

Zooey Deschanel Lawsuit By Ex-Managers “Absurd” & “Retaliatory”, Says Marty Singer – Update



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by **Dominic Patten**
December 17, 2015 7:45am

UPDATE, 7:45 AM: “The lawsuit filed by [Seven Summits](#) is completely absurd and meritless and was filed in retaliation by a disgruntled ex-manager,” said [Zooey Deschanel’s](#) lawyer [Marty Singer](#) of the complaint filed yesterday in L.A. Superior Court. The *New Girl* star’s former reps sued Monday for unpaid commissions from her [Fox](#) comedy as well as compensation from the multimillion-dollar sale of her Hello Giggles website this fall.

Their four-claim complaint also included allegations by Deschanel that the signature on her management agreement with Seven Summits wasn’t hers — even though the actress had been paying commissions as a client from 1996-2013 and actually up until quite recently

However, it seems Deschanel’s official battle with her ex-managers has been going on a bit longer than yesterday’s lawsuit – at least according to Deschanel’s Lavelly & Singer attorney. “Significantly, the retaliatory lawsuit was filed approximately a month after Zooey Deschanel filed a petition before the California Labor Commissioner against Seven Summits and its principal Sarah Jackson alleging that they acted as unlicensed talent agents,” the firm says. “Independent of Ms. Deschanel’s significant affirmative claims against Seven Summits, Seven Summits has no right to seek commissions from Zooey Deschanel’s completely unrelated sale of her investment in a purely entrepreneurial activity, *Hello Giggles*, which does not involve Zooey Deschanel’s activities or career as an artist in the entertainment industry.

seven summits

Pictures and Management, L.L.C.



“I fully expect that the claims will be adjudicated before the California Labor Commissioner, and my client will prevail in this matter,” the combative Singer added.

“Every actor or actress who hires Marty Singer when they get a letter from a manager requesting to be paid commissions rightfully owed makes a ridiculous claim of illegal procurement to try and gain false leverage,” says Seven Summits’ lawyer Bryan Freedman in response. “That this is an actress who had an agent throughout her career at CAA or UTA and she never thought about filing a labor board claim for procurement without the Bill Cosby/Marty Singer strategy of accusing the victim. Don’t thumb your nose at those who have helped you become famous, or it may get cut off. I don’t understand why these people just forget the people that made their careers. That strategy will unfortunately result in a huge legal bill to let the public know that she stiffes her representatives. Not a smart legal or publicity strategy.”

Singer was Bill Cosby’s lawyer for many years before the two parted ways this fall.

PREVIOUS, DECEMBER 16 PM: It’s one of the most common complaints in the Hollywood docket – agency and/or manager backs actor on the rise, actor gets big gig, actor leaves agency and/or manager and doesn’t pay commissions from that big gig. So, agency and/or manager sues and that’s exactly what *New Girl* star Zooey Deschanel’s old reps Seven Summits Pictures & Management did today.

“Seven Summits managed the Defendant Zooey Deschanel’s (Deschanel or Defendant) career from 1996, when she was an unknown actress, until 2013, by which time she was one of the most famous actresses in the world, a Grammy Award-nominated singer, and the co-founder of a successful entertainment website *Hello Giggles*,” said the wide ranging but unspecified damages seeking breach of written contract complaint filed Wednesday in L.A. Superior Court ([read it here](#)). As is usual in these types of things, the management company want former longer term client Deschanel not only to keep paying them their commissions on the Fox comedy. More specific to this particular case they also from the lucrative sale of her website and a Tommy Hilfiger ad campaign. The Elizabeth Meriwether EP’d series, which is in an almost 2-year legal battle of its own over copyright, debuted on September 20, 2011 on Fox. The show is back for a fifth season early next year.

Even though Seven Summits was getting its 10% on the show from the UTA repped *New Girl* star when she exited them 2-years back, the company’s filing today says that Deschanel provided nothing from the multimillion dollar sale of the female focused start-up this fall to Time, Inc. That sale was estimated to have been for up to \$30 million based on certain targets being met. A target, not being met. at least not in this case right now, will be more *New Girl* cash for Seven Summits as today’s complaint says they were informed last month that Deschanel will be ceasing to pay them any more of that.

OK, still pretty standard stuff in this type of thing, right? No, not so much.

“Once Seven Summits requested commissions on Deschanel’s income from *Hello Giggles*, however, Deschanel retaliated by ceasing to pay commissions on all her projects, including *New Girl*,” adds the 13-page 4-claim complaint. “As an excuse, Deschanel is claiming that the signature on the agreement is not hers, an allegation that is false, as indicated by the fact that Deschanel actually paid commissions pursuant to that agreement for many years.” And then, in what is a very rare move in a commissions dispute the Seven Summits filing says, “Further, Deschanel is making the false claim that Seven Summits procured employment for Deschanel when it was not legally permitted to do so. Aside from being untrue, Deschanel’s claim is not a reasonable excuse for deciding to withhold payment for services from a dutiful adviser who worked diligently for 17 years.”

Expect a reply from Deschanel full of more non-standard stuff – likely soon, we hear.

Seven Summits is lawyered by Bryan Freedman of Freedman + Taitleman, LLP. In full disclosure, Freedman and the firm has done and does do work for Deadline’s parent company PMC.