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1	PETER D. KEISLER Assistant Attorney General	Ch MAR 18 AM 9: 16
2	ELIGENE M. THIROLF	RICHARD W. WEEKING
3	Director, Office of Consumer Litigation FLIZABETH STEIN	CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
4	Attorney, Office of Consumer Litigation U.S. Department of Justice	•
5	950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20530-0001	
6	(202) 307-0486 (voice) (202) 514-8742 (fax)	
7	KEVIN V. RYAN (CSBN 118321)	
8	United States Attorney JOANN M. SWANSON (CSBN 88143)	
9	Assistant United States Attorney 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36055	
10	San Francisco, California 94102-3495 Telephone: (415) 436-7200	ICS
11	Attorneys for the United States	JCS
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13	NORTHERN DIS'	es district to unitalization in the call formation in the call for
14	SAN FRAN	ICISCO DIVISION —
15	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,) No.
16	Plaintiff,	OMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALITES, REDRESS, INJUNCTIVE AND OTHER
17	v.) RELIEF)
18	TELEMARKETING, INC., a Utah corporation, also d/b/a Univoxx; APEX))
19	INVESTMENTS, LLC, a Utah corporation, also d/b/a Operator Directory Service and) }
20	Northwestern Atlantic; UNIVERSAL INNOVATIONS, LLC, a Utah corporation;))
21	THOMAS GREGORY PARRISH, individually and as an officer of))
22	Telemarketing, Inc.; SEAN K. ANGELETTI, individually, and as an officer))
23	of Telemarketing, Inc.; and JOHN P. STARRS, individually,))
24	Defendants.))
25)
26	Plaintiff, the United States of America, acting upon notification and authorization to the	
27	Attorney General by the Federal Trade Commission ("Commission"), for its complaint alleges	
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that:

1. Plaintiff brings this action under Sections 5(a)(1), 5(m)(1)(A), 13(b), 16(a), and 19 of the Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTC Act"), 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a)(1), 45(m)(1)(A), 53(b), 56(a), and 57b, and the Telephone Disclosure and Dispute Resolution Act of 1992 ("TDDRA"), 15 U.S.C. § 5701 *et seq.*, to obtain permanent injunctive relief, monetary civil penalties, consumer redress, disgorgement, and other relief for Defendants' violations of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), and the FTC's Trade Regulation Rule Pursuant to the Telephone Disclosure and Dispute Resolution Act of 1992, 16 C.F.R. Part 308 (the "Pay-Per-Call Rule").

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 2. Subject matter jurisdiction is conferred upon this Court by 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a), 53(b), 57b, and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1337(a), and 1345.
 - 3. Venue in this district is proper under 15 U.S.C. § 53(b) and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b) and (c).

THE DEFENDANTS

- 4. Defendant Telemarketing, Inc. is a Utah Corporation having its office and principal place of business at 3995 Alpine Valley Drive, Sandy, Utah. At all times material to this Complaint, Telemarketing, Inc. has transacted business throughout the United States and in this district under its own name and using fictitious names that include, but are not limited to, Univoxx.
- 5. Defendant Apex Investments, LLC is a Utah Corporation having its office and principal place of business at 51 West Center State No. 189, Orem, Utah. At all times material to this Complaint, Apex Investments, LLC has transacted business throughout the United States and in this district under its own name and using fictitious names that include, but are not limited to, Operator Directory Service and Northwestern Atlantic.
- 6. Defendant Universal Innovations, LLC is a Utah Corporation having its office and principal place of business at 3995 Alpine Valley Circle, Sandy, Utah. At all times material to this Complaint, Universal Innovations, LLC has transacted business throughout the United States and in this district.
 - 7. Defendant Thomas Gregory Parrish is president of Telemarketing, Inc., manager of Apex

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Investments, LLC, and manager of Universal Innovations, LLC. At all times material to this Complaint, acting alone or in concert with others, he has formulated, directed, controlled, or participated in the acts and practices of Telemarketing, Inc., Apex Investments, LLC, and Universal Innovations. LLC set forth in this Complaint. At all times material to this Complaint, Defendant Parrish has transacted business throughout the United States and in this district.

