

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Atheist Audiobooks Acquired by Pitchstone Publishing

Secular Media Group, LLC announced today that Pitchstone Publishing is acquiring Atheist Audiobooks under a multilevel agreement, which includes a sponsorship and production deal.

Garland, TX (Feb. 2016) – Secular Media Group, LLC, which owns such brands as *Dogma Debate*, *Secular News Network*, *Tiny Thinkers*, and *Secular Media Network*, today announced that *Atheist Audiobooks* (atheistaudiobooks.com), its popular audiobook label, is being acquired by Pitchstone Publishing (www.pitchstonepublishing.com), a leading publisher of books by and for religious nonbelievers, with a particular focus on titles related to atheism, science, and secularism.

Under the agreement, Pitchstone Publishing will acquire all Atheist Audiobooks assets, including the brand name. In addition, license and production copyright to all twenty-five audiobooks produced through the Atheist Audiobooks label will transfer to Pitchstone, including titles by such notable authors as Lawrence Krauss, Katherine Stewart, David Fitzgerald, Darrel Ray, PZ Myers, David Mills, Robert M. Price, David McAfee, John Figdor, and Jerry DeWitt, among many others.

The decision to sell the audiobook arm of Secular Media Group, whose stated mission is “to cultivate a secular society through entertainment and public education to eradicate discrimination,” follows a strategic vision laid out by company CEO David Smalley. He plans to focus more of the company’s resources and energy toward growing its marquee *Dogma Debate* podcast, which he hosts and which regularly receives tens of thousands of downloads per episode, and toward spearheading various secular outreach initiatives.

“Atheist Audiobooks has been both a labor of love and important profit center for Secular Media Group,” said Smalley. “In fact, when my then full-time job caved in after my atheism became public to my bosses, Atheist Audiobooks was the reason my family didn’t go hungry. But as a business it has also been energy intensive with high capital demands, and as a company we’ve decided to change directions. This sale provides us with the resources and space to focus more not only on *Dogma Debate*, but also on our other important initiatives that seek to raise the profile of atheists and other nonbelievers, whether through twenty-four-hour fundraisers for groups like the Secular Student Alliance or through the solicitation of donations for victims of natural disasters, such as following the recent tornadoes in Texas.”

Smalley noted it was especially important that a proper home be found for the label he’d created and for the audio titles he and his team had produced. “From the beginning, I knew my plan to redirect our company’s focus would be a nonstarter if we didn’t find the right buyer for Atheist Audiobooks. The list of suitable candidates was exceptionally small, which is why I am thrilled to have worked out a deal with Pitchstone, the only other company to have produced as many atheist audio titles as we have, and the only other producer with a list of authors on par with ours.”

“Although we operate as a traditional book publisher, we are also an active producer of audiobooks,” said Kurt Volkan, publisher and editor at Pitchstone, whose audio catalog includes books by Dan Barker, Peter Boghossian, Candace R. M. Gorham, John W. Loftus, Amanda Knief, Dan Arel, Herb Silverman, Ryan T. Cragun, Sean Faircloth, Richard Carrier, Hemant Mehta, Karen Stollznow, and Daniel C. Dennett and Linda LaScola, among many others. “When David approached me about the possibility of acquiring Atheist Audiobooks, I knew immediately it would be a great fit for us. Understanding how difficult and challenging the business can be, I really respected what David and his team had created. I always saw their catalog less as competition and more as a complementary business, with success for them ultimately meaning

success for us, and vice versa.”

For any listeners of audiobooks who worry that this acquisition will mean fewer audiobooks for the atheist and secular market, Volkan says they need not worry. “On top of the fifty-plus titles now in our audio catalog with this deal, we plan to produce and release another fifteen to twenty audiobooks this year, which will mean a catalog of sixty-five to seventy atheist audio titles going into 2017. Having such a strong foundation will allow us to take more chances on future projects, because considerations of profitability and cost will need not always be a primary concern in our decision making.”

Volkan further noted that the production quality for which books produced through Atheist Audiobooks are known will remain. As part of the agreement, Pitchstone has contracted Secular Media Group to produce audiobooks on Pitchstone’s behalf, including two by the late physicist Victor Stenger. “We obviously recognize the high quality of work Atheist Audiobooks has produced. So it was important to us that we keep David Smalley and his team at Secular Media Group on board, to not only help with the transition to make it as seamless as possible, but also with an eye toward them producing products for us down the road,” said Volkan.

The overall agreement also includes a twelve-month sponsorship deal in which Pitchstone will advertise its print and audiobooks on *Dogma Debate with David Smalley*. “As a whole, we strongly believe our deal is one that benefits everyone – not only the parties directly involved, but also current and future authors, and, perhaps most significantly, the atheist and secular community,” said Smalley. “In determining our new strategy, I asked myself, “What can we at Secular Media Group be the best in the world at?” The way we’ve been able to literally change lives through *Dogma Debate* told me where we needed to put our focus. Our listeners need us to be more involved in their activism. Our membership is growing rapidly, and this agreement will allow us to move from one show per week to two in no time.

Equally important to Smalley is that this deal allows Atheist Audiobooks to continue to grow and expand. “I can’t think of a more suitable place for it to land, than in the hands of Kurt and his team at Pitchstone,” he said. “We like to think of this deal as the creation of a partnership – one that plays to all of our strengths and one that will ultimately lead to greater awareness of and interest in the ideas and causes we care about as a community.”

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