

PROGRAM MATERIALS Program #30193 November 19, 2020

# Piracy of Television Content: Deploying the Federal Communications Act

Copyright ©2020 by Raymond Dowd, Esq. and Hardin Rowley, Esq. - Dunnington Bartholow & Miller LLP All Rights Reserved.
Licensed to Celesq®, Inc.

Celesq® AttorneysEd Center

5255 North Federal Highway, Suite 310, Boca Raton, FL 33487
Phone 561-241-1919 Fax 561-241-1969

www.celesq.com

# Internet Piracy of Television Content: Deploying The Federal Communications Act

#### **CELESQ**

Raymond J. Dowd – Partner
Hardin P. Rowley – Associate
Dunnington, Bartholow & Miller LLP

November 19, 2020 Author – Copyright Litigation Handbook (West 14th Ed. 2020-2021) O Attorneys Raymond J. Dowd and Hardin P. Rowley are part of an anti-piracy team that recently succeeded in applying the Federal Communications Act of 1934 for the first time to the new IPTV technology in the Southern District of New York.

# June 16, 2020 Panorama Judgment

- (1) Four Million Two Hundred Forty-One Thousand Dollars (\$4,241,000.00) in statutory damages pursuant to the Federal Communications Act (the "FCA"), 47 U.S.C. § 605(6)(3)(c)(i)(II);
- (2) Eight Million Four Hundred and Eighty-Two Thousand Dollars (\$8,482,000.00) in enhanced damages pursuant to the FCA, 47 U.S.C. § 605(e)(3)(C)(ii); and

of Twelve Million Seven Hundred Fifty Three Thousand Six Hundred Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$12,753,607.50) jointly and severally against Panorama Defendants (ECF 787); and

# Summary

- O In the age of cord-cutting, internet television has exploded, piracy along with it. According to industry estimates at least six to ten percent of North American television viewing is pirated. The cost to content owners, the television industry and broadcasters is tremendous. IPTV pirates brazenly sell subscription packages with 200 channels and 2000 title on-demand movie libraries for as a little as \$25.00 per month. In an age of costly unbundling with Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, Peacock, HBOMAX, and Amazon Prime, IPTV pirates create unbeatable illicit bundles.
- The Federal Communications Act of 1934 ("FCA") combined and organized federal regulation of telephone, telegraph, and radio communications. FCA **Section 605**(a) prohibits persons who transmit or receive wire or radio **communications** from divulging such **communications** except to authorized persons. Violations carry statutory damages ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 each, with mandatory attorneys fees and costs. Recent cases have applied the FCA to internet television distribution originating as satellite transmissions.
- The FCA also prohibits the importation, manufacture, sale, or distribution of a device with the intent to use it in any activity prohibited by § 605(a). Statutory damages range from a minimum of \$10,000 per device to a maximum of \$100,000 per device, with mandatory attorneys fees and costs.
- Join us to learn: how the technology works ,how the case law has been applied to internet television technology, what this means for content owners, the television industry, broadcasters and consumers proactive measures to limit potential piracy

# Goals of CLE

- Learn how to use public resources and litigation tools to discover the identify of an IPTV pirate
- Obtain Personal jurisdiction over an IPTV pirate
- Learn how an old law, Section 605 of the Federal Communications Act, was used to obtain a \$12.7 Million Judgment against that IPTV pirate

# FCA Violations-Unmasking An Anonymous Blogger

#### John Doe

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For other uses, see John Doe (disambiguation).

"Jane Doe" redirects here. For other uses, see Jane Doe (disambiguation).

"John Doe", "John Roe" or "Richard Roe" (for men), "Jane Doe" or "Jane Roe" (for are multiple-use names that have two distinct usages. Firstly, and especially in the Ur action whose identity is being withheld officially. [1][2] In the context of law enforcement or unconfirmed. Secondly, such names are also often used to refer to a hypothetical "

In other English-speaking countries, unique placeholder names, numbers and/or code the United Kingdom, where usage of "John Doe" originated during the Middle Ages. F and other legal systems influenced by it. Other names used informally such as "Joe E in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, such names are seldom used in legal or police

Well-known legal cases named after placeholders include:

- the landmark 1973 US Supreme Court decision regarding abortion: Roe v. Wade in
- the civil cases McKeogh v. John Doe (Ireland; 2012) and Uber Technologies, Inc.

Use of "John Doe" in the sense of an everyman, includes:

the 1941 film Meet John Doe and;

## IPTV/OTT

- Internet Protocol Television is a service that delivers television programming over Internet Protocol networks.
- Over the Top is a streaming media service offered directly to viewers via the Internet
- OTT bypasses cable, broadcast, and satellite television platforms
- Two-way data stream between provider and user
- Examples of licensed OTT providers: Netflix, Hulu, YouTubeTV

# IPTV/OTT Piracy

- Unlicensed IPTV/OTT range from slick legitimate looking providers with websites to pirates offering login information for a price on Reddit or a Facebook page
- User can stream on pirate website, Smart TVs, STBs connected to a TV, and Phone Apps
- Often use open-source software to create a service platform

# Sandvine: 6.5% of Households Use Pirated Content

Using the same numbers from the previous calculation, and using \$50 as an approximation for the cost of television service, the pirate television services could quickly cost CSPs in the United States and Canada five billion dollars a year. This calculation is far from perfect because not everyone who subscribes to a pirate service would sign up for a traditional TV package, but the number serves to illustrate the threat for CSPs.

