



# Zia F. Modabber

Managing Partner, California Offices, and Chair, Entertainment and Media Litigation

Litigation

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Time and again, major recording artists, their key advisors and core industry companies trust Zia Modabber, the managing partner of the Los Angeles offices, to handle legal issues they face in the creation and protection of their assets. With decades of experience in the music and entertainment industry, he has an ability to not only address his clients' pressing legal issues, but also their long-term artistic and business interests. Zia is a sought-after litigator of intellectual property, First Amendment and other entertainment-related issues. And his ability to maintain a career-long perspective, along with his integrity and discretion, cements the trust between Zia and his clients, making him an invaluable counselor and an ethical mediator, even outside of actual litigation.

## Taming a high-stress environment

In a high-stress, high-reward industry, some of the biggest musical artists have relied on his experience, judgment and skill: Michael Jackson (and now his estate), Trent Reznor, Stevie Wonder, Celine Dion, Usher, Chris Brown, Slash and Jeff Lynne/Electric Light Orchestra among them. Zia also represents industry powerhouses Live Nation, The Recording Academy and MusiCares, as well as personal managers, agents, promoters, business managers and record and publishing companies. His clients praise his judicious approach, stating: "I have complete confidence with Zia. He is incredibly smart, transcends representing me and brings humanity to the process..." (*Chambers USA* 2024) "Zia Modabber is a wise and thoughtful attorney. I found the level of his care and counsel very helpful," and "Zia is always my first call for complex copyright litigation and general sophisticated problem solving" (*Chambers USA* 2022).

Zia's industry relationships and reputation are tools that he brings to bear for his clients' advantage. He has deep experience in all forms of dispute resolution, from high-profile jury and bench trials and California Supreme Court appeals to private mediations and everything in between. Additionally, Zia is available to serve as a mediator either before or during

## Practices

- Litigation
- Intellectual Property
- Employment Litigation and Counseling
- Trademarks and Trademark Litigation
- Commercial Litigation
- Artificial Intelligence
- Fiduciary and Private Client Litigation

## Industries

- Entertainment and Media
- Private Client Services

## Education

- JD, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles
- BA, University of California, Berkeley
- Strauss Institute for Dispute Resolution – Pepperdine Caruso School of Law – "Mediating the Litigated Case"

## Bar Admissions

- California

## Court Admissions

- US District Court, Central District of California
- US Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit
- US District Court, Northern District of California
- US District Court, Eastern District of California

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litigation. His matters often include cutting-edge issues, as in his representation of the former spouse of an R&B legend in a case involving the tension between state community property laws and the federal Copyright Act and another matter involving the tension between First Amendment and California's consumer protection statutes. And for Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails), Zia won a multimillion-dollar jury verdict and the return from a former personal manager of all of Nine Inch Nails' trademarks.

## Representative Experience

- General counsel to Trent Reznor, the Nine Inch Nails frontman turned Oscar-winning film score composer, in all motion picture scoring work, composer contracts and intellectual property matters.
- Co-lead trial counsel and lead appellate counsel for the Estate of Michael Jackson in a royalty dispute with record producer Quincy Jones.
- Counsel to Lance Armstrong in two federal class action lawsuits, one over the sale of his two biographies, and the other over his endorsement of FRS nutritional and performance products.
- Multiple internal investigations for the Recording Academy and MusiCares.
- Co-lead trial counsel for the Estate of Michael Jackson in a dispute with Jackson's former manager who claimed millions of dollars in unpaid commissions.
- Counsel for former spouse of an R&B legend in a critically emerging provision of the 1976 Copyright Act that permits artists to recover copyrights they had previously assigned to third-party publishers.
- Counsel for Michael Jackson's estate in class action lawsuit alleging fraud and violation of unfair competition and consumer protections laws relating to certain recorded music.
- Counsel for television production company in an idea submission case over the development of a television program.

