IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS **EASTERN DIVISION**

Case No. 24-cv- 10888

FALL OUT BOY, INC.,

Plaintiff.

v.

THE PARTNERSHIPS and UNINCORPORATED ASSOCIATIONS **IDENTIFIED ON SCHEDULE "A,"**

Defendants.

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Fall Out Boy, Inc. ("Plaintiff") hereby brings the present action against the Partnerships and Unincorporated Associations Identified on Schedule A attached hereto (collectively, "Defendants") and alleges as follows:

I. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction over Plaintiff's claims pursuant to the provisions of the Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1051, et seq., 28 U.S.C. § 1338(a)-(b) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.

2. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391, and this Court may properly exercise personal jurisdiction over Defendants because Defendants structure their business activities so as to target consumers in the United States, including Illinois, through at least the fully interactive e-commerce stores operating under the aliases identified on Schedule A attached hereto (the "Seller Aliases"). Specifically, Defendants have targeted sales to Illinois residents by setting up and operating e-commerce stores that target United States consumers, offer

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 2 of 17 PageID #:2

shipping to the United States, including Illinois, accept payment in U.S. dollars and, on information and belief, sell products using infringing and counterfeit versions of Plaintiff's federally registered trademarks (collectively, the "Unauthorized Products") to residents of Illinois. Each of the Defendants is committing tortious acts in Illinois, is engaging in interstate commerce, and has wrongfully caused Plaintiff substantial injury in the state of Illinois.

II. INTRODUCTION

3. Plaintiff filed this case to prevent e-commerce store operators who trade upon Plaintiff's reputation and goodwill from further selling and/or offering for sale Unauthorized Products. Defendants create e-commerce stores under one or more Seller Aliases and then advertise, offer for sale, and/or sell Unauthorized Products to unknowing consumers. E-commerce stores operating under the Seller Aliases share identifiers, such as design elements and similarities of the Unauthorized Products offered for sale, establishing that a logical relationship exists between them, and that Defendants' counterfeiting operation arises out of the same transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions or occurrences. Defendants take advantage of a set of circumstances, including the anonymity and mass reach afforded by the Internet and the cover afforded by international borders, to violate Plaintiff's intellectual property rights with impunity. Defendants attempt to avoid liability by operating under one or more Seller Aliases to conceal their identities, locations, and the full scope and interworking of their counterfeiting operation. Plaintiff is forced to file this action to combat Defendants' counterfeiting of its registered trademarks, as well as to protect consumers from purchasing Unauthorized Products over the Internet. Plaintiff has been, and continues to be, irreparably damaged through consumer confusion and dilution of its valuable trademarks because of Defendants' actions and therefore seeks injunctive and monetary relief.

III. THE PARTIES

4. Plaintiff is an Illinois corporation and owns the trademark rights asserted in this action. Plaintiff is wholly owned by Peter Wentz, a member of Fall Out Boy, the famous American rock band known for its signature style of pop-punk and alternative music.

5. Fall Out Boy was formed in 2001 by lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist Patrick Stump, lead guitarist Joe Trohman, bassist Peter Wentz, and drummer Andy Hurley. In 2003, Fall Out Boy found underground success with their debut album *Take This To Your Grave*. In 2005, Fall Out Boy broke out of the underground music scene and reached mainstream success with their major label album, *From Under The Cork Tree*, which produced two top 10 singles. The album debuted on the Billboard 200 at number nine, selling over 68,000 copies in its first week. The album earned several awards and achieved double platinum status after selling more than 2.5 million albums in the United States alone. After earning a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist at the Grammy Awards in 2006, Fall Out Boy released more chart-topping albums, such as 2007's *Infinity on High* and 2009's *Folie à Deux*.

6. In 2013 Fall Out Boy released the album *Save Rock and Roll*, which debuted at number one on the U.S. Billboard 200 with 154,000 first week sales. Its top lead single, "My Songs Know What You Did in the Dark (Light Em Up)," has achieved eight platinum certifications in the U.S. Similarly, the band's 2015 album *American Beauty/American Psycho* and 2018 album *Mania* each peaked at number one in the U.S. Billboard 200s.

