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DAN SCHNEIDER

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DAN SCHNEIDER, an individual,

Plaintiff,

vs.

WARNER BROTHERS DISCOVERY, INC.,
a Delaware corporation; MAXINE
PRODUCTIONS, a California corporation;
SONY PICTURES TELEVISION INC., a
Delaware corporation; MARY ROBERTSON,
an individual; EMMA SCHWARTZ, an
individual; and DOES 1 through 50,
inclusive;

Defendants.

Case No.

COMPLAINT

**1. DEFAMATION PER SE UNDER CIV. CODE
§§ 44-46 AND CALIFORNIA COMMON LAW**

[DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL]

Plaintiff Dan Schneider (“Plaintiff,” “Schneider,” or “Dan”), as and for his Complaint herein against defendants Warner Brothers Discovery, Inc. (“Warner”), Maxine Productions (“Maxine”), Sony Pictures Television Inc. (“Sony”), Mary Robertson (“Robertson”) and Emma Schwartz (“Schwartz”) (collectively, “Defendants”), alleges as follows.

1 **INTRODUCTION**

2 1. This action arises out of the recent television docuseries *Quiet on Set: The Dark Side of*
3 *Kids TV* (“*Quiet on Set*”) in which Defendants falsely state or imply that Schneider—a well-known
4 television producer, creator and/or writer responsible for some of history’s most beloved children’s
5 television shows—sexually abused the children who worked on his television shows. These statements
6 are fabrications.

7 2. Schneider is best known for creating, writing and/or producing Nickelodeon’s children
8 television comedies *All That*, *The Amanda Show*, *Drake & Josh*, *Zoey 101*, *iCarly*, and *Victorious*, among
9 others. These shows are hits, beloved by children and their families when they first ran, and enjoyed by
10 new generations of children and their families today. The shows launched the careers of numerous young
11 actors and burgeoning writers who, to this day, attribute much of their success to Schneider.

12 3. *Quiet on Set*’s portrayal of Schneider is a hit job. While it is indisputable that two bona
13 fide child sexual abusers worked on Nickelodeon shows, it is likewise indisputable that Schneider had
14 no knowledge of their abuse, was not complicit in the abuse, condemned the abuse once it was discovered
15 and, critically, was not a child sexual abuser himself. But for the sake of clickbait, ratings, and views—
16 or put differently, money—Defendants have destroyed Schneider’s reputation and legacy through the
17 false statements and implications that Schneider is exactly that.

18 4. No doubt Defendants will endeavor to obfuscate what this lawsuit is about by pointing to
19 what they did get right—and Schneider will be the first to admit that some of what they said is true. At
20 times, he was blind to the pain that some of his behaviors caused certain colleagues, subordinates, and
21 cast members. He will regret and atone for this behavior the rest of his life. But one thing he is not—and
22 the one thing that will forever mar his reputation and career both past and present—is a child sexual
23 abuser.

24 **PARTIES, JURISDICTION, AND VENUE**

25 5. Schneider is a television writer, creator, producer and screenwriter. While working for
26 Nickelodeon from 1993 through 2018, Schneider created, scripted, and/or produced many of the most
27
28

1 successful television shows of all time for children, teens and families. Schneider is, and at the relevant
2 times mentioned herein was, a resident of Los Angeles County, California.

3 6. Upon information and belief, Warner is a corporation organized under the laws of the
4 State of Delaware, with its principal place of business in New York, New York. Upon information and
5 belief, Warner sometimes does business as “Discovery, Inc.” and/or “ID,” and separately, owns Max.
6 Warner regularly and continuously does business in Los Angeles County, including acts giving rise to
7 the claims and damages set forth herein.

8 7. Upon information and belief, Maxine is a corporation organized under the laws of the
9 State of California, with its principal place of business in Los Angeles County, California. Upon
10 information and belief, Maxine is one of the producers of *Quiet on Set* and its trailer.

11 8. Upon information and belief, Sony is a corporation organized under the laws of the State
12 of Delaware, with its principal place of business located in Los Angeles, California. Upon information
13 and belief, Sony is one of the producers of *Quiet on Set* and its trailer.

14 9. Upon information and belief, Robertson and Schwartz each reside in Los Angeles
15 County, California. Upon information and belief, Robertson and Schwartz wrote, directed, produced
16 and/or edited *Quiet on Set* and its trailer.

17 10. Plaintiff is ignorant of the true names and capacities of Defendants sued herein as DOES
18 1 through 50, inclusive, and therefore sued these Defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff will
19 amend this Complaint to allege the true names and capacities of said Defendants when the same has been
20 ascertained. Each of the fictitiously named Defendants is responsible in some manner for the acts
21 complained of herein. Unless otherwise stated, all references to named Defendants shall include DOE
22 Defendants as well.

23 11. Jurisdiction and venue are proper in this county because, upon information and belief,
24 Defendants are citizens of the State of California and/or residents of Los Angeles County, Defendants
25 regularly do business in this county, the majority of the acts complained of giving rise to the claims and
26 damages asserted herein occurred in this county, and/or Defendants caused injury or damages to
27 Schneider in this county.

