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Dr. Dre Wins Lawsuit Against Death Row Records, Digital Rights to 'The Chronic'

By Anthony McCartney | April 20, 2011 7:52 AM EDT



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The new incarnation of Death Row Records does not have the rights to sell Dr. Dre's iconic rap album "The Chronic" digitally, a federal judge ruled Tuesday.

The ruling by U.S. District Judge Christina Snyder ruling states that the rapper and producer has received far less money than he is due from online sales of the 1992 album, which also helped launch the career of Snoop Dogg.

The ruling does not call for a halt of digital sales of Dre's music, but entitles him to receive 100 percent of the proceeds of online sales, his attorney, Howard King, told The Associated Press.

The rapper, whose real name is Andre Young, sued WIDEawake Death Row Records last year, claiming it was improperly selling "The Chronic" digitally and using some of his music on compilation albums without his permission.

Snyder's ruling states the label, which bought the original Death Row Records' holdings out of bankruptcy, does not have the right to put Dr. Dre's music on compilation or any other albums.

"For years, Death Row Records forgot about Dre when they continued to distribute his music digitally and combined his hits with weaker Death Row tracks in an attempt to elevate the stature of their other artists," King wrote in a statement. "We are gratified that the federal court has unambiguously declared that Death Row has no right to engage in such tactics, and must hold all proceeds from these illicit distributions in trust for our client."

Phone and email messages for WIDEawake's attorney, Michael Holtz, was not immediately returned Tuesday evening.

The rapper has a long history of battling Death Row Records, a label he co-founded but later left.

The most recent case he filed centered on his 1996 exit agreement with the label, which called for him to receive 18 percent royalties on his music created while at Death Row and gave him substantial authority over how the songs were used.

The agreement states that WIDEawake can only sell Dre's music in the format it appeared in before the deal. Another of Dre's attorneys, Stephen Rothschild, told Snyder during arguments in court on Monday that meant it could only appear in four formats: CD, cassette, vinyl and 8-Track.

Tagged
The Associated Press, The Chronic, Christina Snyder, Howard King, Michael Holtz, Dr. Dre, Hip hop, G-funk, Music, Death Row Records artists

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