7. Fall Out Boy has released eight studio albums, selling over 9 million copies. As of 2020, the band is a two-time Grammy Award nominee, in addition to being nominated for "Best Rock Video" at the 2020 MTV Video Music Awards. A testament to Fall Out Boy's success is their loyal fan base, as well as their influence on other artists who have covered the band's songs

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 4 of 17 PageID #:4

in homage. Through their record sales and influence on other artists, Fall Out Boy has inspired a new generation of musicians.

8. With a strong fan-base, Plaintiff markets and sells a variety of Fall Out Boy branded products including clothing, hats, stickers, vinyl, banners, decorative items, and other merchandise bearing Plaintiff's trademarks (collectively, "Fall Out Boy Products"). Fall Out Boy Products have become enormously popular and even iconic, driven by Plaintiff's quality standards and innovative designs. Among the purchasing public, Fall Out Boy Products are instantly recognizable as such. Fall Out Boy Products are distributed and sold to consumers by Plaintiff and its licensees through authorized retailers throughout the United States through the website and https://store.falloutboy.com.

8. Plaintiff has used the FALL OUT BOY trademark, and other trademarks, for many years and has continuously sold products under its trademarks (the "Fall Out Boy Trademarks"). As a result of this long-standing use, strong common law trademark rights have amassed in the Fall Out Boy Trademarks. Plaintiff's use of the marks has also built substantial goodwill in the Fall Out Boy Trademarks. The Fall Out Boy Trademarks are famous marks and valuable assets of Plaintiff. Fall Out Boy Products also typically include at least one of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks.

9. The Fall Out Boy Trademarks are registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office and are included below:

Registration		Registration	
Number	Trademark	Date	Goods and Services
3,666,819	FALL OUT BOY	Aug. 11, 2009	For: Prerecorded audio discs,
			tapes and phonographic records
			featuring music, and providing
			downloadable audio musical
			recordings via a global computer
			network in class 009.

			For: Clothing, distributed in connection with musical concerts and musical sound recordings, namely, T-shirts, shirts, sweat shirts, tank tops, shorts, hats, belts in class 025.
3,939,393	FALL OUT BOY	Apr. 05, 2011	For: T-shirts, hooded shirts, sweat shirts, tank tops, hats in class 025.
4,983,527	SAVE ROCK AND ROLL	Jun. 21, 2016	For: T-shirts, shirts, tank tops in class 025.
4,704,853	FOB	Mar. 17, 2015	For: Series of musical sound recordings; Series of musical video recordings; Downloadable musical sound recordings; Downloadable music video recordings featuring music and entertainment; Audiovisual recordings featuring music and entertainment; Downloadable audiovisual recordings featuring music and entertainment; Downloadable ringtones and graphics for mobile phones and wireless devices; Downloadable software application provided via the Internet for use on mobile phones and wireless devices featuring performances, music, recordings, appearances, news, and other information about a musical group in class 009.

4,818,577	FOR	Sep. 22, 2015	For: T-shirts; shirts; sweat shirts; hooded shirts; tank tops; shorts; jackets; hats and belts in class 025.
4,906,316		Feb. 23, 2016	For: T-shirts, shirts in class 025.

10. The U.S. registrations for the Fall Out Boy Trademarks are valid, subsisting, and in full force and effect, and some are incontestable pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1065. The registrations for the Fall Out Boy Trademarks constitute *prima facie* evidence of their validity and of Plaintiff's exclusive right to use the Fall Out Boy Trademarks pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1057(b). True and correct copies of the United States Registration Certificates for the Fall Out Boy Trademarks are attached hereto as **Exhibit 1**.

11. The Fall Out Boy Trademarks are exclusive to Plaintiff and are displayed extensively on Fall Out Boy Products and in marketing and promotional materials. The Fall Out Boy Trademarks are also distinctive when applied to Fall Out Boy Products, signifying to the purchaser that the products come from Plaintiff, or its licensees, and are manufactured to Plaintiff's quality standards. Whether Plaintiff manufactures the products itself or contracts with others to do

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 7 of 17 PageID #:7

so, Plaintiff has ensured that products bearing the Fall Out Boy Trademarks are manufactured to the highest quality standards.

