NEWS RELEASE

Cineverse and Leading Comedy Club Brand The Stand Group to Launch WITZ Podcast Network Through New Development and Distribution Pact

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The Stand Group continues to build a digital footprint on the heels of launching a FAST channel and will work with Cineverse to develop IP while monetizing existing WITZ comedy programming through the podcast network

Partnership kicks off with SXSW event to celebrate the new venture and Cineverse's upcoming and highly-anticipated, unrated wide release of comedy/horror film, The Toxic Avenger

AUSTIN, Texas, NEW YORK and LOS ANGELES, March 6, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- On the eve of their standup comedy takeover of the 2025 South By Southwest festival in Austin, TX, **The Stand Group, Inc.** announce a partnership with leading independent entertainment studio, **Cineverse** and their fast-growing podcast arm to maximize distribution platforms, sponsorships, programmatic demand and additional avenues. The partnership also includes the creation of a development slate for the companies to build new IP together through podcasts and live entertainment.

After successfully launching the **WITZ Comedy-TV** FAST channel and digital content library in 2022 with partners Best Ever Channels (BEC), The Stand Group is now expanding its reach through podcast creation and distribution. Through the launch of the WITZ Podcast Network – a new comedy label operated through the Cineverse Podcast Network – BEC partners Barry Gordon and Jonathon Barbato matched The Stand/WITZ sensibilities with

Cineverse's ability to support and build brands.

"Together we will maximize marketing, promotional and sales initiatives for shows we bring into the network for new creators and original IP," says BEC's co-CEO Barry Gordon.

This marks a significant expansion of Cineverse's audio business into comedy, after becoming a top-10 podcast network driven by its horror, true crime and entertainment content. According to **Edison Research**, comedy is the No. 1 most popular podcasting category in the U.S., and the **Interactive Advertising Bureau** has reported that the genre – which is now more popular than news or sports – grew its revenue share by four points from 2022 to 2024, gaining 300 new advertisers in Q3 2023 alone.

Adds The Stand/WITZ partner Cris Italia, "After 20 years of building live experiences for audiences and securing our standing with some of the best comedians in the world, we are ready to step it up and continue to nurture talent both in the podcasts and independent content creation. We've always considered ourselves as an incubator for talent, and partnering with Cineverse can now bring it all to life."

The WITZ Podcast Network launches in style at SXSW. The brands will come together to celebrate the new venture along with **Cineverse's highly-anticipated, wide, unrated release of The Toxic Avenger**, directed by Macon Blair and starring Peter Dinklage, and coming to theaters this summer. The kick-off event will feature appearances by comedians, podcast talent, musicians and stars from the upcoming film.

"Not only does partnering with comedy leaders like The Stand Group/WITZ make us instantly credible in a genre that has proven itself time and time again as a major force in podcasting, but it also allows us to move quickly into this space," says Cineverse President and Chief Strategy Officer Erick Opeka. "We are quite proud of how successful the Cineverse Podcast Network has quietly become, particularly among horror fans, and with our upcoming release of crossover horror/comedy film, The Toxic Avenger, the timing of this expansion couldn't be more perfect. We look forward to leveraging the WITZ Podcast Network not only to promote our content, but as a valuable addition to our ad sales arsenal, for other studios and brands looking to tap into the power of podcasting as an effective part of their promotional campaigns."

The Stand has worked with some of the funniest and most popular stand-up comedians in the business, including: Dave Chappelle, Pete Davidson, Nate Bargatze, T.J. Miller, Sam Jay, Janeane Garofalo, Laurie Kilmartin, Andrew Dice Clay, Shane Gillis, Bill Burr, Sal Vulcano, Jim Gaffigan, Ramy Youssef, Bonnie McFarlane, Rich Vos, Ian Lara, Tim Dillon, Marcello Hernandez, Nikki Glaser, Mark Normand, Ralph Barbosa, Hannah Berner, Cipha Sounds, Aida Rodriguez, Derek Gaines, Sienna Hubert-Ross and many more.

About Cineverse Podcast Network

Cineverse operates a top-10 podcast network with more than 35 audio series. It leverages owned-and-operated brands like Bloody Disgusting, Midnight Pulp and RetroCrush to deliver hit shows in horror, true crime and entertainment. A growing division of the Company, the Cineverse Podcast Network generates advertising revenue from brands across key categories, including movie studios, retailers and consumer products. In its most recently reported quarter, Cineverse podcast and related revenue was up 39% versus the prior year. Top series include Mayfair Watchers Society, Creepy Places: A True Crime Podcast, The Dead, Murder in America and more.

About Cineverse

Cineverse (Nasdaq: CNVS) is a next-generation entertainment studio that empowers creators and entertains fans with a wide breadth of content through the power of technology. It has developed a new blueprint for delivering entertainment experiences to passionate audiences and results for its partners with unprecedented efficiency, and distributes more than 71,000 premium films, series, and podcasts. Cineverse connects fans with bold, authentic, independent stories. Properties include the **highest-grossing unrated film in U.S. history**; dozens of streaming fandom channels; a premier podcast network; top horror destination Bloody Disgusting; and more. Powering visionary storytelling with cutting-edge innovation, Cineverse's proprietary streaming tools and AI technology drive revenue and reach to redefine the next era of entertainment. For more information, visit **home.cineverse.com**.

About The Stand Group, Inc

For about two decades, The Stand has been a staple of the New York comedy scene by hosting A-list comedians and becoming a home to the city's funniest performers as well as the best comedy fans. By offering exceptional service, high-end cocktails, and rustic American cuisine, The Stand has become a hub in the Gramercy Park / Union Square area of New York City. Headed up by brothers Cris Italia, Paul Italia and Patrick Milligan, The Stand was named the best comedy venue by New York Magazine and TimeoutNY. These three also own and operate a management and production company, representing some of the best names in comedy while producing for TV and film. Due to their success at The Stand, they were tapped as stand-up comedy bookers for The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon in 2015 and have collaborated with Just for Laughs and SXSW festivals. Their produced comedy specials and series have been featured on HBO, Comedy Central, Showtime among many other streaming services and on Demand platforms.

ABOUT WITZ COMEDY-TV

Best Ever Channels (BEC) and The Stand Group Inc. bring 24/7 comedy to FAST and VOD audiences with the dynamic and edgy WITZ Comedy-TV. Featuring a lineup of original programming headlined by comedy all-stars, fan favorites, and up-and-coming talents, WITZ Comedy-TV delivers fresh, uncensored content – live programming, all-new standup comedy specials, talk shows, vodcasts, and more, WITZ is a destination for real and relentless comedy.

Fans can follow WITZ Comedy TV on **TikTok**, **YouTube**, and **Instagram**. Or go to witzcomedy.tv for more.

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View original content to download multimedia:**https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cineverse-and-leading-comedy-club-brand-the-stand-group-to-launch-witz-podcast-network-through-new-development-and-distribution-pact-302393750.html**

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