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Arbitrator Rules Barry Sonnenfeld Owes UTA For 'Men In Black III'

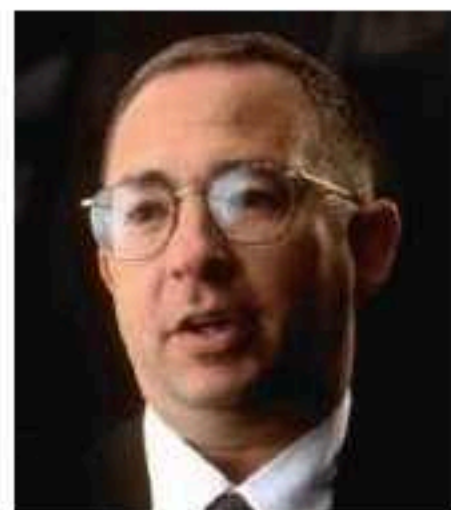
By DOMINIC PATTEN | Wednesday April 25, 2012 @ 12:32pm PDT

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Barry Sonnenfeld must pay UTA up to \$325,000 on his paycheck from *Men In Black III*, a DGA/ATA arbitration ruling revealed today. The director's former agency will get even more if there are more sequels of the Will Smith-Tommy Lee Jones sci-fi franchise. The seven-page ruling ([read it here](#)) filed today in LA Superior Court determines that Sonnenfeld owes 10% of the \$3.5 million he's getting for the film. *Men in Black III* **comes out** on May 25, 2012.



In a February 2 hearing, Sonnenfeld, represented by Edward Anderson of Anderson General & Entertainment Law, argued that because he "terminated his agency agreement with UTA in or about mid-April" 1995, he did not owe them anything for work he subsequently did on any *MIB* sequels. UTA, represented by Bryan Freedman and Steven Stiglitz of Freedman & Taitelman, disagreed.



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substantially negotiated the initial MIB Agreement ... which provided Sonnenfeld with the right of first negotiation to direct any and all sequels to MIB." Weitzman further stated in his ruling, dated March 16, "such 'right of first negotiation' is legally enforceable and is not uncommon in the feature film business."

For one, UTA noted that Sonnenfeld, who left for CAA and is now at WME, was a client of theirs when he "entered into a written agreement with Columbia Pictures dated April 4, 1995 to direct the motion picture *Men in Black*." Also, the agency, which received \$325,000 from Sonnenfeld on *MIB I*, which came out on July 2, 1997, and *MiB II*, which came out on July 3, 2002, did the heavy lifting on Sonnenfeld's MIB deal. UTA, as arbitrator and Hollywood lawyer Howard Weitzman noted, "procured and

The binding DGA ruling still must be confirmed by the court, at which point Sonnenfeld has 30 days to pay the agency. UTA had no comment on the ruling.