12. The Fall Out Boy Trademarks are famous marks, as that term is used in 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(1), and have been continuously used and never abandoned. The success of Fall Out Boy, in addition to the marketing of Fall Out Boy Products, has enabled the Fall Out Boy brand to achieve widespread recognition and fame and has made the Fall Out Boy Trademarks some of the most well-known marks in the music industry. The widespread fame, outstanding reputation, and significant goodwill associated with the Fall Out Boy brand have made the Fall Out Boy Trademarks valuable assets of Plaintiff.

13. Products bearing the Fall Out Boy Trademarks have been the subject of substantial and continuous marketing and promotion. Plaintiff and its licensees have marketed and promoted, and continue to market and promote, products bearing the Fall Out Boy Trademarks in the industry and to consumers through traditional print media, authorized retailers, social media sites, point of sale material, and online through websites like https://store.falloutboy.com.

14. Plaintiff has expended substantial time, money, and other resources advertising, promoting, and marketing Fall Out Boy Products. Fall Out Boy Products have also been the subject of extensive unsolicited publicity due to the longstanding success of the Fall Out Boy brand. As a result, products bearing the Fall Out Boy Trademarks are widely recognized and exclusively associated by consumers as being high-quality products sourced from Plaintiff. The Fall Out Boy Trademarks have achieved tremendous fame and recognition, adding to the inherent distinctiveness of the marks. As such, the goodwill associated with the Fall Out Boy Trademarks is of immeasurable value to Plaintiff.

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 8 of 17 PageID #:8

15. Fall Out Boy Products are sold only by Plaintiff or through authorized licensees and are recognized by the public as being exclusively associated with the Fall Out Boy brand.

16. Defendants are unknown individuals and business entities who own and/or operate one or more of the e-commerce stores under the Seller Aliases identified on Schedule A and/or other seller aliases not yet known to Plaintiff. On information and belief, Defendants reside and/or operate in foreign jurisdictions and redistribute products from the same or similar sources in those locations. Defendants have the capacity to be sued pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 17(b).

17. On information and belief, Defendants, either individually or jointly, operate one or more e-commerce stores under the Seller Aliases listed in Schedule A attached hereto. Tactics used by Defendants to conceal their identities and the full scope of their operation make it virtually impossible for Plaintiff to learn Defendants' true identities and the exact interworking of their counterfeit network. If Defendants provide additional credible information regarding their identities, Plaintiff will take appropriate steps to amend the Complaint.

IV. DEFENDANTS' UNLAWFUL CONDUCT

18. The success of the Fall Out Boy brand has resulted in significant counterfeiting of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks. Because of this, Plaintiff has implemented an anti-counterfeiting program that involves investigating suspicious websites and online marketplace listings identified in proactive Internet sweeps. Recently, Plaintiff has identified many fully interactive e-commerce stores offering Unauthorized Products on online marketplace platforms like AliExpress.com ("AliExpress"), Amazon.com, Inc. ("Amazon"), Dhgate.com ("DHGate"), eBay, Inc. ("eBay"), Ecrater.com ("eCRATER"), Printerval.com ("Printerval"), Spreadshirt, Inc. ("Spreadshirt"), TP Apparel LLC ("Teepublic"), WhaleCo, Inc. ("Temu"), Walmart, Inc. ("Walmart"), and Context

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 9 of 17 PageID #:9

Logic, Inc. d/b/a Wish.com ("Wish"), including the e-commerce stores operating under the Seller Aliases. The Seller Aliases target consumers in this Judicial District and throughout the United States. According to a report prepared for The Buy Safe America Coalition, most counterfeit products now come through international mail and express courier services (as opposed to containers) due to increased sales from offshore online counterfeiters. *The Counterfeit Silk Road: Impact of Counterfeit Consumer Products Smuggled Into the United States*, prepared by John Dunham & Associates (Exhibit 2).

