

Shutts IP Team Successfully Defends Copyright Infringement Case Brought By “Tiger King”

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In their pro bono representation of songwriter client Vince Johnson, members of Shutts & Bowen LLP's Intellectual Property practice group successfully resolved a copyright infringement matter brought on by Joseph Maldonado, also known as Joe Exotic or “Tiger King.”

Mr. Johnson wrote many of the songs that became popular through the Tiger King show. But Maldonado wanted people to believe he had written or performed the songs when in fact Mr. Johnson wrote them and had them performed by another artist. Mr. Maldonado then sued Mr. Johnson in an effort to wrestle Mr. Johnson's rights away from him and try to convince people that Mr. Maldonado had performed the songs when he had not. Mr. Johnson defended himself *pro se* for a year, and then the Northern District of Florida federal court reached out to all members of the bar asking if anyone would be able to represent Mr. Johnson *pro bono*.

The Shutts legal team, made up of [Woodrow “Woody” Pollack](#), [Brian Paul](#) and Katie Chambers, agreed to handle the defense and quickly implemented a strategy to dispose of the copyright claims. Those claims were quickly dismissed with prejudice with a potential for Mr. Johnson to recover attorney's fees and costs for having had to defend against them. This left a breach of contract dispute between the parties concerning ownership rights over certain songs in which Maldonado had previously demanded \$8 million in damages from Mr. Johnson.

Through a court-assisted settlement, the Shutts team successfully resolved the dispute on behalf of Mr. Johnson, retaining exclusive ownership over songs that he had written and had gained notoriety with during Tiger King's popularity at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, the parties agreed that despite Tiger King's original damages demand, Mr. Johnson owed no money whatsoever to Maldonado.

Shutts & Bowen's Intellectual Property team is pleased over the successful defense and termination of this unnecessary lawsuit against their client.



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