

# MICHIGAN LAWYERS WEEKLY

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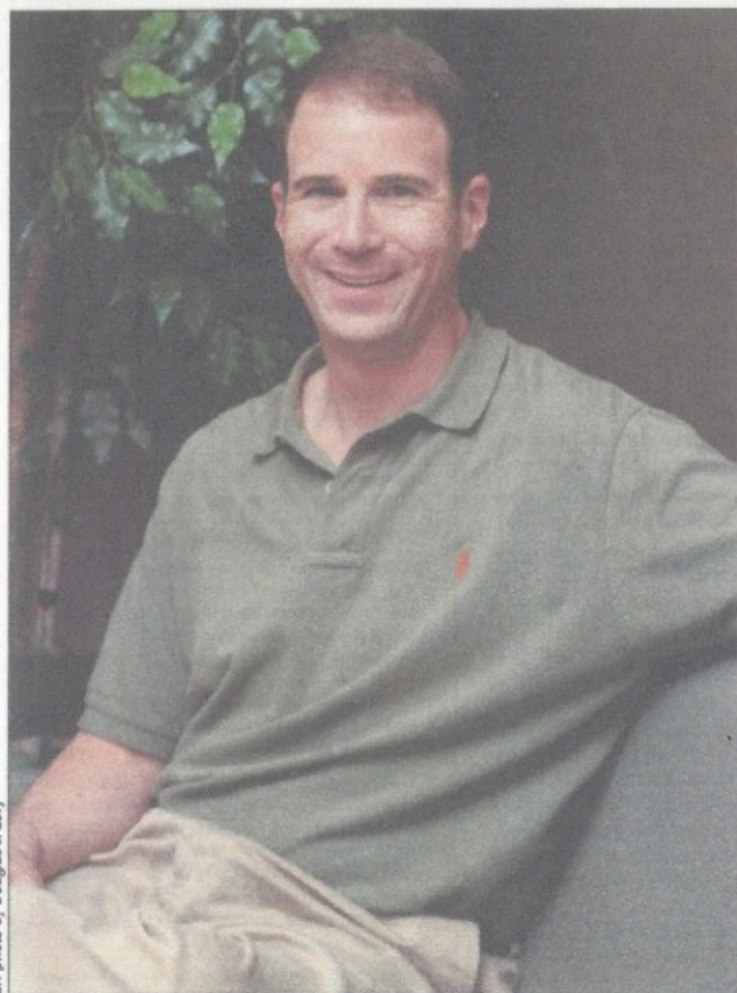
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## ON THE STAND



LW photo by Douglas J. Levy

### Ethan Yale Bordman

Solo practitioner, West Bloomfield

Education: University of Detroit Mercy School of Law (J.D.),  
University of Westminster, London (L.L.M.)

Specialties: Entertainment Law

Ethan Yale Bordman remembers when filmmakers, hearing about Detroit as a potential location for shooting, would answer, "Oh, Detroit?"

Now they'll answer the same — but this time with an exclamation point.

That's because the state's tax incentive has made Michigan a year-round soundstage, said Bordman, chair of the State Bar's Arts, Communication, Entertainment & Sports (ACES) Section.

When he worked for the Detroit branch of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, Bordman spoke across the country to producers, encouraging them to come here.

But legislative talk about capping the incentive could make the curtain close.

"If they only rebate \$100 million or \$200 million in a year, when that number's hit, it's cut for the year," Bordman said. "And the difficult part is, if a project comes here and they say to themselves, 'We expect a rebate of \$20 million,' and that money is given out while the film's being shot, they're out of luck."

He's hoping that "Movie Making in Michigan: A Lawyers Guide," a June 3 ACES/ICLE seminar, will give attorneys who don't specialize in entertainment-related legal matters insight into that and other issues.

"Entertainment law is a very specialized area," he said. "There

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are various idiosyncrasies that go into contracts. Not everything is tangible; it's the intangible things that aren't thought about in a contract, like clauses to protect a person's reputation."

And, if a client to, say, a criminal defense lawyer wants his or her story optioned for a made-for-TV film, "This will offer a beginning step so you can tell that client, 'OK, now you need to protect yourself.'"

#### Ever been in a movie yourself?

Just my bar mitzvah movie. I was the star, of course, and my parents were the producers.

#### What bothers you about the entertainment field?

If someone's an actor, people always assume they're in the movie business, and will ask, "What have I seen you in?" There are actors

who do a number of other things — theater, commercials — besides movies. But it's great that Detroit has some terrific talent, and it's great when filmmakers who come here will consider actors for more than just smaller parts.

#### Do you collect anything?

Snow globes. The real little, cheap plastic ones, not the glass ones on pedestals. When people would go on vacation — friends, family, neighbors — they'd buy them for me, and over the years, they'd keep buying them for me. I have about 350 of them. My favorite is one my great aunt got me from Greece. It has the Parthenon inside, and you could change the date on a calendar in it, but the calendar only went to 1999.

#### Pet peeves?

I'd like to think everyone is straightforward with me, but when people say, "Let me be honest with you," that always makes me think, "Does that mean you *haven't* been honest with me until now?" Also, when people use a word that doesn't exist, like "irregardless," thinking that it does.

#### What is one thing you miss about being a kid?

Having summers off.

— DOUGLAS J. LEVY