

NEWSLETTER



Taylor Swift Files Trademark Applications for Voice and Likeness Amid Rising AI Threats

In a significant development at the intersection of intellectual property law and artificial intelligence, artist Taylor Swift has filed three trademark applications with the USPTO on April 24, 2026, seeking protection over her voice and image against AI-driven misuse. The applications cover two sound marks "Hey, it's Taylor Swift" and "Hey, it's Taylor", and one image mark. The filings are a direct response to the growing misuse of AI tools to generate deepfakes and clone celebrity voices without authorization.

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Key Points

- A registered trademark, by contrast, may be asserted against any AI-generated output that creates a likelihood of confusion with the mark, irrespective of whether an underlying work was copied.
- State-level right of publicity laws, while offering some protection, are limited to commercial misuse and can't reach deepfakes circulated purely for misinformation or entertainment. Federal trademark registration removes this limitation entirely.
- Actor Matthew McConaughey's registration of his catchphrase "Alright, alright, alright" as a sound mark, filed in December 2023 and registered in December 2025, illustrates precisely this advantage: his federal registration allows him to pursue infringement claims against AI-generated imitations of his voice even where no commercial transaction is involved, a claim that state publicity rights alone would not sustain.
- IP practitioners have flagged that voice marks deployed against AI outputs constitute a novel and judicially untested legal theory, with no court having yet adjudicated their enforceability in this context.

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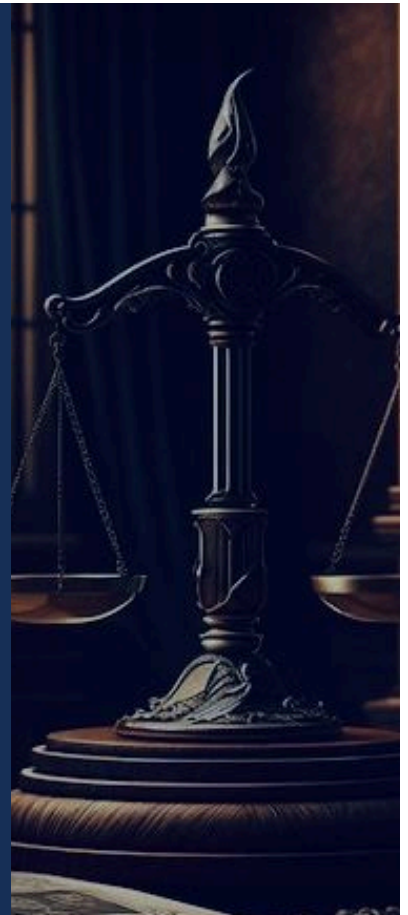
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Bombay High Court Reaffirms "JIO" as a Well-Known Trademark; Restrains Unauthorized Use by Cab Service

In a ruling reinforcing the enhanced protection afforded to well-known trademarks under Indian law, the Bombay High Court has granted an ad-interim injunction in favour of Reliance Industries Limited ("RIL"), restraining the defendants from using the mark "JIO" in connection with a cab service operating under the name "JIOCABS," including through the domain www.jiocabs.com.

Key Points

- The Court reaffirmed that "JIO" constitutes a well-known trademark within the meaning of Section 2(1)(zg) of the Trade Marks Act, 1999, a status consistently recognized across multiple benches of the Bombay High Court.
- RIL has held registered rights in the mark since 2013 across several classes, and the Court found that despite the defendants having modified their trading name, continued use of the infringing domain name sustained the infringement.
- Holding that a strong prima facie case was established, the Court observed that continued use of a well-known and protected mark would cause grave injury to the plaintiff, and that the balance of convenience lay firmly in favour of granting relief.



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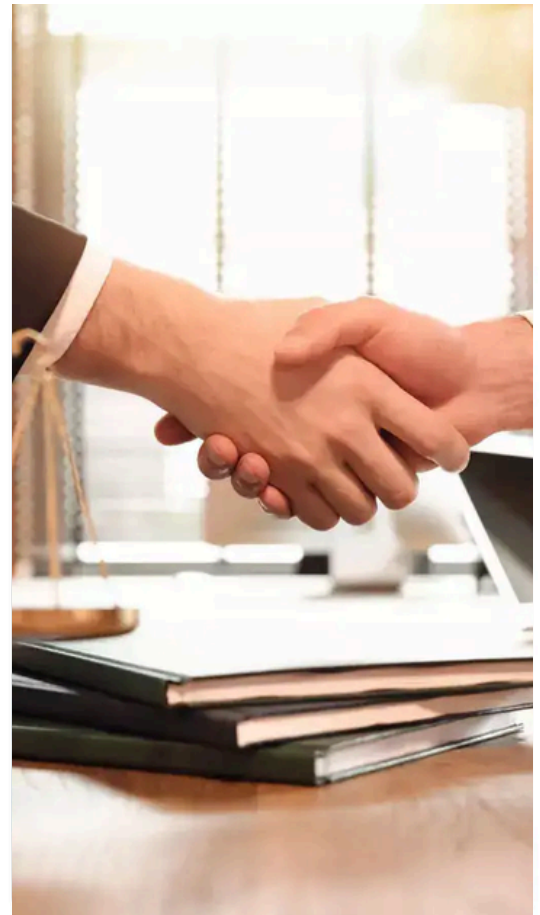
Delhi High Court Restrains Launch of "Glenwalk Godfather" Whisky in Trademark Infringement Suit

In a significant interim ruling, the Delhi High Court (Justice Tushar Rao Gadela) has restrained Cartel Bros Private Limited, a venture backed by actor Sanjay Dutt, from proceeding with the commercial launch of its premium blended Scotch whisky branded "The Glenwalk Godfather Edition," following a trademark infringement and passing off suit filed by Devans Modern Breweries Limited.