19. Because counterfeit products sold by offshore online counterfeiters do not enter normal retail distribution channels, the US economy lost an estimated 300,000 or more full-time jobs in the wholesale and retail sectors alone in 2020. *Id.* When accounting for lost jobs from suppliers that would serve these retail and wholesale establishments, and the lost jobs that would have been induced by employees re-spending their wages in the economy, the total economic impact resulting from the sale of counterfeit products was estimated to cost the United States economy over 650,000 full-time jobs that would have paid over \$33.6 billion in wages and benefits. *Id.* Additionally, it is estimated that the importation of counterfeit goods costs the United States government nearly \$7.2 billion in personal and business tax revenues in the same period. *Id.*

20. Online marketplace platforms like those used by Defendants do not adequately subject new sellers to verification and confirmation of their identities, allowing counterfeiters to "routinely use false or inaccurate names and addresses when registering with these e-commerce platforms." <u>Exhibit 3</u>, Daniel C.K. Chow, *Alibaba, Amazon, and Counterfeiting in the Age of the Internet*, 40 NW. J. INT'L L. & BUS. 157, 186 (2020); *see also* report on "Combating Trafficking in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods" prepared by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 10 of 17 PageID #:10

of Strategy, Policy, and Plans (Jan. 24, 2020), attached as **Exhibit 4**, and finding that on "at least some e-commerce platforms, little identifying information is necessary for a counterfeiter to begin selling" and that "[t]he ability to rapidly proliferate third-party online marketplaces greatly complicates enforcement efforts, especially for intellectual property rights holders." Counterfeiters hedge against the risk of being caught and having their websites taken down from an e-commerce platform by establishing multiple virtual storefronts. **Exhibit 4** at p. 22. Since platforms generally do not require a seller on a third-party marketplace to identify the underlying business entity, counterfeiters can have many different profiles that can appear unrelated even though they are commonly owned and operated. **Exhibit 4** at p. 39. Further, "[e]-commerce platforms create bureaucratic or technical hurdles in helping brand owners to locate or identify sources of counterfeits and counterfeiters." **Exhibit 3** at 186-187. Specifically, brand owners are forced to "suffer through a long and convoluted notice and takedown procedure only [for the counterfeit seller] to reappear under a new false name and address in short order." *Id.* at p. 161.

21. Defendants have targeted sales to Illinois residents by setting up and operating ecommerce stores that target United States consumers using one or more Seller Aliases, offer shipping to the United States, including Illinois, accept payment in U.S. dollars and, on information and belief, sell Unauthorized Products to residents of Illinois.

22. Defendants concurrently employ and benefit from similar advertising and marketing strategies. For example, Defendants facilitate sales by designing the e-commerce stores operating under the Seller Aliases so that they appear to unknowing consumers to be authorized online retailers, outlet stores, or wholesalers. E-commerce stores operating under the Seller Aliases appear sophisticated and accept payment in U.S. dollars in multiple ways, including via credit cards, Alipay, Amazon Pay, and/or PayPal. E-commerce stores operating under the Seller

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 11 of 17 PageID #:11

Aliases often include content and images that make it very difficult for consumers to distinguish their stores from an authorized retailer. Plaintiff has not licensed or authorized Defendants to use the Fall Out Boy Trademarks, and none of the Defendants are authorized retailers of Fall Out Boy Products.

23. Many Defendants also deceive unknowing consumers by using the Fall Out Boy Trademarks within the content, text, and/or meta tags of their e-commerce stores to attract consumers using search engines to find websites relevant to Fall Out Boy Products. Other ecommerce stores operating under the Seller Aliases omit using the Fall Out Boy Trademarks in the item title to evade enforcement efforts while using strategic item titles and descriptions that will trigger their listings when consumers are searching for Fall Out Boy Products.

24. E-commerce store operators like Defendants commonly engage in fraudulent conduct when registering the Seller Aliases by providing false, misleading and/or incomplete information to e-commerce platforms to prevent discovery of their true identities and the scope of their e-commerce operation.

25. E-commerce store operators like Defendants regularly register or acquire new seller aliases for the purpose of offering for sale and selling Unauthorized Products. Such seller alias registration patterns are one of many common tactics used by e-commerce store operators like Defendants to conceal their identities and the full scope and interworking of their counterfeiting operation, and to avoid being shut down.