1 (given the headline and picture, an average or ordinary person could conclude, based on implication, that
2 the plaintiff was the individual who contracted HIV); *Edwards v. Ellis*, 72 Cal. App. 5th 780, 791 (2021)
3 (issue is whether the “gist or sting” of the statements and graphics together imply a defamatory meaning
4 to the average person).

5 17. The fact that an implied defamatory charge or insinuation leaves room for an innocent
6 interpretation does not mean it is not defamatory. There may be conflicting inferences, but the question
7 is whether “when it is addressed to the public at large, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the
8 readers or viewers will take it in a defamatory sense.” *Macleod v. Tribune Pub. Co.*, 52 Cal. 2d 536, 549,
9 547 (1959) (publication judged “not so much by its effect when subjected to the critical analysis of a
10 mind trained in the law, but by the natural and probable effect upon the mind of [the] reader [i.e.,
11 viewer]”); *Edwards*, 72 Cal. App. 5th at 791 (if statement or implication is susceptible to both an innocent
12 and defamatory meaning to an average person, defamation claim sustained).

13 18. Here, and as detailed below, the voiceovers and graphics in *Quiet on Set* and its trailer,
14 juxtaposed or edited with the visual depictions, are purposefully and intentionally defamatory in that
15 they falsely and repeatedly state or imply that Schneider is a child sexual abuser and committed crimes
16 in this regard—and have been interpreted as such by countless average, ordinary or reasonable viewers.

17 FACTS COMMON TO ALL CLAIMS

18 I. THE TRAILER

19 A. THE TRAILER WAS WIDELY DISSEMINATED, CLEARLY CONCERNED SCHNEIDER, AND 20 FALSELY STATED AND IMPLIED THAT SCHNEIDER IS A CRIMINAL AND CHILD SEXUAL 21 ABUSER

22 19. Defendants variously wrote, filmed, produced, marketed, broadcast and streamed a trailer
23 promoting *Quiet on Set* (the “Trailer”), which can be found on ID’s YouTube Channel at
24 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvyULepxgw4>, and which was released online in or about February
25 2024. The Trailer is defamatory in that it was intended to and did falsely state or imply that Schneider is
26 a child sexual abuser and committed crimes in this regard.

27 20. In the first thirty-eight seconds of the two-minute-and-thirty-second Trailer, Defendants
28 set the stage for their defamatory statements and insinuations of Schneider’s purported child sexual abuse

1 by hammering the connection between Schneider and the child audience and cast members. In the first
2 five seconds, the Trailer describes Nickelodeon as “kid everything” before showing video clips of child
3 audience and cast members. The Trailer then swiftly juxtaposes those children with its target, Schneider,
4 and his work with child actors on the Nickelodeon shows, with the voiceover stating: “And this is when
5 Dan Schneider arrives. Nickelodeon’s golden boy. He created these shows that were hugely successful
6 for them.” The Trailer cuts to video of Schneider being interviewed, explaining: “No one had really ever
7 done sketch comedy by kids for kids.” The voiceover continues to emphasize Schneider’s connection to
8 children, flashing pictures of Schneider with a number of well-known child actors while stating: “He
9 launched the careers of child actors who became major stars.” “For twenty years he shaped children’s
10 entertainment and culture,” the Trailer continues, showing additional video of Schneider looking directly
11 into the camera.

12 21. At the thirty-ninth second, the Trailer takes an abrupt turn: “But that marked one of the
13 darkest chapters,” the voiceover states, while cutting to the following graphic of the ID logo and the all-
14 caps words, “TRUE CRIME EVENT” (the “True Crime Graphic”):



26 22. The implication between the thirty-eight-second connection linking Schneider and his
27 work with children, on the one hand, followed by the words “TRUE CRIME EVENT,” on the other,
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1 could not be more clear: Schneider committed a crime—a *true* crime—and one involving children. This
2 is false. The ID logo only emphasizes this false and defamatory implication: ID is a network dedicated
3 to *true crime* documentaries. That the Trailer is stating or implying that the “true crime” involves
4 Schneider is also clear: in the forty-two seconds leading up to the True Crime Graphic, Schneider is not
5 only the main focus—he is the sole focus.

6 23. The Trailer then doubles down on the implication that Schneider is not only a criminal in
7 some way connected to children, but an abuser—or more specifically, a child sexual abuser. Immediately
8 after the True Crime Graphic, the Trailer cuts to a photograph of Schneider as the voiceover states:
9 “Working for Dan was like being in an abusive relationship. Dan’s treatment of people on his shows was
10 an open secret.” The phrase “an open secret” is a loaded one—not coincidentally, *An Open Secret* is a
11 2014 documentary film that exposed child sexual abuse in the film industry in California. The film had
12 nothing to do with Schneider and does not mention him in any way whatsoever.

13 24. Within seconds, the Trailer depicts a video of Schneider working on one of the
14 Nickelodeon children’s shows while posing the question, “How safe can any kids be in that
15 environment?” The (false) implication is clear: Schneider sexually abused child actors on his shows.



26 25. The foregoing image and voiceover—ending at the sixty-sixth second of the Trailer—is
27 immediately followed at the seventieth second by an image of a child’s shadow with the voiceover
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1 stating, “There would be even bigger problems down the line with actual pedophiles on set.” Seventy
2 seconds in, Schneider remains not only the main focus of the Trailer, but the sole focus. The ordinary
3 viewer will interpret the voiceover to mean exactly what Defendants intended: Schneider is a pedophile
4 who sexually abused children on his shows.

