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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
WESTERN DIVISION
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HONORABLE DEAN D. PREGERSON, DISTRICT JUDGE PRESIDING
SOFTWARE FREEDOM CONSERVANCY, )
INC.,
Plaintiffs,
vs.
)
)
)
)
VIZIO, INC., et al., )
Defendants. )
REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
PLAINTIFF'S MOTION TO REMAND TO ORANGE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
[14]
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2022

MARIA R. BUSTILLOS
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER C.S.R. 12254

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## I N D E X

PLAINTIFF'S MOTION TO REMAND TO ORANGE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT [14]: 4


LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA; FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2022 -०00-
(COURT IN SESSION AT 10:35 A.M.)
THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: Calling item number two, SACV 21-01943-JLS: Software Freedom Conservancy, Inc. v. Vizio, Inc., et al.

Counsel, please state your appearances.
MR. SCHLAFF: It's John Schlaff from the
Law Offices of Vakili and Leus, and I'm appearing on behalf of Software Freedom Conservancy.

MR. WILLIAMS: Good morning, Your Honor.
Michael Williams on behalf of Quinn Emanuel on behalf of defendant Vizio.

THE COURT: Good morning. All right. We're here on the plaintiff's motion to remand and the defendant's motion to dismiss. Obviously, they are intertwined, but I am going to focus for purposes of oral argument and any questions I may have on the motion to remand today. So with that, it's plaintiff's motion, and we'll begin with plaintiff's counsel. And, again, I just may have a few questions, because it is a little bit unusual. There have been an a few decisions -- related decisions, but let me hear more.

MR. SCHLAFF: Your Honor, this is John Schlaff. First, I'd like to point out that as we mentioned in our
papers, although, it is our motion, it is their burden to establish their right to be here. This is clearly not appropriately brought before the federal court. The rights that are at issue here are rights that are uniquely available through contract rather than copyright. We are seeking specific enforcement of a provision of the agreement. There's no mechanism under the copyright law for such specific enforcement. This is not like any of the cases that they've cited in their favor, and there are a few things in several of the cases that they've cited in their favor, which actually show the error in their argument, particularly, in Jacobsen II, they actually quote language in Jacobsen II at page 17 of their opposition. And they point out that in Jacobsen II, the Court says that the test for whether something is exclusively within the ambit of copyright, that you have to demonstrate that there -- that -- that there are not rights or remedies available under the Copyright claims that are not otherwise available under the copyright law. Clearly, we have remedies that we're seeking through the contract action. And all of the remedies that we're seeking through the contract action, in fact, are remedies that really are not available to us under the copyright law.

And further, at MDC, the Court -- I don't know that it's in MDC or MDY. I think I'm --

THE COURT: It wasn't MDC, was it? I think there's another --

MR. SCHLAFF: Forgive me -- I'm just --
THE COURT: MDY I think.
MR. SCHLAFF: MDY, yes. For some reason, I keep wanting to call it MDC --

THE COURT: That's the Metropolitan Detention Center. I only hear about that in criminal cases. (Laughter.)

MR. SCHLAFF: In any event, Your Honor, in MDY there's a hypothetical that's lifted with approval from another case called Storage Tech, Corp. v. Custom Hardware. That's at 421 F.3d 1307. The jump cite is 1315 through 16. And there, the Court says, "Consider a license in which the copyright owner grants a person the right to make a -- make one and only one copy of a book with the caveat that the licensee may not read the last ten pages. Obviously, a licensee who made a hundred copies of the book could be liable for copyright infringement, because copyright -- copying would violate the Copyright Act's prohibition on reproduction and would exceed the scope of the license. Alternatively, if the licensee made a single copy of the book, but read
the last ten pages, the only cause of action would be for breach of contract, because reading a book does not violate any right protected by copyright law. And before that, the -- in -- in quoting that hypothetical, the MDY court says to recover for copyright infringement based on a breach for license agreement, the copying must exceed the scope of the defendant's license, and the copyright owner's complaint must be grounded in the exclusive right of a copyright. So if it goes to the actual copying, then there -- there's some -- then that is within the ambit of copyright, but if you're seeking remedies afterwards that involve a state court remedy like specific performance, copyright has no exclusive hold. This is an extra right, and this is a clear extra right case. The -- the --

THE COURT: Your papers are very good. And I've read them. And so I mean, if there's something else you'd like to highlight, I'll let you do it, otherwise, I will go ahead and turn to counsel for defendant.

MR. SCHLAFF: Well, I'd like to reserve a few minutes to whatever they say, but beyond that....

THE COURT: Yes, you may do that.
MR. SCHLAFF: But I'm here for your questions, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. So, Mr. Williams, how is this not a -- the sort of extra element? How does this not go beyond copyright law?

MR. WILLIAMS: Sure. Thank you, Your Honor. This is, in fact, a textbook case of artful pleading where the plaintiffs are trying to avoid federal jurisdiction under the Copyright Act. The -the fact is and the MDY case, I believe, is very significant to this case. It makes clear that if the condition -- if it's a condition that's violated and that condition relates to an exclusive right under the Copyright Act, then there's a claim for copyright infringement. If it's only a covenant which is just a promise, then the claim is for breach of contract. Here, the Court issue is the language in the general public license that talks about the source code provision. That is contained within a section of the license that makes clear that it is a condition. The condition clearly states that if you want to copy, distribute or modify the software, all of which are exclusive rights under the Copyright Act, you must do these things, and namely, provide a copy of the source code. The license goes on to say that if you don't comply, your license is terminated, your rights are gone, and -- and you have no right to copy, distribute
or otherwise modify the software. That is a -- a typical claim tore copyright infringement. And how do we know this? Well, the creator of the GPLs -- the free software foundation -- makes clear in its frequently asked questions, who has the power to enforce the GPL.

THE COURT: Well, isn't -- I mean, but
that's -- they're frequently asked questions. The answer isn't really binding on the court. Isn't it their just informal way of saying, we hold the copyright, and we enforce under the copyright law? MR. WILLIAMS: Well, it $I$ think is instructive. It's also -- it makes the license itself, which the Court -- obviously, is a critical piece here -- the license itself makes clear that it only covers activities involving copying, distribution and modification. Each of those activities are exclusive rights under the -- under the Copyright Act. So the question is --

THE COURT: So let me -- let me just ask this question very directly: If there is a third party beneficiary under the contract, how would that third party beneficiary ever enforce the right to receive the source code, if that's provided for in the agreement? MR. WILLIAMS: Well, $I$ don't believe there is a third-party beneficiary under the --

THE COURT: Well, that would be for the state court really to decide, right?

MR. WILLIAMS: Well, it would, however --
THE COURT: I'm asking more abstractly.
MR. WILLIAMS: Sure.
THE COURT: If there's a -- if there is a right under the contract that the third-party beneficiary can enforce the right to receive code, if it's framed that way, how could they enforce it under the copyright law?

MR. WILLIAMS: They can't. And that assumes that they have a right to receive the code, and that sort of puts the cart before the horse, because what we're talking about here is, this is a license that has a clear condition. If you want a copy -- if you want the right to copy, distribute and modify the software, you have to do these things. If you don't do that, you have stepped outside of the license. License terminates, and you're liable for copyrighting. That's distinct --

THE COURT: But I think you're getting that -the idea that this condition means that it's only enforceable via copyright by an overly broad reading of MDY. I -- I tend to agree with the plaintiff that MDY wasn't saying that you may not sue for breach of contract in those circumstances where you may be able to
sue for copyright infringement.
MR. WILLIAMS: But the problem with that
argument, Your Honor, and I believe their reply brief essentially says that a party could elect between copyright infringement or a breach of contract. That is entirely inconsistent with the very concept of preemption, because if a party can elect a -- either based upon the same conduct -- here it's the failure to comply, alleged failure to comply with the source code bridge. If they can either elect a copyright claim or a breach of contract claim, those rights are equivalent. You can't have the breach of contract claim based upon the same underlying misconduct.

THE COURT: So let me -- let me ask about the hypothetical that was raised in the case that Mr. Schlaff just identified -- the one about reading the last ten pages. So let's say that -- that the copyright holder says, you may make one copy, but you may not read the last ton pages. If you do, your -- your copyright -- your rights terminate. Are you saying that because -- because they say that's a condition -whatever condition they put, that becomes exclusive then at that point?

MR. WILLIAMS: No, Your Honor. And MDY makes that point very clear. MDY says that one, it has to be
breached of a condition of the license, and that condition must relate to an exclusive right under the Copyright Act. Here, the condition that is being violated, the source code provision, relates specifically to the copying distribution and modification of the software. So it meets the MDY standard that says there has to be a nexus. You can't -- and MDY is a --

THE COURT: Well, but the hypothetical he gave, it created a nexus. In other words, any condition that the copyright holder places can be tied to, and if you don't do -- if you do $X$ or don't do $X$, this agreement terminates. Well, that's a condition then. You can't -- you -- you no longer have the right to distribute or copy if you don't do X.

MR. WILLIAMS: So, Your Honor, MDY specifically addresses this issue, and it's at 629 F.3d -- let's see, the pin cite appears to be 940, 941. It says, "Here the terms of use, Section 4, contains certain restrictions that are grounded in Blizzard's exclusive rights of copyright and other restrictions that are not. For instance, term of use Section 4(d) forbids creation of derivative works based on World of Warcraft without Blizzard's consent. A player who violates this prohibition would exceed the scope of their license and
violate one of Blizzard's exclusive rights under the copyright. In contrast, term of use force 4 (C) (ii) prohibits a player's disruption of another player's game experience. A player might violate this prohibition while playing the game by harassing another player with unsolicited instant messages. Although, this conduct may violate the contractual covenant with Blizzard, it would not violate any of Blizzard's exclusive rights of copyright." And it goes on to say, "Were we to hold otherwise, Blizzard -- or any other software copyright holder -- could designate any disfavored conduct during software use as copyright infringement, by purporting to condition the license on the player's abstention from the disfavored conduct. The rationale would be that because the conduct occurs while the player's computer is copying the software code into RAM in order for it to run, the violation is copyright infringement. This would allow software copyright owners far greater rates than Congress has generally confirmed under the Copyright Act claim." So, again, it addressed that. It's that the condition has to be tied to the exclusive right. If it is, that's copyright infringement. And here, the condition that if you want you to copy, modify or distribute the software, you must comply with it. You must make the source code available upon request.

That's tied to the exclusive rights of the copyright owner to copy, distribute or modify the software.

THE COURT: All right.
MR. WILLIAMS: If -- if there was some other -and that's the -- the concern here is that there are no cases -- and I would have gone through them -- and I can distinguish them that -- that say -- that address the issue that say a copyright holder could simply choose, based upon the same conduct, whether to pursue copyright infringement or breach of contract. There are cases that say you have a copyright infringement claim for exceeding the scope of the license, and you have a breach of contract claim for violation of some other covenant, and there are cases that plaintiff cites that -- that deal with that. The Effects case from the Ninth Circuit -- the case that Judge Kozinski offered, that didn't hold that the parties can simply elect. It said there was -- in that case there was no written license agreement. So the question was, is there an implied license. If there's no implied license to use, the -- the copyrighted material, then there's copyright infringement. If there is an implied license, then your remedy is left to breach of contract. So all of the cases fall under the same rubric of whether the issue involved is a condition that's tied to an exclusive
right under the contract -- under the license. And if so, your remedy is copyright. Otherwise, to allow them to convert to a breach of contract claim would violate the very purpose behind preemption, is to not allow state law claims to interfere with what Congress has decided to be the exclusive rights. And, again, because this is a case of artful pleading, the court can properly look at extrinsic evidence. And in their -you know, I do want to address, they claim that -- you know, our reference to the correspondence with them is somehow inadmissible settlement discussions, but they referenced their demand letter to us in their complaint, none of which says it's for settlement purposes.

THE COURT: Regardless of inadmissibility, I'm not sure of relevance though. I mean, I don't decide what the Copyright Act means and whether it falls within an exclusive copyright provision based on pre-litigation arguments of one side or the other.

