

'NEVERMIND' BABY SUES NIRVANA FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The US man who featured as a baby on the cover of Nirvana's "Nevermind" album, one of the most famous album covers of all time, is suing the band for sexual exploitation, according to a lawsuit. Spencer Elden was photographed in 1991, when he was four months old, naked in a swimming pool reaching for a dollar bill on a fish hook. The album went on to sell 30 million copies, with songs such as "Smells Like Teen Spirit" becoming American pop cultural touchstones.

But neither Elden nor his legal guardians "ever signed a release authorizing the use of any images of Spencer or of his likeness, and certainly not of commercial child pornography depicting him," the lawsuit said. It also said Elden had never received any compensation for the image, and asked for \$150,000 in damages from each of the 15 defendants-including the surviving former members of the band, Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic, as well as the

estate of the late lead singer Kurt Cobain, and the photographer, Kirk Weddle.

The album cover "exposed Spencer's intimate body part and lasciviously displayed Spencer's genitals from the time he was an infant to the present day," the lawsuit, filed in California, said. It said Elden had suffered "extreme and permanent emotional distress," as well as "lifelong loss of income earning capacity," among other consequences. Representatives for Nirvana or the members' record labels have not yet responded to the lawsuit. Elden recreated the album cover multiple times, including for its 25th anniversaries. Weddle, the original photographer, was a friend of his father's, the family told NPR in 2008. They held a pool party during which Elden posed for the then-unknown band. Elden's parents were paid \$200 for the original shoot. — AFP



In this file photo a sign with the image of Kurt Cobain is seen in Kurt Cobain Park in Aberdeen, Washington near the house where Cobain lived and committed suicide. — AFP



Spike Lee

Spike Lee re-edits 9-11 documentary featuring conspiracy theorists

HBO yesterday said that US director Spike Lee is re-editing the final episode of a documentary series on the September 11, 2001 terror attacks that featured interviews with conspiracy theorists. The last episode of the eight-hour series—which focuses on the effect of Al-Qaeda attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic on New York City—includes interviews with a group pushing the debunked theory that the World Trade Center towers were destroyed in a controlled demolition, and not by hijacked airliners crashing into the buildings.

Lee faced criticism for including the interviews after HBO allowed reporters an early viewing of the series. The final episode is set to air on the cable TV network on September 11, the 20th anniversary of the attacks. "I'm Back In The Editing Room And Looking At The Eighth And Final Chapter Of NYC EPI-CENTERS 9/11?2021/2. I Respectfully Ask You To Hold Your Judgment Until You See The FINAL CUT," Lee said in a note posted on an HBO website. — AFP

Disney, Delta and Big Tech dampen movie theater party at CinemaCon

Movie theater bosses have plenty of cause for cheer this week-not least because 2,000 of them are spending it at a bustling Las Vegas casino adorned with posters proclaiming "The Big Screen Is Back." After a year-and-a-half of big film releases placed on hold due to COVID, the CinemaCon trade summit has seen studios show off a glut of forthcoming blockbuster offerings, with James Bond, Batman, Spider-Man and The Matrix all headed for the big screen soon. But beneath the talk of theatrical renaissance is a great deal of uncertainty-highlighted by the absence from Caesars Palace of Disney, which unlike its rivals did not put on a presentation of its theatrical schedule for the next few months.

The Delta variant is keeping Disney executives at home — the same strain of COVID that has reduced US consumer confidence in the safety of going to theaters from its early-summer high. But Disney bosses may have drawn a frosty reception in the desert heat had they met with owners of international multiplexes and independent mom-and-pop theaters, who rely heavily on their wildly popular product.

Hollywood's biggest studio has launched multiple recent films on its own Disney+ streaming platform, including "Black Widow," "Jungle Cruise" and "Cruella," taking money

out of box office registers and popcorn concession stands. While its comedy "Free Guy" and next big Marvel superhero film "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" are exclusive to theaters, nobody knows what Disney is planning next.

"We need to know where they're going in the future," National Association of Theatre Owners chief John Fithian told AFP. "We just don't know what's coming from them after those movies. We need some greater signals about what their release models are," he added. Disney is not alone-rival Warner Bros for instance was slammed by theaters and A-listers for releasing all its 2021 titles on HBO Max, although it has since committed to a shorter, 45-day exclusive big-screen window for next year's movies.

But the competition between entertainment giants to drive new subscribers to their streaming platforms at any cost is a broader issue, and movie theaters are currently caught in the crossfire. "The streaming wars are hot and heavy, and some studios have their streaming platforms as a big priority, and some don't," said Fithian. "We are concerned about the attitude of some on the studio side,

that profitability doesn't matter-all that matters is subscribers," he added.

'Concerned'

The concern raised by Hollywood studios experimenting with streaming is nothing compared to the ever-growing reach of Big Tech. Earlier in the week historic studio MGM confirmed the long-delayed James Bond movie "No Time To Die" will finally see the light of day in October — important due to the franchise's enormous popularity, and symbolic as 007's outing was the first major movie delayed in March 2020. But any mention of the Hollywood Golden Age-era studio's ongoing takeover by tech giant Amazon was, like Disney, conspicuously absent. "What does an Amazon acquisition of MGM mean? We don't know," said Fithian.

"I hope it means that the creative vision, and the ways that movies are released by the MGM team, continues and is encouraged and is fostered. But it might not." While theater owners insist studios will make more money by putting all their films back on the big screen once the pandemic eases, the equation changes for the deep-pocketed likes of Amazon, who have other priorities.

"It's not a business model that means they want big returns on their movies—they want to drive people to Amazon Prime," Fithian said. "It does concern us when a gigantic tech company like that proposes to acquire a historic film studio with filmmakers that want their movies in our theaters," he added. The Amazon-MGM deal was announced in May, and is currently the subject of a federal antitrust probe. While the theater owners' group has not taken a formal position, Fithian noted that regulators have the power to block or attach specific conditions to any merger. — AFP



In this file photo British actor Daniel Craig poses for pictures during the presentation of the 24th edition of the James Bond movie "Spectre", in Mexico City. — AFP