5 26. 100 seconds into the Trailer, Schneider remains the *only* person mentioned by name—
6 three times, to be exact, with variations of his likeness portrayed ten times. The Trailer then verbally
7 describes a litany of horrific sexual crimes against children: (i) “they find this enormous trove of child
8 pornography”; (ii) “the officer said they found ziplocked bags, each one with a girl’s name on it”; and
9 (iii) “eleven charges of child sexual abuse related to a child actor.” Simultaneously, images of legal
10 documents describe a “[Poli]ce Department’s Sexually Exploited Child Unit” and the words, “he was
11 going to explode if he couldn’t get hold of a little . . . how he could find one to ‘rape if I have to.’ . . .
12 kept in plastic baggies containing girls’ panties.” The unstated question posed to the audience is *who*
13 committed these crimes; with only Schneider’s name and likeness offered, the implication is clear: It
14 was Schneider. Again, this is false.

15 27. Schneider anticipates that Defendants will attempt to defend themselves against the
16 foregoing by pointing to the image of a legal document with highlighted text that appears for literally
17 *one second* with zero context or explanation: “Peck was coaching the victim.” At almost two minutes
18 into the two-minute-and-thirty-second Trailer, “Peck” is the first person to be named other than
19 Schneider. His full name is not stated or shown, nor is his image shown. There is no reason for an average
20 or ordinary viewer to notice it, let alone draw the conclusion that it was Peck, and not Schneider, who
21 committed crimes against a child. And by this point, the damage Defendants intended was already done.
22 When the Trailer closes with a former child-actor victim being asked if he had ever told his story publicly
23 before, the implication remains that it was Schneider who perpetrated the crime. Another fabrication.

1 **III. QUIET ON SET**

2 **A. QUIET ON SET WAS WIDELY DISSEMINATED, CLEARLY CONCERNED SCHNEIDER, AND**
3 **FALSELY STATED AND IMPLIED THAT SCHNEIDER IS A CRIMINAL AND CHILD SEXUAL**
4 **ABUSER¹**

5 **i. Episode 1 Falsely and Intentionally States and/or Implies That Schneider**
6 **Sexually Abused Children Who Worked on His Shows**

7 28. *Quiet on Set* was simultaneously released on Max and Discovery+, with the first four
8 episodes airing between March 17 and 18, 2024, and the fifth episode airing on April 7, 2024.

9 29. *Quiet on Set* picks up where the Trailer left off by falsely stating and/or implying that
10 Schneider sexually abused children who worked on his shows. Toward that end, the Episode 1 opening
11 graphic provides: “This series investigates the abuses experienced by children from the adults they were
12 expected to trust” (the “Opening Graphic”).

13 **This series investigates the abuses**
14 **experienced by children from the**
15 **adults they were expected to trust.**
16 **Viewer discretion is advised.**
17

18 30. Episode 1 is forty-two minutes and forty-three seconds long. The first minute or so
19 introduces the setting: Nickelodeon’s children’s television shows. Then, the subject: Schneider. Less
20 than two minutes into Episode 1, *Quiet on Set* depicts a video clip of Schneider receiving “the first ever
21 Nickelodeon Lifetime Achievement Award” as multiple people yell, “Dan Schneider!” Episode 1 then
22 shows myriad images of Schneider in rapid succession, calling him a “golden boy,” a “cash cow,” a
23 person who “launched the careers of child actors who became major stars,” and who “shaped children’s
24 entertainment and shaped children’s culture.” That success is immediately juxtaposed with Schneider’s
25 “downfall,” while a speaker warns the viewer—literally using the word “warn”—that “if you were a

26 ¹ Numerous statements and implications in *Quiet on Set* are false, and the fact that this Complaint does
27 not address each and every misstatement should not be deemed as acceptance of the truth of any
28 statement. This Complaint and this action focus on the most egregious defamatory statements that have
caused the most severe harm and damage.

1 child of the '90s, this is going to ruin that for you.” A Tweet is shown accusing Schneider of
2 “inappropriate behavior,” and mere seconds thereafter two side-by-side images are shown depicting
3 Schneider with his arm around a child actress, and then his hand on the back of that same child actress.



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13 31. To aid the viewer’s understanding (or more accurately, misunderstanding) of Schneider
14 as a children’s predator, Episode 1 turns to the purported perversion of the television content he created
15 or wrote.² Schneider “made” children “do things that were very weird.” “There are all these setups that
16 referenced porn.” These statements color the inference set up by the Trailer and are underscored by
17 Episode 1’s first three minutes and its conclusion discussed below: Schneider was a child sexual abuser.
18 Again, this is false.

