Eminem's Ring Thing

by Julie Keller
Oct 5, 2005, 10:25 AM PT

Hello, Moto. Goodbye, Eminem.

Via his publishing companies, Eight Mile Style and Martin Affiliated, the rapper has filed suit in U.S. District Court in Detroit to stop five companies from making his tunes available online for cell phone ringtones.

"This is a big business. We're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars a year," the rapper's lawyer, Howard Hertz, told the Detroit News.

Hertz says the lawsuit would block the sale of any rings offered by Cellus, USA; FanMobile; Nextones.com; MyPhoneFiles and MatrixM LLC.

The companies were not available for comment Wednesday.

Ringtone sales are becoming an increasingly bigger slice of the music business. A recent study from Jupiter Research claims that ringtone sales pulled in $217 million in 2004 and will reach $724 million by 2009.

The lawsuits won't stop at cell phones, however. Eminem, whose real name is Marshall Mathers III, is also taking on karaoke companies spinning ill-gotten songs.

"We're going to be going after any ringtones or karaoke companies who use his
songs without getting the proper licenses," Hertz said to the News.

The latest legal salvos aren't exactly surprising, considering Eminem is downright vigilant when it comes to protecting his music.

He sued (and later settled with) Apple for using a song in an iTunes commercial sans permission. He sued to block The Source magazine from publishing the lyrics from unauthorized, racially charged tracks from his early years as a rapper. He also moved up the release of his last two albums to thwart Internet piracy.

As if music thieves weren't enough, Eminem is also battling some personal demons. He recently announced he was "taking a break" from music and then did a stint in rehab to battle drug addiction.