



→ Robert A. Darwell

Partner

1901 Avenue of the Stars
Suite 1600
Los Angeles, CA 90067

T: +1.310.228.3740

C: +1.310.925.0865

rdarwell@sheppardmullin.com

Robert Darwell is the Head of Global Media and a senior partner in the Entertainment, Technology and Advertising Practice Group in the firm's Century City office. In August 2024, the Beverly Hills Bar Association honored Darwell as Entertainment Lawyer of the Year and in January 2025, AMEC (Association of Media and Entertainment Counsel) awarded Sheppard Mullin's Entertainment Practice Group as Counsel of the Year.

Areas of Practice

2024 proved to be another extraordinary year for Darwell and his team. Darwell's team worked on the acquisition and development of hundreds of motion picture and television projects. After representing Amazon in connection with its acquisition of MGM, Amazon's second largest acquisition in history, Darwell and his colleagues worked with their in house counterparts on the integration of the revered MGM library into Amazon MGM Studios. On top of that, Darwell also guided Amazon MGM Studios, Wondery, Twitch, Nickelodeon, Disney, Peacock and Meta in connection with numerous high-profile movie, television, podcast and AI projects.

Over the course of Darwell's legal career, he's worked on the development, finance, production and distribution of hundreds of motion pictures and television productions (including personal favorites such as "Traffic", "Brokeback Mountain", and "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind"). In addition, he regularly handles major newsworthy deals such as Disney's termination of Bob and Harvey Weinstein (which garnered him the prestigious CLAY Award as California Entertainment Lawyer of the Year for Entertainment) and Disney's subsequent sale of Miramax. Darwell also acted as lead entertainment counsel to Comcast in connection with its acquisition of NBC Universal.

Darwell brought his team to Sheppard Mullin in 2003 and served as Chair of the Entertainment, Technology and Advertising practice for more than a decade as it achieved accolades such as Top Tier ranked by Chambers and US Legal 500, as well as Entertainment Practice Group of the Year by Law 360.

Through the years, Darwell launched several specialty practices in the areas of advertising, fashion, and art law and has handled transactions that reflect the intersection of those verticals as well as those in sports, music, gaming, merchandising and mobile/digital areas. He represents clients in all segments of these businesses around the world.

Darwell studied law at Georgetown in Washington, DC and focused his studies on international trade. While there, he worked for the Attaché de Presse at the French Embassy and for DC powerhouse law firm Wilmer Cutler (where he had the opportunity to assist Lloyd Cutler, who served as counsel to President Carter).

At Georgetown, Darwell took the only entertainment course offered at that time and, following the tragic deaths of Vic Morrow and two child actors on the set of "The Twilight Zone" movie, wrote his seminar paper on the employment of minors in the entertainment industry. Its publication coincided with the birth of the first of his three children. Upon graduation, Darwell moved to Los Angeles and combined his passion for entertainment and media with his interest in international business and finance.

Darwell travels and works regularly from locations around the world. Always reachable, clients praise his availability at all hours and dedication to service and excellence. Darwell is often invited to speak at international film festivals, including at the Toronto, Zurich, Havana, Beijing, Shanghai and Rome International Film Festivals, among others.

When not negotiating and drafting, Darwell may be found in the DJ booth (on Sunset Boulevard, in Mexico City, Paris, or Zurich) or taking photos for his popular Instagram feed @TheDailyServer. Recently, Darwell completed directing two documentary films, "The 90s Club", which strikes a hard blow against ageism and "Black Uniform", which focuses on 12 Black men and women who served in the U.S. military between WWII and present. Both films are now available on Amazon, screened in dozens of festivals, and garnered numerous awards. He is currently in production on his third documentary, "Crowning Achievement", featuring a dozen former Miss America winners through the decades.

