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28 CONSOLIDATED REPLY OF ALL DEFENDANTS
ON MOTIONS TO DISMISS AMENDED COMPLAINT

Case No. C 04 0371 JW (PVT)

SF: 95547.5

# Winston & Strawn LLP 101 California Street San Francisco, CA 94111-5894

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Plaintiff's opposition sheds any last pretense about Plaintiff's objectives in this case. It cannot be any clearer that this case is an attempt to foist onto the Defendants the role of global policeman. To Plaintiff, this is a case of "public policy" and it concerns, among other things, web sites in Bulgaria and Vanuatu. See Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of Plaintiff's Combined Opposition to Motions to Dismiss ("Opposition") at 7. Under Plaintiff's theory, Defendants -- and by extension numerous other potential defendants in analogous positions -- must cleanse the Internet, and literally the entire world, merely because Defendants offer global payment systems.

Plaintiff's opposition to the current motion rests upon a profound misreading of the Ninth Circuit's recent decision in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios v. Grokster, Ltd., 380 F.3d 1154 (9th Cir. 2004) ("Grokster") and upon wishful thinking and metaphorical argument applied to aggressive, but still inadequate, pleading. The Plaintiff's original complaint failed for numerous reasons, many of which were detailed by this Court in granting the original motion to dismiss. While Plaintiff has boldly -- and wildly -- made new, conclusory allegations to attempt to overcome deficiencies in its original complaint, Plaintiff still cannot state a viable claim on any of its theories. The reason for this failure is that the Plaintiff's entire conception of Defendants' liability in this case is misguided and unfounded.

Cutting to the core, Plaintiff rests its case upon the following points:

- (1) administration by Visa and MasterCard of global payment networks;
- (2) adoption of rules and regulations for the handling of merchant accounts by member banks of MasterCard and Visa;
- (3) terms and conditions allegedly set in contracts entered between some merchants and Cardservice International or First Data Corp. (and allegedly by Humboldt Bank as a principal for which Cardservice or First Data Corp. acts as

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agent) in "merchant account agreements" like Exhibit 1 to Plaintiff's Amended Complaint:

- (4) Defendants' receipt of fees from transactions:
- (5) alleged activities of Visa and MasterCard to investigate or terminate merchants for illegal activity or (in Plaintiff's language) "otherwise improper business practices";
- (6) notices to Defendants by Plaintiff of alleged infringements by businesses that have merchant accounts with banks that are members of the Visa and MasterCard payment systems<sup>1</sup>;
- (7) the alleged fact that infringing websites would be devoid of any commercial viability without access to Defendants' payment systems; and
- (8) the unsupported conclusion that, without payment services from Defendants, third-party webmasters cannot exist.

Defendants cannot be liable even if these points are accepted as true. As shown below, Plaintiff utterly fails to allege that Defendants actually participate in, supervise, or support any infringing activity. The Amended Complaint alleges, at best, that Defendants provide business support for enterprises that are alleged to have engaged in infringements, and that does not suffice to impose liability.<sup>2</sup>

Plaintiff confuses the difference between infringing activities and transaction processing systems. Defendants, by operating or participating in payment systems, do not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> While Defendants First Data Corp., Cardservice International, and Humboldt Bank, unlike Visa and MasterCard, have direct relationships with some merchants, Plaintiff has not alleged that any of these Defendants actually has a business relationship with any particular infringer identified by Plaintiff.

Curiously, Plaintiff's assumption that "commercial viability" is essential for large-scale Internet-based infringements is remarkably naïve, and is one that is universally known to be false. Napster, which had no revenues at all, was not "commercially viable," and its users who allegedly engaged in massive infringements were not acting commercially. Moreover, cases such as ALS Scan v. RemarQ Communities, 239 F.3d 619 (4th Cir. 2001), demonstrate that non-commercial bulletin boards can be vehicles for massive infringement. That case, like this one, involved a plaintiff's assertion of copyright infringement of pornographic photographs.

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insert themselves into or control infringements. Plaintiff's characterization of payment systems as providing "critical business support" does not support Defendants' liability for the conduct of unrelated third party web sites or other merchants. Despite a second chance from the Court and the most artful efforts by its counsel, Plaintiff has once again failed to allege the types of conduct or involvement by Defendants that would make them liable to Plaintiff.

