

Sports & Entertainment Beat

Sports & Entertainment Spotlight: Kobe Bryant's Estate and Nike Forge New Partnership to Carry on Legacy; Dua Lipa Faces Yet Another Copyright Infringement Lawsuit Over Her Mega-Hit Song "Levitating"

By Joshua Bloomgarden on 3.31.22 | Posted in Sports & Entertainment Spotlight

Welcome back to the "Spotlight." I don't know whether any of you have heard, but something pretty shocking took place this past Sunday night at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. I hope you're sitting down while you read this (those of you with standing desks may want to bring it down to its lowest level—your chiropractor will forgive you). But apparently there was an awards ceremony at which...get this: gold statuette trophies were given to some of the most talented and accomplished people in the motion picture industry for their work from the past year! Who knew?! Remarkable that all this could have happened around Will Smith's violent demonstration of how paper beats (Chris) Rock. As for the awards themselves, the deaf family drama, CODA notably won the Best Picture category representing a watershed moment that many saw coming for years—that a streaming service could take home Hollywood's most coveted prize, while Ariana DeBose became the first openly queer woman of color to win an Academy Award for her role in the film adaptation of *West Side Story*. Still, those firsts seemed overshadowed by the ugly incident of Smith storming on stage and assaulting Rock with a slap across the face for making a joke (albeit one in poor taste) about Smith's wife. In turn, we subsequently learned, Smith was asked to leave, he refused and then to punish him, he was given the Best Actor award (the horror!) and subjected to a standing ovation in the process (talk about best actors...). The weeks and months ahead are sure to have further dissection of the incident and reactionary measures at future award shows (the Grammys are just around the corner) and regrettably, at comedy clubs around the country (I'm even wearing a helmet as I write this). Whatever the result, I can only hope that what takes place around the stage does not detract from what is presented on the stage. For now, my best supporting readers in an entertainment and sports law blog, this week's *Spotlight* goes to...you.

- Mamba forever: months after letting Kobe Bryant's endorsement deal with Nike expire, his estate and Nike have forged a new partnership to help carry on Bryant's legacy.

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- Dua Lipa is hit with yet another copyright infringement lawsuit over her mega-hit song, "Levitating." If it were me from all this litigating, my heart would be palpitating.
 - Musician and creatives' social networking app, Vampr reaches new heights, adding users and taking on money hungry (err...blood thirsty?) investors. A surprising development for an app that only works in the dark.
 - Madonna vogues into the metaverse, becoming the latest celebrity to acquire a Bored Ape NFT, while fellow musical acts Diplo and Nas sell NFTs of their own through tokenized royalty platform, Royal. Clearly, we are liv-ing in an ethereal world...
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Endorsement Deals, Sponsorships & Investments

Group 1001 Becomes Majority Stakeholder in Women's Sports-Focused Enterprise Parity

March 29, 2022 via Yahoo Finance

In a bold step to create lasting and meaningful change in women's sports, Group 1001 will become a majority stakeholder in Parity, a startup created for both elite women athletes and their fans to combat gender pay inequities in professional sports.

Lucky Penny Candles Sponsors Millennial Millionaire LinkedIn Influencer - Shay Rowbottom

March 29, 2022 via GlobeNewswire

Lucky Penny Candles is proud to celebrate its sponsorship of Shay Rowbottom's recent 2's Day event in Orlando.

Capital One becomes official sponsor of Major League Baseball

March 29, 2022 via Biz Journal

McLean's Capital One Financial Corp. is Major League Baseball's new official banking and credit card partner.

Washington State Unveils Local NIL Marketplace Powered by Icon Source

March 29, 2022 via Kentucky New Era

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Washington State University athletics announced the launch of Icon Suite, an innovative name, image, and likeness tool from Icon Source, the leading digital marketplace connecting brands and athletes for endorsements and partnerships, for all Cougar student-athletes and community members.