- 8. Defendant Sean K. Angeletti is an officer of Telemarketing, Inc. At all times material to this Complaint, acting alone or in concert with others, he has formulated, directed, controlled, or participated in the acts and practices of Telemarketing, Inc., Apex Investments, LLC, and Universal Innovations. LLC set forth in this Complaint. At all times material to this Complaint, he has transacted business throughout the United States and in this district.
- 9. Defendant John P. Starrs is an employee of Telemarketing, Inc. At all times material to this Complaint, acting alone or in concert with others, he has formulated, directed, controlled, or participated in the acts and practices of Telemarketing, Inc., Apex Investments, LLC, and Universal Innovations, LLC. At all times material to this Complaint, Starrs has transacted business throughout the United States and in this district.

COMMERCE

10. At all times material to this Complaint, Defendants' course of business, including the acts and practices alleged herein, has been and is in or affecting commerce, as "commerce" is defined in Section 4 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 44.

DEFENDANTS' COURSE OF CONDUCT

Defendants' "American Idol" Copycat Telephone Number Project

11. From approximately July 2002 through February 2003, Defendants engaged in various deceptive practices intended to induce persons who were trying to vote for contestants on the popular "American Idol" television show to purchase Defendants' pay-per-call services. The "American Idol" program, produced by FremantleMedia North America and 19 TV Limited, conducts weekly contests of amateur musical performers. Once judges initially select a pool of contestants, the television viewing audience is invited to vote on a weekly basis to determine

which contestants proceed to the next level of competition.

- 12. During the broadcast, the host of the American Idol show invites the television audience to vote for contestants after the show by calling a toll-free number. The number remains constant except for the last two digits identifying the contestant. For example, the number may be 1-866-IDOLS01 (1-866-436-5701) for contestant #1 and 1-866-IDOLS02 (1-866-436-5702) for contestant # 2. Typically, the number of persons calling to vote increases as the show progresses through its broadcast season. The American Idol show has become one of the most-watched television shows in the United States. Over 10 million persons have called the American Idol voting lines on a typical night.
- 13. Defendants, in or about July 2002, put into place a marketing program whereby Defendants would lease or arrange to utilize toll-free telephone lines (hereinafter "copycat" or "complementary" numbers) using numbers almost identical to voting line telephone numbers used by the American Idol show. The objective was to capture phone calls from persons who were attempting to vote for American Idol contestants, but who mistakenly dialed the wrong number. Defendants would arrange for a taped message to be played to such persons, urging them to call a 900-number, and incur pay-per-call charges, to complete their vote.
- 14. The individual Defendants employed at least three separate companies to effectuate the plan. Two companies controlled by Defendant Parrish Telemarketing, Inc. and Universal Innovations. LLC leased, subleased, or arranged to utilize over 100 toll-free lines having numbers very similar to the American Idol numbers. Examples included "866" lines identical to American Idol numbers except for one set of switched digits (*e.g.*, 1-866-463-5701 instead of 1-866-436-5701), and numbers that varied from American Idol numbers only by prefix (e.g., (800) 436-5701 instead of (866) 436-5701).
- 15. In addition, those companies and/or another company managed by Parrish, Apex Investments, LLC, arranged for the operation of a single 900-number line in 2002 and another 900-number line in 2003. Callers to Defendants' toll-free lines were instructed to dial one of these 900-numbers. Defendants employed two Apex Investments trade names -- "Northwestern

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5652. To be connected to this new operator directory, a service of Northwestern Atlantic, you must be at least 18 years of age, or have permission from your parents or legal guardian. Each call is 99 cents per minute, with a 3-minute minimum." (Advertisement #4)

18. Consumers who called Defendants' pay-per-call number as instructed in Defendants' toll-free messages heard a recorded message. The pay-per-call message used in 2003 stated:

"Thank you for calling the operator directory service. The cost of this call is 99 cents per minute and there is a three minute minimum. You must be 18 or older, or have permission from your parents or legal guardians and have a touch tone phone to use this line. If you do not wish to be billed for this call, please hang up now, billing will begin in 3 seconds. [3 second break] [tone] Using the keypad on your phone, please enter the number of the contestant you are trying to reach."