### Π. PLAINTIFF'S COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT ALLEGATIONS FAIL.

Plaintiff appears to equate Defendants' alleged failure to exercise a contractual right to terminate merchants with both (a) an exercise of control over copyright infringements and (b) an active contribution by Defendants to third-party copyright infringements. Such rules of equivalence would allow no limit to liabilities that could be imposed upon a vast array of businesses for failing to step in and act for copyright owners. Such a rule would establish copyright owners as Masters of the Internet, to whose enforcement interests all others must bow. Copyright law has never gone so far. Nor should it now.

### A. Plaintiff Fails To State A Claim for Vicarious Copyright Liability.

Any infringing conduct of third-party websites does not flow through MasterCard's and Visa's systems, and it does not come within any monitoring the MasterCard and Visa payment systems provide. As this Court previously recognized, this case is vastly different from A&M Records v. Napster, 239 F.3d 1004 (9th Cir. 2001), where Napster directly maintained an index of infringing files for its users.

Plaintiff's best facts still cannot allege the sort of supervision and control over infringing activity that are necessary to support vicarious liability. Plaintiff nowhere alleges such a right and ability to supervise and control infringing activity. Instead, Plaintiff distorts the vicarious liability standard by referring to a "right and ability to terminate or suspend merchants and their customers" instead of a right and ability to supervise and control *infringing activity.* Opposition at 17:7-8 (confusing vicarious and contributory standards).

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The best Plaintiff can allege is that Defendants may threaten to withhold access to their transaction processing systems if third parties engage in "illegal, fraudulent, or otherwise improper business practices." Opposition at 9:23-10:1.

Plaintiff does not mean literally that the Defendants have the right and ability actively to supervise and control the alleged reproduction and distribution activities of third parties. Plaintiff means, instead, that because Defendants process financial data and payments, allegedly have a right of review of certain business practices, and have a power to terminate relationships, they therefore are "virtually present" at infringing activities and therefore must "virtually depart" by terminating their relationships with all alleged infringers.<sup>3</sup> Because vicarious liability (unlike contributory infringement) does not have a knowledge requirement, Plaintiff's argument would impose liability on all companies that have the power to terminate their business dealings with alleged infringers, regardless of knowledge of the infringements and apparently without even being asked to do so by a copyright holder!

As addressed extensively in Defendants' Opening Brief on Motion to Dismiss, filed April 19, 2004 ("Defendants' Opening Brief on Original Complaint"), at 1-6, 11-16 and Defendants' Reply Brief on Motion to Dismiss, filed June 1, 2004 ("Defendants' Reply Brief on Original Complaint") at 1-3, 12-16. Plaintiff's proposed new theories of vicarious and contributory liability would not merely authorize, but would also compel, a commercial blockade of companies merely upon their being accused of infringement, and the proposed theories would turn those who do business with alleged infringers into police officers, investigators, prosecutors, judges, juries, and punishers of the alleged infringement.

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Plaintiff must use the word "virtual" in discussing a "virtual presence" (Opposition at p. 18), or "virtual 'site and facilities" (Id. at 17) to avoid a violation of Rule 11, Fed. R. Civ. P., because Plaintiff cannot allege an actual presence or an actual or apparent partnership. In this context, "virtual" has the same meaning as "virtual" in the phrase "virtual reality": it is a synonym for "not." "Virtual presence" and "virtual site and facilities" allegations are concessions that there are not a presence and not a site and facilities.

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Plaintiff thus seeks a form of blunt, vigilante justice. The copyright law does not support such a theory.

The Plaintiff's failure here is not a pleading error. It is a fundamental misapprehension of copyright law. Plaintiff no doubt has pleaded the best case it can, by artfully arranging allegations to create merely an illusion of liability. The Court should be satisfied that Plaintiff can do no better, and the Court should now dismiss the case with prejudice in its entirety.

Turning to the recent decision of the Ninth Circuit decision in *Grokster*, there can be no doubt that it sounds yet another a death knell for Plaintiff's claims. Plaintiff's Houdinilike effort to escape the Grokster decision required contortions and distortions that this Court may readily reject.

As Plaintiff correctly notes, in Grokster the Ninth Circuit affirmed the district court's holding that the defendants, distributors of peer-to-peer software, were not secondarily liable for copyright infringement. The Ninth Circuit considered and rejected both contributory and vicarious claims against the defendants. See Grokster, 380 F.3d at 1165, 1166. Plaintiff argues that the Grokster decision supports its claim of vicarious liability for copyright infringement against Defendants because factors discussed by that court indicate that Defendants in this case have the "right and ability to supervise the infringing parties." Opposition at 13. While Plaintiff attempts to argue that the Ninth Circuit in Grokster enunciated some fact intensive, complicated balancing test (Opposition at 13:7-14), Plaintiff has pulled its "factors" out of thin air.

