

**FILED**

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U.S. COURT OF APPEALS

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

GIBSON BRANDS, INC., a Delaware corporation,

Plaintiff - Appellant,

v.

VIACOM INTERNATIONAL, INC., a Delaware corporation and JOHN HORNBY SKEWES & CO. LTD., a United Kingdom corporation,

Defendants - Appellees.

No. 13-57050

D.C. No. 2:12-cv-10870-DDP-AJW

MEMORANDUM\*

Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the Central District of California  
Dean D. Pregerson, District Judge, Presiding

Argued and Submitted February 4, 2016  
Pasadena, California

Before: REINHARDT, PAEZ, and M. SMITH, Circuit Judges.

Plaintiff Gibson Brands, Inc. (Gibson) appeals the district court's dismissal of its complaint against John Hornby Skewes & Co., Ltd. (JHS) and Viacom

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\* This disposition is not appropriate for publication and is not precedent except as provided by 9th Cir. R. 36-3.

International Inc. (Viacom) (collectively, Defendants). Gibson is the holder of registered trademarks in the Flying V body-shape design, the Flying V peg-head design, and the Flying V word mark. Gibson alleges that Defendants infringed its marks through JHS's production and distribution of a ukelele made with a V-shaped body and bearing Viacom's Spongebob Squarepants and Nickelodeon trademarks. The district court dismissed the action against Viacom due to Gibson's failure to state a claim for secondary infringement. In a subsequent order, the district court dismissed the complaint against JHS for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. We have jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1291. We affirm in part, reverse in part, and remand for further proceedings.

1. The district court properly granted Viacom's Rule 12(b)(6) motion dismissing Gibson's claims for contributory infringement and for vicarious liability for trademark infringement. We "review de novo a dismissal for failure to state a claim" under Rule 12(b)(6). *Zixiang Li v. Kerry*, 710 F.3d 995, 998 (9th Cir. 2013). First, Gibson failed to state a claim for contributory infringement. When a contributory infringement claim concerns the defendant's supply of something other than a product—here, Viacom's supply of a license to use its trademarks—a court will consider the "extent of control exercised by the defendant over the third party's means of infringement." *Lockheed Martin Corp. v. Network Solutions*, 194

F.3d 980, 984 (9th Cir. 1999). In this case, Gibson did not allege that Viacom exercised the requisite level of control over JHS's production and sale of the ukelele in order to trigger liability for contributory infringement. Although the appearance of Viacom's trademarks on the ukelele was a prominent feature of the product, those trademarks do not have a sufficient nexus to the allegedly infringing conduct. Viacom could not be said to have exercised "direct control and monitoring" over JHS's means of infringement. *Id.*

Moreover, Gibson failed to advance claims for vicarious liability for trademark infringement. Gibson emphasized the presence of a licensing agreement between JHS and Viacom, but the agreement does not reveal a relationship of "control over the actual infringing activity," which would constitute evidence of vicarious liability. *Perfect 10, Inc. v. Visa Int'l Serv. Ass'n*, 494 F.3d 788, 806 (9th Cir. 2007). In particular, Viacom does not directly control the body shape or name of the ukelele, and the degree of control necessary for a trademark licensing agreement does not, by itself, provide the degree of control necessary to impose vicarious liability with respect to any aspect of the allegedly infringing product.

**2.** The district court dismissed the complaint against JHS for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction under Rule 12(b)(1), holding that Gibson had not shown that the ukelele was "use[d] in commerce" within the meaning of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1114(1),

1125(a), and 1127. We review de novo a dismissal for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. *Alaska v. Babbitt*, 38 F.3d 1068, 1072 (9th Cir. 1994). In this case, the district court considered the Lanham Act’s “use in commerce” requirement as a jurisdictional prerequisite. Subsequent to the district court’s order, we decided *La Quinta Worldwide LLC v. Q.R.T.M., S.A. de C.V.*, 762 F.3d 867, 873 (9th Cir. 2014), which held that the Lanham Act’s “use in commerce” requirement was properly considered an element of a cause of action, and not a jurisdictional bar, in light of *Arbaugh v. Y&H Corp.*, 546 U.S. 500, 515 (2006). *Id.* at 874. *La Quinta*’s reasoning is controlling in this case. We therefore reverse the district court’s order dismissing the complaint under Rule 12(b)(1), and we remand for the district court to determine whether Gibson’s complaint has stated a claim against JHS under Rule 12(b)(6).

**AFFIRMED IN PART, REVERSED IN PART, AND REMANDED.**

Each party shall bear its own costs on appeal.

## United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

Office of the Clerk  
95 Seventh Street  
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### Information Regarding Judgment and Post-Judgment Proceedings

#### Judgment

- This Court has filed and entered the attached judgment in your case. Fed. R. App. P. 36. Please note the filed date on the attached decision because all of the dates described below run from that date, not from the date you receive this notice.