7 million subscribers x \$50/month x 12 months =

# \$4.2 billion a year

Sandvine: 2017 Global Internet Phenomena,
 Spotlight: Subscription Television Piracy

https://www.sandvine.com/hubfs/downloads/archive/2017-global-internet-phenomena-spotlight-subscription-television-piracy.pdf

# Scope of IPTV Piracy

- Estimates lost revenue of \$840 million to \$4.2 billion per year *See* Sandvine 2019 Subscription Television Piracy, Sandvine Global Internet Phenomena Spotlight
- https://www.sandvine.com/blog/the-video-tsunami-continues

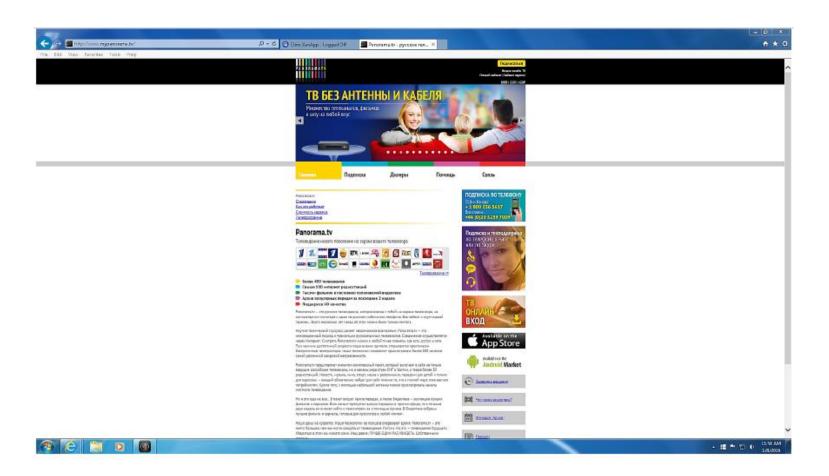
### IPTV End User

- Pays a monthly/yearly subscription for access to unlicensed content
- May make a one-time payment to purchase a plug-and-play STB that comes fully loaded with media software to view content
- Low price to view foreign programming is appealing

# Russian Language IPTV End User

- The audience for the pirated programming tended to be in Brooklyn, NY as part of diaspora from former Soviet Union
- Providers opened up retail and service shops in New York too
- Identified One Potential Pirate as Panorama TV

# What is mypanorama.tv?



# Panorama is a Suspected IPTV Pirate

#### Panorama.tv

Телевидение нового поколения на экране вашего телевизора

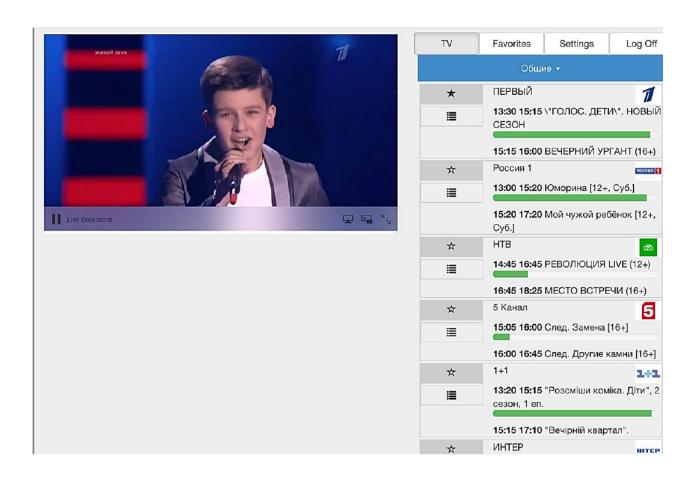


Телепрограмма >>

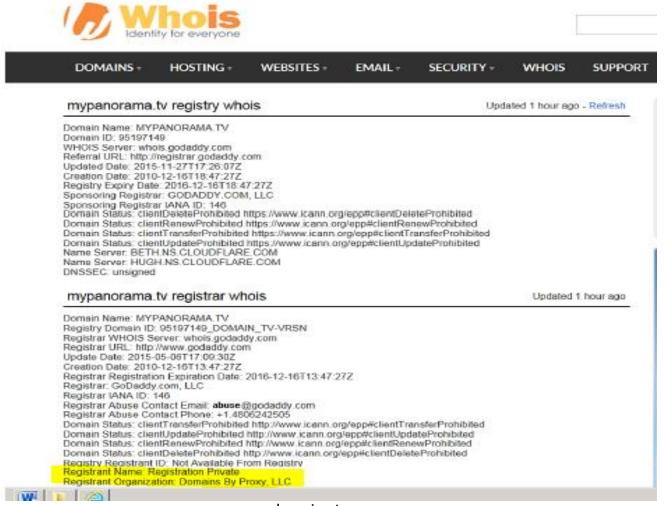
- Более 400 телеканалов
- Свыше 100 интернет радиостанций
- Тысячи фильмов в постоянно пополняемой видеотеке
- Архив популярных передач за последние 2 недели
- Поддержка НD качества

Panorama.tv – это русское телевидение, которое всегда с тобой: на экране телевизора, на компьютерном мониторе и даже на дисплее мобильного телефона. Без кабеля и спутниковой тарелки... Всего несколько лет назад об этом можно было только мечтать.

# Channel One Viewable on Panorama Website



# Who is mypanorama.tv?



### Is Panorama.tv Just a website?

57. Upon information and belief, Panorama TV is a for profit organization with a principal place of business located at 1702 Ave Z, Second Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11235.