Nothing in the *Grokster* opinion supports a finding of liability in this case. Indeed, that opinion emphasizes the historical distinction between dance hall operators and landlords in vicarious copyright liability cases. As the Ninth Circuit stated, "[t]he dance hall operator is liable, while the landlord escapes liability, because the dance hall operator has the right and ability to supervise infringing conduct, while the landlord does not." Grokster, 380

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F.3d at 1164 (citing Fonovisa, Inc. v. Cherry Auction, Inc., 76 F.3d 259, 262 (9th Cir. 1996))(emphasis added).

None of the facts alleged in this case indicate that Defendants have a right and ability to supervise the alleged infringing conduct. While Plaintiff continues to press the fact that Defendants have the right and ability to control because they can terminate the merchant accounts of allegedly infringing websites, this Court has already soundly rejected that argument. See Perfect 10 v. Visa Int'l Serv. Ass'n, 2004 WL 1773349 \*4, \*5 (N.D. Cal., Aug. 5, 2004). Nothing in *Grokster* suggests that the retained contractual right of Defendants, banks, or other businesses to terminate business relationships could provide a basis of liability. To the contrary, Grokster expressly approved narrow application of vicarious liability only to those situated somewhere on the landlord-to-employer spectrum of relationships. Nor do Defendants' internal regulations or merchant agreements alleged by Plaintiff establish a right and ability to control and supervise alleged infringing conduct. As discussed in Defendants' opening brief, nowhere has Plaintiff alleged that Defendants have the ability to affect or control allegedly infringing conduct by third parties other than by terminating merchant status. This is in contrast to Napster, which as noted by the Grokster court "had an express policy reserving the right to block infringers' access for any reason." Grokster, 380 F.3d at 1165 (citing Napster, 239 F.3d at 1023) (emphasis added). Access to an infringement system is vastly different from access to a payment system. Defendants in this case have neither the right nor the ability to block access to allegedly infringing content; they at best have the right to deny access to a payment system.<sup>4</sup>

While Plaintiff misleadingly argues that it has alleged that "defendants have 'an express policy reserving the right to block infringers' access," (Opposition at 14), the paragraphs in its amended complaint to which it refers simply allege that Defendants reserve

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Notably, the *Grokster* Court found that while Grokster nominally reserved the right to terminate access through its user agreement, it had no ability to actually terminate access to file-sharing functions, and so this factor did not indicate a right and ability to control infringing conduct.

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the right to terminate merchant accounts. Amended Complaint ¶ 20, 21. Here, as in the Grokster case, the sort of monitoring and supervisory relationship that has supported vicarious liability in the past is completely absent. As in *Grokster*, and unlike *Nanster*. Defendants do not "operate and design an 'integrated service,' which they monitor and control." Grokster, 380 F.3d at 1165. (citing lower court decision, 259 F. Supp. 2d at 1045).

Moreover, as discussed in the opening brief by MasterCard and other Defendants on this motion to dismiss, the *Grokster* court expressly rejected the "blind eye" theory of copyright infringement liability urged by plaintiffs in that case and which is really all that Plaintiff can allege in this case. The *Grokster* court stated that "[t]he Copyright Owners finally argue that Grokster and StreamCast should not be able to escape vicarious liability by turning a 'blind eye' to the infringement of their users, and that '[t]urning a blind eye to detectable acts of infringement for the sake of profit gives rise to liability." Grokster, 380 F.3d at 1165 (citing *Napster*, 239 F.3d at 1023). As the Ninth Circuit explained, however, "[i]f the [defendants] had a right and ability to control and supervise that they proactively refused to exercise, such refusal would not absolve them of liability . . . [but] there is no separate 'blind eye' theory or element of vicarious liability that exists independently of the traditional elements of liability." Id.

Because Plaintiff's fundamental theory of liability fails and cannot be cured by pleading, the Court should dismiss the vicarious copyright infringement claim with prejudice.

### В. Plaintiff Fails To State A Claim For Contributory Copyright Infringement.

Plaintiff hardly expounds its contributory infringement claim in its opposition, and for good reason: it cannot allege any contribution to alleged infringing activity of third parties. Defendants simply do not provide any service, product, or labor used as part of any infringing conduct. Once again, Plaintiff has failed to plead any conduct by Defendants that

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contributes to a violation of any of the exclusive rights of the copyright holder set forth in 17 U.S.C. § 106: Defendants are not alleged to contribute to reproduction of works; preparation of derivative works; distribution of copies to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease or lending; public display; or public performance of Plaintiff's works. Plaintiff accuses Defendants instead of (a) providing a payment system that is necessary to the operation of businesses and (b) failing to impose an economic "death penalty" on alleged infringers.

