Atlantic Records and Estate of Ahmet Ertegun Sued by Sexual Assault Survivor under NY Adult Survivors Act

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On November 28, Wigdor LLP client Jan Roeg filed legal claims regarding repeated sexual assaults by the late Ahmet Ertegun, the co-founder and longtime CEO of Atlantic Records ("Atlantic" or the "Label"), during her years as a talent finder and manager affiliated with the Label from the 1980s into the 2000s. Ms. Roeg is filing legal claims in New York State Supreme Court against Atlantic Records and the Estate of Ahmet Ertegun under the newly effective New York Adult Survivors Act, which renews claims related to past sexual assaults that would have been considered expired under previous law.

For decades, Ms. Roeg had an impressive and high-profile career managing musicians and facilitating their relationship with recording labels, first and foremost Atlantic Records. As detailed in the Complaint, the very first time Ms. Roeg and Mr. Ertegun met, in or around 1983, he sexually assaulted her. Ms. Roeg was sitting in Mr. Ertegun's office at Atlantic Records when one of her contact lenses popped out, and she bent down on the floor to find it. While Ms. Roeg was on the floor and unaware of what he was about to do, Mr. Ertegun suddenly put his hand up her skirt, touching her upper thigh close and backside close to her vaginal area. Ms. Roeg was shocked and yelled as she quickly tried to get away from Mr. Ertegun. Ms. Roeg learned that this was standard conduct by Mr. Ertegun, and she remained tied to Atlantic due to her music artists having signed with the Label, over years of sexual assault and an obsessive sexual pursuit of Ms. Roeg by him as described in Ms. Roeg's filing.

Other instances of sexual assault and abuse in Ms. Roeg's Complaint (read here) include, but are not limited to:

- After a dinner with Ms. Roeg and other music industry insiders in Manhattan, Mr. Ertegun proposed that he and Ms. Roeg go to a club, but on the way he said they needed to stop at his Upper East Side home to get cocaine. Roeg declined to take any drugs, and when she came out of the bathroom Mr. Ertegun was masturbating, with his zipper pulled down and his penis out of his pants. When Ms. Roeg tried to leave he roughly grabbed her and slammed her against a wall and continued to masturbate pressed against her body.
- Roeg was admitted to Mr. Ertegun's New York office on at least two occasions when, despite knowing that she was coming in, he was openly masturbating in his office.
- In two other physically harmful incidents in the early 1990s (one in New York, the other in Miami), Mr. Ertegun grabbed Ms. Roeg's hair, head, and/or neck while seated in the back of cars with her and forced her head down towards his crotch with his pants open, in attempts to coerce her to perform oral sex on him.

As alleged in the Complaint, the management of Atlantic Records was well aware of Mr. Ertegun's open and notorious sexual misconduct towards female employees and business associates, and enabled it for decades, imposing suffering on and hampering the careers of countless women within and outside

the Company. Among other practices alleged in the Complaint which led to further assaults by Mr. Ertegun, including those upon Ms. Roeg, Atlantic made regular payoffs to women who came to its offices after encounters with Mr. Ertegun, and turned a blind eye to open sexually inappropriate and misogynistic conduct by him—including obvious sexual activity in his office and revolting stories by Mr. Ertegun in meetings about his exploitative sexual encounters with women at concerts and other events. Ms. Roeg was severely harmed by Mr. Ertegun's assaults and abuse, and continues to suffer emotional distress and other lasting effects to this day. Mr. Ertegun passed away in 2006, and the Complaint seeks damages from Atlantic Records and from Mr. Ertegun's estate through its trustees.

Statement from Wigdor LLP Partner Lawrence M. Pearson

"As Ms. Roeg shows in her Complaint, the "sex, drugs, and Rock n' Roll" culture in the music industry at companies like Atlantic Records was taken as license by powerful men like Ahmet Ertegun to engage in sexual assault and other abuse of women. Now, Ms. Roeg and other survivors of sexual assault who in past years were forced into silence due to the threat of retaliation or loss of their careers can get justice under the Adult Survivors Act. Ms. Roeg and we look forward to holding the Defendants accountable and finally getting some relief for her pain over the years."

Read the Complaint HERE:

MEDIA COVERAGE:

Billboard: "Atlantic Records and Founder Ahmet Ertegun's Estate Sued Over Alleged Sexual Misconduct"

Rolling Stone: "Atlantic Records, Estate of Ahmet Ertegun Sued Over Sexual Assault Claims"

Daily Beast: "Late Record Industry Titan Ahemt Ertegun Sexually Assaulted Talent Scout

Daily Mail: "Ahmet Ertegun's Estate is Sued by Music Manager Who Claims He Sexually Assaulted Her for Decades"

Guardian: "Late Atlantic Records Founder Ahmet Ertegun Accused of Sexual Assault"

Law 360: "Atlantic Records Sued Over Ex-CEO's Alleged Abuse in 1980's"