Women's college basketball players taking advantage of NIL opportunities

March 28, 2022 via Sports Business Journal

Women's college basketball seems "poised to rise as never before," and players are "taking the greatest advantage of their fast-growing social media popularity and the new college sports rules on endorsements," according to Kurt Streeter of the N.Y. Times.

For Members Only: New collective membership models will provide more guaranteed NIL money to college athletes

March 28, 2022 via Sports Business Journal

In this rapidly developing and changing industry, the next iteration of business for these collectives already is taking shape — memberships that offer fans special insider access.

States grapple with allowing high school athlete endorsements

March 27, 2022 via The Columbian

In a handful of states, high school athletes have started making endorsement deals with pizza parlors, apparel companies and smartphone apps — cashing in on their status as star players.

Nike, Vanessa Bryant Enter Partnership to Continue Kobe 'Legacy'

March 24, 2022 via Sportico - Business (subscription may be required)

Nike and Vanessa Bryant, the wife of the late NBA icon Kobe Bryant, have entered into a partnership.

Whole New Ballgame as Star of NCAA Cinderella Cashes In

March 23, 2022 via Bloomberg - News (subscription may be required)

One of the stars of the Saint Peter's Peacocks, a 15-seed in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, is capitalizing on his Cinderella moment with a pair of new endorsement deals.

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Adidas To Create NIL Network

March 23, 2022 via SGB Online - Outdoor Business News Headlines

Adidas announced that it would create a name, image and likeness (NIL) network for up to 50,000 college athletes to become paid endorsers for the brand.

Adidas' plan to take over college sports: Sign endorsement deals with up to 50,000 student athletes

March 23, 2022 via CNN

New York (CNN Business) Following a landmark Supreme Court decision last year that opened the door for college athletes to make money, sponsors have scrambled to nab the highest-profile NCAA players.

[back to top](#)

Sports

Lakers Score With Judge in COVID-19 Insurance Damages Lawsuit

March 30, 2022 via Sportico - Law (subscription may be required)

This week saw the Los Angeles Lakers tumble to 11th place in the Western Conference, putting themselves at real risk of missing the playoffs. Amid those struggles on the court, however, the team has fared better in court.

Fan Analytics Could Prove Critical for Post-COVID Attendance Growth

March 29, 2022 via Sportico - Business (subscription may be required)

A recent KAGR (Kraft Analytics Group) study determined that while the average cost for a family of four to attend a Major League Baseball game rose 8.2% from 2019 to 2021 (to \$253.64), attendance at a league level declined 16% over the time frame.

Fanatics-WWE Deal Covers E-commerce, Licensed Goods, Cards and NFTs

March 28, 2022 via Sportico - Business (subscription may be required)

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Fanatics has signed a wide-ranging partnership with WWE, the first of what it hopes will be a number of deals that reflect the rapid expansion of the company.

[back to top](#)

Music Biz

Sex Pistols star John Lydon rages against 'substandard' album The Original Recordings and 'does not support' its release

March 30, 2022 via Metro

Sex Pistols legend Johnny Rotten has raged against a new compilation album which he says was released without his support.

Dua Lipa's Copyright Problem

March 29, 2022 via Slate

Did the "Levitating" singer rip off other artists? Or should courts stop rewarding musicians for being so litigious?

'LinkedIn for musicians' Vampr passes \$700k in latest funding round and opens new \$2m private round as it's named #2 in Fast Company's 'Most Innovative Music Companies' 2022

March 28, 2022 via Yahoo Finance - Top Stories

Latest round takes Vampr's total funding to over \$3.3 million, in line with explosive user growth; hosting 1.4 million users worldwide and brokering over 7 million professional relationships.

Musicians, fans mourn loss of Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins

March 26, 2022 via The Star

Celebrities and stars from all around the globe are offering their condolences on social media after Hawkins' death in Colombia. Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins, who was with the rock band for more than two decades, died at age 50 while touring in South America.