Once again, Plaintiff strains logic and credulity by asserting (Opposition at 17:28-18:2) that Defendants are "virtually present' at, and pass on the validity of, each individual transaction." Even if such a "virtual presence" doctrine were valid, Plaintiff has not shown the payment transaction to infringe upon, or even implicate, any of the Section 106 rights of a copyright holder. Plaintiff has not alleged, and cannot allege, that Defendants were "virtually present" at any infringing activity as opposed to payment transactions.

Plaintiff's argument spins out of control by invoking the concept of "site and facilities" as a straw man and by making a comparison between A & M Records, Inc. v. Abdallah, 948 F. Supp. 1449 (C.D. Cal. 1996) and Fonovisa v. Cherry Auction, Inc., 76 F.3d 259 (9th Cir. 1996). In Abdallah, the defendant furnished the very tools for infringement, namely blank audio tapes measured and cut precisely to the duration of the intended infringing recordings; in *Fonovisa*, the defendant provided the actual physical facilities for illegal distribution of counterfeit recordings. Plaintiff's reliance on both those cases (and no others) is puzzling, because the differences between those cases and this one is stark: Plaintiff cannot allege that Defendants provide a "site and facilities" -- either literal or metaphorical -- for infringing activity, and it cannot allege that Defendants provide any tools or instruments for violations of the Section 106 rights of a copyright owner.

Notably absent from the contributory infringement argument of Plaintiff's Opposition is any reference to the *Napster* case, which Plaintiff's counsel identified during

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oral argument on Defendants' motion to dismiss the original complaint as Plaintiff's best case on the issue. Neither *Napster* nor any other case supports Plaintiff's aggressive theories. Because Plaintiff's pleading failures are substantive, persistent and non-curable, the Court should now dismiss the copyright claims with prejudice.

# III. PLAINTIFF CANNOT STATE A CLAIM FOR CONTRIBUTORY OR VICARIOUS TRADEMARK INFRINGEMENT.

Plaintiff's Opposition barely goes through the motions on its largely unaltered trademark infringement claims. Notably, Plaintiff ignores the controlling precedent of *Lockheed Martin v. Network Solutions*, 194 F.3d 980 (9th Cir. 1999)("*Lockheed Martin*"), even though this Court appropriately followed *Lockheed Martin* in its order dismissing the original complaint.

In Lockheed Martin, the Ninth Circuit directly held that, to be liable for contributory trademark infringement, a defendant must either have "intentionally induce[d] a third party to infringe the plaintiff's mark or supplie[d] a product to a third party with actual or constructive knowledge that the product is being used to infringe the [mark]." Id. at 984. Plaintiff has pleaded no new facts that would support an allegation that Defendants have induced third parties to infringe Plaintiff's mark.

While Plaintiff makes the claim in its opposition that defendants provide the "ultimate inducement: payment for products and services" (Opposition at 18), the allegation it cites to support this proposition is paragraph 9 of its Amended Complaint. But paragraph 9 simply describes the manner in which certain defendants process payments; it does not allege the supply of goods or services directly used in a trademark infringement and does not support a claim of intentional inducement.

Nor has Plaintiff alleged new facts that would support an allegation that Defendants have supplied a product to a third party with knowledge that it being used to infringe Plaintiff's mark. As stated by this Court in its August 6, 2004 Order, "[t]he only service

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Defendants supply is the ability to accept certain credit cards as payment, and this service has no apparent link to the alleged infringing activities." Perfect 10, 2004 WL 1773349 at \*6. Moreover, as discussed in detail in Defendants' Opening Brief on Original Complaint at 19-20, where, as here, a Defendant provides a service rather than a product, it is liable only if it directly controls and monitors the instrumentality used by the third party to infringe the trademark. Fonovisa, Inc. v. Cherry Auction, Inc., 76 F.3d 259, 264 (9th Cir. 1996)(emphasis added); Lockheed Martin, 194 F.3d at 984-85. As recognized by the Lockheed Martin court, the direct control and monitoring required would be particularly difficult to establish regarding the provision of internet services, precedent Plaintiff chooses to simply ignore in its opposition. Plaintiff has failed to allege any facts that would satisfy the "direct control and monitoring" rule.