Consumers who called Defendants' pay-per-call number in year 2002 heard a prerecorded message that was identical, or almost identical, to the foregoing message except for the price of the service (\$1.99 instead of \$2.97).

- 19. At the conclusion of each 900-number call at a point where the caller was already liable for charges of \$1.99 or \$2.97 consumers discovered that Defendants' service consisted of nothing more than a recitation of the correct American Idol toll-free number, repeated three times. For example, if the caller pressed "2," he or she would hear the correct American Idol telephone number for contestant number two, e.g., (866) 436-5702. The consumer would have to place a separate call to this number the real American Idol number to actually vote for contestant number two.
- 20. The toll-free number messages described in Paragraph 17 of this Complaint constituted advertisements for Defendants' 900-number pay-per-call service. Those advertisements, despite the clear danger of confusion described above, (1) affirmatively suggested Defendants' 900-number telephone lines were actual voting lines for American Idol; (2) failed to disclose that callers had reached a wrong number; (3) failed to disclose the answering party's true identity and lack of affiliation with the American Idol show; (4) failed to sufficiently identify the nature of the service, which was merely to provide the correct number to the caller, for a fee, and (5) falsely suggested that callers needed to call a 900-number and incur pay-per-call charges to

successfully vote for the contestant of their choice.

- 21. Section 308.5(a)(1) of the Pay-Per-Call Rule, 16 C.F.R. 308.5(a)(1), requires that the service provider, in an introductory disclosure message ("preamble") of the 900 number message, "identif[y] the name of the provider of the pay-per-call service" and "describe ... the service being provided." Although Defendants' practices in 2002 fell within the "nominal cost" exemption of the Rule, *see* 16 C.F.R. 308.5(c), Defendants' 900-number pay-per-call messages in 2003 were subject to these preamble disclosure requirements.
- 22. In the 900-number preamble, Defendants provided no meaningful identification of the service provider as required by the Pay-Per-Call Rule. Although the tape stated "thank you for calling the operator directory service" ("Operator Directory Service" being a trade name for Apex Investments), in numerous instances the recitation of that phrase would not be reasonably perceived as a company identification. Accordingly, consumers who heard the preceding toll-free message suggesting that American Idol was the answering party would continue to believe that American Idol, or an entity associated with it, was the pay-per-call service provider. This is an erroneous and inadequate identification of the pay-per-call service provider, in violation of the Pay-Per-Call Rule.
- 23. Similarly, the 900-number taped message contained no adequate description of the payper-call service, in violation of the Pay-Per-Call Rule. The same phrase, "thank you for calling the operator directory service," is inherently ambiguous in this context. Callers who heard the reference in Advertisement #3 to "voting lines" would naturally assume that they had been referred to a voting system for American Idol, not to an independent company offering mere directory assistance for a fee. For these and other reasons, Defendants' taped pay-per-call message also violated the Pay-Per-Call Rule by failing to adequately describe the pay-per-call service.
- 24. Before Defendants terminated the foregoing practices in February 2003, approximately 25.000 calls had successfully reached Defendants' pay-per-call lines.
 - 25. Defendants' misrepresentations and deceptive omissions, and Pay-Per-Call Rule

violations, were likely to have misled many of these consumers, to their detriment.

Defendants' Other Pay-Per-Call Services

26. Defendants, since at least January 2002, have operated an additional pay-per-call program not related to Defendants' American Idol project. For this additional pay-per-call program, Defendants leased or arranged to utilize toll-free telephone lines using numbers almost identical to lines used, or formerly used, by frequently-called companies, such as Sprint. Consumers who reached Defendants' toll-free lines heard a message urging them to call a 900-number.