26. Even though Defendants operate under multiple fictitious aliases, the e-commerce stores operating under the Seller Aliases often share unique identifiers, such as templates with common design elements that intentionally omit contact information or other information for identifying Defendants or other Seller Aliases they operate or use. E-commerce stores operating

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 12 of 17 PageID #:12

under the Seller Aliases include other common features, such as registration patterns, accepted payment methods, check-out methods, keywords, advertising tactics, similarities in price and quantities, the same incorrect grammar and misspellings, and/or the use of the same text and images. Additionally, Unauthorized Products for sale by the Seller Aliases bear similar irregularities and indicia of being counterfeit to one another, suggesting that the Unauthorized Products were manufactured by and come from a common source and that Defendants are interrelated.

27. E-commerce store operators like Defendants communicate with each other through QQ.com chat rooms and utilize websites, like sellerdefense.cn, that provide tactics for operating multiple online marketplace accounts and evading detection by brand owners. Websites like sellerdefense.cn also tip off e-commerce store operators, like Defendants, of new intellectual property infringement lawsuits filed by brand owners, such as Plaintiff, and recommend that e-commerce operators cease their infringing activity, liquidate their associated financial accounts, and change the payment processors that they currently use to accept payments in their online stores.

28. Counterfeiters such as Defendants typically operate under multiple seller aliases and payment accounts so that they can continue operation despite Plaintiff's enforcement. Ecommerce store operators like Defendants maintain off-shore bank accounts and regularly move funds from their financial accounts to offshore accounts outside the jurisdiction of this Court to avoid payment of any monetary judgment awarded to Plaintiff.

29. Defendants are working in active concert to knowingly and willfully manufacture, import, distribute, offer for sale, and sell Unauthorized Products in the same transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions or occurrences. Defendants, without any authorization or license from Plaintiff have, jointly and severally, knowingly and willfully used and continue to use

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 13 of 17 PageID #:13

the Fall Out Boy Trademarks in connection with the advertisement, distribution, offering for sale, and sale of Unauthorized Products into the United States and Illinois over the Internet.

30. Defendants' unauthorized use of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks in connection with the advertising, distribution, offering for sale, and sale of Unauthorized Products, including the sale of Unauthorized Products into the United States, including Illinois, is likely to cause, and has caused, confusion, mistake, and deception by and among consumers and is irreparably harming Plaintiff.

COUNT I TRADEMARK INFRINGEMENT AND COUNTERFEITING (15 U.S.C. § 1114)

31. Plaintiff hereby re-alleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in the preceding paragraphs.

32. This is a trademark infringement action against Defendants based on their unauthorized use in commerce of counterfeit imitations of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks in connection with the sale, offering for sale, distribution, and/or advertising of infringing goods. The Fall Out Boy Trademarks are highly distinctive marks. Consumers have come to expect the highest quality from products offered, sold, or marketed under the Fall Out Boy Trademarks.

33. Defendants have sold, offered to sell, marketed, distributed, and advertised, and are still selling, offering to sell, marketing, distributing, and advertising products using counterfeit reproductions of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks without Plaintiff's permission.

34. Plaintiff is the owner of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks. Plaintiff's United States registrations for the Fall Out Boy Trademarks are in full force and effect. On information and belief, Defendants have knowledge of Plaintiff's rights in the Fall Out Boy Trademarks and are willfully infringing and intentionally using infringing and counterfeit versions of the Fall Out Boy

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 14 of 17 PageID #:14

Trademarks. Defendants' willful, intentional, and unauthorized use of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks is likely to cause, and is causing, confusion, mistake, and deception as to the origin and quality of the Unauthorized Products among the general public.

35. Defendants' activities constitute willful trademark infringement and counterfeiting under Section 32 of the Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1114.

36. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law and if Defendants' actions are not enjoined, Plaintiff will continue to suffer irreparable harm to its reputation and the goodwill of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks.

