

2023 MVP

Seth Traxler



Seth Traxler of Kirkland & Ellis LLP’s media and entertainment transactions practice counseled asset managers to acquire pop stars’ music catalogs and facilitated a partnership between a technology company and the NBA in efforts to help everyone feel like they’re sitting courtside, earning him a spot among Law360’s 2023 media and entertainment MVPs.

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His biggest accomplishment over the past year:

Traxler said his proudest moment this year was in representing Hipgnosis Songs Capital, which is backed by Blackstone, as it acquired all of pop star Justin Bieber’s music catalog. That purchase included all the songs Bieber had released prior to Dec. 31, 2021, such as massive hits like “Baby,” “Love Yourself” and “One Time.”

“He’s such a tremendous performer in the prime of his career, and executing a transaction like that for someone in the prime of their career is not easy, and it takes very detailed

knowledge of the music industry and the artist’s situation,” Traxler said.

The deal was reportedly worth more than \$200 million, which marked Hipgnosis’ biggest deal to date, and was also the largest music rights sale for any artist in Bieber’s generation, Traxler said.

Other notable deals he’s worked on:

Also in the entertainment industry, Traxler said he served as lead counsel to Cosm, an immersive technology company, on a multiyear partnership with the NBA. The deal, announced in

February, marked the company’s first partnership with a professional sports league. It allows Cosm to produce and present games from NBA League Pass, the league’s subscription-based live-game streaming service, in immersive 8K on large-scale LED-dome systems that will create “an unbelievable viewing experience,” Traxler said.

The games will be presented at the company’s forthcoming venues with the goal of digitally recreating a stadium and the accompanying atmosphere.

“Cosm is helping to pioneer a totally new type of live entertainment experience known as immersive

entertainment,” Traxler said. “Cosm has these amazing state-of-the-art recording and screening projections and lighting technologies that make the audience member feel as if he or she is truly there when watching, for example, an NBA game. So quite rewarding to lead the Kirkland team and to help Cosm pursue its vision for a new entertainment category.”

The biggest challenge over the past year:

Traxler said there’s always been a give-and-take between technological innovation and the media and entertainment industry, which presents a new host of challenges each year. And while the industry is still wrestling with the proliferation of streaming services, a new rise in generative artificial intelligence has presented a new challenge, he said.

“Generative AI in media and entertainment has the potential to create or destroy value in different ways, many of which remain to be discovered,” Traxler said. “And for someone counseling clients about deals and value, the sheer volume of potential business and technological disruption and change, stemming from the development of generative AI, has been quite challenging but also quite fun to absorb and react to.”

Why he’s an entertainment attorney:

Traxler said he comes from a family that has a deep interest

in entertainment matters, and being involved in that industry took root early on. His dad was a trial attorney in Los Angeles and once represented the Beatles in a copyright litigation matter, his mom worked briefly for music company EMI in Hollywood, and his brother is a Broadway producer, he said.

“And so carrying on that heritage, after college, I worked for Virgin Records in Los Angeles briefly,” Traxler said. “And from those experiences over the course of my life, my amazement of artists and entertainers has only grown with respect to their visions and their talents and their raw courage, so it’s very rewarding to have a professional link to the industry that’s responsible for creativity.”

Advice he has for junior attorneys:

Traxler said it can be “healthy and helpful” to participate in other aspects of the industry in which one is practicing law. For example, Traxler said he’s particularly involved in theater. He formerly served as a board member for Writers Theatre, a theater company in Chicago.

He’s also contributed pro bono time to the New York City-based nonprofit American Theatre Wing, and he’s personally invested in more than 10 Broadway shows, including “Spamalot” and “Mean Girls.” He said doing so has given him an appreciation for those who fund creative endeavors.

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Over the course of his 25 years practicing law, Traxler said he’s learned several things that he would also offer as professional advice. First, he said junior attorneys should gain as much meaningful experience with clients as possible. However, they should also pay attention to how much they let work define their lives and circumstances.

“And keep focused on the matter at hand, but also keep an eye on their horizons,” Traxler said.

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