Panorama TV owns and operates the website <a href="www.mypanorama.tv">www.mypanorama.tv</a>. According to WHOIS.com, a search engine that reveals the registrars of different websites, the registrar of that website is

11

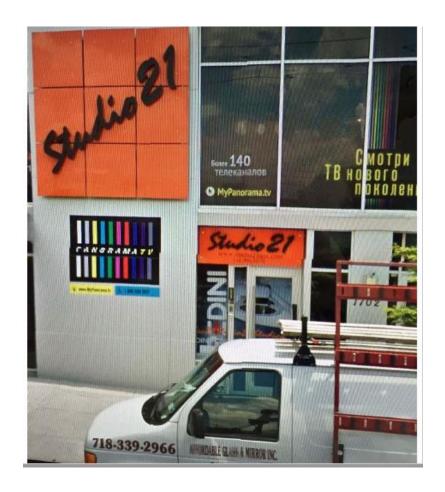
#### Case 1:16-cv-01318 Document 1 Filed 02/19/16 Page 12 of 29

GoDaddy.com, LLC which is located at 14455 N. Hayden Rd., Ste. 226 Scottsdale, AZ, 85260.

Annexed hereto as **Exhibit** 2 is a screenshot of the WHOIS website showing that GoDaddy.com hosts the website www.mypanorama.tv.

# Where is mypanorama.tv?

1701 Ave ZBrooklyn, NY



## Who is Alex Yenavour?

- Complaint filed February 6, 2019
- March 16, 2016. Process server served "Alex Yenavour" at 1701 Ave Z in Brooklyn, NY

## **Default Motion**

- Panorama never filed a responsive pleading
- Filed motion for default judgment on May 12, 2016.
- May 13, 2016, Alan Fraade, Esq, files notice of appearance on behalf of Panorama TV.

# May 20, 2016 Fraade Letter

We are attorneys for My Panorama TV UK, a corporation organized under the laws of the United Kingdom and is named as a defendant in this action as Panorama TV (www.mypanorama.tv). This may be a bit confusing, but only because Plaintiff is loose with the form in which it names the defendants or otherwise identifies them. We were retained as attorneys late in the day on May 12, 2016, and we filed a notice of appearance the next day. Plaintiff has moved for a default judgment against Panorama TV UK, which motion was filed on May 12, 2016.

We are advised by our client, Panorama TV UK, that it has no offices in the United States and no employees in the United States. There is no one in the United States who is authorized to accept service. All My Panorama TV UK's licensing and programming business is done from the UK. The business of Panorama TV UK is to provide Russian language programming through license agreements, utilizing the trade name, Panorama TV. That a business in Brooklyn, New York, which may be an unrelated distributor, uses the banner, Panorama TV does not connote that such premises are an office of Panorama TV UK.

Accordingly, service could not have been effected in Brooklyn, New York, as proffered by Plaintiffs. Any individual whom Plaintiffs claim to have served could not have been an agent, let alone an officer or director of Panorama TV UK.

# May 27, 2016 Fraade Letter

I am an attorney for Panorama Alliance LP, a Limited Partnership formed under the laws of the United Kingdom. I am writing to correct the reference to the correct legal name of our client stated in our May 20, 2016 letter to this Court. In the May 20 letter I incorrectly stated that our client's entity name is My Panorama TV UK, and incorrectly stated that it is a corporation. Our client's actual entity name is Panorama Alliance LP, and it is a Limited Partnership formed under the laws of the United Kingdom.

The error was caused by our desire to promptly provide the Court with the relevant information in the letter and to note the inadequate service made by Plaintiffs in this matter. On that, we were unable to confirm the full entity name with our client in time. We apologize for providing the Court with this inaccurate information.

### Who is David Zeltser?

#### **DECLARATION OF DAVID ZELTSER**

David Zeltser hereby declares, under penalty of perjury:

- I am the Managing Director of Panorama Alliance LP (the "Company"), a Limited Partnership formed pursuant to the laws of the United Kingdom. A true copy of the formation documents of the Company is annexed hereto as Exhibit "A".
- The Company's principal address is located in the United Kingdom at 44 Main Street Douglas, South Lanarkshire, M111 0Qw.
- The Company has no office in the State of New York and the Company does not do business in the State of New York.
- There is no office associated with Panorama Alliance, LP, located at 1702 Avenue Z,

## Who is David Zeltser?

Brooklyn, New York, 11235.

- Alex Yenavour, who we have been advised was served with the Summons and Complaint
  in this matter, is not an agent, officer, director or employee of the Company. The
  Company has no knowledge of who he is and he is not, and was never, authorized to
  accept service of process on behalf of the Company.
- Based upon the advice of counsel, if, for any reason, the Company is subject to the jurisdiction of this Court, it is believed that there are substantive defenses to the claims of the Plaintiffs, which the Company would respectfully request the opportunity to address the allegations made either pursuant to an Answer to the Complaint or a Motion to Dismiss the Complaint.

Dated: June 10, 2016

[Nume], [Title]

# Panorama Alliance, LP



#### CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION OF A LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

Limited Partnership No. 5L13886

The Registrar of Companies for Scotland hereby certifies that:

#### PANORAMA ALLIANCE L.P.

is this day registered under the 1907 Limited Partnerships Act as a Limited Partnership.

Given at Companies House on 13th August 2013.

# Panorama files MTD Under 12(b)(6)

- o August 25, 2016
- Broadcasters Opposed and requested jurisdictional discovery
- Panorama's contacts with NY
  - Presence
  - Commercial website

# Who is David Zeltzer?

I declare under the penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August, 2016.

David Zeltzer, Managing Director

# Something is Not Right...

- Balance what seems like a fraudulent declaration with respect for opposing counsel
- We asked Panorama's counsel for an explanation and were told the different Zeltser spellings was a typo.

# Court Granted Jurisdictional Discovery

- Broadcasters serve RFPs and Interrogatories
- Panorama produces no additional documents
- Independent Investigation

# Court Grants Jurisdictional Discovery

**Interrogatory No. 7:** "State whether there exists and describe any relationship Panorama has with Asaf."

Response: There is no written agreement or formal relationship between Panorama and "Asaf".

The person to whom this interrogatory refers made purchases from the Website similar to it being available to other consumers.

Interrogatory No. 8: "Identify each of Panorama's limited partners, officers and directors."

Response: David Zeltser is Panorama's only Partner and its Managing Director.

# Investigation Resources

- Google
- Westlaw People Search and Company Investigator
- Department of State Corporation Search
- Subpoenas of third parties
- Companies House
- Luck

# Who is Asaf Yevdayev?

Panorama Alliance Group LLC Name

2014-000675225 Filing ID

Limited Liability Company Status Active Type

General Information

Old Name Sub Status Fictitious Name Standing - Tax

Sub Type

Formed in Wyoming Term of Duration Perpetual

Principal Address

1702 Ave Z. Second Floor Brooklyn, NY 11235

Registered Agent Address

National Registered Agents, Inc. 1908 Thomes Ave Cheyenne, WY 82001

Parties 8 8 1

Type Name / Organization / Address

Organizer Asaf Yevdayev

Notes

Recorded By Date Note

Good Standing - RA Good Standing - Other Good

Filing Date

11/06/2014 10:21 AM

Current

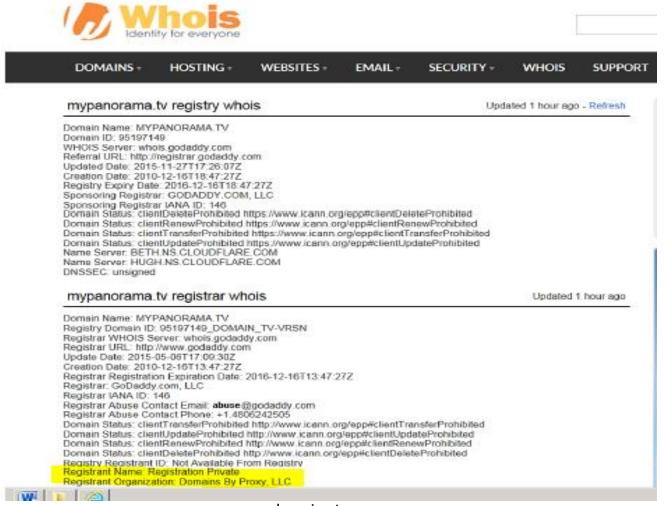
Delayed Effective Date

Inactive Date

Mailing Address

1702 Ave Z. Second Floor Brooklyn, NY 11235

# Who is mypanorama.tv?



# Domains by Proxy Registration: Asaf Yevdayev

 Shopper ID:
 40476676

 Private Label ID
 1695

 Login Name:
 40476676

 First Name:
 Asaf

Middle Name:

Last Name: Yevdayev

Company:

Address1: 2812 east 27th street

Address2: suite 3c City: brooklyn State/Prov: NY Postal Code: 11235 Country: US

Phone1: +1.5169029552

Phonel Extension:

Phone2: Fax: Mobile:

Email: asafyevdayev@hotmail.com

BirthDate:

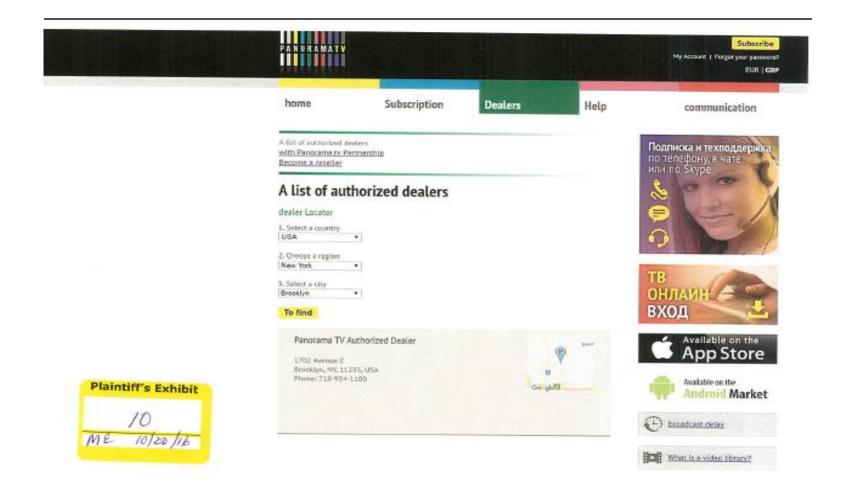
Gender: No Response

Date Created: 12/16/2010 11:46:30 AM

Last Changed By gdqhDeleteProfiles

Last Changed By Date 1/16/2016 1:13:43 AM

Centre



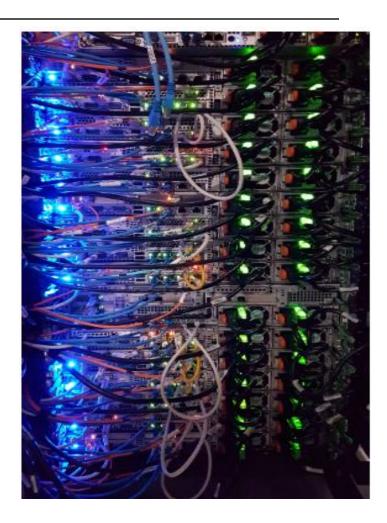
# March 30, 2017: Court Finds Personal Jurisdiction

