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Swiftly Navigating the Importance of IP

Few pop icons have navigated the art of protecting their intellectual property as well as Taylor Swift. Not only does Taylor Swift have an outstanding knack for creating number one hits, a keen eye for branding, and an entrepreneurial spirit that is inspiring, she is also business savvy in protecting her trademarks and copyright. On this International Women's Day 2024 we look to Taylor Swift as an inspiration in IP protection, enforcement, and commercialization, as we celebrate women who "could show you incredible things".

"Shake it Off": The Copyright Controversy

Swift's hit song "Shake it Off" has not only become an anthem for shrugging off criticism but it is also an example of complexities in copyright law. When faced with an alleged copyright infringement challenge, Swift however did not "shake it off", she stood her ground. The legal dispute alleged copyright infringement by Swift as to certain lyrics in her hit song "Shake it Off". In the copyright dispute, Swift was alleged to have used lyrics from "Playas Gon' Play". She defended the allegations on various grounds including that any similarity in terminology resulted from the words being part of common everyday culture. Although this legal battle against her spanned many years it was ultimately dropped (see examples here and here). Swift seemingly recognizes the importance of artistic integrity and fiercely defends her intellectual property rights. In the legal arena, it isn't just about "sick beats" but also about legal beatdowns.

Trademark ''Superstar''

Taylor Swift is a branding star, with Swifties following her every move and clamoring for all things Taylor Swift. As part of managing her brand power, Swift takes her trademarks seriously. She is quick to seek out protection and enforcement. She has trademarked phrases such as "Party Like It's 1989" and "can show you incredible things" (see examples here and here). The trademarks protect such phrases from being used without permission, including on merchandise such as notebooks, T-shirts, toiletries, bags, and music related items like guitar straps to name just a few. It is clear there is immense value in Swift protecting and commercializing her brand and marks. The business empire of Taylor Swift is layered with

creativity, innovation and business strategy (see example here). Protecting and enforcing the Swift brand and trademarks is a strong mechanism of maintaining market dominance and proprietary control. This is yet another reminder of a “fearless” and savvy women demonstrating boldness in business.

The “End Game”

Whether in defending copyright in her music or actively seeking to protect her brand, Swift appears to appreciate the importance of intellectual property. Although there may be times where imitation is a form of flattery, in the entertainment space and in intellectual property, the true currency is in originality.

The Taylor Swift example is a great reminder of the importance of intellectual property rights and how to use IP to broaden brand recognition and increase asset value. With her savvy legal manoeuvres and branding swiftness, Taylor Swift smartly protects her creative works and ingenuity. So go ahead, innovate, build your brand, fill in the “blank space”, “write your name,” and protect it!