BIRD MARELLA LLP

BIRD • MARELLA • RHOW • LINCENBERG • DROOKS • NESSIM



John V. Berlinski

Partner

jberlinski@birdmarella.com

310.551.4341

Practices:

Intellectual Property, Entertainment, Complex Business Litigation

---

John Berlinski is regarded as one of Hollywood's most respected lawyers, with a practice focused on representing top actors, producers, directors, talent agencies, guilds, independent studios, casinos, resorts, and recording artists in their most significant disputes.

John has been at the forefront of some of the most hot-button legal issues facing the entertainment industry today, representing clients in high-stakes and high-profile licensing, distribution, intellectual property, residuals, and “backend” profit participation disputes. In a case that drew national attention, John represented actor-producer Scarlett Johansson in her groundbreaking lawsuit alleging that The Walt Disney Company had improperly failed to release her film *Black Widow* as promised, opting instead for a “day-and-date” release on streaming service Disney+ that deprived Ms. Johansson of tens of millions of dollars in box office bonuses. He also represents Ms. Johansson in her dispute against OpenAI and its CEO, Sam Altman, in which OpenAI is accused of appropriating Ms. Johansson’s voice for use in its ChatGPT system.

John is also well known for his role in obtaining the largest award in the history of profit participation arbitration, on behalf of David Boreanaz, Emily Deschanel, and Kathy Reichs, the actors and author-producer behind the hit Fox television series *Bones*. He currently represents actor Brad Pitt and his company in highly publicized multi-jurisdictional lawsuits against Angelina Jolie and others concerning the parties' interests in Château Miraval – the highly regarded French winery.

Prior to joining Bird Marella, John was the Chair of his prior law firm’s entertainment practice. Before that, he spent seven years at NBCUniversal, where he was the Senior Vice President & Head of West Coast Television Litigation. John has received numerous awards and accolades, including being recognized by *Forbes* as one of the Top 200 Lawyers in America; by *Variety* as a top entertainment litigator in its Legal Impact Report: Top Attorneys Winning Cases and Making Deals in Hollywood; as one of Hollywood’s top attorneys by *The Hollywood Reporter* on its “Power Lawyers: Hollywood Top 100 Attorneys” list; as an Entertainment Trailblazer by *The American Lawyer*; and by *The National Law Journal* for his groundbreaking work.

Education & Admissions

- University of Michigan Law School, J.D., cum laude, 1999
- Cornell University, B.A., with distinction, 1995

- California, 2000

Notable Matters

Currently representing actor Brad Pitt in his multi-jurisdictional lawsuits against ex-wife Angelina Jolie and others concerning the parties' interests in Château Miraval – the highly regarded French winery. The lawsuits are pending in Los Angeles, Luxembourg, and France.

Resolved a breach of contract and tortious interference lawsuit for The Seelig Group (TSG), a private media and entertainment investment and advisory firm that has invested billions of dollars in Twentieth Century Fox (Fox) films, including *Avatar: The Way of Water, Bohemian Rhapsody*, and *Deadpool,* against Fox and The Walt Disney Company.

Successfully represented the actor/producer Scarlett Johansson in a widely publicized lawsuit alleging that The Walt Disney Company interfered with her contract to star in the Marvel Entertainment film, *Black Widow.*

Successfully represented Genting Malaysia Berhad, a major international gaming and resort business, in a billion-dollar lawsuit against Fox Entertainment Group and its parent company, The Walt Disney Company. The case, which was filed in the Central District of California, alleged that Fox wrongfully terminated the parties' 2013 licensing agreement in which Fox had granted to Genting the right to use Fox intellectual property to build a theme park.

Obtained a $179 million arbitration award for fraud and breach of contract on behalf of Emily Deschanel and David Boreanaz, the stars of the long-running hit TV show *Bones*, and author-producer Kathleen Reichs, against 21st Century Fox and the Fox Broadcasting Company. The award, which included $128 million in punitive damages, is the largest arbitration award in the history of profit participation disputes.

Successfully defended Resorts World Las Vegas, a $4+ billion hotel and casino on the Las Vegas "Strip," in a trademark infringement and unfair competition action brought by Wynn Resort Holdings.

Successfully represented the executive producers who conceived one of basic cable television's most-watched series ever in a confidential profit participation arbitration, obtaining a significant monetary award and prevailing party attorneys' fees.

Represented television executive Katie O'Connell Marsh in a suit alleging that she was underpaid more than $15 million in contingent bonuses involving television shows she developed while CEO of Gaumont International Television, including *Narcos*, *Hannibal*, *Hemlock Grove,* and *F is for Family*.

Awards & Recognitions

- Ranked Band 1, Media & Entertainment: Litigation, *Chambers USA*, 2023-present
- America's Best-in-State Lawyers (California), *Forbes*, 2025
- Shortlisted, Entertainment Litigator of the Year, *Benchmark Litigation*, 2025-present
- America's Top Lawyers, *Forbes*, 2024 - 2026
- Ranked, Los Angeles City Elite: Media and Entertainment, *Legal 500*, 2026
- Leading Global Entertainment, Sports & Media Lawyers, Lawdragon, 2025-present
- Best Lawyers in America, Entertainment Law – Motion Pictures and Television; Commercial Litigation; Litigation - Intellectual Property, Best Lawyers®, 2023-present
- Power Lawyers, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2020, 2022-present
- Legal Impact Report, *Variety*, 2019, 2021-present
- Entertainment Trailblazer, *National Law Journal*, 2020
- Entertainment Trailblazer, *American Lawyer,* 2021
- California Litigation Star, *Benchmark Litigation,* 2022
- Local Litigation Star, *Benchmark Litigation,* 2022
- Southern California Super Lawyers, *Los Angeles Magazine,* 2021

Articles & Publications

- Quoted, "A Red-Letter Day For Black Widow," *Law Quadrangle*, November 2022
- Quoted, "'Narcos' Profits Suit Settles Ahead of Trial," *The Hollywood Reporter,* October 2022
- Quoted, "Netflix Seeks to Renegotiate Deals to Show Ads Next to Popular Shows," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 2022
- Featured, "Scarlett Johansson Lawyer John Berlinski Moves To Bird Marella As Partner," Deadline, May 2022
- Quoted, "Disney wants Scarlett Johansson case arbitrated; her team wants an open court,"

Los Angeles Times, August 2021

- Quoted, "Scarlett Johansson Sues Disney Over ‘Black Widow’ Streaming Release," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 2021
- Author, “Is the curtain closing on TV profit participation litigation?,” *Daily Journal,* August 2020
- Quoted, "Arbitrator Says Fox Dug A $179M Grave In 'Bones' Profit Row," *Law360*, February 2019