

THE RECORDER

ALM | LAW.COM
CALIFORNIA
LEGAL AWARDS
2024



ENTERTAINMENT LAWYER OF THE YEAR: Marvin Putnam, Latham & Watkins



Courtesy photo

Marvin Putnam, with Latham & Watkins.

Marvin Putnam is a partner with Latham & Watkins.

What's your proudest professional achievement of the past year and why?

My proudest professional achievement cannot be revealed as it involved thwarting a baseless threat to an entertainment client that nonetheless would have caused reputational harm had it been publicly alleged—and doing so without any payment or acquiescence. For publicly known matters, I'm particularly proud of the complete victory secured on behalf of the NAACP, defending the civil rights organization in a lawsuit where they were accused of First Amendment rights violations after several cities canceled the 2021 "Put America First" rallies.

As Judge Hernan Vera of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California said when granting our motion to dismiss all claims with prejudice, this lawsuit was a "misguided effort to settle political scores" by "hauling nine civil rights groups into federal court for speaking out against an event—[which] should shock in equal measure civic members from across the political spectrum."

I am also proud to have successfully defended Netflix in some of the baseless lawsuits brought against them for supposedly defamatory content, such as for the film "No Limit." Increasingly, the media seems to forget, to their great peril, that the First Amendment protects storytellers who take

the raw materials of life—including the stories of real people—and turn them into art. You don't need permission to do that.

What advice would you give to new attorneys specializing in entertainment law?

Don't mistake aggression for competence.

How is the practice of entertainment law changing?

The practice of entertainment law is one of constant transformation, mirroring the rapid evolution of the entertainment industry itself. With fields like artificial intelligence, virtual reality, gaming, and the like posing novel legal questions—or at least novel takes on age-old legal questions, we necessarily must adapt to a digital landscape that is increasingly complex and technology-driven.

That has been true since the dawn of the industry and continues to be true today. Entertainment is dead; long live entertainment.