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Key Points

- Devans, which holds multiple registered trademarks over the "GODFATHER" mark and markets both beer and spirits under it, alleged that Cartel Bros had dishonestly adopted an identical mark for a product falling within the same broader category of alcoholic beverages, thereby constituting infringement and likely passing off given the mark's established goodwill and market recall.
- The defendants, upon hearing of submissions, furnished an undertaking before the Court to defer the commercial launch until the next date of hearing.
- The Court further directed Cartel Bros to refrain from publishing any fresh promotional or social media communications relating to the product under the impugned mark, while clarifying that the defendants bear no liability for continued circulation of already-published material not originating from them or their distributors.



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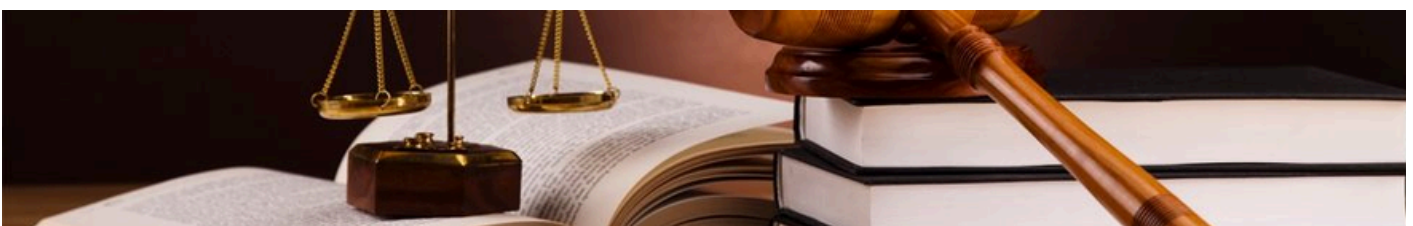
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Hera Pheri Copyright Dispute: FIR Filed Over Franchise Rights to Malayalam Original "Ramji Rao Speaking"

A long-running copyright dispute over the Hera Pheri franchise has escalated into criminal proceedings, with Bollywood producer Firoz Nadiadwala filing a complaint at Amboli Police Station, Mumbai, resulting in the registration of an FIR on April 27, 2026, against Gopala Pillai Vijaykumar and M. Paul Michael under Sections 318(4), 356, and 3(5) of the BNS, 2023, alleging cheating and defamation in connection with the copyright of the 1989 Malayalam film "Ramji Rao Speaking," on which Hera Pheri (2000) is based.

Key Points

- Nadiadwala claims to have lawfully acquired remake rights on March 24, 2000, for Rs. 4.50 lakh from M/s Compact Disc India Limited, which had originally purchased those rights in 1993, covering Hindi and other languages excluding southern languages, on the basis of which both Hera Pheri (2000) and Phir Hera Pheri (2006) were produced without objection for over 25 years.
- The dispute resurfaced when Vijaykumar filed a petition before the Madras High Court in October 2025, claiming ownership of the entire Hera Pheri franchise including future instalments, on the ground that Nadiadwala was authorized only to produce a single Hindi remake.
- Nadiadwala's complaint further alleges a pattern of bad faith conduct, including a demand for Rs. 60 lakh and a 25% profit share, supported by a documentary trail of assignment agreements and financial records establishing his chain of title.



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Madras High Court: CBFC Certificate Not Determinative of Copyright Ownership in Film Disputes