19 32. Episode 1 is effectively sandwiched by this theme, closing with the same messaging with
20 which it began: After a lengthy section on adult women’s experience with Schneider in the workplace,
21 a voiceover questions, “How safe can any kids be in that environment if that’s how the adult women are
22 being treated behind the scenes? . . . But there would be even bigger problems down the line with actual
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24 ² While Defendants take certain scenes out of context from hundreds of hours of television in an attempt
25 to support their defamation of Schneider, the television scenes referenced were not intended to be
26 inappropriate in any way. It is telling that these clips remain on television today. Further, at least some
27 of several child actors’ references to feeling “unsafe” relate to some of the jokes or stunts performed on
28 the shows, and not child sexual abuse. Defendants intentionally and purposefully take these statements
out of context and combine them with a reference to falsely state or imply that Schneider sexually abused
children, and that is why they felt unsafe.

1 pedophiles on set.” The audio then transitions to a reporter stating, “Van Nuys division officers have
2 arrested a suspected child predator charged with kissing and touching a nine-year-old girl, but officers
3 believe there may be more victims.” The background does not show the predator’s likeness, nor give the
4 predator’s name (two easy fixes to avoid viewer confusion); instead, Episode 1 shows a television screen
5 with black-and-white static. Like the Trailer, the conclusion of Episode 1 wholly obfuscates the reality
6 by focusing on Schneider—and only Schneider—while providing the viewer with no information to
7 conclude that the predator was anyone *other* than Schneider.

8 33. As a whole, the Episode 1 inference from the Opening Graphic, taken together with the
9 verbal warning; written accusation of “inappropriate behavior”; images of Schneider posing with his
10 arms around and on young female actresses; discussion of inappropriate pornographic, sexual content
11 on the Nickelodeon shows; questioning of child safety; and an arrest of a child predator is clear: Children
12 were sexually abused on Nickelodeon television shows, and the perpetrator was Schneider. This is false.

13 ii. **Episode 2 States and/or Implies That, Like Convicted Felons Jason Handy**
14 **and Brian Peck, Schneider Too Was a Child Sexual Abuser**

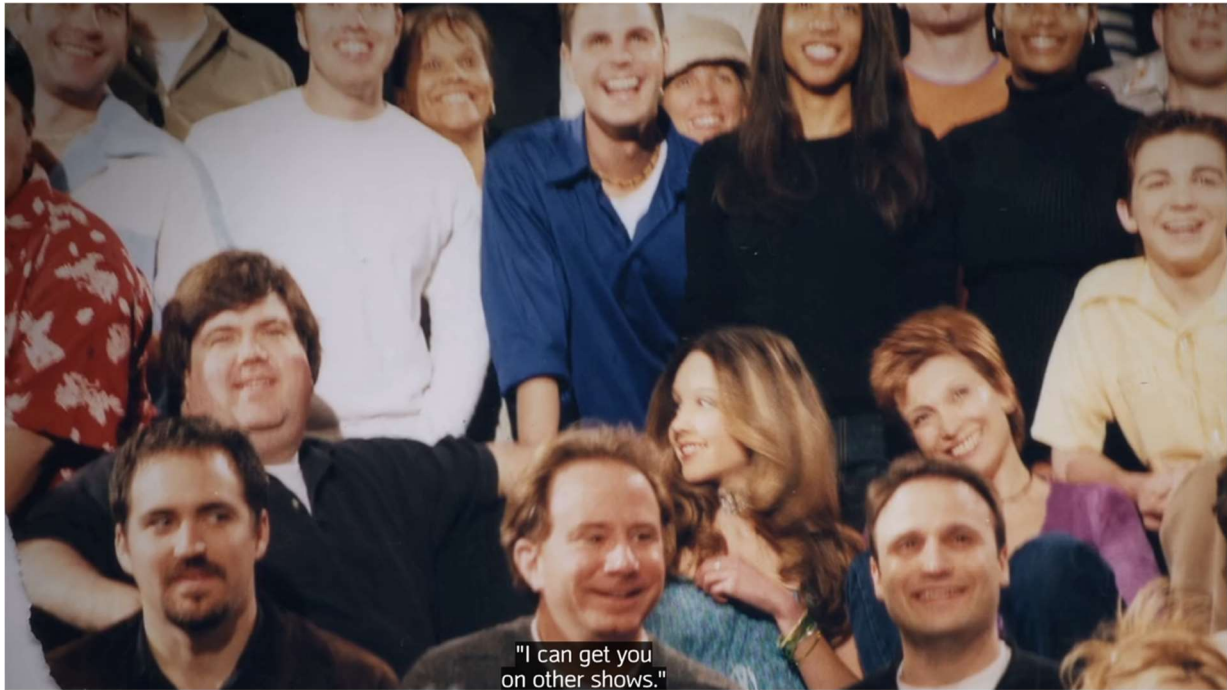
15 34. The Trailer and Episode 1’s conflation of Schneider, on the one hand, with the real child
16 sexual abusers, on the other hand, continues with Episode 2, which finally introduces convicted felons
17 and child sexual abusers Jason Handy (“Handy”) and Brian Peck (“Peck”), respectively.

18 35. Episode 2 begins by introducing Handy, who was ultimately convicted of various felony
19 sex crimes against children for conduct committed while he was employed on certain Nickelodeon
20 shows.³ Episode 2 pivots stories and then returns to Handy in the latter half of the episode. There, shortly
21 following a graphic description of Handy’s misconduct, a victim’s mother states: ““He had also told this
22 young girl, I can get you on other shows.” In the background, the image of a legal document shows the
23 following text: “talked to her about getting her a job on another children’s program.” These statements
24 are remarkably similar to another speaker’s commentary about Schneider in Episode 1, where
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27 ³ *Quiet on Set* fails to note that Handy worked solely on television shows produced for Nickelodeon by
28 Tollin/Robbins Productions—including *Cousin Skeeter*, which Schneider had nothing to do with—and
not by Schneider’s production company, Schneider’s Bakery.

