

The-Dream, Hitmaker for Beyoncé and Rihanna, Is Accused of Rape

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June 4, 2024



Terius Gesteelde-Diamant, a top songwriter and producer for Beyoncé, Rihanna and other stars under the name The-Dream, has been accused of rape and sexual battery in a lawsuit filed on Tuesday by a former protégée.

Chanaaz Mangroe, who performed as Channii Monroe, says in her suit that in 2015, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant used promises to promote her career to entangle her in an abusive relationship in which he repeatedly forced her to have sex, strangled her and once made a video recording of an intimate encounter and threatened to show it to others.

As The-Dream, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant is one of the most powerful producers behind the scenes of the music industry, an eight-time Grammy winner who helped make some of the biggest pop and R&B hits of the last two decades, including Rihanna’s “Umbrella,” Justin Bieber’s “Baby” and Mariah Carey’s “Touch My Body.” He has forged a particularly close creative bond with Beyoncé, credited as a writer and producer on her signature female-empowerment anthems like “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)” and “Break My Soul,” and working on each of the superstar’s studio albums since 2008.

But Ms. Mangroe’s suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, portrays Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant as an abusive Svengali-type figure, dangling the promise of fame and success before an aspiring artist while controlling her life, forcing her into unwanted sex and

physically abusing her.

The suit also accuses Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant of sex trafficking, a claim that has been cited in a number of recent civil lawsuits — including against Sean Combs, the hip-hop mogul known as Diddy or Puff Daddy — over accusations of harboring or transporting a victim of sexual assault by fraud or coercion. Ms. Mangroe’s suit cites the Sexual Abuse and Cover-Up Accountability Act, a California law that allows people to bring sexual assault cases even if the statute of limitations for incidents they allege have expired.

“What Dream did to me made it impossible to live the life I envisioned for myself and pursue my goals as a singer and songwriter,” Ms. Mangroe said in a statement. “Ultimately, my silence has become too painful, and I realized that I need to tell my story to heal. I hope that doing so will also help others and prevent future horrific abuse.”

In a statement supplied by a representative, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant said: “These claims are untrue and defamatory. I oppose all forms of harassment and have always strived to help people realize their career goals. As someone committed to making a positive impact on my fellow artists and the world at large, I am deeply offended and saddened by these accusations.”

Ms. Mangroe, 33, was born in the Netherlands and wanted to break into the music business as a pop singer and songwriter. According to her complaint, she was working in the United States in late 2014 when an associate of Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant asked her to send examples of her music. In January 2015, she flew to Atlanta to meet Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant, who took her to a strip club, began recording with her and, according to the complaint, “told her that he would make her the next Beyoncé and Rihanna.”

Within days, according to Ms. Mangroe’s lawsuit, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant began to pressure her into sex, telling her it was “part of the process.” At a house with a studio where they were working, the suit says, he locked her in a dark room and “would only stop aggressively having sex with her once she said that she loved him.”

More sexual encounters continued, the suit says, with Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant sometimes holding her down and refusing to use a condom despite her protests. At the same time, the suit says, he made business promises to her, suggesting he could make her the opening act for Beyoncé’s next tour.

According to the complaint, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant then became more controlling and violent: He placed her in an Atlanta hotel, had his security staff monitor her movements, and berated her unless she regularly checked in with him. After Ms. Mangroe complained about bedbugs in her hotel room, her court papers say, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant exploded in anger, telling her she was a disloyal “brat” and blaming the attention he spent on her for delays to Beyoncé’s next album.

He plied her with alcohol and marijuana, the complaint says, and once forced Ms. Mangroe to have sex with him while he recorded it, and later threatened to show the footage to other people. During sex, the complaint says, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant often placed a gun next to her, which she saw as a warning.

At a movie theater one day, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant asked Ms. Mangroe to perform oral sex on him, the complaint says. After she said no, he became angry and forced her to have sex, in view of the other theater patrons. “It was a physically painful encounter,” the complaint says. Later that same day, the suit says, Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant took Ms. Mangroe to his van and again forced her to have sex, pinning her down and placing his hands over her mouth and nose, leaving her unable to breathe.

Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant signed Ms. Mangroe to his record label, Contra Paris, and arranged for a distribution deal for her with Epic Records, a major label owned by Sony. The court papers say that by the summer of 2015, Ms. Mangroe was trying to escape from Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant’s control and prepare for the release of an album, but her efforts were unsuccessful.

According to the complaint, Ms. Mangroe reported Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant’s abuse to an Epic executive, who told her that “she needed to figure out a way to work with Dream again.” In July 2016, according to the complaint, Ms. Mangroe was told that Epic was dropping her because Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant, who still controlled her artist contract, had not delivered music. Epic is also named as a defendant in the suit.

A spokeswoman for Sony did not have an immediate comment. Representatives of Beyoncé and Rihanna did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Gesteelde-Diamant, who used to go by the name Terius Nash, has been accused of violence against women in the past. In 2014, he was charged with assault on allegations that he kicked, punched and choked a former girlfriend who was eight months pregnant; prosecutors dropped the case the following year, saying they could not prove it beyond a reasonable doubt.

In her lawsuit, Ms. Mangroe is represented by Douglas H. Wigdor and Meredith A. Firetog, who have also represented Casandra Ventura, the singer known as Cassie. Ms. Ventura’s lawsuit against Mr. Combs, filed in November — and settled after just one day — was the first of six suits by women who have accused Mr. Combs of sexual assault.

“This is yet another horrific example,” Mr. Wigdor and Ms. Firetog said in a statement, “of how men in the music industry use their power and influence to manipulate and harm others.”

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