Honors

Leading Global Entertainment, Sports & Media Lawyer, *Lawdragon*, 2025

Entertainment Lawyer of the Year, *Beverly Hills Bar Association*, 2024

Entertainment Business Visionary, *Los Angeles Times*, 2024

Top 10 Influential Transactional Attorney in California's Media & Entertainment, *Business Today*, 2023

Top 100 Music Lawyers, *Billboard*

USA Thought Leader, *Who's Who Legal*, 2023-2024

Power Lawyer, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 20 out of 20 years (2006-2025)

Top Entertainment Attorney, *Variety's Legal Impact Report*, 2022-2025

Who's Who Legal: Telecoms, Media & Entertainment, 2023-2024

Who's Who Legal: Sports & Gaming 2022-2024

Dealmakers Impact Report, *Variety*

Marketing and Advertising, *Legal 500*

Media and Entertainment, *Legal 500*

Leading Lawyer in Media & Entertainment (California), *Chambers USA*

Daily Journal: Top Entertainment Lawyers

Top Thirty Media Practitioners in the U.S., *Expert Guides*

CLAY Award, Attorney of the Year, Entertainment, *California Lawyer*

California's Top Entertainment Lawyer, *Daily Journal*

AlwaysOn Power Player in Digital Media

Top Rated Lawyer in Technology, *American Lawyer Media* and Martindale-Hubbell

20 Most Important People to Meet at AFM, *The Hollywood Reporter*

Which Lawyer?, Practical Law Company, Media

One of Top 100 Lawyers in California, *Daily Journal*

Best Lawyer in America, Advertising and Entertainment categories, *Best Lawyers*

One of 40 Who's Who in Law?, *LA Business Journal*

Southern California Super Lawyer

Best of the Bar, Media and Entertainment, *Los Angeles Business Journal*

Lawdragon 500 Leading Lawyers In America, *Lawdragon Magazine*

500 New Worlds, New Stars, *Lawdragon*

3000 Leading Lawyers in America, *Lawdragon*

Experience

Representative Experience

- Represented Amazon Studios in connection with its acquisition of MGM.
- Counsel to Hemisphere Media Group in connection with its acquisition of Lionsgate's interest in Spanish language SVOD platform Pantaya and distribution company Pantelion.
- Lead entertainment counsel to Comcast in connection with its multi-billion dollar acquisition of NBC Universal.
- Represented Disney on the sale of Miramax.
- Represented Los Angeles Clippers in connection with multi-year telecast rights agreement.
- Represent television powerhouse Banijay Entertainment in expanding its reality television empire by acquiring Stephen David Entertainment and Bunim/Murray Productions.
- Counsel to City National Bank in connection with a series of off balance sheet financing transactions for video game titles.
- Represented IAC in connection with its deal with Ben Silverman to form Electus.
- Representation of Focus Features with respect to its co-development/co-financing venture with Random House to form Random House Films.
- Lead outside counsel representing Walt Disney Company in connection with the separation of Bob and Harvey Weinstein from Miramax.
- Legal counsel to producer in the production, distribution, financing and/or acquisition of 100s of high profile motion pictures, including "Better Man", "Air", "Judy", "A Hero", "The Revenant", "Selma", "American Hustle", "Her", "Zero Dark Thirty", "Best Exotic Marigold Hotel", "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind", "Traffic", and "Brokeback Mountain".
- Entertainment counsel to USA Networks in connection with its sale of its entertainment assets to Vivendi Universal.

- Represented ABS as promoter of Manny Pacquiao boxing event in Manila, Philippines.
- Represented South Korean developer in connection with MGM theme park.
- Represented France Animation/Moonscoop in its acquisition of a majority interest in animation company Mike Young Productions.
- Counsel to private equity investor involved in Legendary slate financing arrangement at Warner.
- Structure and negotiate key Telemundo strategic alliances with Globo, Argos, and TV Azteca.
- Entertainment Counsel to USA Networks in connection with its acquisition of Polygram domestic library and merger with October Films to form USA Films.

Articles

- Documentary Filmmaking Makes Me A Better Lawyer
Law360, 02.03.2025
- Seized Art Ownership Row Highlights Importance Of Vetting
Law360, 11.21.2023
- Texas Racing Association joins lawsuit to rein in federal power over doping
Sports Business Journal, 08.22.2023

Art Law Blog: www.artlawgallery.com

Daily Journal: www.dailyjournal.com - Sheppard Mullin Partner Documentary About Nonagenarians

Books

The Art Collecting Legal Handbook: 28 United States – California 462
2023

Media Mentions

Indies' New Foreign-Presale Rules: Tight Budgets, Tough Calls – and Jason Statham
The Ankler, 11.25.2025

Hollywood Power: Behind the Scenes with Top Entertainment Attorney & Producer Robert Darwell
SilverDisobedience, 08.22.2025

