

AI Back in Court: MiniMax Studio's "In your Pocket" Faces Hollywood Studios Copyright Infringement Claims

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By W. Drew Kastner, Edward Baxter, Stephenie Wingyuen Yeung
楊穎苑 and LuAnne Morrow



When an AI company markets its product as a "Hollywood studio in your pocket," it probably shouldn't be surprised when Hollywood lawyers come knocking. Such is the lot of MiniMax, a Shanghai-based tech company whose video and image generation platform, Hailuo AI, became the target of a joint copyright lawsuit filed by Disney, Universal, and Warner Bros. Discovery in a California federal court last fall. The studios' complaint alleges that Hailuo AI was built on a foundation of stolen intellectual property: that MiniMax scraped and trained its model on the studios' copyrighted films without permission, and that the resulting platform can generate eerily accurate, downloadable images and videos of characters like Darth Vader, Wonder Woman, and the Minions, all with MiniMax's own branding slapped on them, at the push of a button.

The lawsuit raises two distinct types of copyright infringement claims. The first involves the AI's *training*: the argument that feeding a model copyrighted films without a license is itself an unauthorized reproduction of those works, regardless of what the model later produces. The second involves the AI's *outputs*: the finished videos and images that directly replicate protected characters. The studios also pursued a theory of contributory infringement, arguing that MiniMax didn't just passively enable infringement, but actively encouraged it. The company's own promotional materials featured generated clips of the studios' characters, and it sponsored tutorial videos walking users through how to produce content like "Spider-Man and Supergirl kissing in the park." On May 22, 2026, a federal judge denied MiniMax's motion to dismiss, rejecting both the company's claim that a U.S. court lacked authority over a Chinese defendant and its argument that the studios hadn't stated a viable legal claim. On the contributory infringement theory in particular, the court found the studios' allegations sufficient to proceed.

The studios have framed the stakes in stark terms, warning that as generative AI advances, it's only a matter of time before these tools can produce full-length unauthorized films. While that outcome remains speculative, the core legal question the case will force courts to answer is concrete: can an AI company build a commercial product on copyrighted works it never licensed, and then profit from an output that reproduces those works on demand? If the studios prevail, the answer will reshape how AI developers approach content licensing and what rights holders can expect in return. For now, MiniMax's motion to dismiss has been denied, the parties are headed toward discovery, and the "Hollywood studio in your pocket" is facing the real Hollywood in court.