

Orlando Sentinel LOCAL & STATE

Ex-Universal executive sues Disney

Man claims company stole ride design for Rise of the Resistance

By Katie Rice
Orlando Sentinel

A former director with Universal Creative is suing Disney, claiming the company used his design for a themed drop ride mechanism in its Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance ride without compensating him after he pitched the design to Disney years earlier.

Louis Alfieri, now the chief creative officer of entertainment design company Raven Sun Creative, is seeking an unspecified amount in damages from Walt Disney Parks and Resorts for allegedly infringing on his patent for a "tower ride," according to a lawsuit filed in Orlando's U.S. District Court last week.

Alfieri claims his company submitted a proposal to Walt Disney Imagineering in 2014 for an "Ultra Tower Show Experience" that would use the technology of Alfieri's then-pending patent, according to the lawsuit. Disney used Alfieri's technology without consulting his company, the suit contends.

The lawsuit alleges Disney prominently advertised the new ride system technology in Rise of the Resistance and profited from the ride's popularity without compensating Alfieri or Raven Sun Creative for the design.

According to the lawsuit, Raven Sun Creative notified Disney of the patent infringement in March 2020 and Disney responded that November saying they would continue to operate the ride without compensating the company for the alleged infringement.

Representatives for Disney did not respond

to a request for comment, and lawyers for Raven Sun Creative said they had no further comment beyond the lawsuit.

The patent, filed in 2013, is for a "vertically-aligned amusement ride apparatus" that moves in time with video on a screen to make riders feel like they are moving through an environment, records show.

Rise of the Resistance, a trackless dark ride based on the Star Wars sequel trilogy, has several ride systems that simulate a journey through a Star Destroyer. It culminates in riders dropping into a motion-simulated escape pod that moves in sync with a projected video.

Though the patent acknowledges the existence of other rides that show imagery while simultaneously moving riders vertically — including the Tower of Terror ride, also at Disney's Hollywood Studios — the lawsuit

claims its technology improved these ride systems and allows for "enhanced illusion and improved experience."

The lawsuit mentions that Bob Iger, then-CEO of the Walt Disney Co., said in an early 2020 earnings call that the debuts of the ride in Walt Disney World and Disneyland increased visitor attendance and spending at the parks.

Alfieri worked as a creative director at Universal for four years, leaving the company in 2010, according to his LinkedIn page. His work includes the Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit roller coaster at Universal Orlando and other attractions at the company's international parks.

Court records did not list a lawyer representing Disney.

krice@orlandosentinel.com



Demonstrators hold flags and signs as they greet traffic at Curry Ford Road and Semoran Boulevard in Orlando on Monday. The protesters were there to support Cubans who were supposed to take to the streets on the island. STEPHEN M. DOWELL/ORLANDO SENTINEL PHOTOS

Protesters make noise in support of #15NCuba

By Daniela Vivas Labrador
El Sentinel

Cuban protesters peacefully rallied again Monday for the #15NCuba protest to demand the island's freedom and democracy.

Waving Cuban and American flags, they chanted and made noise inviting bystanders to support their cause.

Otilia Mariña said she fled the country about 60 years ago after her mom told her that was probably her safest choice.

"I came here with two friends," Mariña said. "My mom did all the paperwork for my friends and I."

Since then, she was able to work as a family physician, a degree she obtained in Venezuela, and is now retired. But she still looking out for her island.

"There is no food, medicine, water or electricity," Mariña said. "The system is very bad, does not work. We have to take it away already."

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis offered some words on the Cuban protests Monday while announcing a \$25 million investment to restore in Miami's Freedom Tower.

"I am proud to be standing in the free state of the United States, and then in the assembly of freedom right here in the Freedom Tower of Miami," said DeSantis. "The Freedom Tower means that the state of Florida is a symbol of people seeking freedom and people who have fled communist dictatorships."

Other Republicans have also expressed their disagreement with President Joe Biden's inaction on the matter.

"Despite knowing the regime will respond with violence & repression brave people inside (Cuba) will march today demanding liberty," U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio said in a tweet Sunday.

But Democrats are also expressing their support for the protesters.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Val Demings spoke on the House floor Monday, saying, "We know what freedom means in America. It is the life-line of our nation. The people of Cuba have cried out for freedom and because of who we are, America must answer the call. Democracy and a free economy are the right path forward for Cuba."

As for the protesters, some came to this country together and have stuck together throughout the years, even when going out to protest for their island's rights.

"As Cubans, we are here on the streets of Orlando, demanding for Cuba's freedom," said María González who was at the protest with her husband. "We have family in Cuba who we



María González waves her flag at cars in the protest calling for Cuban freedom.

want to be like us here, free, as we have been for more than 30 years now."

González and her husband, Carlos González, both arrived in Miami as part of a political prisoners program about three decades ago.

"Political prisoners, just because they think differently, should be on the streets already," María said, "because that is an injustice from the dictatorship."

Josefa Ramírez ran away from the dicta-

torship with her 1-year-old daughter in her arms, Mayra Díaz Ramírez, who was protesting with her on Monday afternoon.

"I am 60 years old now," Díaz Ramírez said. "It's been too long."

Daniela Vivas Labrador is an intern for El Sentinel Orlando and covers the Hispanic and Latino community in Central Florida. She can be reached at dvivas@orlandosentinel.com.

Man struck his kids' mother with truck, deputies say

By Jeff Weiner
Orlando Sentinel

Her father and a close friend believed Candice Colvert had already left Orlando to get away from the abusive father of her two children when they found out the 34-year-old woman had been killed on Pine Hills Road — in a crash that involved her alleged abuser, Kenneth Postell.

Colvert's loved ones told detectives that Postell had been tormenting her for years, in episodes both reported and unreported, and had threatened to kill her in the past — including a prior attempt to hit her with a vehicle, according to an affidavit for Postell's arrest.

Meanwhile, detectives say, Postell's account of the crash that killed Colvert was falling apart: He claimed that another car had struck her, but the forensic evidence didn't fit. And those who encountered him noted he showed no emotion over her death, despite their long relationship.

Postell, 31, was arrested Thursday on a first-degree murder charge in the June 31 crash that killed Colvert near Pine Hills and Indian Hill roads. According to the 12-page affidavit by Detective Anthony Ventriere, Postell struck her intentionally with his F-350, driving across several lanes to do so.

Florida Highway Patrol troopers arrived at the crash scene about 3 a.m. to find the F-350 parked perpendicular across the roadway. It had been struck on its side by a Chevy Malibu. Colvert was lying on the roadside in the grass between the street and sidewalk, the affidavit shows.

She was rushed to Orlando Regional Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead.

FHP investigators reported that Postell disclosed his prior relationship with Colvert, but "barely reacted to or showed signs of sadness and despair after learning of her death." He refused to speak to crash investigators, beyond claiming it was the Malibu that had hit her.

He said Colvert had been climbing into his vehicle when the crash happened. Investigators later determined that the nature and location of her injuries didn't fit with that scenario; instead, they suggested that she was struck from behind by the F-350 while standing at ground level.

Colvert's father told investigators about Postell's long history of alleged domestic violence against Colvert. Her father said he thought she had already left Orlando for New York to get away from him.

A friend of Colvert's, with whom she'd been staying, also believed that she had already left town, Ventriere wrote. Colvert had left the friend's apartment around 11 a.m. the day before her killing.

Colvert's said she witnessed "multiple incidents of physical violence" by Postell against Colvert and had been "forced to step in and separate them on a number of occasions." In one incident, the friend said Postell tried to back over Colvert with a vehicle during an argument, the affidavit said.

Cell phone records showed a flurry of calls between Postell and Colvert in the hours before her death, while location data suggested he had picked her up and brought her around 1:30 a.m. to his home, which is a few blocks away from the crash scene, according to Ventriere's affidavit.

Her phone also showed that Colvert had attempted to download the Lyft ride-share app around 2:40 a.m., which undercut Postell's claim that he was picking her up and the Malibu hit and killed her.

Investigators determined that the pair had likely had a fight and that Colvert was walking away from Postell when he "used his vehicle to drive across the lanes after Candice and intentionally struck her from behind," the affidavit said. The Malibu then hit the F-350 when it was stopped in the roadway.

"Evidence clearly established that Kenneth lied multiple times during this

Turn to Murder, Page 4