**Title:** Entertainment Lawsuit By Man Claiming to Be Mastermind Behind Several Popular Reality Shows Dismissed

**Subtitle:** Entertainment Lawsuit By Man Claiming to Be Mastermind Behind Several Popular Reality Shows Dismissed

**Meta Description:** Entertainment Lawsuit By Man Claiming to Be Mastermind Behind Several Popular Reality Shows Dismissed

**Date:** 1-4-2012

**Author:** Anthony R. Caruso

**Formatted Content:**

An Australian man who claimed to be the mastermind behind popular reality television shows like American Idol and Dancing with the Stars finally had his day in court. However, his New York entertainment lawsuit likely didn’t go as planned—U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin dismissed all of his claims.

As reported by the Hollywood Reporter, the suit was brought by Paul Thayil, who claimed that his 1997 marketing plan outlined several aspects of today’s reality competitions. According to the lawsuit, multi-city tours, judges, "going to Hollywood," undiscovered talent, and rounds of competition were all his idea.

The lawsuit named a host of entertainment world heavyweights, including Fox, NBC, Sony, EMI, Simon Cowell, Idol creator Simon Fuller, and Nigel Lythgoe, all of which Thayil claimed colluded to deprive him of his intellectual property rights. He even attempted to bring a claim under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, generally used to prosecute organized crime.

While some might argue that reality shows are all starting to look the same, the court did not buy into Thayil’s conspiracy theory. She specifically noted that Thayil “fail[ed] to make factual assertions to support his generalized accusations of defendants’ wrongdoing.” Instead, his complaint was “filled with conclusory allegations of wrongdoing and violation of various laws, which are unsupported by factual assertions that would allow this court to draw a reasonable inference that defendants are liable for the alleged misconduct.”

Thayil’s outlandish claims aside, this case highlights something very important in the world of entertainment law— in order to be afforded intellectual property rights, you need more than a good idea. In dismissing Thayil’s copyright claims, Judge Scheindlin specifically noted that he failed to show that any of his "generalized abstractions" were protectable in the first place.

For anyone looking to make it in the entertainment industry, it is important to understand that vague or generic ideas (no matter how good) are not protected under U.S. copyright law. While it is possible to copyright a movie or TV show, you must first establish a detailed and unique expression of your concept.

Given the complex legal issues involved, if you are seeking to protect your ownership rights to a film or television show, it is often advisable to consult with an experienced entertainment lawyer.

**Raw Content:** <h2 style="text-align: center;">Entertainment Lawsuit By Man Claiming to Be Mastermind Behind Several Popular Reality Shows Dismissed</h2>
<p>An Australian man who claimed to be the mastermind behind popular reality television shows like <em>American Idol</em> and <em>Dancing with the Stars</em> finally had his day in court. However, his <a href="/practices/sports-and-entertainment-law/">New York entertainment lawsuit</a> likely didn’t go as planned—U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin dismissed all of his claims.</p>
<p>As reported by the <a href="http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr-esq/reality-show-theft-american-idol-287621" target="\_blank" rel="noopener">Hollywood Reporter</a>, the suit was brought by Paul Thayil, who claimed that his 1997 marketing plan outlined several aspects of today’s reality competitions. According to the lawsuit, multi-city tours, judges, "going to Hollywood," undiscovered talent, and rounds of competition were all his idea.</p>
<p>The lawsuit named a host of entertainment world heavyweights, including Fox, NBC, Sony, EMI, Simon Cowell, <em>Idol</em> creator Simon Fuller, and Nigel Lythgoe, all of which Thayil claimed colluded to deprive him of his intellectual property rights. He even attempted to bring a claim under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, generally used to prosecute organized crime.</p>
<p>While some might argue that reality shows are all starting to look the same, the court did not buy into Thayil’s conspiracy theory. She specifically noted that Thayil “fail[ed] to make factual assertions to support his generalized accusations of defendants’ wrongdoing.” Instead, his complaint was “filled with conclusory allegations of wrongdoing and violation of various laws, which are unsupported by factual assertions that would allow this court to draw a reasonable inference that defendants are liable for the alleged misconduct.”</p>
<p>Thayil’s outlandish claims aside, this case highlights something very important in the world of entertainment law— in order to be afforded intellectual property rights, you need more than a good idea. In dismissing Thayil’s copyright claims, Judge Scheindlin specifically noted that he failed to show that any of his "generalized abstractions" were protectable in the first place.</p>
<p>For anyone looking to make it in the entertainment industry, it is important to understand that vague or generic ideas (no matter how good) are not protected under U.S. copyright law. While it is possible to copyright a movie or TV show, you must first establish a detailed and unique expression of your concept.</p>
<p>Given the complex legal issues involved, if you are seeking to protect your ownership rights to a film or television show, it is often advisable to consult with an <a href="/attorneys/ronald-s-bienstock/">experienced entertainment lawyer</a>.</p>