defendant is unknown to Plaintiff at this time, on information and belief, Defendants reside in this District, may be found in this District and/or a substantial part of the acts of infringement complained of herein occurred in this District.

THE PARTIES

9. Plaintiff brings this action to stop Defendants from copying and distributing to others over the Internet unauthorized copies of Plaintiff's copyrighted MOVIE. Defendants' infringements allow them and others unlawfully to obtain and distribute an unauthorized copy of the MOVIE for free. Each time a Defendant unlawfully distributes a free copy of Plaintiff's copyrighted MOVIE to others over the Internet, each person who copies the MOVIE then distributes the unlawful copy to others without any significant degradation in sound and picture quality. Thus, a Defendant's distribution of even one unlawful copy of a motion picture can result in the nearly instantaneous worldwide distribution of that single copy to a limitless number of people. Plaintiff now seeks redress for this infringement of its exclusive rights.

10. Plaintiff is the owner of the copyright and/or the pertinent exclusive rights under copyright in the United States in the MOVIE that has been unlawfully distributed over the Internet by Defendants.

11. The true names of Defendants are unknown to Plaintiff at this time. Each Defendant is known to Plaintiff only by the Internet Protocol ("IP") address assigned to that Defendant by his or her Internet Service Provider and the date and the time at which the infringing activity of each Defendant was observed. Plaintiff believes that information obtained in discovery will lead to the identification of each Defendant's true name and will permit Plaintiff to amend this Complaint to state the same. Plaintiff further believes that additional information obtained will lead to the identification of additional infringing parties, as monitoring of online infringement of Plaintiff's motion picture is ongoing.

COUNT I

COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

12. The MOVIE is currently available for rental and purchase throughout the U.S. As a result, the MOVIE has significant value and has been produced and created at considerable expense.

13. At all relevant times, Plaintiff has been the holder of the pertinent exclusive rights infringed by Defendants, as alleged hereunder, including but not limited to the copyrighted MOVIE, including derivative works. The Copyrighted MOVIE is the subject of a valid Certificate of Copyright Registration issued by the Register of Copyrights. (Exhibit A)

14. The Copyrighted MOVIE includes a copyright notice advising the viewer that the motion picture is protected by the Copyright Laws.

15. Plaintiff is informed and believes that each Defendant, without the permission or consent of Plaintiff, has used, and continues to use, an online media distribution system to reproduce and distribute to the public, including by making available for distribution to others, the Copyrighted MOVIE. Plaintiff has identified each Defendant by the IP address assigned to that Defendant by his or her ISP and the date and the time at which the infringing activity of each Defendant was observed. (Exhibit B). Each Defendant has violated Plaintiff's exclusive rights of reproduction and distribution. Each Defendant's actions constitute infringement of Plaintiff's exclusive rights protected under the Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. §101 *et seq.*).

16. On information and belief, each Defendant deliberately participated in a swarm and/or reproduced and/or distributed the same seed file of Plaintiff's Copyrighted MOVIE in digital form with other Defendants. In particular, on information and belief, Defendants participated in a collective and interdependent manner with other Defendants via the Internet for the unlawful purpose of reproducing, exchanging, and distributing copyrighted material unique to the swarm.

17. The foregoing acts of infringement constitute a collective enterprise of shared, overlapping facts and have been willful, intentional, and in disregard of and with indifference to the rights of Plaintiff.

18. As a result of each Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to relief pursuant to 17 U.S.C. §504 and to its attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to 17 U.S.C. §505.

19. The conduct of each Defendant is causing and, unless enjoined and restrained by this Court, will continue to cause Plaintiff great and irreparable injury that cannot fully be compensated or measured in money. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law. Pursuant to 17 U.S.C. §§502 and 503, Plaintiff is entitled to injunctive relief prohibiting each Defendant from further infringing Plaintiff's copyright and ordering that each Defendant destroy all unauthorized copies of the Copyrighted MOVIE.

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff demands trial by jury on all issues so triable.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against each Defendant and relief as follows:

1. For entry of permanent injunctions providing that each Defendant shall be enjoined from directly or indirectly infringing Plaintiff's rights in the Copyrighted MOVIE, including without limitation by using the Internet to reproduce or copy Plaintiff's MOVIE, to distribute Plaintiff's MOVIE, or to make Plaintiff's MOVIE available for distribution to the public, except pursuant to a lawful license or with the express authority of Plaintiff. Each Defendant also shall destroy all copies of Plaintiff's MOVIE that Defendant has downloaded onto any computer hard drive or server without Plaintiff's authorization and (subject to the Order of Impoundment prayed for below) shall serve up all copies of the downloaded MOVIE transferred onto any physical medium or device in each Defendant's possession, custody or control.

2. For Judgment in favor of Plaintiff against Defendants that they have: a) willfully infringed Plaintiff's rights in its federally registered copyright pursuant to 17 U.S.C. §501; and b) otherwise injured the business reputation and business of Plaintiff by Defendants' acts and conduct set forth in this Complaint.

3. For Judgment in favor of Plaintiff against Defendants for actual damages or statutory damages pursuant to 17 U.S.C. §504, at the election of Plaintiff, in an amount to be determined at trial.

4. For an Order of Impoundment under 17 U.S.C. §§503 and 509(a) impounding all infringing copies of Plaintiff's MOVIE which are in Defendants' possession or under their control.

5. For Judgment in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendants awarding Plaintiff attorneys' fees, litigation expenses (including fees and costs of expert witnesses) and other costs of this action.

6. For Judgment in favor of Plaintiff against Defendants, awarding Plaintiff such further declaratory and injunctive relief as may be just and proper under the circumstances.

DATED: November 30, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Kathleen M. Lynch
Kathleen Lynch
N.C. Bar No. 37429
Law Office of Kathleen Lynch
2500 Regency Parkway
Cary, NC 27518
(919) 654-6735
klynch@kliplaw.com

and

/s/ R. Matthew Van Sickle
R. Matthew Van Sickle
N.C. Bar No. 33516
Van Sickle Law, PC
201 Shannon Oaks Circle, Suite 200
Cary, North Carolina 27511
(919) 279-3908
matt@mattvansicklelaw.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff