

# Benjamin K. Semel

Partner



New York, NY



bsemel@pryorcashman.com



212.326.0131



Partner Benjamin Semel serves as co-chair of Pryor Cashman’s Music Group and Media and Entertainment Litigation Practice, chair of the AI Interdisciplinary Group, and a member of the Litigation Group. Ben has extensive experience representing clients in the music, entertainment, and media industries in complex and high-stakes matters, and is a thought leader in protecting the rights of content creators and owners. He is known for his strategic thinking and ability to achieve successful outcomes for his clients that address their short- and long-term goals, and has served as lead counsel on multibillion-dollar matters with industrywide impact in the music space.

Ben’s experience and results have made him a sought-after legal advisor for clients seeking to navigate complex legal issues. His reputation has been recognized with top industry awards, including repeated selection in *Billboard’s* Top Music Lawyers and *Variety’s* Legal Impact Report, recognizing top attorneys, as well as the *New York Law Journal’s* Trailblazers Award, celebrating “true agents of change” who have made a significant impact in their area of practice.

Ben’s experience also goes well beyond the media space, spanning a wide variety of commercial areas. He has managed numerous matters involving intellectual property, including disputes over trademark and trade secret protection; copyrights in film, television, music, software, literature, and architectural works; and rights of publicity and privacy and allegations of idea theft. Ben also maintains an active practice in technology law, addressing issues for digital media and emerging technology companies. His practice extends to other commercial litigation areas, including a broad spectrum of contract disputes, tort claims, and regulatory enforcement matters. Ben’s experience extends to federal and state courts and federal agency proceedings, as well as alternative dispute resolution (ADR) cases before various organizations, such as the American Arbitration Association (AAA), its international affiliate ICDR, JAMS, FINRA, and others. His experience on all sides of ADR, including as a mediator and arbitrator for New York City courts, enhances his ability to effectively represent clients in negotiations and litigation.

Representative matters include serving as counsel to:

- Songwriters and music publishers, through their trade organizations National Music Publishers’ Association and Nashville Songwriters Association International, in successful Copyright Royalty Board proceedings to set the nationwide mechanical royalty rates for interactive streaming for the periods 2018-2022 and 2023-2027.
- The Mechanical Licensing Collective, since its inception.
- Rightsholders and trade organizations in numerous rulemaking proceedings before the U.S. Copyright Office.
- Rightsholders in successful landmark digital piracy case against Grooveshark.

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- Major and independent record companies and music publishers in numerous licensing negotiations.
- Artists and songwriters, from stadium headliners to independent and emerging creators, with respect to copyright and trademark issues, band and management agreements, and other counseling.
- One of the nation's largest ticket brokers in a federal lawsuit by Ticketmaster involving copyright and contract claims and antitrust counterclaims.
- A defendant in an FDIC enforcement action, obtaining complete dismissal after trial and a \$1.5 million fee award against the FDIC, in what the *New York Law Journal* described as a "rare victory" over the FDIC.
- Plaintiffs in obtaining a \$58 million jury verdict against a major pharmaceutical company in a breach of contract and fraud dispute over the sale of a medical program for the treatment of prostate cancer.

Prior to his legal career, Ben worked in print journalism and radio, and alongside his legal career, he has engaged in extensive international travel and charitable work, journeying across more than 100 nations, participating in teaching, NGO management, disaster relief, and conservation and animal welfare projects.

## Services

- Copyright
- Intellectual Property
- Interactive + Gaming
- Litigation
- Media + Entertainment
- M+E Litigation
- M+E Transactions and Financing
- Music
- Music Litigation
- Restrictive Covenants + Trade Secrets

## Education

- Columbia Law School (J.D., 1998)
  - Kent Scholar, the highest academic honor awarded; Class of 1912 Prize, given to the top student in the field of contracts
- Brown University (B.A., 1992)

## Recognition

- Recognized as a top lawyer by **Chambers USA** in Media & Entertainment: Litigation (New York) (2026)
- Named one of *Lawdragon* 500 Leading Global IP Lawyers for IP, Litigation – Music, Entertainment (2025)
- Named one of *Lawdragon* 500 Leading Global Entertainment, Sports & Media Lawyers for Litigation - Music, Media, Entertainment, AI (2025)
- Recognized in *Variety's* Music Legal Elite Report (2024-25)
- Named a "Top Music Lawyer" by *Billboard* (2021-25)
- Recognized in *Variety's* Legal Impact Report (2020-24)
- Named a 2021 Music "Trailblazer" by the *New York Law Journal*
- Named to the *Super Lawyers – New York Metro* list in Business Litigation (2025)

## Community

- Board of Directors, Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF)

## Admissions

- New York, 1999

## **Professional Affiliations**

- New York State Bar Association

## **Languages**

- Spanish

## **Publications**

October 8, 2012

**International Trade Commission Proposes New E-Discovery Rules for Patent Cases**