

DAILY NEWS

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Grammy-winning trumpeter for Steely Dan featured on Mark Ronson/Bruno Mars track now facing eviction

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Michael Leonhart performing with Steely Dan in Anaheim, California, on Aug. 4, 2008. Leonhart is now facing eviction.

He's going from "Uptown Funk" to the Village blues.

A Grammy Award-winning trumpeter featured on the Mark Ronson/Bruno Mars smash is facing eviction from his West Village apartment.

Michael Leonhart's landlord wants him to blow from his W. 16th St. building for allegedly using his apartment as a music studio.

The building owner is the estate of Nicholas Morrison.

The landlord says in papers filed in Manhattan Supreme Court that Leonhart — who's played for the likes of Steely Dan and James Brown — is not entitled to the apartment because he has been using it solely for commercial purposes for years.

The landlord, "Randy" Morrison, a sound production supervisor for decades in the Shubert Theater organization, was fine with that, according to estate attorney Bradley Silverbush.

He said Morrison signed a lease with Leonhart in 2005 which let him use the studio apartment as a recording studio at the rate of \$1400 a month.

When Morrison died in December 2013, his estate moved to reclaim the apartment because the lease had expired but Leonhart refused to move and appealed to state housing officials to declare that the unit was rent stabilized.

"We're not trying to evict him from his home. He doesn't live there. There is no bed. It's a recording studio," said Silverbush who insisted that Leonhart lives with his family nearby on Fifth Avenue.

Silverbush is asking the courts to evict Leonhart, block him from claiming that he has rent stabilized status and order him to pay market rate rent from October 2014.



MARKRONSONVEVO VIA YOUTUBE

Leonhart is featured on Mark Ronson track 'Uptown Funk,' featuring Bruno Mars.

The landlord apparently used to be fine with that — the suit says Leonhart signed a commercial lease for the unit in 2005 and used the apartment to record while he and his family have lived nearby on Fifth Ave.

When the estate moved to increase the rent last fall by charging full market rate rent for residential use of the apartment, papers say, Leonhart insisted that the unit was rent stabilized and filed a rent overcharge claim with state housing officials.

Thompson is asking the courts to evict Leonhart, to block him from claiming that he has rent stabilized status and to order him to pay residential market rate rent from October 2014.

Leonhart's lawyer Peter Schwartz said the landlord's claims are off-key.

He said his client "has consistently lived in the apartment since 1998 as his primary residence" and he is entitled to a rent-stabilized lease.

Schwartz confirmed that Leonhart's wife, Jamie, lives on Fifth Ave., but said a "husband and wife can have separate primary residences" and that's the case here.

Schwartz said the rent stabilization laws also allow people to live and work in their apartments but he declined to answer questions further because he has not seen the court papers yet.

Leonhart, who did not return a phone call, won his first Grammy as a teenager at LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts. He subsequently played with Steely Dan on Grammy-winning album "Two Against Nature."

The son of jazz bassist Jay Leonhart, the trumpeter has produced seven solo albums, performed on 125 others and composed and performed music and songs for movies, television, dance, fashion shows and theater. He has performed with Ringo Starr, Yoko Ono, Bette Midler, Henry Mancini, Alicia Keys and Rufus Wainwright. His most recent trumpet performance on an album is on Mark Ronson's hit, "Uptown Funk," which features Bruno Mars.