The Report correctly found that Panorama is subject to specific jurisdiction under N.Y. C.P.L.R. § 302(a)(1),<sup>3</sup> which "provides for jurisdiction over a non-domiciliary where (1) the defendant 'in person or through an agent . . . transacts any business within the state or contracts anywhere to supply goods or services in the state,' so long as (2) the cause of action 'aris[es] from' that business transaction," *Peeq Media, LLC v. Buccheri*, No. 16 Civ. 5292, 2016 WL 5947295, at \*2 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 13, 2016) (alterations in original) (citing *Licci ex rel. v. Lebanese Canadian Bank, SAL*, 673 F.3d 50, 60 (2d Cir. 2012)), "such that there is an 'articulable nexus' between the cause of action and the business activity." *Sound Around Inc. v. Audiobahn, Inc.*,

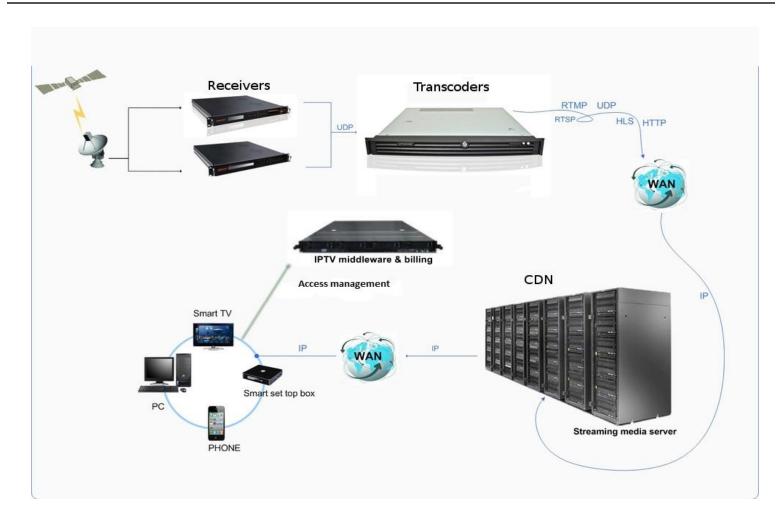
#### What Does a Pirate Need?

- Source of Programming
- Transcoder
- Content delivery network
- Middleware
- Website
- Set-top boxes
- Web based player/app





# What is IPTV/OTT?



### Fact Discovery

- Three Depositions & multiple document productions to Discover:
  - Bank records showing payments for Programming
  - Payments to provider that transcoded content and provided middleware
  - Payments to customer support services
  - Panorama had between 1600-4200 Subscribers

# Paying for Source of Programming

22/02   Sank C#   Sank C	DATE. 02/01	American State Commence	1134992250	AMOUNT \$7.95
ACC Ab Drb Benkes Vilnius Lt 2800 Lithuania Ben: Evp International Vilnus 03601 Lt Ref: Evp8310001032870 Business Expenses/Bni/Payment Purpose, Evp8310001032870 Sen: 0394513 Tm: 48858000 3458     D2/07	02/02	The state of the s		2,100.50
2,100.00  20/08 O2/08 Online International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/C103  A/C: Ab Drib Bankas Vilhius Lt-2600 Limuania Ben: Evp International Vilnos 03601 Lt Ref	02/03	A/C: Ab Drib Benkas Vilnius Lt- Evp8310001032870 Business B	2600 Lithuania Ben. Evp international Vilnus 03601 Lt Reft.	4,000.00
02/08 Offine International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/C103         2,500.0           A/C: Ab Drib Bankas Vilnius Li-2600 Linuariis Ben: Evp International Vilnus 03601 Li Ref         Evp8310001032870 Business Expanses/Bnf/Payment Purpose Evp83100010328 70 Ssn: 0280179 Trg. 36613 000396.         45,51           02/10 Forte PSecretary Company America/Organia (CDD ID) 5330903620         45,51           02/10 Online International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/Organia (CDD ID) 5330903620         45,51           02/15 Online International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/Organia (CDD ID) 5330903620         45,51           02/15 Online International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/Organia (CDD ID) 5330903620         45,51           02/15 Online International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/Organia (CDD ID) 5330903620         45,51           02/15 Online International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/Organia (CDD ID) 5330903601 (CDD ID) 5330903601 (CDD ID) 5350903601 (CDD ID) 5350	12/06	American and the force statements	946-900 8-15-17-90-20e 1164992250	195.94
02/08 Ozlob Online International Wire Transfer Via; Deutsche Bank Trüst Company America (103 A/C; Ab Dnb Bankas Vilnius Li-2600 Litruania Ben; Evp International Vilnius 03601 Li Ref; Evp310001032870 Business Expanses/Bnf/Payment Purpose; Evp83100010328 70 San; 0260179 Trn 36633 00306         45.5           02/10 Forte Page 1 August Bankas Vilnius Litrua Bankas COD ID: 5330903620         45.5           02/15 Online International Wire Transfer Via; Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/0103         4,000.0           A/C; Ab Dnb Bankas Vilnius Lit-2600 Litruania Ben; Evp International Vilnius 03601 Li Ref; Evp8310001032870 Business Expenses/Bnf/Payment Purpose; Evp83100010328 70 San; 0272776 Tm; 36:30500048Es         910.0           02/17 Chase Quickder off         910.0           02/22 Online Virte         910.0           02/22 Online Virte         913.0           02/22 Appended Caparas and Capara Bank Bank Bank Bank Bank Bank Bank Ban	2/07	Street Annual Street	CONSTRUCTOR SERVICE AND ADDRESS OF VALUE OF THE PROPERTY OF TH	2,100.00
02/15 Online International Wire Transfer Via: Deutsche Bank Trust Company America/0103         4,000.0           A/C. Ab Dno Bankas Vinius Lt-2600 Lithuania Ben: Evp International Vinus 03601 Lt Ref: Evp6310001032870 Business Expenses/Bnf/Payment Purpose: Evp83100010328 70 Ssn. 0272776 Tm: 353090048Es         910.0           02/17 Chase Quickdeuts         910.0           02/22 Online Wire: 1235 US Ref: 11235 US Ref:	)2/08	A/C: Ab Dnb Bankas Vilnius Lt-	2600 Lithuania Ben: Evo International Vilnus 03601 Lt Ref:	2,500.00
A/C: Ab Dnb Bankas Vilnius Lt-2600 Lithuania Ben: Evp International Vilnius 03601 Lt Ref: Evp6310001032670 Business Expenses/Bnf/Payment Purpose: Evp63100010326 70 Ssn: 0272776 Tm: 3530900048Es  02/17 Chase Quickder Business Expenses/Bnf/Payment Purpose: Evp63100010326 70 Ssn: 02/22 Oline Ving 2	02/10	Forte Pien of the year of the state of	COD ID: 5330903620	45.50
02/22 Online Wire 2	02/15	A/C: Ab Dnb Bankas Vilnius Lt-2600 Lithuania Ben: Evp International Vilnus 03601 Lt Ref: Evp6310001032870 Business Expenses/Bnf/Payment Purpose: Evp63100010328 70 Ssn:		
11235 US Ref. Co. 300 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100	2/17	Chase Quickdentille Transport	OFFICE ACTION AND AND ADDRESS OF THE ACTION	910.00
2/22 Aprejo en Experiente al la distribución de 2000 (D. 1134992250) 85.9	2/22	11235 US Raf: Ect 2015 19	THE RESERVE OF THE PARTY OF THE	6,370.00
2/27 Discover - 1	2/22	THE STREET SATISFACTOR OF THE STREET STREET, THE STREET STREET STREET, STREET, STREET, STREET, STREET, STREET,	#3/NSC0916" COC ID. 1134992250	85.99
	2/27	The state of the s		3,955.9

