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Macias Counsel, Inc. Sues Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior for Malicious Conduct in Santee Alley "Knock-Offs" Case

LOS ANGELES, CA--(Marketwire - August 14, 2008) - A malicious prosecution lawsuit against Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior was filed today by downtown Los Angeles shop owners George and Marijeanne Antounian, charging the companies and their attorneys with bringing an unlawful lawsuit against them for selling knock-off products (Antounians v. Louis Vuitton et al, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. BC396340). The malicious prosecution suit alleges that Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, and their respective lawyers knew the allegations of copyright and trademark infringement were not true but continued with the litigation, ultimately forcing the shop to close and the owners to liquidate their inventory.

Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior hired a private investigation company, Investigative Consultants, in 2005 to determine whether stores on Santee Alley in downtown Los Angeles were selling counterfeit Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior wallets, purses and other goods. After nearly two years of investigations, the suit alleges Investigative Consultants wrongfully concluded that the Antounians, owners of the Bijou Palace at 1116 Santee Alley, sold fake Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior products. An investigation video showed the counterfeit transactions occurring at adjacent stores and in the alley itself but not at Bijou Palace.

"The Antounians' store, Bijou Palace, sold only costume jewelry and was not in the business of selling purses and wallets," says Sean Macias, managing partner of Macias Counsel, Inc. in Glendale and lead attorney representing the Antounians.

William Salle, co-counsel for the Antounians, says a member of the investigation team, Arianna Ortiz, admitted she provided false testimony in identifying Bijou Palace as one of the stores selling knockoff products. "Ortiz alerted Kris Buckner, president of Investigative Consultants, and lead counsel Janine Garguilo for Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, of the errors in the investigation reports months before trial, but legal action still proceeded against the Antounians," says William Salle. During trial in July 2007,

Investigator Buckner testified that he never saw handbags, wallets or sunglasses or any Louis Vuitton or Dior items for sale at Bijou Palace. "These were the same items that the Antounians and Bijou Palace were to have allegedly sold," says Salle.

"We understand the plight of companies as they try to protect their brand from counterfeiters," says Macias, "but doing as they did in this case is unjustifiable. Maybe they wanted to send a message to would-be counterfeiters that they mean business. Instead, Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior succeeded only in destroying a small business."

Co-counsel representing George and Marijeanne Antounian is also Armen Shaghzo of the law firm Shaghzo and Shaghzo.