Plaintiff's citation to Hard Rock Café Licensing Corp. v. Concession Services, Inc., 955 F.2d 1143 (9th Cir. 1992) is remarkably candid, since the case opposes Plaintiff's theory. While Plaintiff artfully and metaphorically refers in its Opposition to a "symbiotic financial partnership" between Defendants and alleged third-party infringers, Hard Rock requires an "actual or apparent partnership," not a metaphorical or "virtual" one. See Hard Rock, 955 F.2d at 1150. Moreover, Hard Rock teaches that secondary trademark infringement liability requires a much stronger showing than secondary copyright infringement liability, requiring such a strong showing that the defendant and the third-party infringer amount to "joint tortfeasors." Id.<sup>5</sup>

As with its copyright claims, the theory underlying Plaintiff's contributory and vicarious trademark infringement claims cannot support a cause of action, no matter how Plaintiff tries to articulate its allegations. The Court should dismiss the trademark infringement claims with prejudice.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "The essential elements of both a joint venture and partnership are a sharing of profits as well as losses and a right to joint management and control of the business." People v. Park, 87 Cal. App. 3d 550, 564 (Cal. App. 1978). Plaintiff falls far short of alleging the requisite standard.

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### IV. PLAINTIFF'S REMAINING CLAIMS ALSO FAIL.

Plaintiff pays no more than lip service to the claims for alleged violation of rights of publicity, unfair competition, and false advertising, and it has not sought to cure its earlier pleading defects. For the reasons stated in Defendants' earlier briefs on the present motions and their motion to dismiss the original complaints, Plaintiff's claim must fail.

### V. **CONCLUSION**

Throughout the case, Plaintiff has applied the highest degree of invective and hyperbole to its allegations and arguments, couched in terms of "stolen content," "theft." "fencing." and similar language. Such language did not carry the day before; nor should it now.6 While Plaintiff has urged this Court to provide it new remedies so that it can force Defendants to police the Internet and global commerce on its behalf, the Ninth Circuit in Grokster explained that the Copyright Act is not so malleable: "It is prudent for courts to exercise caution before restructuring liability theories for the purpose of addressing specific market abuses, despite their apparent present magnitude. [¶] Indeed, the Supreme Court has admonished us to leave such matters to Congress." Grokster, 380 F.3d at 1167. Defendants have explained at length why it would be unwise to foist onto them, and financial institutions and other businesses, the broad policing and enforcement obligations Plaintiff

On this point Judge Noonan's comments at the Ninth Circuit's oral argument in the Grokster case are apt. Judge Noonan, criticizing the strongly-worded argument of the music publishing plaintiffs' counsel in that case, observed: "You can use these harsh terms, but you are dealing with something new. And the question is, does the statutory monopoly that Congress has given you reach out for the something new, and that's a very debatable question. You don't solve it by calling it 'theft.' You have to show why this court should extend a statutory monopoly to cover the new thing." *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios v.* Grokster, Inc., case no. 03-55894 (9th Cir. argued Feb 3, 2004) (sound file available at www.ca9.uscourts.gov. by clicking on "audio files" and searching case number; relevant portion is at 0:25:30 of the sound file). While Judge Noonan's point related to the federal copyright statutes, his point is salutary with respect to all of Plaintiff's claims. Hyperbolic language and invective do not carry Plaintiff's claims across the pleading threshold. Given Plaintiff's persistent failure to meet that threshold, the Court should now dismiss all claims in the case with prejudice.

urges here. But even if a court saw a need, there is no legal basis in the Copyright Act or in 1 2 precedents for the expansive application of the law sought by Plaintiff. 3 Plaintiff has, with creative and able counsel, articulated clearly its proposed new 4 liability theories and has made clear the limits of its ability to plead acceptable claims on 5 any of its causes of action. Now that the limits of Plaintiff's pleading capacity are clear, the 6 Court should dismiss the action in its entirety with prejudice. 7 Respectfully submitted, 8 Dated: November 1, 2004 WINSTON & STRAWN LLP 9 10 /s/ Andrew P. Bridges By: ANDREW P. BRIDGES 11 JENNIFER A. GOLINVEAUX 101 California Street San Francisco, CA 94111-5894 Attorneys for Defendant 12 MASTÉRCARD INTERNATIONAL **INCORPORATED** 13 14 15 Dated: November 1, 2004 TOWNSEND AND TOWNSEND AND CREW LLP 16 17 /s/ Mark T. Jansen 18 DANIEL J. FURNISS MARK T. JANSEN 19 JOHN C. BAUM Attorneys for Defendant 20 VISA INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

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