#### Panorama's Service Provider



# **Setplex Payments**

10 m		-
SKYPER GROUP LLC	210 /	116
2219 AVENUE X BROOKLYN, NY 11235-2507	CATE 1/23/16	
MAY TO THE Set Dea	1 \$ 40	00
four thank -		• A ≡=
JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A.		
WHIN CHINA OCT 1078	14	
MINO 4	X	
The state of the s		
MEDIA ALLIANCE INC	,	
1702 W. NY 11235-3015	Jan 22,1	4735 7 1.2010
gr though three h	out Can LEIT	-
Set Plea		63/800
ONDER OF ELL OF ELL OF	0.00	010
go Tuones Three no	an ello	HARS & ET
CHASE NAK. NA.	111	
MARGERIA COM	11/20	
MARKOTANO COM MARKOTANO COM MARKOTANO (MARKOTANO)	X	
	<b>泰州中国</b>	
	and the second second	

# **Setplex Services**



https://setplex.com/en/why-setplex.html

## Setplex Services

#### TURNKEY

#### **IPTV Middleware**

Nora Middleware is a highly-intuitive administration interface designed to be straightforward and easy to use. Control all aspects of your IPTV/OTT platform from the dashboard, including:

Subscribers

Usage Analytics

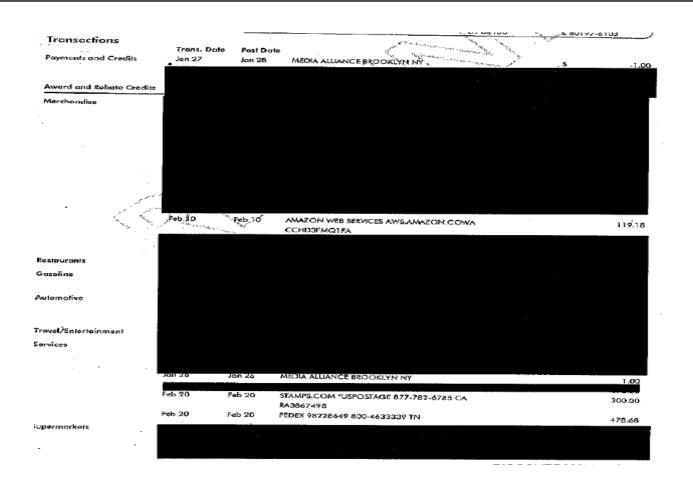
- Content Management
- Reports & Payments
- Interface Customization
- And Much More

Utilizing microservices architecture with docker containers makes our software highlyscalable on demand.



https://setplex.com/en/why-setplex.html

### Distribution of IPTV Services



### June 16, 2020 Panorama Judgment

- (1) Four Million Two Hundred Forty-One Thousand Dollars (\$4,241,000.00) in statutory damages pursuant to the Federal Communications Act (the "FCA"), 47 U.S.C. § 605(3)(c)(i)(II);
- (2) Eight Million Four Hundred and Eighty-Two Thousand Dollars (\$8,482,000.00) in enhanced damages pursuant to the FCA, 47 U.S.C. § 605(e)(3)(C)(ii); and

of Twelve Million Seven Hundred Fifty Three Thousand Six Hundred Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$12,753,607.50) jointly and severally against Panorama Defendants (ECF 787); and

### Recent FCA Devlopments

- o 47 U.S.C. § 605(e)
- OTT Access Codes = Device?
- DISH Network, LLC v. Henderson, No. 519CV1310MADATB, 2020 WL 2543045, at \*4 (N.D.N.Y. May 19, 2020)

# \$12.7 Million v. \$4.2 Billion



www.dunnington.com

### IPTV Device/Software Litigation

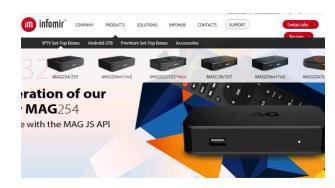
# Copyright Act and Federal Communications Act

(It's Time to Think Inside The Box)



#### END TO END OTT/IPTV SOLUTION

Setplex is the first company in the world to offer a true A-Z, end to end OTT/IPTV solution with your own custom branding.