MR. WILLIAMS: Understood, Your Honor, but it demonstrates, we believe, the disingenuous nature of their position, and so they -- leading up to this, they -- they've agreed with all of our positions. I mean, Exhibit 2, the Williams' declaration -- which is their demand letter -- is entirely consistent with the arguments we've laid out as to why these claims are in
effect. It's -- Vizio has failed to comply with this particular source code provision; they instantly terminated all our rights, which then leads to give rise to a claim for copyright infringement. That is their position. That shows that what they've now put in to state court is an artful pleading way to try to avoid federal preemption, because they recognize they don't have the ability to bring a copyright claim, because they're not the copyright holders. They're trying to greatly expand the law here and -- and basically do away with the preemption argument, because they're staying the same conduct. It's not just an essential element. It has to be an essential element that transforms the nature of the claim, but the conduct here is identical. They're saying we failed to comply with the source code provision, and, therefore, we're liable for breach of contract, but if that's the condition to the license that relates to the copying and modification of distribution of the software --

THE COURT: But -- but what is your limitation on what relates to the copying right or distribution of the software? In other words, what you're saying is a copyright holder could enter into a licensing agreement that conditions anything on, if you violate -- if you violate this term of the contract, you -- you are going
outside the scope of the -- of your license. They could say that about anything, correct? You -- you are not entitled to modify or distribute, unless you comply with all of these different terms, and they could be along the lines of the ones identified in MDY. What -- how is it that other than by -- by proclamation, you know, the -- this is tied to distribution? I mean, the -- as the plaintiffs -- as the plaintiff points out, the right they are seeking is greater -- it's greater distribution. In other words, it's essentially the opposite of what is typically protected under copyright law. And it's -- in their view, whether correctly or incorrectly -- to benefit them as third parties to a contract. And so they can't bring it as a copyright claim. The nature of the claim is one that is contrary to exclusive rights under the copyright. So you're saying simply by the fact that the copyright holder has linked it to distribution, means that -- that that's it; that you can't meet the standard of an extra element that changes the nature of the action.

MR. WILLIAMS: Your Honor, it's no different than the example you just gave, which is, if the copyright holder said, you could make one copy of this, and no more. That's tied -- that condition is tied to copying which is the copyright holder's exclusive right
to control. If -- this is not about the terms of use. The GPLs do not say you can -- you can't use this software to do $A, B, C$ and $D$ and that's a condition of the -- of the license. Here, it's saying, if you want to make a copy or you want to distribute it, you have to do this. They're intertwined with the exclusive rights under the Copyright Act. So if, for example, you know, there's some other provision in the contract that says, you know, you agree -- and that's why the cases they cite, the Altera case from the Ninth Circuit is readily distinguishable, because there it dealt with the right to use the software which is not an exclusive right under the Copyright Act. And it distinguished that from the right to reproduce.

THE COURT: What if the copyright holder were to tie use of the software to distribution? In other words, if you use it in the following prohibited ways, your distribution rights end. You can't distribute it to the extent you have distribution rights. You can't copy it. What if they tie it to use? If you use it in the way that we don't authorize, you can't distribute.

MR. WILLIAMS: Your Honor, I would have to know what the actual language, because it comes down to the contract interpretation, but if -- again, as the Ninth Circuit has said, if it is -- if there's a nexus
between the -- an exclusive right and a condition, then it's copyright infringement. So if -- you know, I'd have to see -- I mean, because again, Altera and MDY dealt with terms of use that were violations of the -of the agreement, but because they were used and not the right to copy or distribute -- which are exclusive rights -- the court found that they were only covenants. So, again, I mean, it comes down to a question of how is this -- I mean, it would -- it would essentially undo any, you know, the MDY decision to say, that, well, I mean, if you put any limitation on the ability to copy or distribute or modify, then that is -- that meets the standard then. And that's exactly what the court in Jacobsen II -- I mean, again, think about it in a sense that there is no -- that what -- there is no extra element. I mean, here, the elements are identical. They haven't identified what the -- how this element transforms the nature of the claim. I mean, that's a significant issue here, because --

THE COURT: I'll give you one more minute, and then I'll give plaintiff a couple of minutes in response, and then we need to move on to the next one.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So, Your Honor, I think that -- again, looking at the cases that they have cited in their reply -- we have, for example, the Crispin case
that talks about, you know, there, the breach of contract claim was based on a different term than the copyright infringement claim. Vizio's position is not that you can never have a case which a breach of contract claim and a copyright claim coexist, but you can't have a case where the breach of contract claim and the copyright infringement claim are based on the identical conduct, because at that point, they're equivalent and under Section 301, the state law claim is preempted. And we -- and, again, I believe that the -the language of this license agreement makes it clear that you terminate, you go outside, you exceed the scope, that gives rise to the claim for copyright infringement. That's how you determine if this is a copyright case or a contract case. We believe it clearly is a -- a copyright case, and they have artfully pled around it. And their positions in prior litigation -- and even with us previously is -- is indicative of the fact that this is an artful pled complaint.