#### Mandate (Fed. R. App. P. 41; 9th Cir. R. 41-1 & -2)

- The mandate will issue 7 days after the expiration of the time for filing a petition for rehearing or 7 days from the denial of a petition for rehearing, unless the Court directs otherwise. To file a motion to stay the mandate, file it electronically via the appellate ECF system or, if you are a pro se litigant or an attorney with an exemption from using appellate ECF, file one original motion on paper.

#### Petition for Panel Rehearing (Fed. R. App. P. 40; 9th Cir. R. 40-1)

#### Petition for Rehearing En Banc (Fed. R. App. P. 35; 9th Cir. R. 35-1 to -3)

#### (1) A. Purpose (Panel Rehearing):

- A party should seek panel rehearing only if one or more of the following grounds exist:
  - ▶ A material point of fact or law was overlooked in the decision;
  - ▶ A change in the law occurred after the case was submitted which appears to have been overlooked by the panel; or
  - ▶ An apparent conflict with another decision of the Court was not addressed in the opinion.
- Do not file a petition for panel rehearing merely to reargue the case.

#### B. Purpose (Rehearing En Banc)

- A party should seek en banc rehearing only if one or more of the following grounds exist:

- ▶ Consideration by the full Court is necessary to secure or maintain uniformity of the Court's decisions; or
- ▶ The proceeding involves a question of exceptional importance; or
- ▶ The opinion directly conflicts with an existing opinion by another court of appeals or the Supreme Court and substantially affects a rule of national application in which there is an overriding need for national uniformity.

**(2) Deadlines for Filing:**

- A petition for rehearing may be filed within 14 days after entry of judgment. Fed. R. App. P. 40(a)(1).
- If the United States or an agency or officer thereof is a party in a civil case, the time for filing a petition for rehearing is 45 days after entry of judgment. Fed. R. App. P. 40(a)(1).
- If the mandate has issued, the petition for rehearing should be accompanied by a motion to recall the mandate.
- *See* Advisory Note to 9th Cir. R. 40-1 (petitions must be received on the due date).
- An order to publish a previously unpublished memorandum disposition extends the time to file a petition for rehearing to 14 days after the date of the order of publication or, in all civil cases in which the United States or an agency or officer thereof is a party, 45 days after the date of the order of publication. 9th Cir. R. 40-2.

**(3) Statement of Counsel**

- A petition should contain an introduction stating that, in counsel's judgment, one or more of the situations described in the "purpose" section above exist. The points to be raised must be stated clearly.

**(4) Form & Number of Copies (9th Cir. R. 40-1; Fed. R. App. P. 32(c)(2))**

- The petition shall not exceed 15 pages unless it complies with the alternative length limitations of 4,200 words or 390 lines of text.
- The petition must be accompanied by a copy of the panel's decision being challenged.
- An answer, when ordered by the Court, shall comply with the same length limitations as the petition.
- If a pro se litigant elects to file a form brief pursuant to Circuit Rule 28-1, a petition for panel rehearing or for rehearing en banc need not comply with Fed. R. App. P. 32.

- The petition or answer must be accompanied by a Certificate of Compliance found at Form 11, available on our website at [www.ca9.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov) under *Forms*.
- You may file a petition electronically via the appellate ECF system. No paper copies are required unless the Court orders otherwise. If you are a pro se litigant or an attorney exempted from using the appellate ECF system, file one original petition on paper. No additional paper copies are required unless the Court orders otherwise.

### **Bill of Costs (Fed. R. App. P. 39, 9th Cir. R. 39-1)**

- The Bill of Costs must be filed within 14 days after entry of judgment.
- See Form 10 for additional information, available on our website at [www.ca9.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov) under *Forms*.

### **Attorneys Fees**

- Ninth Circuit Rule 39-1 describes the content and due dates for attorneys fees applications.
- All relevant forms are available on our website at [www.ca9.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov) under *Forms* or by telephoning (415) 355-7806.

### **Petition for a Writ of Certiorari**

- Please refer to the Rules of the United States Supreme Court at [www.supremecourt.gov](http://www.supremecourt.gov)

### **Counsel Listing in Published Opinions**

- Please check counsel listing on the attached decision.
- If there are any errors in a published opinion, please send a letter **in writing within 10 days** to:
  - ▶ Thomson Reuters; 610 Opperman Drive; PO Box 64526; St. Paul, MN 55164-0526 (Attn: Jean Green, Senior Publications Coordinator);
  - ▶ and electronically file a copy of the letter via the appellate ECF system by using “File Correspondence to Court,” or if you are an attorney exempted from using the appellate ECF system, mail the Court one copy of the letter.

### United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

### BILL OF COSTS

This form is available as a fillable version at:

<http://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/uploads/forms/Form%2010%20-%20Bill%20of%20Costs.pdf>.

**Note:** If you wish to file a bill of costs, it MUST be submitted on this form and filed, with the clerk, with proof of service, within 14 days of the date of entry of judgment, and in accordance with 9th Circuit Rule 39-1. A late bill of costs must be accompanied by a motion showing good cause. Please refer to FRAP 39, 28 U.S.C. § 1920, and 9th Circuit Rule 39-1 when preparing your bill of costs.

v.  9th Cir. No.

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Attorney for:

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