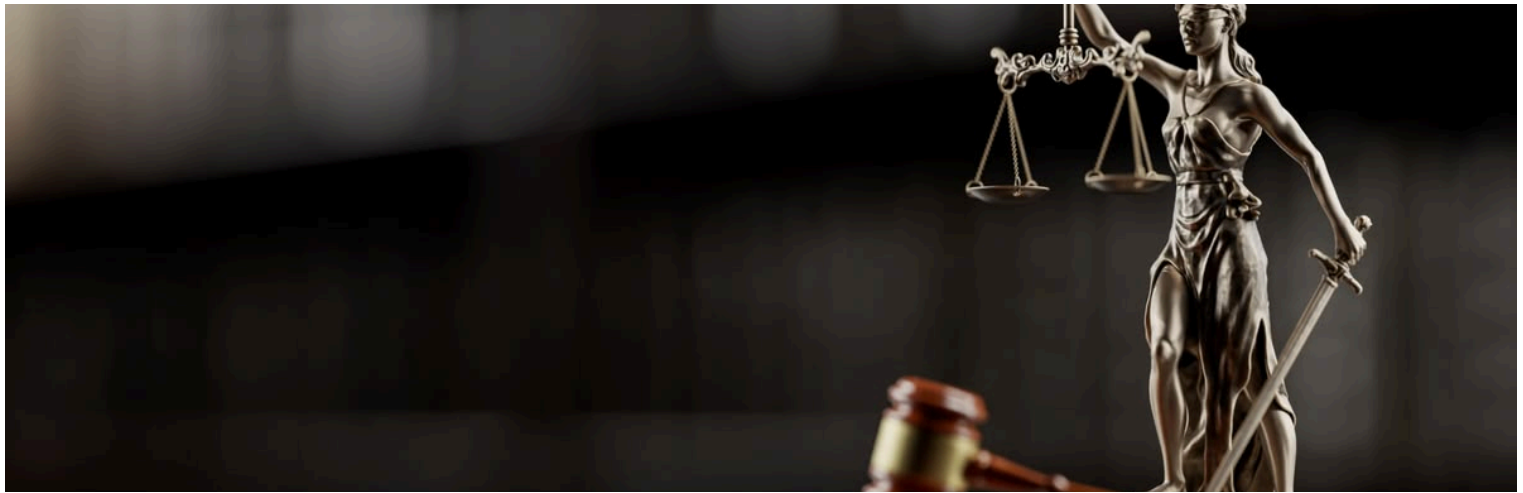
In *R. Kishore Kumar v. M/s R.R. Cine Productions*, the Madras High Court (Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy) has held that a Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) certificate constitutes only prima facie evidence of who produced a film and is not determinative of copyright ownership in a contested dispute.

Key Points

- The dispute arose over a Tamil film produced under multiple titles, namely "MANI," "MONEY," and "DADHA," with both Kishore Kumar and Durairajan of R.R. Cine Productions claiming to be its producer and first copyright owner. R.R. Cine Productions relied primarily on the CBFC certificate issued in their name to assert ownership, while Kishore Kumar relied on the original script, production ledgers, and payment records as evidence of initiative and financial responsibility over the film.
- The Court held that under Section 17 of the Copyright Act, 1957, the "producer" is the first owner of copyright in a cinematographic film, and that the test for determining who qualifies as producer is who took the initiative and bore the responsibility for making the film, a standard that documentary evidence must substantiate and not the CBFC certificate alone.
- Applying this test, the Court found that Kishore Kumar had conceptualised the film, arranged its financing, engaged the cast and crew, and bore the financial risk of production, thereby satisfying all elements required to establish him as producer under Section 17; by contrast, R.R. Cine Productions had merely facilitated the certification process, which the Court held was insufficient to confer copyright ownership. On this basis, the Court declared Kishore Kumar the first copyright owner of the cinematographic film and granted a permanent injunction restraining R.R. Cine Productions from exhibiting it.

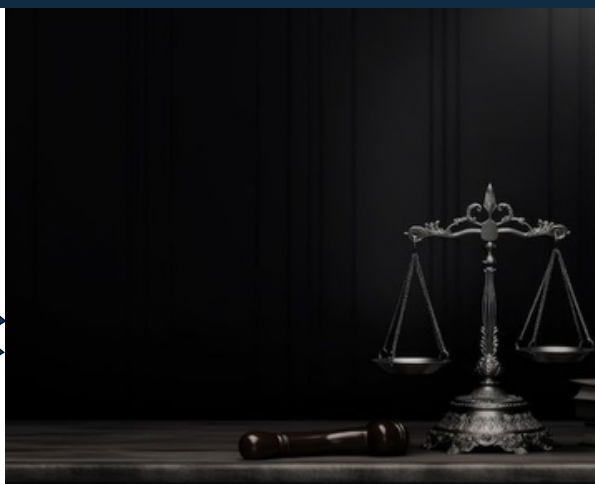


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Tenth Circuit Restores Netflix's Fair Use Defence in Tiger King Copyright Dispute

The United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit has, on rehearing, reversed its own 2024 ruling and restored the district court's summary judgment in favour of Netflix, holding that its use of a funeral video in the documentary series Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness constituted fair use under the US Copyright Act.



Key Points

- The suit was filed in 2020 by cameraman Timothy Sepi, who alleged copyright infringement over eight video clips used in the series. The district court held seven clips to be works for hire, filmed during Sepi's employment at the zoo, and found the eighth clip, a funeral video filmed after his employment ended, to be covered by fair use.
- On first appeal in March 2024, the Tenth Circuit reversed the fair use finding by applying the Supreme Court's standard in *Andy Warhol Foundation v. Goldsmith*, holding that Netflix's use was insufficiently transformative as it did not comment on the original work itself.
- On rehearing, the Court held that transformative use does not require commentary on the original work; it suffices that the use serves a purpose distinct from that of the original.
- Netflix had deployed the funeral footage as commentary on Joe Exotic's character, whereas Sepi had filmed it purely as documentation, and this distinction was sufficient to satisfy the first fair use factor.

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