

Rising Star: Mayer Brown's Allison Stillman

By Hailey Konnath

Law360 (September 25, 2019, 4:31 PM EDT) -- Allison Stillman of Mayer Brown LLP has advised prominent digital media companies on cutting-edge copyright issues, including helping secure court approval of a \$43 million settlement on behalf of Spotify last year in a suit brought by songwriters, earning her a spot as one of the media and entertainment law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

WHY SHE'S AN ENTERTAINMENT ATTORNEY IN IP:

Stillman said she has always been drawn to intellectual property, and copyrights in particular, because it presents difficult and interesting legal issues that appeal to her academic sensibilities but also bring entertainment.

"It's fun to get to dive into really challenging academic issues, but ones that are not just academic because they play out in real-life ways that are easy to see all around you in the way you listen to music, the way you use digital services and the way you consume other types of IP content," she said.

And right now is a "particularly exciting time in the digital music space," Stillman said. She's at the forefront of helping industry-leading digital media services navigate the recently enacted Music Modernization Act, which made major changes to how streaming music services, such as Spotify and Pandora, pay so-called mechanical royalties, which go to songwriters when a musical composition is reproduced.

In particular, she has been working with the Digital Media Association, whose members include Amazon, Apple, Google and Pandora, in connection with implementing the legislation. The changes will likely impact the legal landscape of the digital music industry for a long time to come, Stillman said.

RISING

STAR



Allison Stillman
Mayer Brown

Age: 39

Home base: New York

Position: Partner

Law school: University of Pennsylvania Law School

First job after law school: Law clerk for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

"It's really fun to be at the center of that and get to participate in that," she said.

In the Spotify case, Stillman helped win federal court approval for a settlement resolving claims that the company chose "systemic" infringement rather than following procedures to pay mechanical royalties. Under the terms of the deal, Spotify paid songwriters \$43.45 million for past royalties and committed to pay ongoing royalties valued at \$63 million.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Stillman said she enjoys helping her clients tackle complicated and complex issues critical to their businesses and knowing that she has their "trust to guide them through these issues."

"I think there's something really meaningful about that kind of relationship," she said.

HER PROUDEST MOMENT AS AN ATTORNEY:

Stillman was promoted to partner at Mayer Brown in January 2015. And she got the news of her promotion while she was out on a lengthy maternity leave with her first child.

"So there were obviously a lot of exciting things happening at once for me personally," she said. "But I think it really speaks to how supportive Mayer Brown has been in the development of my career, and my family as well. Those are competing demands that are not that easy to juggle at the same time."

THE FUTURE OF ENTERTAINMENT AND IP LAW:

Digital media is changing fast, Stillman said, and the law tends to lag behind the technology.

"One of the things I love about practicing copyright and related IP law in the media space in particular is everything is changing all the time," Stillman said.

Notably, the Music Modernization Act will impact the licensing landscape for digital media companies for some time, she said. Stillman added, "And I expect there to be a lot of other significant changes in the future, as well."

— As told to Hailey Konnath

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2019 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,300 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 years old as of April 30, 2019, in order to be considered for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.