THE COURT: All right. Thank you. Mr. Schlaff, I'll just give you another minute or so.

MR. SCHLAFF: Your Honor, first of all, this whole condition covenant thing that they're putting before Your Honor, they're importing from a series of
cases that are about a litigant trying to open the door to copyright, to enforce a right through copyright as opposed to breach of contract. In the Sun Microsystems case, for example, there's an attempt to go through copyright, because there's a -- at that time, there was presumption of irreparable harm, and they wanted that presumption. The cases that we've cited are under the Ninth Circuit about copyright and contract cases being able to coexist, are myriad. The MDY case talks -specifically says, contractual rights are much broader than the right under a copyright. Copyrights now -contract rights are broader. Their whole analysis ignores the extra element test, and it ignores the language that they, themselves quote that say an extra element is not only an extra element giving rise to the -- the cause of action, but an extra remedy. There's a remedy that you can't get through copyright. You can get it through state law cases. And there's simply nothing that supports their position. They've taken --

THE COURT: So are you -- so is the plaintiff conceding that this is a -- that there is a covenant condition distinction and that this is a condition?

MR. SCHLAFF: I don't think that there is a covenant condition distinction for whether or not you
can assert a contract cause of action. They're taking a distinction that that was -- that was written out in a series of cases that were about whether the plaintiff got to use the presumption of irreparable harm under -under copyright. And it might be -- that analysis might be pertinent to that kind of case, but it's irrelevant to this case.

THE COURT: All right. All right. I think I have enough information. And I appreciate the arguments, both in the papers and here today. I think that your papers were very good. So I appreciate that. And the matter will be taken under submission, and the Court's ruling will be posted on the docket.

MR. WILLIAMS: Your Honor, just as a housekeeping matter, you had mentioned the motion to dismiss. If the Court may recall, the parties that originally agreed to have the motion to dismiss and the remand motion set for, I believe it was June 3rd, and then the Court advanced the remand motion hearing to today. So our -- we have a reply brief that is due on the motion to dismiss next Friday, the 20 th which is two weeks before that scheduled hearing. So I just wanted to clarify that that was on a separate track, based upon the stipulated court order?

THE COURT: Oh, I wasn't sure that we had done
it that way. So that was my fault, I suppose in introducing the case, because I thought that both were in front of me, but $I$ focused on remand first for obvious reasons. One does not decide a motion to dismiss until one has decided remand. So when is your reply brief due?

MR. WILLIAMS: A week from today, the 20th.
THE COURT: All right. If I think that I need
more time, I will -- I will let you know, and we'll move
that; but for right now, $I$ don't think anything else needs to take place on that.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you, Your Honor.
THE COURT: I mean, I don't have to change
anything just yet. All right. Okay. Thank you, both. MR. SCHLAFF: Thank you, Your Honor.

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Your Honor.
(Whereupon, proceeding adjourned.)

## C ERTIFICATE

SOFTWARE FREEDOM CONSERVANCY, : INC.
: No. SACV 21-01943-JLS
vs.
:
VIZIO, INC., et al.

I, MARIA BUSTILLOS, OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER, IN AND FOR THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT PURSUANT TO SECTION 753, TITLE 28, UNITED STATES CODE, THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND CORRECT TRANSCRIPT OF THE STENOGRAPHICALLY REPORTED PROCEEDINGS HELD IN THE ABOVE-ENTITLED MATTER AND THAT THE TRANSCRIPT PAGE FORMAT IS IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS OF THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEES CHARGED FOR THIS TRANSCRIPT, LESS ANY CIRCUIT FEE REDUCTION AND/OR DEPOSIT, ARE IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS OF THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES.
/S/ 07/02/2022

MARIA R. BUSTILLOS
DATE OFFICIAL REPORTER


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