Infomir — manufacturer of MAG set-top boxes for IPTV/OTT

#### New Help For Copyright Lawyers? How The Federal Communications Act Should Transform Television Antipiracy Strategies In The IPTV and OTT Era

#### Raymond J. Dowd Dunnington Bartholow & Miller LLP

Copyright lawyers may soon be dusting off an old antipiracy tool. Using a descrambler box to steal cable television became largely a thing of the past when the Federal Communications Act of 1934 (the "FCA") was deployed. With the growth of IPTV as a revenue source and a corresponding rise in Pay TV piracy, and in light of a recent court decision applying this powerful law to new technology suggests that counsel for television broadcasters and content owners should work with outside counsel to rethink antipiracy strategies.

As new technologies for delivering television and video content over the internet emerge, so too do piracy methods and depriving broadcasters and content owners of revenue. Piracy is traditionally expensive and difficult to identify and police. Law and policing methods have a hard time keeping up with changes in technology and with tech-savvy pirates. Many content owners have been frustrated with the cost, delay and burdens associated with the Digital Millenium Copyright Act ("DMCA"). Pirates have moved offshore, frustrating team of lawyers in multiple jurisdictions. A recent Sandvine report found that 6.5% of all U.S. households access illegal television-streaming services every month. Now that television viewers are cancelling traditional cable and satellite subscriptions in favor of streaming services, it is critical that content producers develop new methods to counteract online piracy to avoid losing revenues.

The Federal Communications Act provides for statutory damages and mandatory legal fees. Our team won a recent victory by successfully applying the FCA to IPTV technology for the first time. Our winning strategy suggests that broadcasters and content owners should consider adopting nimble, cost-efficient antipiracy strategies to maximize revenues.

#### A. Infringers Have Taken Advantage Of The Regulatory Gap And Are Using Emerging Technologies To Violate Content Producers' Rights

Content producers are afforded the exclusive right to perform their works publicly under the Copyright Act, which includes the right to control the transmissions of copyrighted material. Many content producers have successfully litigated against infringers who can be located or who can be shut down through traditional methods.<sup>2</sup> Those online infringers who have sought to apply novel legal arguments to internet retransmissions have failed.<sup>3</sup> However, with new means of stealing television content emerging in the internet age, content owners should look to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sandvine Report, 2017 Global Internet Phenomena Spotlight: Subscription Television Piracy (Oct. 27, 2017), https://www.sandvine.com/hubfs/downloads/archive/2017-global-internet-phenomena-spotlight-subscription-television-piracy.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Am. Broad. Companies, Inc. v. Aereo, Inc., 134 S. Ct. 2498, 2502, 189 L. Ed. 2d 476 (2014) citing 17 U.S.C. § 106(4).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Fox Television Stations, Inc. v. FilmOn X LLC, 150 F. Supp. 3d 1, 31 (D.D.C. 2015).

establish antipiracy strategies to combat piracy operations that may be difficult, expensive or unwieldy to enforce through claims brought under the Copyright Act, DMCA or Lanham Act.

Recently developed technologies including over-the-top or "OTT" delivery methods and internet protocol television ("IPTV") enable streaming content to be delivered without the need for a traditional cable or satellite provider.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, infringers operating around the world have been quick to capitalize from these largely unregulated technologies in the United States and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Among other things, infringers are using set-top boxes ("STB") that are preloaded with apps enabling consumers to easily access software that enables end-users to access pirated content broadcast over the internet.

Notice and registration provisions of the Copyright Act and safe harbor provisions of the DMCA have provided significant hurdles for broadcasters seeking to counteract OTT and IPTV piracy. Further complicating the circumstances for content providers is the fact that OTT piracy may originate in a foreign jurisdiction leaving providers and their counsel struggling with how to tailor anti-piracy efforts to target offshore entities profiting from new technology.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than wait for law enforcement to act, content providers should consider deploying existing legal tools to combat pirates and increase revenues.<sup>7</sup> One potential source of relief is the Federal Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. § 151 *et seq.*, ("FCA"), which focuses more on *how* content is acquired as opposed to the Copyright Act which requires formalities, such as registration, to successfully assert a claim or qualify for statutory damages and attorneys' fees. <sup>8</sup> The FCA prohibits unauthorized distribution of a satellite or radio communication. By establishing theft, unauthorized distribution of a signal or trading in devices like STBs that enable infringement, a content producer may be able to quickly and effectively target infringers as well as those that aid and abet them such as payment processors as well as equipment and software providers from whom judgments may be enforced.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> As determined by one federal court, ""IPTV' is the electronic delivery of video programming via internet protocol over a service provider's infrastructure—such as AT & T's 'U-verse.' 'OTT' is the delivery of video programming using an internet connection that is not owned, managed, or operated by the party delivering the programming—i.e., Netflix." *China Cent. Television v. Create New Tech. (HK) Ltd.*, No. CV 15-01869 MMM MRWX, 2015 WL 3649187, at \*1 (C.D. Cal. June 11, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Traditional cable and satellite providers are "multi-channel programming video distributor" as defined by the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC"). 47 C.F.R. § 76.1000.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Article 29 Working Party publishes Opinion on review of E-Privacy Directive, Practical Law UK Legal Update 3-631-6346