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SoundExchange Hits \$9 Billion Milestone, Completes 150th Royalty Distribution

March 25, 2022 via Yahoo Finance - Top Stories

SoundExchange, the premier music-tech organization powering the future of music, reports it has distributed more than \$9 billion in digital royalties directly to music creators since 2003.

Music Industry Takes Its Radio Royalty Case To The FCC.

March 25, 2022 via Inside Radio - News

The music industry is expanding its campaign to enact a performance royalty for broadcast radio to include the FCC.

March Madness TV Ratings Return to Pre-pandemic Levels

March 24, 2022 via Sportico - Business (subscription may be required)

The brass and blare of March Madness has returned after a two-year layoff, and the rekindled enthusiasm of the students and alumni who have crammed the arenas over the course of the first 52 games seems to have carried over to the fans watching from home.

Spotify Says It Paid \$7 Billion In Royalties In 2021 Amid Claims Of Low Pay From Artists

March 24, 2022 via Forbes - Business (subscription may be required)

Topline Spotify said it paid out \$7 billion in royalties last year to rights holders, in a transparency report released Thursday, following critiques from within the music industry that the streaming service pays artists minuscule amounts.

Spotify's 2021 royalty report paints a rose-tinted vision of the music streaming industry

March 24, 2022 via Verge, The

Spotify is continuing its effort to offer some transparency to musicians who are unhappy with its streaming rates. The company updated its "Loud & Clear" website, providing a breakdown of some 2021 metrics for how artists, publishers, and rights holders actually make money off Spotify streams.

[*back to top*](#)

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Film & TV

How Will Smith rebooted \$470 million empire with family sex secrets and Netflix's 'big risk'

March 30, 2022 via The Mercury (Australia)

With Will Smith's Hollywood future under a cloud following the infamous Oscars slap, he may need to pull out another trick to bounce back.

The GIST Makes A Move Into Sports Business Coverage

March 28, 2022 via Forbes - Business (subscription may be required)

These are heady times for The GIST, a women-owned, women-operated sports media startup. Investment and a newsletter list that now tops 400,000 subscribers means a series of newsletters are ahead, along with podcasts and other expansion efforts.

CBS Poised to Cash In on the Wild, Wild AFC West

March 23, 2022 via Sportico - Business (subscription may be required)

Russell Wilson's move from Seattle to Denver is just one of a dozen seismic personnel shifts that have rocked the NFL in recent weeks, and while Broncos fans are justifiably psyched about their new QB, the big winner of this year's bonkers free agency bazaar may well be CBS.

[back to top](#)

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs)

Civic Partners With Snowcrash for NFTs by Sony Music Entertainment and Universal Music Group

March 29, 2022 via Yahoo Finance - Top Stories

Civic's identity verification technology will be leveraged by Snowcrash to prevent bots from participating in the NFT drops of illustrious musicians and artists.

MLS Deal Part of Sorare's American NFT Expansion Plans

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March 29, 2022 via Sportico - Business (subscription may be required)

As NFT fantasy and collectibles startup Sorare plots its American expansion, the platform has landed its first U.S. league partner, Major League Soccer.

Madonna becomes the latest celeb to flaunt a new Bored Ape

March 24, 2022 via The Block

Popstar Madonna has acquired a Bored Ape non-fungible token (NFT) valued at more than half a million dollars.

Diplo Joins Nas With NFT Drop on Tokenized Royalties Platform Royal

March 24, 2022 via Yahoo Finance - Top Stories

David M. Benett Crypto music startup Royal has nabbed Diplo as its latest star, announcing the DJ and electronic musician will be releasing one of his new songs on the tokenized royalties platform.

Ian Charms, Iconic Jewelry Brand, Becomes the First Designer to Leverage Genies' Creator Tools for Their Avatar Fashion NFT Collection

March 23, 2022 via Markets Insider - Top Stories

Genies, culture's leading avatar technology company, today announced that female-owned, handmade jewelry company based in LA, Ian Charms, will be the first designer to release their own avatar fashion NFT collection.