

Style Blog

Robin Thicke, Pharrell Williams owe Marvin Gaye's family \$7.4 million for 'Blurred Lines,' jury decides

By [Emily Yahr](#) March 10

The strange, fraught saga of “Blurred Lines” — 2013’s most notoriously popular single — has finally come to a rich conclusion. A Los Angeles jury decided Tuesday that, yes, songwriters Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams ripped off Marvin Gaye’s 1977 hit “Got to Give It Up” and awarded Gaye’s family \$7.4 million in compensation.

That amounts to about a dollar for every copy the smash pop hit sold. It ultimately raked in \$16 million in profits, with Thicke and Williams each earning about \$5 million.

[\[Critic's notebook: It's okay if you hate Robin Thicke. But the "Blurred Lines" verdict is bad for pop music.\]](#)

The U.S. District Court jury [divided the award](#) into an approximately \$1.6 million payment from Williams and \$1.7 million from Thicke, to compensate the Gaye family for loss of profits. Another \$4 million was assessed as damages. Neither the record company nor rapper T.I. — who also performed on the song — owe anything.

Thicke’s publicist released a statement from Thicke, Williams and T.I. that called the

ruling “a horrible precedent for music and creativity going forward.”

“‘Blurred Lines’ was created from the heart and minds of Pharrell, Robin and T.I. and not taken from anyone or anywhere else,” the statement said. “We are reviewing the decision, considering our options and you will hear more from us soon about this matter.”

[Sam Smith stole a Tom Petty song, which is a grand tradition in pop music]

The trial was notable primarily because it’s unusual that these battles go public. For example, Sam Smith quietly agreed to add Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne as co-writers to Smith’s Grammy-winning “Stay With Me,” after Petty’s camp argued that it sounded a little too much like Petty’s “I Won’t Back Down,” in a matter that never went near a courtroom.

But this case was messy from the beginning. In August 2013, Thicke, Williams and T.I. filed a preemptive suit claiming no infringement. Then, after Gaye’s family sued them, Thicke made headlines last year when his deposition leaked with his shocking, embarrassing defense: The singer claimed he was “high on Vicodin and alcohol” during the writing process.

As for all those interviews where he boasted about helping write it and how he was specifically inspired by Gaye’s “Got to Give It Up”? Well, he was lying, Thicke said, and just envious that Williams, also the producer of the song, would get all the glory.

[Robin Thicke's defense in "Blurred Lines" lawsuit is not what anyone expected]

“After making six albums that I wrote and produced myself, the biggest hit of my career was written by somebody else,” Thicke said of “Blurred Lines,” which was nominated for two Grammy Awards including Record of the Year. “And I was jealous and wanted some of the credit.”



[The Los Angeles Times reports](#) that Thicke took the stand with a keyboard during the trial to show jury members that songs borrow chord progressions all the time. Meanwhile, Gaye’s lawyer warned the jury against believing Thicke and Williams: “Keep in mind at all times, these people are professional performers,” he said.

“Blurred Lines” has been plagued with controversy ever since its release; many criticized its creepy, suggestive lyrics: “I know you want it/But you’re a good girl/The way you grab me/Must wanna get nasty.” Thicke brushed off the critiques, saying the song was about his wife, Paula Patton.

“She’s my good girl,” he [told the Daily Mail](#) in 2013. “And I know she wants it because we’ve been together 20 years.” (Thicke and Patton divorced the following year.)

[\[Robin Thicke wrote "Blurred Lines" about his wife\]](#)

The music video made a splash and the “unedited” version was almost immediately banned from YouTube, as it consisted mostly of Thicke frolicking with virtually naked models against a white backdrop. Later, Thicke performed the song on the MTV Video Music Awards which led to the [infamous twerking incident with Miley Cyrus](#).

Nona Gaye, Marvin Gaye's daughter, "wept" when she heard the verdict, [according to the Associated Press](#).

"Right now, I feel free," she told reporters. "Free from ... Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke's chains and what they tried to keep on us and the lies that were told."

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Emily Yahr covers pop culture and entertainment for the Post. Follow her on Twitter [@EmilyYahr](#).
