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Designer created Bratz while at Mattel, jury says



Since being introduced in 2001, MGA Entertainment's Bratz dolls have cut into Mattel's Barbie sales. (Stephen Hird/Reuters/File 2004)

By Bloomberg News / July 18, 2008 [Email](#) | [Print](#) | [Single Page](#) | [Text size](#) - +

LOS ANGELES - [Mattel Inc.](#), maker of the Barbie doll, won a jury verdict concluding a former employee made original drawings of MGA Entertainment Inc.'s Bratz dolls while working at Mattel.

A federal jury in Riverside, Calif., agreed yesterday that designer Carter Bryant made most of the first sketches of the pouty Bratz characters while he was employed by Mattel in 1999 and 2000. The verdict might clear the way for Mattel to seek damages for copyright infringement.

The jury found that Bryant had conceived the Bratz characters and name while he was employed by El Segundo, Calif.-based Mattel and that MGA and its chief executive, Isaac Larian, were liable for intentional interference with Bryant's Mattel contract.

"Today's decision is a victory not only for Mattel but for all those who believe in fair play," Mattel chief executive Bob Eckert said. "While the case has been very complicated, the underlying principle has been a simple one: You shouldn't take what isn't yours."

MGA and Bryant argued during the trial that the designer came up with the idea for the dolls and made the original sketches in 1998, while he was living with his parents in Missouri and wasn't working for Mattel.

"The real issues will be flushed out" in the trial's next phase, dealing with Mattel's copyright-infringement claims, MGA lawyer Thomas Nolan said. "We've always taken the strong position that the 3-D Bratz dolls do not infringe on Carter Bryant's drawings."

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On Carter Bryant's drawings.

MGA made substantial changes to the dolls to make them marketable, Nolan said. Their success was a result of branding, he said.

Mattel claimed in court filings that MGA, based in Van Nuys, Calif., gets about \$500 million a year from Bratz sales and licenses. The popularity of Bratz, first introduced in 2001, has contributed to a slide in Mattel's Barbie sales.

Bryant settled with Mattel a week before the start of the trial. Terms weren't disclosed. ■

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