1 Schneider's ability to make or break a career is emphasized: "On *The Amanda Show*, Dan is the king
2 maker. He is the one who is deciding who gets a spin-off, who gets the most lines."

3 36. Then—without explaining who the speaker's reference to "he" was—Episode 2
4 immediately and inexplicably cuts to an image that centers on *Schneider*, not Handy:



16 In three rows of people, Schneider sits in the middle, the viewer's attention directed to him by virtue of
17 his position in the image and the gaze of a child actress turned toward and looking up at him. In the top
18 row, with his head partially obstructed, is the real child abuser, Handy. By virtue of Episode 2's
19 manipulative mix of editing, speech, and imagery, the viewer is left to conclude that, like Handy,
20 Schneider used his position to facilitate child sexual abuse. This is false.

21 37. Episode 2 continues its manipulative use of editing and photographs to conflate Schneider
22 with a second child sexual abuser, Peck. Episode 2 exaggerates the relationship between Schneider and
23 Peck, falsely claiming that the latter "worked closely with Dan as this dialogue coach" and that "he's
24 very much one of the cogs in the Dan Schneider machine."⁴

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27 ⁴ Schneider had no knowledge of Peck's abuse of Drake Bell until that information came to light long
28 after Bell's appearances on *The Amanda Show* (another Tollin/Robbins production, for which Schneider
was a showrunner) and filming of the pilot for *Drake & Josh*.

1 38. Echoing the precise format used to introduce the above misleading image, Episode 2
2 describes Peck's abhorrent abuse and a former child actor muses, "We go through enough as child actors,
3 and for us to not feel like we have a voice, that's worse. 'Cause you don't know who you're supposed
4 to trust. That's worse." As with Handy, Episode 2 then immediately and inexplicably cuts to a
5 photograph featuring *Schneider*, not the real child sexual abuser, Peck.



17 39. Only after that image remains on screen for three seconds does Episode 2 pivot to Peck:



1 40. Schneider was not complicit in Peck’s crimes, was unaware of Peck’s crimes until that
2 information was made a matter of public record, and Schneider did not commit any such crimes himself.
3 The only reason to include Schneider’s image in this context was to falsely equate Schneider with Peck;
4 the viewer is left to infer that just as Peck was a child sexual abuser, so was Schneider.

5 iii. **Episode 5 Falsely States and/or Implies that Schneider is a Convicted Child**
6 **Molester and/or Allowed Them On Set**

7 41. In the final minutes of Episode 5, the speakers discuss updating child actor laws “so that
8 no individual who is a convicted child molester can ever be on a Hollywood set again.” Then, after
9 describing the loopholes that allow a “convicted child molester” to be on a Hollywood set, Episode 5
10 cuts to a photograph of *Schneider* on a Hollywood set, which remains on screen for approximately five
11 seconds:



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22 42. The use of Schneider’s photograph in this context clearly states and/or implies that
23 Schneider is a convicted child molester, which is both false and made with reckless disregard of the truth.
24 Other options for photographs are obvious: Handy or Peck, for example. The use of Schneider’s
25 photograph in this context is also defamatory because it states and/or implies that Schneider invited or
26 allowed convicted child molesters on the set—in effect, aiding and abetting their crimes. This, too, is
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1 both false and made with reckless disregard of the truth. As Defendants are aware, neither Handy nor
2 Peck were convicted child molesters when they worked on any show with which Schneider was
3 affiliated; indeed, it was not Nickelodeon, but a different network entirely that hired Peck after his
4 conviction. As Defendants are aware, Schneider did not personally hire Handy or Peck; they were hired
5 through Tollin/Robbins Productions, not Schneider’s own production company.

6 **IV. DEFENDANTS KNEW THEIR STATEMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS WERE FALSE**

7 43. Because an element of defamation is falsity, and because Defendants will likely argue
8 that Schneider is a public figure, Schneider must plead what he—and more importantly, Defendants—
9 know to be true: The Trailer and *Quiet on Set’s* statements and/or implications are false. Schneider never
10 committed, nor has he been charged or convicted with committing, a criminal act toward a child.
11 Schneider never sexually abused a child, nor has he been charged or convicted with sexually abusing a
12 child. The Trailer and *Quiet on Set’s* statements and implications to the contrary are both false and made
13 with reckless and malicious disregard for the truth.