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Ownership of the patents underlying OTT technology were filed in the District of Delaware in 2014 and, after transfer to the Northern District of California and summary motion practice, the claims were settled. *OpenTV, Inc. v. Netflix, Inc.*, No. CV 12-1733 (GMS), 2014 WL 1292790, at \*1 (D. Del. Mar. 31, 2014); *OpenTV, Inc. v. Netflix Inc.*, 76 F. Supp. 3d 886, 889 (N.D. Cal. 2014)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Fox Broad. Co. v. Dish Network L.L.C., 747 F.3d 1060, 1067 (9th Cir. 2014) citing Cartoon Network LP v. CSC Holdings, Inc. ("Cablevision"), 536 F.3d 121 (2d Cir.2008) (affirming denial of preliminary injunction because the end user creates the copy and Fox could not establish direct copyright infringement and Fox did not own the copyrights in the advertisements being skipped and could not prove a likelihood success for secondary copyright infringement). A motion to compel discovery concerning Dish Network's efforts to create an OTT network was previously denied by the district court. Fox Broad. Co., Inc. v. DISH Network, L.L.C., No. CV 12-04529-DMG (SH), 2014 WL 12558792, at \*1 (C.D. Cal. July 30, 2014).

#### B. The FCA Is Applied By The Southern District of New York To IPTV/OTT Infringement

The Federal Communications Act of 1934 has long been utilized to combat theft of television signals. For instance, the FCA was used in the 1990s and early 2000s as a very powerful tool against consumers stealing cable services through descrambling boxes and other devices. The FCA includes powerful anti-piracy provisions against infringers and against those using a mechanical device to make unauthorized retransmission. The FCA authorizes private rights of action; authorizes the recovery of actual or statutory damages and permits the Court to enhance damages by up to \$100,000.00 per violation in cases of willfulness. 47 U.S.C.A. § 605(e)(3) and (4). Our legal team is the first to apply the FCA to OTT and IPTV.

A 2017 case decided by the Southern District of New York suggests that tried-and-true strategies used in pursuing cable television thefts may be viable in the era of OTT and IPTV. Specifically, Judge Barbara Moses found:

I conclude that the third sentence of § 605(a) does not require pleading or proof that the defendant intercepted a satellite transmission or other radio communication. The statute reaches the unauthorized retransmission of a signal that originated as a satellite transmission, even when it is thereafter received or transmitted over the internet.

In applying the FCA to IPTV delivered by OTT, the Court looked to older cases that applied existing laws to novel means of infringing television broadcasting. *Id. citing Int'l Cablevision, Inc. v. Sykes*, 997 F.2d 998, 1008 (2d Cir. 1993) ("The term 'radio communication,' as used in the Communications Act, has long been understood to include satellite transmissions.") This lone decision suggests that the FCA may be an effective tool to use against those infringers hiding behind OTT and IPTV technology.

#### C. Content Producers Should Establish Anti-Piracy Policy Using Various Methods of Prevention

Telltale signs of piracy include (i) the availability of channels that are exclusively licensed to another provider or not available on a given jurisdiction; (ii) the advertising of "free" or below market prices; (iii) the need to purchase separate hardware; (iv) the need to download or install software to view the content; (v) required prepayment of subscription fees; (vi) provider's use of "virtual offices" that often house many entities; (vii) inefficient payment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Int'l Cablevision, Inc. v. Sykes, 75 F.3d 123, 133 (2d Cir. 1996) (applying FCA to cable descrambling devices); DIRECTV, Inc. v. Bates, 393 F. Supp. 2d 147, 150 (N.D.N.Y. 2005) (applying FCA to "pirate access devices" or PAD and awarding statutory damages including attorneys' fees.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Joint Stock Co. Channel One Russia Worldwide v. Infomir LLC, No. 16-CV-1318 (GBD) (BCM), 2017 WL 696126, at \*7 (S.D.N.Y. Feb. 15, 2017), report and recommendation adopted sub\_nom. 2017 WL 2988249 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 27, 2017).

methods such as the requirement of payment in person or over the phone; (vii) low-image and sound quality; and (vii) last but certainly not least, the origination of the source signal.

One of the most important aspects of developing a strong anti-piracy and litigation strategy is for content providers to choose an experienced team of lawyers, paralegals and investigators to implement a cost-effective strategy.

There are a number tools that content providers can use to combat piracy. As part of a comprehensive anti-piracy campaign, content producers should consider pursuing entities selling, importing, or manufacturing the STBs or other infringing devices. According to the Sandvine report, almost 95% of illegal television streaming is completed by using STBs from only a few foreign manufacturers. These often poorly engineered boxes continuously stream the illegal content unless the box is physically turned off, which Sandvine found could lead to users using around 1 terabyte of "phantom bandwidth" a month.

Other possible tools to combat piracy include pursuing (i) sources of the infringing code such as web-portals and domain registrars; (ii) payment processors involved with the illegal transaction; and (iii) other accomplices such as local STB distributors. Traditional enforcement methods relied on by Copyright holders such as cease-and-desist letters targeted at app stores, payment processors and content distribution networks ("CDNs") may be considered as part of an anti-piracy plan. Emerging technologies may help in a content producer's initiative to combat piracy. Developing a good rapport with in-house investigators and outside counsel can make the difference between a costly endeavor that yields no results or a proactive measure that increases revenues, gaining positive attention from the C-Suite.

#### **D.** Conclusion

As the cord-cutting movement kicks into high gear in 2018, content providers should wake up to loss of revenues from television and video piracy. In-house counsel should consider adopting strategies to combat content piracy of waiting. Using the FCA to supplement existing enforcement measures may lead to powerful results.

Raymond J. Dowd <u>www.dunnington.com</u> @raydowd