

# 'Anger Management' Producer Joe Roth Countersues in \$50 Million Legal Battle (Exclusive)

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**The heavyweight producer claims he terminated Jason Shuman's contract; Shuman says he's entitled to compensation for the upcoming Charlie Sheen sitcom.**



Joe Roth

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**Joe Roth**, producer of FX's upcoming **Charlie Sheen** sitcom *Anger Management*, has filed a countersuit against **Jason Shuman** and his Blue Star Entertainment.

In April, Shuman **sued** Roth for \$50 million in lost compensation on *Anger Management* after allegedly being cut out when Sheen signed up for the series. Shuman claimed he had been working with Roth since 2008 in analyzing properties from Roth's Revolution Studios that could be developed into remakes, sequels and TV shows -- one of which was said to be *Anger Management*. Now, Roth is seeking to terminate Shuman's consulting

agreement.

According to Shuman's original lawsuit, after the 2008 consulting agreement was made, Shuman helped Roth develop *Are We There Yet?* But Shuman wasn't happy about his compensation on that TBS series.

Roth, who ran Disney and Fox film studios before launching Revolution in 2000, is said to have admitted that Shuman's comp was "poor compared to the deals other producers received on the show" but that he would "make it up to" Shuman by giving him significant backend ownership and producer credit on the next motion picture property that was turned into a TV series.

During the second half of last year, the TV series *Anger Management* picked up steam with Sheen jumping aboard.

But Shuman appears to have become increasingly worried about his participation. Shuman says he was told to sit tight and "hold off" on pursuing any showrunners for *Anger Management*. By the end of the year, Shuman's reps were telling Revolution that it was in breach of contract for sidelining him and that it had 30 days to cure the breach.

On Dec. 1, Roth is alleged to have confirmed his intention to continue working with Shuman in an e-mail that said, "I will make things right."

But just seven weeks later, on Jan. 24, according to Roth's counterclaims, Shuman was provided notice that his consulting agreement was being terminated.

Shuman's reps responded in March by rejecting the effectiveness of the termination notice, which had language that purportedly allowed Revolution to terminate "at any time, with or without cause."

A few weeks later, Shuman filed a lawsuit against Roth, who is now being represented by **Louis Petrich** at Leopold, Petrich & Smith.

Time will tell if the termination notice actually weighs in Roth's favor. According to the Jan. 24 letter, attached to the new counterclaims, Revolution acknowledged that the consulting agreement would continue to apply to various "Blue Star-instigated projects" for a period of six months, including a television series based on *Anger Management*.

According to the terms of the consulting agreement, also attached, the deal provides that if an acquiring party is unwilling to enter into separate deals with both Roth and Blue Star, "then Blue Star's deal will be born out of Roth's producing deal" and that "Revolution shall, in lieu of such engagement, pay to Blue Star a sum (a 'Set-Up Fee') equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of the option fees and (if applicable) purchase price actually received by Revolution" for the project."

Besides seeking a declaratory judgment that Shuman's consulting agreement is effectively terminated, Roth also has asserted affirmative defenses in the \$50 million lawsuit, including failure to state a cause, lack of consideration, failure to perform, estoppel, laches, waiver, unclean hands, settlement and the expiration of statute of limitations.

Shuman attorney **Bryan Freedman** provided *The Hollywood Reporter* with the following strongly worded statement on the countersuit:

"If the cross complaint was the best Roth could come up with, he is in serious trouble. The termination letter was sent after Roth received a legal letter notifying him that he was in breach and completely ignores the 2010 written agreement which my client performed under until he unceremoniously and covertly shut out from the project. Continuing to be motivated by greed and power, Roth continues to make mistakes. Suing the little guy after he performs for you does not play well to a jury."

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