

EXTRA

Trials, transactions
and the insider's guide
to the practice of law.

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COVER STORY



In the Wild West of the legal world, a new generation of attorneys is pioneering at the frontier. From high-powered deal makers to a \$10 million rainmaker, an animal rights activist and a hotshot government lawyer, our list of the Top 20 Under 40 proves the sky's the limit, no matter what your age.

Young and the Restless

The individuals on our list of the Top 20 Under 40 do it all. From jump-starting the World Poker Tour into the national spotlight to fighting to keep ducks off the dinner table, these 30-somethings show no sign of folding.

After 13 years, you'd think that we would have perfected this process, but the pool of bright young lawyers who vie for inclusion on our annual Top 20 Under 40 list continues to amaze and overwhelm us.

During many long sessions to narrow the field, we looked at a hundred nominations submitted by their peers and partners. We vetted their accomplishments, their location and especially their age. Those nearing the end of eligibility for the

list were given priority, since those still maneuvering through their early 30s have future years to shine.

As we dropped one and picked up another, we found we had come up with a pretty amazing hand.

Shaun Clark, 35

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton

At the poker table, Shaun Clark just knows the basics: what's a good hand, how much to wager and when to fold. But at the negotiation table, Clark, 35, has demonstrated a mastery rare for attorneys his age, as shown by his work to launch "World Poker Tour" into the ranks of cable television's high rollers.

"Poker has exploded in popularity around the world, largely due to the efforts of [producer] Steve Lipscomb with World Poker Tour," says Clark, an entertainment law partner in the Century City office of Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton. "I do play some myself, but because of my relationship with the World Tour, I don't play much in front of them because I want them to think I'm good."

Clark handled many of the deals that made the show possible, including its license arrangement with the Travel Channel, which Clark says generates \$6 million for his client annually.

Clark also handled the \$32 million initial public offering of Lipscomb's company, WPT Enterprises, in August.

WPT general counsel Adam Pliska says Clark's skills have proved key to the show's success.

"I think he's one of the smartest attorneys around, regardless of age, and he has worked very much like a partner," Pliska says. "We rely on his intelligence, creativity, and his willingness to put himself right in the middle of the action."

Clark says that, in recent months, he helped WPT partner with online gaming company WagerWorks Inc. to launch a



Photo by Hugh Williams

"I do play some myself, but because of my relationship with the World Tour, I don't play much in front of them because I want them to think I'm good," says Shaun Clark of Century City's Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton.

branded WPT gambling Web site.

He also brokered a similar deal with slot-machine maker IGT to launch a World Poker Tour-themed line of slot machines.

Other clients that benefit from Clark's expertise include Bunim-Murray

Productions, creators of MTV's "The Real World," for which Clark has structured licensing and secondary rights deals; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, for which Clark handles numerous film-finance deals; and Focus Features, the art house-movie arm of NBC Universal Productions.

Clark brokered a multiparty deal for Focus to finance production costs on the forthcoming "Brokeback Mountain," as

well as the rights deal for "The Motorcycle Diaries."

Clark, who reunited with colleagues from his former firm, Hill, Wynne, Troop & Meisinger, when he left Katten Muchin in 2003 to join Sheppard Mullin, also serves as outside counsel to Playboy Enterprises Inc., where he handles the company's mainstream entertainment transactions.

"We're working to develop an animated TV series for MTV where Hugh Hefner plays a millionaire businessman by day and a worldwide crime fighter by night," Clark says. "His character will be aided by Playboy Bunnies with various superpowers."

— **Draeger Martinez**