

What Happens In Vegas Stays In Vegas, Except When It Comes to Pyramids

Anyone who's ever been to Las Vegas may have seen the pyramid-shaped Luxor Hotel. While the pyramid may not be an exact replica of the pyramids in Egypt, arguably the 35-million tourists who visit Las Vegas annually may call those monuments to mind when viewing the Luxor Hotel. Now Egypt has decided to "gamble" with Las Vegas, and has announced that it is passing a law requiring the payment of royalties whenever its ancient monuments (including the pyramids and the sphinx) are reproduced. The law will be applied to all countries and its purpose is to pay for the upkeep and preservation of the country's thousands of monuments.

Can the pyramids be copyrighted? Under U.S. law, copyright protection extends from the author's life plus 90 years. Thus, any work done by ancient Native Americans would be in the public domain in the United States. Under the Egyptian law, it is questionable whether Egypt could force the Luxor Hotel to pay royalties. It may be that Egypt has no personal jurisdiction over Luxor Hotel in Egypt, and it would be rare for a U.S. court to enforce Egyptian copyright law. In addition, it is unclear how far the Egyptian copyright law would extend. For example, if a pyramid is featured in an American movie, would the movie studio be required to pay royalties to Egypt? What about The Bangles' song "Walk Like An Egyptian"? Given that the song was number 1 in the Billboard 100 in 1987, it seems unfair to make The Bangles pay royalties now. In addition, the back of the U.S. dollar bill features a pyramid and arguably the U.S. could be required under Egypt's new law to pay royalties (which may make the U.S. dollar even more less valuable than the Euro).

While the new law has not yet been passed and is not yet in effect, allegedly the new law will only completely prohibit exact copies of historic Egyptian monuments, but will allow local or international artists to draw or otherwise reproduce the monuments so long as they are not exact copies. Thus, this caveat may save the U.S. dollar, The Bangles, and the Luxor Hotel from any "pyramid scheme." Of course, there are a whole range of legal and political considerations beyond the scope of this article, but the mere fact that Egypt is even contemplating such a law may open a new and heated debate.

The Seinfelds Stir Up a Cookbook Infringement and Defamation Suit

Missy Chase Lapine, author of the 2007 cookbook [The Sneaky Chef: Simple Strategies for Hiding Healthy Foods in Kids' Favorite Meals](#) recently sued Jerry and Jessica Seinfeld for copyright and trademark infringement as well as defamation. Lapine argues that Jessica Seinfeld misappropriated trademarks and copyrights in her cookbook

entitled Deceptively Delicious: Simple Secrets to Getting Your Kids Eating Good Food which published six months after Lapine's book. Specifically, Lapine alleges that the book "brazenly plagiarized" her trademark, a caricature of a winking chef holding a finger to her lips (as if to say "shhh") and hiding carrots behind her back, and that there are definite similarities between the two books. Lapine alleges that Seinfeld's book was fueled by a massive, celebrity-driven marketing campaign and became a commercial success by climbing to the top of The New York Times best seller list. She further alleges that Seinfeld's success was accompanied by accusations of plagiarism in the media based on the "striking and substantial similarities" between Seinfeld's and Lapine's books.

With respect to Jerry Seinfeld defamation suit, Lapine argues that he "embarked on a national media campaign of malicious defamation" against Lapine. Lapine argues that on the Late Night With David Letterman show, Jerry Seinfeld stated that his wife's book came out at the same time as Lapine's and that his wife never read or saw Lapine's book. Lapine further alleges that Seinfeld stated that Lapine was a "wacko" celebrity stalker and an "angry and hysterical women." Lapine also alleges that Jerry Seinfeld also referred to her as a "nutjob" on E! News.

The Seinfelds have not yet answered the Complaint, but have issued a statement via their attorney. They indicated that the allegations with respect to the copyright and trademark infringement claims are "unfounded and untrue." With respect to the defamation claims, the spokesperson for the Seinfelds stated that Jerry Seinfeld was entitled to his opinions.

Lapine has requested compensatory and punitive damages but has not yet specified a monetary amount. The suit is "stewing" before the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York

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