27. Consumers who, in response, called Defendants' pay-per-call number as instructed heard a recorded message. For approximately two months in 2003, that message stated:

"Thank you for calling operator directory service. To use our enhanced, toll-free directory assistance, you must be over 18, or have permission from your parents. This call is 99 cents per minute, with a three-minute minimum. [Pause] Using the keypad on your phone, please enter the first three to six letters of the name of the company you are trying to reach. For "Q," press 7, for "Z" press 9."

Consumers who subsequently entered the name of a company whose number was included in the pay-per-call service heard a recitation of the correct number for that company, repeated three times. For example, if a consumer entered S-P-R (7-7-7), he or she could obtain the telephone number for Sprint.

28. Section 308.5(a)(3) of the Pay-Per-Call Rule, 16 C.F.R. 308.5(a)(3), requires the service provider, in the preamble of its 900 number message, to inform callers that charges for the call begin, and that to avoid charges the call must be terminated, three seconds after a clearly discernible signal or tone indicating the end of the preamble. Defendants' pay-per-call message, described above in Paragraph 27, did not alert callers as to when charges would begin, or explain how callers could avoid being charged. For this reason, Defendants' taped pay-per-call message violated the Pay-Per-Call Rule.

I. VIOLATIONS OF THE FTC ACT

- 29. Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), prohibits unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce.
 - 30. Misrepresentations or omissions of material fact constitute deceptive acts or practices

prohibited by Section 5(a) of the FTC Act.

Count One (Misrepresentations)

- 31. Paragraphs through 1 through 30 are incorporated herein by reference.
- 32. In numerous instances. Defendants have represented, expressly or by implication, to persons who called certain of their toll-free lines:
 - (a) That such persons needed to call Defendants' 900-number to be sure to reach the voting lines for American Idol;
 - (b) That such persons had reached American Idol, or an organization endorsed by or affiliated with American Idol, and had to pay a 900-number pay-per-call service to be sure that their original call would be completed and that they would correctly reach the party they were calling;
 - (c) That such persons had to pay fees to an "operator directory" organization called "Northwestern Atlantic" to be sure that their original call to American Idol would be completed and that they would correctly reach the party they were calling; and
 - (d) That Defendants' 900 number telephone lines were actual voting lines for American Idol.

33. In truth and fact,

- (a) In numerous instances, callers to Defendants' toll-free numbers did not need to call a 900-number line to be sure to reach the voting lines for American Idol;
- (b) Callers who reached Defendants' toll-free numbers had not reached American Idol, or an organization endorsed by or affiliated with American Idol, and in numerous instances did not need to pay a 900-number service to be sure that their original call would be completed and that they would correctly reach the party they were calling;
- (c) Callers to Defendants' toll-free numbers in numerous instances did not have to pay fees to an "operator directory" organization called "Northwestern Atlantic" to be sure that their original call to American Idol would be completed and that they

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- 41. Section 308.5(a)(1) of the Pay-Per-Call Rule requires, *inter alia*, that the service provider, in its 900-number message, provide an introductory disclosure message ("preamble") that "clearly . . . identifies the name of the provider of the pay-per-call service."
- 42. In numerous instances, as alleged herein, Defendants failed to provide clearly the name of the provider of the pay-per-call service in its 900-number message preamble. Alternatively, Defendants violated this provision of the Pay-Per-Call Rule by using a trade name ("Operator Directory Service") which, in the context of the preceding toll-free messages heard by callers, contributed to the false representation that the answering party was the American Idol show or a firm acting at its behest.
- 43. Therefore, Defendants, as alleged above, have violated the Pay-Per-Call Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 308.5(a).

Count Four (Failure to Clearly Identify the Pay-Per-Call Service Provided)

- 44. Paragraphs 1 through 43 are incorporated herein by reference.
- 45. Section 308.5(a)(1) of the Pay-Per-Call Rule requires, *inter alia*, that the service provider, in its 900 number message, provide a preamble that "clearly . . . describes the service being provided."
- 46. In numerous instances, as alleged herein, Defendants described their service in terms ("operator directory service") that were both ambiguous and falsely implied, *inter alia*, that the answering party was merely an "operator" for American Idol that "completed" the original call.
- 47. Therefore, Defendants, as alleged above, have violated the Pay-Per-Call Rule, 16 C.F.R. \$ 308.5(a).

