

Kirkland Solves Nash Bridges Case; L.A. Jury Returns \$23 Million Verdict for Don Johnson in Cop Show Ownership Dispute

By Victor Li

July 08, 2010

[Post a Comment](#)

Nine years after Don Johnson's super-cop character, *Nash Bridges*, was given an early retirement by CBS, he finally got his severance package, courtesy of a Los Angeles superior court jury. On Wednesday, after a two-week trial and one day of deliberation, jurors awarded Johnson \$23.2 million in his copyright and lost profits suit against Rysher Entertainment, the show's producer.

No stranger to the world of intellectual property (who else could have pulled off the quintessential 1980s pastel-and-no-socks style of Sonny Crockett in *Miami Vice*?), Johnson alleged that he was the co-creator of *Nash Bridges*, which (believe it or not) ran from 1996 to 2001 and (believe it or not) is still popular overseas. In a statement released by his lawyers at Kirkland & Ellis, Johnson said the jury verdict was sweet. "I have waited more than 10 years for Rysher to recognize me as the co-owner of the *Nash Bridges* series," the statement says. "It was my idea, and I owned the rights in the first place. From the beginning, I have asked only that Rysher honor our contract, and I am so pleased that the jury agreed with me."

According to Johnson, the show, which co-starred the renowned thesbian Cheech Marin, has earned more than \$325 million in revenue, including \$150 million in syndication, and could bring in another \$50 million. At trial, Rysher maintained that the show actually lost money, citing the high cost of shooting in San Francisco.

We talked on Thursday with Johnson's lawyer, Mark Holscher of Kirkland. "I'm gratified for Don because *Nash Bridges* was his idea and his project," said Holscher, who pointed out that the jury awarded Johnson's production company, Don Johnson Productions, 50 percent of future revenue from the show. "Apart from the money, he's being recognized as owning the show. He was the one that had the guarantee from CBS, he was the one that picked Rysher. This is vindication for Don."

For Holscher, the trial still isn't quite over. He and Rysher's lawyers from Munger, Tolles & Olson; O'Melveny & Myers; and Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld are due back in court to determine whether Rysher's co-defendants, Qualia Capital and 2929 Entertainment, are liable as Rysher's "alter egos." Holscher maintains that 2929, which is co-owned by Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban and his partner, Todd Wagner, controlled Rysher from 2001 until 2006, before selling their interest to Qualia, which is part of Canyon Partners, a large private equity fund. According to Holscher, the "alter ego" proceedings will not affect the jury verdict.

Rysher's lawyers didn't return our calls, but Bart Williams of Munger Tolles put out a statement on the jury verdict. "Rysher is extremely disappointed...and will aggressively pursue all legal recourse," the statement says. "While we respect the jury's right to their judgment, there are several matters of law that will form the basis of Rysher's appeal. We are ready to undergo the appeals process and are confident that in the end, today's outcome will be reversed."

Advertisement

Newly Updated Book!

Due Diligence in Business Transactions

by Gary M. Lawrence

Save 25%

Enter promo code 2120782 at checkout

lawjobs.com

TOP JOBS
Staff Attorney
Stradley Ronon
District of Columbia

****HIGH PROFILE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & LICENSING PARTNER WITH \$500,000 IN PORTABLE BUSINESS WANTED****
Hiretrends, Inc.
New York, New York

[MORE JOBS >>](#)
[POST A JOB >>](#)

Advertisement