## Recognitions

Recognized or listed in the following:

- *Best Lawyers in America*
  - Entertainment Law - Music, 2010–2025
- *Billboard*

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***"Zia is the definition of a team player. He is in the weeds but also maintains a valuable bird's-eye view on all matters." "Zia is able to advise on the law and also knows how to land advice and guidance in a way that is cognizant of our organization."***

***Chambers USA 2023  
(California, Media & Entertainment: Litigation) survey response***

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- Top Music Lawyers, 2019–2024
- *Chambers USA*
  - Media and Entertainment, 2022–2024
- *Daily Journal*
  - Top 100 Lawyers in California, 2017
- *Lawdragon*
  - 500 finalist, 2007
- *Super Lawyers*
  - Southern California, 2005–2021
- *The American Lawyer*
  - West Trailblazer, 2021
- *The International Who's Who of Sports & Entertainment Lawyers*
  - 2013
- *The Legal 500 United States*
  - Recommended Attorney, 2017–2024
- *Variety*
  - Legal Impact Report, 2020, 2022
- Lexology Index
  - 2014

## News

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- Zia Modabber Named Once Again to *Billboard Magazine's* Top Music Lawyers List (April 28, 2025)
- Katten Pulls for Special Olympics Southern California in Biggest Showing Yet (August 29, 2024)
- Katten Attorneys Recognized as *Best Lawyers®* and *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch®* Award Recipients (August 15, 2024)
- Katten Highly Ranked in Legal 500 United States 2024 (June 12, 2024)
- Katten Attorneys Named to 2024 Southern California Super Lawyers Rising Stars List (June 11, 2024)
- Katten Receives High Marks in *Chambers USA* Guide 2024 (June 6, 2024)

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- Billboard Names Zia Modabber to 2024 Top Music Lawyers List (April 2, 2024)
- Katten Attorneys Distinguished by *Best Lawyers®* (August 17, 2023)
- Katten Lauded in The Legal 500 United States 2023 (June 9, 2023)
- Katten Boosts Rankings in *Chambers USA Guide 2023* (June 1, 2023)
- Zia Modabber Listed Among *Billboard Magazine's* Top Music Lawyers of 2023 (April 4, 2023)
- Zia Modabber Speaks With *Law360* on Rick Astley's Legal Fight Over Voice Impersonation (February 15, 2023)
- Katten Attorneys Recognized by *Best Lawyers®* (August 18, 2022)
- Katten Awarded Top Ranking in Structured Finance: Securitization in The Legal 500 United States 2022 (June 8, 2022)
- Katten Ranked Leading Law Firm by *Chambers USA* 2022 (June 1, 2022)
- *Variety's* 2022 Legal Impact Report Recognizes Five Katten Entertainment Partners (April 21, 2022)
- *Billboard Magazine* Recognizes Zia Modabber Among 2022 Top Music Lawyers (March 29, 2022)
- Katten Attorneys Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America®* (August 19, 2021)
- Zia Modabber Named a 2021 Trailblazer in Entertainment and Media by *The American Lawyer* (July 1, 2021)
- Katten Receives High Marks in Derivatives, M&A and Securitization in The Legal 500 United States 2021 Guide (June 10, 2021)
- Zia Modabber Named a 2021 Top Music Lawyer by *Billboard Magazine* (April 13, 2021)
- Katten Attorneys Selected to 2021 Southern California Super Lawyers List (January 21, 2021)
- Katten Attorneys Distinguished as Top Legal Talent in the 2021 *Best Lawyers in America* and *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch* Lists (August 20, 2020)
- *Billboard Magazine* Names Zia Modabber Among Top Attorneys in Music Industry (August 4, 2020)
- Five Entertainment Attorneys Named to *Variety Magazine's* 2020 Legal Impact Report (July 15, 2020)