14 44. As argued above, Defendants’ motivation in publishing the false statements and
15 implications were for clickbait, ratings, and views—or simply put, money. Defendants purposefully
16 stated or implied that Schneider sexually abused children on his shows in order to generate interest—
17 and it worked as intended. Defendant Robertson spoke to this motivation in recent interviews. In an
18 interview with the *L.A. Times* on April 5, 2024, Robertson stated, “When we released the trailer for
19 ‘Quiet on Set’, it went viral almost immediately and questions started swirling. The trailer itself ignited
20 a fair amount of conversation . . .” And in another interview with Gold Derby on April 11, 2024,
21 Robertson stated, “We saw that even after just the release of the trailer alone, there were swirling
22 questions, a debate had been ignited around some of the particulars of the series, the original four
23 episodes . . .”⁵

24 45. Indeed, at the very end of Episode 4, Defendants admit the falsity of the above-described
25 defamatory statements and implications. The voiceover, with approximately ten minutes left in the fourth
26 and final episode of the original series, states that back in 2018 when Schneider and Nickelodeon parted
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28 ⁵ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sIcEjygyUY>.

1 ways, Nickelodeon (or its then-parent ViacomCBS) conducted an extensive investigation of Schneider
2 by interviewing dozens of present and former employees, with no child sexual abuse found. The
3 voiceover states: “This investigation did not find any evidence of inappropriate sexual behavior [or]
4 inappropriate relationships with children.”⁶

5 46. As further evidence of actual malice and knowing or reckless disregard for the truth,
6 Defendants are also well aware of an investigative report of Schneider conducted by the *New York Times*
7 in 2021. The *Times* investigation culminated in an article dated June 30, 2021, which reveals that the
8 *Times* interviewed numerous former coworkers, friends and television executives on Schneider’s shows
9 at Nickelodeon, with no reported evidence of child sexual abuse or misconduct with respect to any of
10 the children on who worked with Schneider. The *Times* confirmed that Nickelodeon’s investigation of
11 Schneider also found no evidence of child sexual abuse whatsoever.

12 47. Nevertheless, the Trailer and *Quiet on Set*, as set forth above, knowingly and intentionally
13 go out of their way to state or implicate that Schneider sexually abused children on his shows, committed
14 crimes, and is the same as or equivalent to convicted child molesters. Defendants could have made it
15 clear in the Trailer or in the first episodes that Schneider (i) did not commit any sexual abuse of any child
16 actors; (ii) there is no evidence of such; (iii) he was not charged with and did not commit any crimes;
17 and/or (iv) that his acts or words are very different than those of the child molesters depicted in *Quiet on*
18 *Set*. There could have been a graphic or disclaimer to this effect at the very beginning of the Trailer or
19 *Quiet on Set*. Simply stated, Defendants could have been *honest*. Instead, Defendants, the Trailer and
20 *Quiet on Set* do the exact opposite, and knowingly, intentionally, maliciously, and repeatedly state or
21 imply that Schneider is a child sexual abuser—likely to attract viewers and ratings.

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23 ⁶ It should be noted that this singular statement, following the Trailer and 3½ episodes of a four-episode
24 series is far too little and too late for the preceding Trailer and episodes of *Quiet on Set* to not be
25 defamatory to the ordinary or average viewer. For example, “[f]alse insinuations” are “not cured or
26 negated by explanatory language later in the magazine because ‘a reasonable juror could conclude that
27 the [explanatory language] was too far removed from the cover headline to have the salutary effect.’”
28 *Manzari*, 830 F.3d at 890 (“[a] passing reference buried in the article” is insufficient to defeat a
defamation claim). Moreover, many viewers may watch only the Trailer, or some (but not all) episodes
of *Quiet on Set*, rendering Episode 4 a classic example of “too little, too late.”

1 48. In addition, Defendants have acted with actual malice and purposeful disregard for the
2 truth by refusing to interview witnesses or air witness testimony that does not fit their false and
3 defamatory narrative. For example, after a brief conversation, a former President of Content,
4 Development and Production from Nickelodeon repeatedly offered to meet with one or more Defendants
5 to speak openly, truthfully and positively about Nickelodeon television shows and Schneider, and
6 Defendants thereafter completely ignored this individual. Similarly, others have stated that they were
7 interviewed by one or more Defendants and spoke positively about Schneider, and then were never
8 contacted again nor asked to be on camera.

9 49. In addition, in recent weeks, accusations have mounted that one or more Defendants were
10 dishonest or deceptive during witness interviews as to the intended purpose of the questions, with one
11 witness stating that he felt “ambushed.” There have also been allegations that one or more Defendants
12 used certain intellectual property without permission. This further demonstrates a knowing and/or
13 reckless disregard for the truth.

14 **V. SCHNEIDER WAS HARMED**

15 50. Schneider’s reputation and career have been irreparably harmed by the Trailer’s and *Quiet*
16 *on Set*’s defamatory and malicious content. On a personal level, after the Trailer’s publication, Schneider
17 was immediately contacted by friends and colleagues in disbelief about the Trailer’s false depiction of
18 Schneider as a criminal and child predator. While these persons know the truth, the overwhelming
19 majority of the public does not—to them, Schneider is and will remain what Defendants have portrayed
20 him to be. The harm to Schneider’s reputation, career, and business, to say nothing of his own
21 overwhelming emotional distress, cannot be understated.

