

Steptoe & Johnson LLP

China Central Place, 29th Floor,
Tower 2
79 Jianguo Road, Chaoyang
District
Beijing, 100025
Tel: +86 10 5834 1000
Fax: +86 10 5969 6099

Avenue Louise 489
3rd Floor
B-1050 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 626 0500
Fax: +32 2 626 0510

115 South LaSalle Street
Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60603
Tel: 312.577.1300
Fax: 312.577.1370

2121 Avenue of the Stars
Suite 2800
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Tel: 310.734.3200
Fax: 310.734.3300

633 West Fifth Street
Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90071
Tel: 213.439.9400
Fax: 213.439.9599

1114 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036
Tel: 212.506.3900
Fax: 212.506.3950

201 E. Washington Street
Suite 1600
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Tel: 602.257.5200
Fax: 602.257.5299

1330 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202.429.3000
Fax: 202.429.3902

Steptoe & Johnson

99 Gresham Street
London, EC2V 7NG
England
Tel: +44 20 7367 8000
Fax: +44 20 7367 8001

Entertainment

Providing successful legal representation in the entertainment industry requires a unique blend of skills. Lawyers in Steptoe & Johnson LLP's Entertainment Law group provide a multi-disciplinary approach to problem-solving, taking advantage of the legal talent and experience of attorneys from several of Steptoe's diverse practice areas. With offices worldwide, including in the entertainment centers of New York, Los Angeles, and London, Steptoe's Entertainment lawyers combine a comprehensive understanding of the entertainment industry with support from experienced business solutions, intellectual property, technology, litigation, tax, and labor professionals.

Our Entertainment lawyers are poised to manage a range of concerns in the numerous fields of the entertainment business, including negotiating and drafting contracts; structuring and forming business entities; devising business solutions; and counseling clients regarding copyright and trademark protection and exploitation, merchandising, publishing, and Internet and new media ventures, as well as resolving and litigating disputes. Our lawyers have handled matters in various fields, such as music, film and television production, literary publishing, Internet-based and digital entertainment, and theater and dance theater.

Film & Television

Our lawyers represent and advise a wide range of clients engaged in the film and television industry, including networks, distribution companies, production companies, filmmakers, and screenwriters. We negotiate and draft contracts and provide counsel on issues involving intellectual property rights. We advise clients on all stages of filmmaking, from development, preproduction, and financing through production, distribution, and exploitation.

In addition to their legal experience, our lawyers have business experience as executives in the entertainment industry, having had the responsibility for both the acquisition and sales of film and television productions. Our entertainment lawyers are knowledgeable about all aspects of the financing of film production. Our experience includes negotiating the terms of "negative pickup" and foreign pre-sale deals; arranging film completion guarantees; handling negotiations for bank financing and the equity investment into films, in addition to the creation of a structure for film funds for a studio film slate.

Music

Our Entertainment Law group offers a full-service music practice to protect, preserve, and advance our clients' interests. Working with business entities and creative talent, including musicians, songwriters, and producers, our lawyers handle music licensing and clearance, copyright and trademark protection and prosecution, recording contracts, agent and management contracts, and merchandising agreements. Steptoe lawyers also represent webcasters regarding

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intellectual property rights and regulations in connection with the transmission of music over the Internet, including podcasting.

Literary Publishing

We represent publishers and authors in publishing transactions, including basic publishing agreements, licensing agreements, and copyright issues. On behalf of publishers we have structured, negotiated, and drafted numerous publishing agreements as well as book distribution agreements. One of our lawyers structured and negotiated licensing agreements for foreign language publications of magazines and books for one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Steptoe lawyers represent authors in numerous book deal negotiations and other media issues. We are experienced in exploiting the different rights of an author. For example, we have separately licensed translation rights and publication rights for expanded new editions of literary works, while reserving all other exclusive publication rights to the authors. We have also represented an author in negotiating reacquisition of publishing rights for entry to new markets. In addition, on behalf of authors, we have negotiated and documented publishing contracts for a variety of trade and professional treatises.

Internet-Based & Digital Entertainment

Our information technology experience gives us an advantage in handling matters in which the Internet is used as a distribution channel for entertainment content. Our lawyers stay on top of cutting-edge developments in technology that can have substantial impact on deals involving music, video, movies, graphics, and games, ranging from managing digital rights to developing and maintaining underlying software applications. We have represented providers and users of Internet-based entertainment content, Internet software developers, and Internet-based companies. Moreover, our intellectual property experience enables us to obtain and protect copyrights, patent rights, trade secret rights, and trademark rights applicable to entertainment content and its enabling technology.

Theater & Dance Theater

Steptoe lawyers represent choreographers, advising them with regard to preserving and protecting their copyrights and prosecuting copyright applications. We have also advised regarding merchandising opportunities and separate copyright protection for characters created in the production.

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Representative Matters

- Counsel to production company on television co-production agreements with Chinese production companies for broadcasting and distribution of TV shows in China.
- Counsel to the largest Hispanic television production and distribution company in the structuring their co-production agreements in China for compliance with Chinese regulations of television broadcasting and production in China.
- Counsel to young filmmaker in connection with a movie starring Kevin Bacon in a declaratory relief action concerning the ownership of a copyrighted film. The case concluded with a settlement that resulted in our client owning all rights in the film.
- Counsel to a major Hispanic television station in a common-law copyright infringement action involving music in television programs.
- Counsel to a premier emergency response organization in connection with the negotiation of a production agreement for a reality program focused on that organization.
- Counsel to a high profile celebrity's talent managers in connection with a lawsuit filed against them and their client arising out of a dispute concerning a reality television show.
- Counsel to a production company in defense of injunction proceedings involving rights to a major motion picture.
- Counsel to a production company in two successive actions against another production company alleging underpayment of royalties in connection with the licensing of a film library.
- Counsel to an internet record producer and recording company in connection with copyright protection and exposure of doing business of music downloads over the Internet.
- Counsel to a non-profit radio company providing broadcast to southeast Asia in connection with music licensing issues.
- Counsel to a major entertainment company in connection with trademark portfolio management for its subsidiary; assisted with trademark clearance counseling, prosecution, and enforcement.

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- Counsel to a major broadcasting company in connection with a trademark action to protect its logo, and defended defamation and privacy actions against that company in two states.
- Counsel to the producer of a popular videotape series and related marketing efforts against invasion of privacy and related claims in the Arizona Superior Court.
- Counsel to two major network affiliate stations in Phoenix in a wide range of matters, including intellectual property, defamation and privacy and related matters.
- Counsel to various celebrities in connection with issues and agreements related to use of licensing and talent agents, fashion lines and brand launching, and all related trademark, copyright and licensing issues.

Noteworthy

- Our attorneys also represent webcasters regarding IP rights and regulations in connection with transmitting music over the Internet, including podcasting.