

Guitar-Strumming Attorney Sets Legal Parodies to Music

By SARAH PORTLOCK
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The skills of successful litigators with three decades in the law profession include the ability to craft an unfortunate situation into a lawsuit and arrange the evidence into a persuasive argument. But producing songs from those experiences and scoring them to electric guitar riffs is a more unusual skill, the domain of one lawyer, Lawrence Savell, who does his part to bring the insider world of high-power litigation to the masses.

A partner at Chadbourne & Parke, Mr. Savell, who just turned 50, waxes poetic on the intricacies of seeing opposing counsel and of emotions running high on late nights. This year, he produced his fourth album, "The Lawtunes, Live at Blackacre," while earlier albums have had holiday themes to their songs.

Mr. Savell purchased his electric guitar with his first paycheck 25 years ago, but first began drafting legal jargon parodies in law school at the University of Michigan. He has since started writing his own lyrics, a process that takes a few weeks each summer to write and weekends throughout the fall to produce. His recording studio is a home office, with moving blankets hanging along the walls to muffle echoes and computer software to create instrumentals and the illusion of back-up singers.

Mr. Savell has no formal musical background, only a sense of humor and a disarming self-deprecating nature about what he does, both as a professional lawyer specializing in product liability and "media law," and as an amateur musician.

"I love being a lawyer. I would never do anything else. It's be-

cause I enjoy it so much that I have a desire to spend my free time doing things that are related to it," he said. "If I didn't enjoy it, I would put it aside."

Instead, he added, "I've integrated it into my hobbies."

Slightly hokey but with earnest charm, the songs cover topics with which lawyers are all too familiar. The lyrics are filled with references that include emerging issues like electronic discovery, the joys of reviewing briefs in early morning hours with cold take-out, and imaging the life of Santa Claus's general counsel.

"The inspiration is really just working as a lawyer and trying to find, especially at the holidays, a little bit of humor in what we do, and not to take ourselves so seriously," Mr. Savell said.

There are love songs to law and inspirational ballads, like "Law-

Man," which Mr. Savell describes as "a hard-pounding and blunt explanation of exactly what it is that lawyers do." The title character offers his fighting services to any lawyer facing the wrong end of a lawsuit, or losing a promotion to nepotism.

A first year associate who sang "LawMan" with Mr. Savell at this year's office holiday party, Matthew Kelly, said the music is refreshing to the profession and showcases the creative side of lawyers.

"Most lawyers have a creative side to them. You can't get through law school without the ability to think on your feet," Mr. Kelly said in an e-mail message. "However, I think that Larry is one of the few to exhibit it to his colleagues in an effort to entertain."

Mr. Savell says he is surprised when he actually sells an album. "None have been massive sellers, but for an independent seller with no advertising, I'm always amazed when people order them," he said.

He has sold more than 1,000 CDs, and more songs have been downloaded from iTunes and his personal Web site, LawrenceSavell.com. His work is most popular with mothers or grandmothers of lawyers or law students, he said.

The hard-bargaining defense attorney in him hopes that perhaps he can, if even slightly, change the perception of lawyers for the masses.

"A lot of people have this view of lawyers as stuck up and hard to deal with, that they have no sense of humor," Mr. Savell said. "This is designed in part to soften the image of lawyers a little bit."

And it also about having fun, he added. "Every time I see it on iTunes or Amazon next to those of real musicians, it's still a real thrill," he said. "I know I'll never be in their league, but to a small degree, I know I've achieved my goal of being a rocker."



SINGING SOLICITOR Attorney and amateur performer Lawrence Savell sings original songs about being a lawyer to colleagues at the firm Chadbourne & Parke during a holiday lunch.