

Zia F. Modabber

Managing Partner (Los Angeles) and Chair, Entertainment and Media Litigation

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Practices

FOCUS: Litigation

Intellectual Property Litigation

Employment Litigation and Counseling

Fiduciary and Private Client Litigation

Intellectual Property

Trademarks and Trademark Litigation

Commercial Litigation

Industries

Entertainment and Media Litigation

Entertainment and Media

Private Client Services

Education

JD, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles

BA, University of California, Berkeley

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

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 that make him an invaluable counselor 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 “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. 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

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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*

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, Tohme Tohme, who claims 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.
- Represented several defendants 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, 2010–2024