22 51. As referenced above, in recent years there have been rumors about Schneider and his
23 shows, including that certain jokes (taken out of context from hundreds of hours of television) were
24 intentionally inappropriate (which was not the case at all). Regardless, these rumors were primarily
25 posted by anonymous users on fringe social media sites, and do not come remotely close to the severe
26 impact of the defamatory statements in *Quiet on Set* and its Trailer, which in stark contrast are made by
27 the largest media companies in the world, via one of the world’s largest platforms, namely Max. Further,
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1 it is *Quiet on Set* and its Trailer that opportunistically seized upon and egregiously expanded or
2 embellished these rumors by going so far as to falsely state or imply as a matter of fact that Schneider
3 sexually abused children on his shows and committed crimes in this regard. Thus, Defendants have
4 caused Schneider to suffer the severe damages described herein.

5 **VI. AVERAGE OR ORDINARY VIEWERS UNDERSTAND THE TRAILER AND *QUIET ON SET* TO BE**
6 **DEFAMATORY**

7 52. As a direct consequence of the foregoing, reasonable, ordinary or average viewers who
8 have watched the Trailer and/or *Quiet on Set* have interpreted each as stating and/or implying as a matter
9 of fact that Schneider sexually abused children on his shows. For example, shortly after *Quiet on Set*
10 aired, the *New York Post* ran an article about the docuseries with a picture of Schneider and captioning
11 Schneider as a child abuser, stating: “*Alleged assaulter* and Nickelodeon showrunner Dan Schneider
12 accepting Kids Choice Award” (emphasis added):



25 53. As another example, shortly after Episode 5 on April 10, 2024, *The Hollywood Reporter*
26 ran an article about *Quiet on Set* and falsely referred to Schneider as a sexual abuser and equated him
27 with convicted felon Peck. The article discusses the loopholes in policies that “allowed Schneider and
28

1 his colleague, dialogue coach Brian Peck, to get away with *years of sexual abuse.*”

2 54. Further, comments on the Trailer reveal that viewers understood Defendants’ statements
3 in the Trailer and/or *Quiet on Set* to mean that Schneider in fact committed crimes of child sexual abuse
4 just like Handy and Peck and other convicted felons. These include but are not limited to the following
5 comments under the Trailer on ID’s YouTube Channel:

- 6 • “I watched. Dan Schneider, Brian Peck and Jason Handy need to be in prison”
- 7 • “DAN SCHNEIDER – HARVEY WEINSTEIN – JEFFREY EPSTEIN – BILL COSBY –
8 The Mount Rushmore of Sexual Abuse. JOSH PECK can serve as Tour Guide”
- 9 • [The Trailer and *Quiet on Set*] “are last bit of proof to get him [Schneider] finally thrown in
10 prison like bill cosby except unlike bill cosby schneider stays in prison and doesn’t get let out
11 kinda like r Kelly”
- 12 • “Dan Schneider needs to go down”
- 13 • “He’s gross what a sick predator”
- 14 • “Arrest Dan Schneider”
- 15 • [We will see] “Dan Schneider behind bars”
- 16 • “Dan ‘Get in the van’ Schneider”
- 17 • “I hope that Dan Schneider goes down just like R-Kelly and Harvey after their docuseries.”

18 55. Similarly, while *Quiet on Set* was first premiering, numerous viewers, posting in real-
19 time, revealed their understanding that the docuseries stated that Schneider is a criminal and child sexual
20 abuser. For example, numerous posts on X (formerly Twitter) concluded that Schneider is a “predator,”
21 tantamount to Jeffrey Epstein or Bill Cosby. Contemporaneous X posts read:

- 22 • “Dan Schneider needs to be in prison IMMEDIATELY”
- 23 • “Dan Schneider and Brian Peck really molested, groomed, and raped the children of
24 Nickelodeon”
- 25 • “Dan Schneider was the Harvey Weinstein of Nickelodeon”
- 26 • “If the court can lock up Bill Cosby, Dan Schneider needs to be in jail now”
- 27 • “Quiet on Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV, a new four-part docuseries. A look at Nickelodeon,
28 who facilitated Dan Schneider and other pedophiles and child rapists”
- “Dan Schneider raped children and brought other pedophiles on to the set, and they later
assaulted and raped children! RAID DAN SCHNEIDER NEXT!!! #QuietOnSet”

56. Indeed, thousands of viewers have posted comments, videos or other content indicating
that they understand the Trailer and/or *Quiet on Set* to be stating or implying that Schneider is a criminal

1 who sexually abused children on his shows. Further, as set forth above, even Schneider’s former
2 colleagues and close friends have interpreted the Trailer and *Quiet on Set* as falsely stating or implying
3 that Schneider committed crimes of child sexual abuse.

4 57. Defendants have essentially admitted that the Trailer and *Quiet on Set* are, at the very
5 least, defamatory by implication. In response to a cease-and-desist letter sent by counsel for Schneider
6 demanding that *Quiet on Set* “not include any statements that allege or imply that Mr. Schneider engaged
7 in any criminal or sexual misconduct,” Defendants’ counsel responded that there are no “statements”
8 that defame Schneider. Defendants tellingly ignore whether the statements imply that Schneider engaged
9 in criminal or sexual misconduct with respect to children and are therefore defamatory—because
10 Defendants know that this is the case.

11 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

12 **(Defamation Per Se Under Civ. Code §§ 44-46 and California Common Law)**

13 **(By Schneider Against All Defendants)**

14 58. Schneider repeats, realleges and incorporates by reference each paragraph set forth above,
15 as if fully set forth herein.

