

# Johnny Depp Settles Legal Battle With Attorney Jake Bloom

By **GENE MADDAUS**



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Johnny Depp has settled his long-running legal fight with his former attorney, Jake Bloom, whom he had accused of collecting tens of millions in fees without a representation agreement.

Depp's attorney, Adam Waldman, said that Bloom's firm, Bloom Hergott, agreed to pay an "8-figure" amount to settle the case. Depp sued Bloom in October 2017, alleging that the attorney had improperly collected more than \$30 million in legal fees over the course of their 18-year relationship. A trial was scheduled to begin on Dec. 2.

Bloom countersued, claiming that Depp had failed to fully pay his bills, and sought to have Depp's case thrown out. However, in a critical hearing in August 2018, Judge Terry Green ruled in Depp's favor, finding that Bloom and Depp had a contingency agreement, which under state law must be in writing. Bloom was paid a commission based on Depp's earnings.

"Today, Bloom Hergott provided Johnny Depp an 8-figure payment to settle Mr. Depp's lawsuit against the firm for fraud, conflict of interest, disgorgement of over \$30 million in voidable fees and other malfeasance that they engaged in over nearly two decades," Waldman said in a statement.

Bryan Freedman, who represented Bloom Hergott, said the litigation was settled for a "fraction" of Depp's original demand.

"The former law firm of Bloom Hergott, with the help of its insurance carrier, has favorably settled the litigation with Johnny Depp for a fraction of his original demand," Freedman said. "While the firm was confident it would prevail at trial, we are nonetheless pleased with this resolution as it expedites the firm's winding down process and allows it to get off the endless Johnny Depp litigation train."

Waldman added another statement, saying that Bloom Hergott had "avoided the shame of evidence in a public trial."

"They are correct that 8 figures is a fraction of 9 figures," Waldman said.

The costly settlement may end the days of handshake deals between attorneys and their superstar clients.

"This is another great result for Johnny, and one that will change the way business is done for the better in Hollywood," said Benjamin G. Chew, an attorney at Brown Rudnick LLP who represented Depp. "Through Judge Green's decision, Johnny established a precedent that should prevent other artists from being victimized by their attorneys using improper oral contingency fee contracts."

Sky Moore, a partner at Greenberg Glusker who was not involved in the case, agreed that attorneys are likely to insist on written agreements from now on.

"The feeling was, even if it was technically required, many deals in Hollywood are oral," Moore said. "Certainly there will be less of that — that is for sure."

Bloom and his partner, Alan Hergott, retired in May, turning their firm over to the remaining partners. The new firm was christened Goodman Schenkman & Brecheen.

Depp sued Bloom at the same time he was fighting in court with The Management Group, which he had accused of mishandling his finances and pushing him to the brink of financial ruin. The Management Group countered that Depp had ignored repeated warnings to stop spending money, and instead splurged on luxury real estate, wine, private jets, and a cannon that was used to blast Hunter Thompson's ashes.

That lawsuit was settled in July 2018.

Depp is still embroiled in litigation with Amber Heard, his ex-wife, whom he accused of defamation following the publication of an op/ed in which Heard expressed solidarity with abuse survivors. Depp is also being sued by Buckley LLP, the law firm that won the critical decision in the Bloom litigation last year. Buckley claims it is owed \$348,000 in unpaid legal bills.



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