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- Katten Named Top-Tier Firm in Structured Finance and Securitization by The Legal 500 United States 2020 Guide (June 16, 2020)
- Katten's Zia Modabber Marks Victory When Quincy Jones' Jury Award Is Slashed in Michael Jackson Estate Appeal (May 7, 2020)
- Katten Attorneys Named to 2020 Southern California Super Lawyers List (January 16, 2020)
- Zia Modabber Named One of Billboard's 2019 Top Music Lawyers (September 5, 2019)
- Katten Praised in The Legal 500 United States 2019 Guide (June 11, 2019)
- Super Lawyers List Recognized 13 Katten Attorneys in Southern California (January 30, 2019)
- Katten Distinguished by *The Legal 500 United States* (June 14, 2018)
- Katten Attorneys in Southern California Honored on Super Lawyers List (February 16, 2018)
- The Ninth Circuit Affirms Katten's Summary Judgment for Nicholas Clainos in Iconic Rock Memorabilia and Copyright Case (December 14, 2017)
- Zia Modabber Named to *Daily Journal's* Top 100 Lawyers in California List (September 21, 2017)
- Katten California Attorneys and Staff Pull for Special Olympics (August 25, 2017)
- Katten Distinguished by *The Legal 500 United States 2017* (May 31, 2017)
- Katten Attorneys Recognized in 2017 Southern California *Super Lawyers* List (March 9, 2017)
- 79 Katten Attorneys Selected for *Best Lawyers in America*® 2017 (August 15, 2016)
- Zia Modabber Profiled in the *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (March 14, 2016)
- Nineteen Katten Attorneys Recognized in 2016 Southern California *Super Lawyers* List (January 20, 2016)
- Zia Modabber Comments on California Law Regarding Celebrity Likeness on NPR (December 9, 2015)
- Zia Modabber Comments on His Successful Representation of Nick Clainos, Executor of Bill Graham Estate (October 20, 2015)

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- 91 Katten Attorneys Recognized in *Best Lawyers in America*® 2016 (August 17, 2015)
- Twenty-One Katten Attorneys Recognized as Top Attorneys in Southern California (January 21, 2015)
- 85 Katten Attorneys Named to *Best Lawyers in America*® 2015 (August 18, 2014)
- Zia Modabber, Head of the Los Angeles Litigation and Dispute Resolution Practice, Quoted in *The Hollywood Reporter* on Recaptured Copyrights (May 7, 2014)
- Katten Obtains Dismissal for Lance Armstrong in False Advertising Suit (March 27, 2014)
- Twenty-One Katten Attorneys Recognized on Southern California *Super Lawyers* List (February 10, 2014)
- Katten Obtains Favorable Ruling for Lance Armstrong in Book Lawsuit (September 16, 2013)
- 83 Katten Attorneys Lauded in *Best Lawyers in America*® 2014 (August 15, 2013)
- Partner Zia Modabber Comments on Armstrong Autobiography Suit in *National Law Journal* (August 12, 2013)
- Katten's Representation of Lance Armstrong in Class Action Suit Noted in Law360 (July 10, 2013)
- Twenty-Two Katten Attorneys Included on 2013 Southern California *Super Lawyers* List (January 21, 2013)
- Michael Jackson estate settles copyright lawsuit with memorabilia website dealer, *NY Daily News* (September 4, 2012)
- 80 Katten Attorneys Named to *Best Lawyers in America*® 2013 Guide (August 24, 2012)
- Katten Hosts Charity Bike Ride Benefitting LiveStrong, *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (November 4, 2011)
- Cycling Keeps Him Sane, *Los Angeles Business Journal* (November 4, 2011)
- 75 Katten Attorneys Named to *Best Lawyers in America*® 2012 Guide (September 12, 2011)
- 70 Katten Attorneys Named to *Best Lawyers in America*® 2011 (August 9, 2010)

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- Katten Wins Dismissal of Antitrust Suit on Behalf of Speedo (May 2010)
- 66 Katten Attorneys Named to 2010 List of *Best Lawyers in America*® (August 5, 2009)
- 13 Katten Partners Named Finalists for Lawdragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America (September 27, 2007)

## Presentations and Events

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- 2019 Institute on Entertainment Law and Business (October 26, 2019) | *Moderator* | *The Musical Artist and the Representation Team*