16 59. As set forth above, Defendants, either directly or through authorized agents, filmed,
17 produced, wrote, marketed, broadcast and/or streamed the Trailer and *Quiet on Set*.

18 60. In the Trailer and *Quiet on Set*, Defendants, through the use of voiceovers, photos, videos,
19 graphics, editing and production, have publicly made defamatory statements or implications of fact with
20 respect to Schneider, including that Schneider committed crimes of child sexual abuse, or otherwise
21 committed child sexual abuse, with respect to children who worked on his shows, similar or equivalent
22 to crimes committed by named convicted child molesters.

23 61. Defendants’ statements and implications referenced above are utterly false and certainly
24 do not meet any requisite legal standard of being substantially true.

25 62. Defendants’ statements or implications are knowingly false. Defendants know full well
26 that Schneider did not commit any crime or any child sexual abuse on any of his shows, or otherwise.
27 Defendants also know that there is no evidence of Schneider doing any such thing.
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1 63. Defendants have acted maliciously, and have intentionally and/or recklessly disregarded
2 the truth, in repeatedly stating or implying that Schneider committed any crime or sexual abuse with
3 respect to any children on any of his shows. Defendants know these statements are false. Defendants
4 have purposefully ignored or avoided witnesses who spoke or wanted to speak positively about
5 Schneider, solicited only negative or salacious allegations, and have refused to publish positive
6 statements that contradict their intentionally false narrative.

7 64. Defendants have maintained a false narrative in order to obtain viewers, clicks, ratings or
8 financial gain, or simply to be malicious and vindictive. In determining actual malice, California courts
9 examine whether defendants “failed to include any explanation or disclaimer” which could have
10 informed the viewers of the truth. *Manzari*, 830 F.3d at 892. Defendants easily could have presented
11 information or disclaimers in the Trailer, or in the first three and a half episodes of *Quiet on Set* that
12 Schneider did not commit any crimes or acts of child sexual abuse, or that investigations of Schneider
13 were conducted, including by Nickelodeon’s then parent company ViacomCBS and the *New York Times*,
14 and that no evidence was found of any child sexual abuse or misconduct, but purposefully chose not to
15 do so in order to present false and defamatory statements or implications to the contrary.

16 65. Reasonable, ordinary and/or average viewers could, and have in fact, understood
17 Defendants’ statements or implications in the Trailer and *Quiet on Set* to mean, as a matter of fact, that
18 Schneider committed crimes or otherwise engaged in sexual abuse with regard to children on his shows.

19 66. Reasonable, ordinary and/or average viewers could, and have in fact, understood
20 Defendants’ statements or implications to mean, as a matter of fact, the false notion that Schneider has
21 committed illegal acts the same as or equivalent to those of serial convicted child molesters depicted in
22 *Quiet on Set*, including Handy and Peck.

23 67. Defendants’ statements and/or implications in the Trailer and *Quiet on Set* are defamatory
24 per se as they state or imply that Schneider committed crimes or otherwise engaged in child sexual abuse
25 with respect to children on his shows, and equate his actions to individuals convicted for child sexual
26 abuse and molestation. Such statements and implications have exposed and continue to expose Schneider
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1 to hatred, contempt, ridicule and/or obloquy, have caused him to be shunned or avoided, and have injured
2 him in his occupation and business.

3 68. Defendants' statements or implications are a substantial factor in causing Schneider to
4 suffer contempt, aversion, hatred and death threats. Schneider's reputation has been irreparably damaged
5 as a result of Defendants' defamatory statements. Schneider continues to endure emotional pain and
6 suffering, and mental distress, as a result of Defendants' defamatory statements, as well as financial and
7 career damages.

8 69. In recent years, Schneider has obtained valuable deals from major networks or platforms.
9 However, due to the defamatory statements or implications in the Trailer and *Quiet on Set*, these
10 opportunities are now virtually impossible for Schneider to obtain, causing direct financial damages.
11 Schneider is entitled to actual damages and compensatory damages.

12 70. Defendants' statements or implications are not protected by any privilege.

13 71. Defendants' conduct was and is willful, wanton and malicious such that punitive damages
14 should also be awarded.

15 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

16 WHEREFORE, Schneider seeks judgment against Defendants, and each of them, in an amount
17 to be determined at trial as follows:

- 18 (i) For compensatory damages relating to past and future loss, past and future economic loss,
19 damage to reputation, damages to business, lost revenues, other economic injury, and
20 emotional distress damages;
- 21 (ii) For punitive damages;
- 22 (iii) Reasonable attorneys' fees and costs as allowable by law;
- 23 (iv) For preliminary or permanent injunctive relief, including editing, taking down or
24 removing all or a portion of the Trailer and/or *Quiet on Set*; and
- 25 (v) For such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.
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Dated: May 1, 2024

MOSER LEGAL, PC

By: 

JANA M. MOSER
RICHARD D. MCKIE

Attorneys for Plaintiff
DAN SCHNEIDER

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff Dan Schneider hereby demands a trial by jury on all causes of action alleged herein in the Complaint.

Dated: May 1, 2024

MOSER LEGAL, PC

By:  _____
JANA M. MOSER
RICHARD D. MCKIE

Attorneys for Plaintiff
DAN SCHNEIDER

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