Elon Musk sued for using AI-generated Blade Runner imagery at robotaxi event



Though it remains very unclear whether any of the self-driving vehicles demoed at Tesla's We, Robot presentation will ever actually make it to market, one of the production companies behind *Blade Runner 2049* thinks Elon Musk ripped off their copyright for the event, and are taking him to court.

Today, Alcon Entertainment – an LA-based production company behind *Blade Runner 2049* – filed a lawsuit against Tesla, Elon Musk, and Warner Bros. Discovery alleging that an AI image generator was used to create promotional art for the We, Robot event that was meant to resemble stills from the 2017 sci-fi film. According to Alcon, which also owns the copyright to *Blade Runner 2049*, WBD and Tesla sent a request to use imagery from the film on the afternoon of October 10th just hours before the We, Robot demo took place on the Warner Bros. lot in California.

Though WBD owns some licensing rights for *Blade Runner 2049*,

because the event would be live-streamed internationally, clearance for the images had to come from Alcon directly. And when Alcon's legal and licensing departments were made aware of the situation, they sent back a firm refusal to the interested parties "so that there would be no mistakes in the conduct of the event."

"Any prudent brand considering any Tesla partnership has to take Musk's massively amplified, highly politicized, capricious and arbitrary behavior, which sometimes veers into hate speech, into account," Alcon's suit explains. "Alcon did not want BR2049 to be affiliated with Musk, Tesla, or any Musk company, for all of these reasons."

Despite Alcon's refusal, however, Tesla allegedly decided to feed shots from *Blade Runner 2049* into an AI image generator to create "a lightly stylized fake screen still screen" which was displayed prominently during the We, Robot presentation. During the event, Musk mentioned the *Blade Runner* franchise by name while describing sci-fi depictions of the future, and the livestream cut to an image depicting a man wearing a duster jacket and standing in front of a ruinous, apocalyptic cityscape.

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Along with the larger copyright infringement, Alcon also says it was never made privy to any of the agreements between Tesla and WBD that would have been necessary before the We, Robot event. Along with giving Tesla the ability to use Warner Bros.' lot and equipment, Alcon believes that agreement also included a promotional element that "allowed or possibly even required Tesla expressly to affiliate the Cybercab with one or more motion pictures" from the studio's catalog.

Alcon's suit doesn't specify exactly how much money the

company is seeking in damages, but it states clearly that it believes Musk, Tesla, and WBD all “understood the unauthorized nature of the image and the improper purpose behind it and encouraged or otherwise lent their support to the improper endeavor.”

https://www.theverge.com/2024/10/21/24276092/alcon-entertainment-blade-runner-2049-tesla-musk-warner-bros-discovery-copyright