Mubi's \$24M Bet Just Made Agents Bullish Again. Here's Why
Dealmakers/The Ankler, 05.27.2025

Black Uniform': A Documentary Honoring the Legacy of Our Unsung Heroes
Los Angeles Sentinel, 02.19.2025

Best in Fest: Experts on Where (&How) to Sell and Indie Film Now
The Ankler, 02.04.2025

TV Sports Surge: Lawyers, Execs & Managers Get Ready to Rumble
The Ankler, 01.07.2025

The Saudi Money You Secretly Want? It Now Comes at a Steep Price
The Ankler, 10.15.2024

Cost-Plus Deals Are Dying. Now What?
The Ankler, 08.06.2024

New Rules of Film Finance: What Private Money Wants Now
The Ankler, 06.19.2024

'Black Uniform' - Remembering and Honoring
Beverly Hills Courier, 06.04.2024

10 Questions: Entertainment lawyer and documentarian knows where the good bars are
ABA Journal, 06.03.2024

Serena Williams Comeback?, Celebrating Black Veterans, Jasmine Crockett And MORE!
Fox Soul, 05.24.2024

What Inspired Entertainment Attorney Robert Darwell to get behind the Camera?
Super Lawyers, 01.11.2024

How Streamers and Dealmakers Alike Are Shifting Strategies Post-Strike
Variety, 12.14.2023

Hollywood Power Lawyer Spotlights Veterans in Documentary 'Black Uniform'
The Hollywood Reporter, 11.10.2023

Parma native, Valley Forge High School grad and Los Angeles powerhouse lawyer living the Hollywood dream
Cleveland.com, 08.14.2023

'The 90s Club' – You Should Live So Long
Beverly Hills Courier, 05.18.2023

Lawyer Puts Spotlight on Black Vets
Los Angeles Business Journal, 04.03.2023

For US collectors buying in London, the dollar's strength may be their only advantage
The Art Newspaper, 10.11.2022

Sheppard Mullin Entertainment Atty's Star Turn As Filmmaker
Law360, 08.12.2022

Dealmakers Impact Report
Variety, 12.04.2018

The Best Job To Prepare You For Biglaw Life
Well, This is Unexpected
Above The Law, 05.02.2017

Say Cheese! Big-Law Partner's Instagram Feed Captures Life in the Tasty Lane
American Lawyer, 05.01.2017

Power Lawyers 2017: Hollywood's Top 100 Attorneys
The Hollywood Reporter, 04.26.2017

Speaking Engagements

Beverly Hill Bar Association - 2023 Transactional Entertainment Law Year in Review

Film Finance Forum East - Making the Sale: Securing Domestic and Intl. Distribution

Beijing International Film Festival - Sino-European Co-Productions

Cannes Film Festival - Slate Film Financing

Havana Film Festival - Co-Production and Distribution Arrangements

Miami International Film Festival - Bank, Bonding and Insurance Panel

Milan Fashion Week - Celebrity Endorsement Deals

Rio Film Festival - North American Production Incentives

Shanghai International Film Festival - Doing Deals with A List Talent

UCLA Entertainment Law Symposium - Celebrity Endorsements and Licenses

Ventana Sur (Buenos Aires) - Remake Deals

Zurich Film Festival - Making Movies and Generating Revenue in Today's Environment

Memberships

Harvard Law School FiLM Society Board of Advisors

Advisory Board, Media Law International

Advisory Committee, Beverly Hills Bar Association's Entertainment Law Summit

Nashville Fashion Forward Advisory Counsel

Law360's Media and Entertainment Editorial Advisory Board

Former Co-Chair, Beverly Hills Bar Association Entertainment Law Section

Past President, Premier Patrons of the American Cinematheque

Emeritis, Planning Committee for the UCLA Entertainment Law Symposium

Practices

Entertainment, Technology and Advertising

International Reach

Japan

Korea

Latin America

Advertising

France

Industries

Advertising

Art

Artificial Intelligence

Entertainment, Technology and Advertising

Esports & Games

Music

Sports

Education

J.D., Georgetown University Law Center, 1988, *magna cum laude*

B.A., Arizona State University, 1985, *summa cum laude*

French Language Program, Sorbonne (University of Paris), 1985

Admissions

California

U.S. District Court of the Central District of California

Languages

French