

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

Lawand Hill v. Sloppy Vinyl, LLC; Michael Cameron, individually;
Water Music Publishing, doing business as Rich Water Publishing;
and John Doe Companies 1-20

Hill v. Sloppy Vinyl · No. 2:25-cv-15238 (BRM) (AME) · Decided March 5, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of New Jersey granted defendants’ Rule 12(b)(6) motion and dismissed Lawand Hill’s complaint without prejudice. The court held that a settlement agreement was operative and that its broad release provision encompassed Hill’s copyright, contract, fraud, emotional-distress, name-and-likeness, and unjust-enrichment claims. The court declined to award defendants attorneys’ fees under the settlement agreement because defendants had not initiated the suit.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Brian R. Martinotti
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
DECIDED	March 5, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-15238 (BRM) (AME)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss Plaintiff's six-count complaint. The court granted the motion and dismissed the complaint without prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true, draws reasonable inferences in favor of the nonmoving party, and determines whether the complaint states a facially plausible claim for relief. The court may consider documents integral to or explicitly relied upon in the complaint.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished

PARTIES

Lawand Hill v. Sloppy Vinyl, LLC, Michael Cameron, individually, Water Music Publishing, doing business as Rich Water Publishing, John Doe Companies 1-20

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

breach of contract

contract interpretation

copyright law

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

contracts

copyright

torts

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the settlement agreement became effective despite Plaintiff's assertion that a condition precedent was not satisfied.
2. Whether the settlement agreement's broad release provision bars Plaintiff's claims.
3. Whether Defendants' alleged breaches prevented them from enforcing the settlement agreement when Plaintiff did not allege compliance with the agreement's notice-and-cure provision.
4. Whether Defendants were entitled to attorneys' fees under the settlement agreement's indemnification and fee provisions.

HOLDINGS

1. The settlement agreement became operative because its condition precedent required the parties to execute the attached amendment, and the parties executed that amendment.
2. The settlement agreement's broad release bars Plaintiff's claims because it releases any and all claims, known or unknown, related to the parties' relationship, and Plaintiff did not assert a recognized exception or that her claims fell outside the release.
3. Plaintiff could not rely on alleged breaches to avoid the settlement agreement because she did not allege or argue that she provided the contractually required notice and opportunity to cure before filing suit.
4. Defendants were not entitled to attorneys' fees under the settlement agreement because the indemnification clause applies to third-party liability and Defendants did not initiate a suit under the separate fee provision.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A release of claims pursuant to a settlement agreement is [a] simple legal contract, which 'should be enforced to preclude a lawsuit stemming from the related events provided there is no applicable exception to the release defense.'"

"Under no circumstances may the non-breaching party stop performance and continue to take advantage of the contract's benefits."

“The release applies to “any and all” claims that Plaintiff “at any time may have” against Defendants, “by reason of any matter . . . in any way related to the relationship of the Parties hereto.””

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, an independent recording artist, entered recording agreements with Water Music Publishing and the other defendants. She alleged that Michael Cameron coerced her into a sexual relationship, harassed and humiliated her, improperly sublicensed her catalog, and caused emotional, financial, and reputational harm. In April 2025, Plaintiff executed a Settlement Release with Sloppy Vinyl and Cameron, but later alleged that Defendants failed to provide an accounting, asserted fabricated balances, and violated the agreement concerning use of her likeness. Plaintiff then sued on six theories, while relying on the settlement agreement in related litigation.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed claims for copyright infringement, breach of contract, fraudulent inducement, intentional infliction of emotional distress, misuse of name, image, and likeness, and unjust enrichment. Defendants moved to dismiss, Plaintiff opposed, and Defendants replied. The court declined oral argument and dismissed the complaint without prejudice because the parties' settlement agreement released the asserted claims.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Philips v. County of Alleghany, 515 F.3d 224, 228 (3d Cir. 2008)
- In re Burlington Coat Factory Securities Litigation, 114 F.3d 1410, 1426 (3d Cir. 1997)
- Shaw v. Digital Equipment Corp., 82 F.3d 1194, 1220 (1st Cir. 1996)
- Alexander v. Gennarini, 144 F. App'x 924, 926 (3d Cir. 2005)
- Cooke v. Experian Information Solutions, Inc., Civ. A. No. 22-05375, 2024 WL 1142214, at *2 (D.N.J. Mar. 15, 2024)
- Huff v. Atlantic County Justice Facility, Civ. A. No. 20-9761, 2021 WL 307303, at *2 (D.N.J. Jan. 29, 2021)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 570 (2007)
- Conley v. Gibson, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)
- Papasan v. Allain, 478 U.S. 265, 286 (1986)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 670, 678-79 (2009)
- Doe v. Princeton University, 30 F.4th 335, 342, 345 (3d Cir. 2022)
- Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics, Inc. v. Fulcrum Clinical Laboratories, Inc., Civ. A. No. 21-2530, 2023 WL 3983877, at *3 (D.N.J. June 13, 2023)
- Jacob's Limousine Transportation, Inc. v. City of Newark, 688 F. App'x 150, 151 (3d Cir. 2017)
- Excelsior Insurance v. Pennsbury Pain Center, 975 F. Supp. 342, 348-49 (D.N.J. 1996)

- Sheet Metal Workers International Association Local Union No. 27 v. E.P. Donnelly, Inc., 737 F.3d 879, 900 (3d Cir. 2013)
- Weisman v. New Jersey Department of Human Services, 982 F. Supp. 2d 386, 392, 395 (D.N.J. 2013)
- Nolan v. Lee Ho, 577 A.2d 143, 146 (N.J. 1990)
- Peskin v. Peskin, 638 A.2d 849, 856 (N.J. Super. Ct. App. Div. 1994)
- Williams v. Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, 322 F. App'x 111, 113 (3d Cir. 2009)
- Brundage v. Estate of Carambio, 951 A.2d 947, 961 (N.J. 2008)
- Department of Public Advocate v. New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, 503 A.2d 331, 334 (N.J. Super. Ct. App. Div. 1985)
- Travelodge Hotels, Inc. v. Durga, LLC, Civ. A. No. 15-8412, 2024 WL 4345051, at *11 (D.N.J. Sept. 30, 2024)
- Red Roof Franchising, LLC v. Patel, 877 F. Supp. 2d 124, 133-34 (D.N.J. 2012)
- S&R Corp. v. Jiffy Lube International, Inc., 968 F.2d 371, 376 (3d Cir. 1992)
- Atlantic City Associates, LLC v. Carter & Burgess Consultants, Inc., 453 F. App'x 174, 181 (3d Cir. 2011)
- Investors Savings Bank v. Waldo Jersey City, LLC, 12 A.3d 264, 270-71 (N.J. Super. Ct. App. Div. 2011)
- Travelers Indemnity Co. v. Dammann & Co., 592 F. Supp. 2d 752, 766-67 (D.N.J. 2008), aff'd, 594 F.3d 238, 255 (3d Cir. 2010)