Count Five (Failure to Indicate when Charges Begin)

- 48. Paragraphs 1 through 47 are incorporated herein by reference.
- 49. Section 308.5(a)(3) of the Pay-Per-Call Rule requires, *inter alia*, that the service provider, in the preamble of its 900-number message, inform the caller that charges for the call begin, and that to avoid charges the call must be terminated, three seconds after a clearly discernible signal or tone indicating the end of the preamble.

- 50. In numerous instances, as alleged herein, Defendants have failed to inform callers to Defendants' pay-per-call services as to when charges begin, or that callers can avoid charges by terminating the call three seconds after a clearly discernible signal or tone indicating the end of the preamble.
- 51. Therefore, Defendants, as alleged above, have violated the Pay-Per-Call Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 308.5(a).

Count Six (Billing Consumers for Violative Services)

- 52. Paragraphs 1 through 51 are incorporated herein by reference.
- 53. Section 308.5(f) of the Pay-Per-Call Rule states: "The provider of pay-per-call services is prohibited from billing consumers for any services provided in violation of any section of this rule."
- 54. In numerous instances, Defendants violated this provision by causing bills to be sent to consumers even though Defendants had violated the Rule by failing to properly identify themselves as a provider of the service, by failing to properly describe the service, and by failing to inform callers how to avoid charges for Defendants' pay-per-call services, as described above.
- 55. Therefore, Defendants, as alleged above, have violated the Pay-Per-Call Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 308.5(f).

CONSUMER INJURY

56. Consumers throughout the United States have suffered and continue to suffer substantial monetary loss as a result of Defendants' unlawful acts or practices.

THIS COURT'S POWER TO GRANT RELIEF

- 57. Section 13(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 53(b), empowers this Court to grant injunctive and other ancillary relief, including consumer redress, disgorgement, and restitution to prevent and remedy any violations of any provision of law enforced by the Commission.
- 58. Section 19 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 57b, and Section 5711 of TDDRA, 15 U.S.C. § 5711. authorize this Court to grant such relief as the Court finds necessary to redress injury to consumers or other persons resulting from Defendants' violations of the Pay-Per-Call Rule,

including the refund of money. 1 PRAYER FOR RELIEF 2 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that this Court, as authorized by Sections 13 and 19 of the 3 FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 53(b) and 57b, and the TDDRA, 15 U.S.C. § 5701 et seq., and pursuant 4 5 to its own equitable powers: 1. Enter judgment against Defendants and in favor of Plaintiff for each violation alleged in 6 7 this complaint; 2. Permanently enjoin Defendants from violating the FTC Act; 8 3. Permanently enjoin Defendants from violating the Pay-Per-Call Rule, 16. C.F.R. Part 9 308; 10 4. Award plaintiff monetary civil penalties from each Defendant for each violation 11 of the Rule alleged in this complaint; and 12 5. Award such other and additional relief as the Court may determine to be just and 13 14 proper. Respectfully submitted, 15 PETER D. KEISLER 16 Assistant Attorney General 17 KEVIN V. RYAN United States Attorney 18 19 Dated: 3-1)-04 By: Joann M. Swanson 20 Assistant United States Attorney 21 EUGENE M. THIROLF 22 Director Office of Consumer Litigation 23 Dated: ペープでく 24 Bv: Elizabeth Stein Attorney 25 26 27

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1	Of Counsel:
2	JEFFREY KLURFELD Regional Director
3	
4	LAURA FREMONT DEAN C. GRAYBILL
5	Attorneys Federal Trade Commission
6	901 market Street, Suite 570 San Francisco, CA 94103
7	(415) 848-5100 (voice) (415) 848-5184 (fax)
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