37. The injuries and damages sustained by Plaintiff have been directly and proximately caused by Defendants' wrongful reproduction, use of advertisement, promotion, offering to sell, and/or sale of Unauthorized Products.

COUNT II FALSE DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN (15 U.S.C. § 1125(a))

38. Plaintiff hereby re-alleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in the preceding paragraphs.

39. Defendants' promotion, marketing, offering for sale, and sale of Unauthorized Products has created and is creating a likelihood of confusion, mistake, and deception among the general public as to the affiliation, connection, or association with Plaintiff or the origin, sponsorship, or approval of Defendants' Unauthorized Products by Plaintiff.

40. By using the Fall Out Boy Trademarks in connection with the offering for sale and/or sale of Unauthorized Products, Defendants create a false designation of origin and a misleading representation of fact as to the origin and sponsorship of the Unauthorized Products.

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 15 of 17 PageID #:15

41. Defendants' false designation of origin and misrepresentation of fact as to the origin and/or sponsorship of the Unauthorized Products to the general public involves the use of counterfeit marks and is a willful violation of Section 43 of the Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1125.

42. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law and will continue to suffer irreparable harm to its reputation and the associated goodwill of the Fall Out Boy brand if Defendants' actions are not enjoined.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants as follows:

1) That Defendants, their affiliates, officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys, confederates, and all persons acting for, with, by, through, under, or in active concert with them be temporarily, preliminarily, and permanently enjoined and restrained from:

- a. using the Fall Out Boy Trademarks or any reproductions, counterfeit copies, or colorable imitations thereof in any manner in connection with the distribution, marketing, advertising, offering for sale, or sale of any product that is not one of Fall Out Boy Products or is not authorized by Plaintiff to be sold in connection with the Fall Out Boy Trademarks;
- b. passing off, inducing, or enabling others to sell or pass off any product as one of Fall Out Boy Products or any other product produced by Plaintiff, that is not Plaintiff's or not produced under the authorization, control, or supervision of Plaintiff and approved by Plaintiff for sale under the Fall Out Boy Trademarks;
- c. committing any acts calculated to cause consumers to believe that Defendants' Unauthorized Products are those sold under the authorization, control, or

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 16 of 17 PageID #:16

supervision of Plaintiff, or are sponsored by, approved by, or otherwise connected with Plaintiff;

- d. further infringing the Fall Out Boy Trademarks and damaging Plaintiff's goodwill; and
- e. manufacturing, shipping, delivering, holding for sale, transferring, or otherwise moving, storing, distributing, returning, or otherwise disposing of, in any manner, products or inventory not manufactured by or for Plaintiff, nor authorized by Plaintiff to be sold or offered for sale, and which bear any of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks;

2) Entry of an Order that, upon Plaintiff's request, those with notice of the injunction, including without limitation, any websites and/or online marketplace platforms, including AliExpress, Amazon, DHGate, eBay, eCRATER, Printerval, Spreadshirt, Teepublic, Temu, Walmart, and Wish, shall disable and cease displaying any advertisements used by or associated with Defendants in connection with the sale of counterfeit and infringing goods using the Fall Out Boy Trademarks;

3) That Defendants account for and pay to Plaintiff all profits realized by Defendants by reason of Defendants' unlawful acts herein alleged, and that the amount of damages for infringement of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks be increased by a sum not exceeding three times the amount thereof as provided by 15 U.S.C. § 1117;

4) In the alternative, that Plaintiff be awarded statutory damages, for willful trademark counterfeiting pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1117(c)(2), of \$2,000,000 for each and every use of the Fall Out Boy Trademarks;

5) That Plaintiff be awarded its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs; and

Case: 1:24-cv-10888 Document #: 1 Filed: 10/22/24 Page 17 of 17 PageID #:17

6) Award any and all other relief that this Court deems just and proper.

Dated this 22nd day of October 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

<u>/s/ Martin F. Trainor</u> Martin F. Trainor Sydney Fenton Alexander Whang TME Law, P.C. 10 S. Riverside Plaza Suite 875 Chicago, Illinois 60606 708.475.1127 martin@tme-law.com sydney@tme-law.com alexander@tme-law.com

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