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Entertainment lawyer to stand trial for allegedly enticing, molesting Manhattan Beach teen



Booking photo of Benjamin Lawson Adams. (Courtesy Manhattan Beach Police Department)

By **LARRY ALTMAN** | laltman@scng.com | Daily Breeze

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A former production attorney for MGM studios was ordered Tuesday to stand trial for [allegedly sexually molesting](#) a 14-year-old Manhattan Beach boy he met on Instagram, enticing him with pictures of himself with celebrities and playing unreleased music from heartthrob Troye Sivan.

Benjamin Lawson Adams, 32, was ordered to appear Sept. 13 in Torrance Superior Court for arraignment on nine felony counts of lewd or lascivious acts, oral copulation, sexual penetration and sodomy, all with a minor under 16. He also faces one count of possession of child pornography, which police said they found on his MacBook.

Despite a vigorous defense that portrayed the boy — now a 16-year-old transgender girl — as a mentally unstable, gender-confused liar who made up the sexual assault story to explain away explicit photographs found on her phone two years ago, Judge Hector Guzman ruled at a

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preliminary hearing Tuesday that she appeared credible during her three hours of testimony in his courtroom.

"I listened to her very carefully," Guzman said. "There isn't anything about her testimony that would cause the court to question her credibility."

Graphic detail

Adams took notes throughout the hearing as the girl — who began her transformation after the allegations came to light in October 2015 — described in graphic detail how she and Adams engaged in sexual activity at Adams' West Los Angeles apartment and under the Manhattan Beach Pier on two occasions that month.

"He got touchy," she said during questioning by Deputy District Attorney Chad Gillette. "He was touching and kissing me. His hands were all over my body."

Supported by family members in the courtroom audience, the girl testified that she was physically a boy when Adams contacted her on Instagram in 2015. She went by her male name, dressed as a boy and listed her age as 14 on the account.

At first, the two communicated through social media, including Snapchat, and cellphone text messages. After getting to know each other, Adams sent nude photos of himself, she said.

Hung around young people

"He would talk to me about his job, and on Instagram I could see he hung around with a lot of young people," she said.

Eventually, she said, Adams wanted to meet. She sneaked out of the house about midnight and he picked her up a block away from home.

The girl said they ate at IHOP and he showed her photos of himself with celebrities. They went to his apartment, where he played a song by Sivan, the South African-born Australian singer, songwriter and YouTube personality, that had not been publicly released.

Inside his apartment, they showered and engaged in sexual activity.

A similar evening occurred on a second date that began with a meal at The Kettle in Manhattan Beach and sexual activity underneath the city pier.

Production attorney

At the time of his arrest in June 2016, Adams' resume showed he worked as a production attorney at MGM studios. His resume now shows that job came to an end and he operates his own entertainment law business.

Previously, according to his own resume, the Pepperdine Law School graduate worked as production counsel for Bunim/Murray Productions and as director of business and legal affairs for The Weinstein Co. There, he worked on draft agreements for "above-the line talent (e.g. actors, directors, writers, producers.)"

As the girl testified Tuesday, she revealed details about herself that included her gender confusion, and that she had been hospitalized when she attempted suicide with pills. She provided information to Manhattan Beach police while hospitalized for psychiatric observation.

She testified that she revealed few details to police at first, not wanting her homophobic father to find out and become angry. She said she expanded on her story during each of four interviews with police officers and a prosecutor, revealing most of the encounters during the third interview with a female detective who made her feel more comfortable, and added more details while on the witness stand.

Differing stories

"In the beginning, I didn't say anything because of my dad," she said.

Adams' attorney, Alan Jackson, however, said the different stories cast doubt on her veracity. He presented a Department of Children and Family Services report the girl made earlier in April 2015 that accused her father of assault. The case went nowhere.

Jackson said the girl was truthful when she said Adams and she kissed and hugged, but he told Guzman the rest was a lie. He characterized it as "an ever-evolving, changing story," and said the girl has added to it as her family became more comfortable with her transformation.

Following Adams' arrest, Manhattan Beach police publicized the case in search of more victims. No other cases were filed. Adams remains free on \$200,000 bail.

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Larry Altman

Larry Altman has covered crime and court proceedings in Southern California since 1987. A graduate of Cal State Northridge, where he served as editor of the college newspaper, Altman has worked for the Daily Breeze since 1990. The Society of Professional Journalists named him a "Distinguished Journalist" in Los Angeles in 2006. Altman's work was featured twice on CBS' "48 Hours" and he appeared eight times with "Nancy Grace," who called him "dear." He has covered hundreds of homicides and many trials. Altman has crawled through a mausoleum to open a coffin, confronted husbands who killed their wives, wives who killed their husbands, and his coverage helped put a child molester and a murderer in prison. In his spare time, Altman is an avid Los Angeles Lakers and Dodgers fan, is the commissioner of a Fantasy Baseball league with several other current and former newspapermen, runs a real estate empire and likes to watch old movies on TCM.

Follow Larry Altman @larryalt