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Netflix Is Officially Trying to Win the Podcast Wars

By **Nicholas Quah** DEC 19, 2025



Dave Portnoy's Barstool Sports, now on Netflix. Photo: Gary Gershoff/Getty Images

Netflix has had a busy few weeks as it moves to fend off David Ellison and Paramount to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery, one of Hollywood's most storied studios, but amid all that corporate drama, it's worth keeping an eye on the company's other, less historic targets. Its budding video-podcast strategy. Two months after announcing a pact to bring select Spotify shows onto the platform, Netflix unveiled two additional deals this week: one with Dave Portnoy's Barstool Sports and another with iHeartMedia.

The Barstool agreement, announced today, will bring three shows to Netflix: the flagship Pardon My Take, the NHL-focused Spittin' Chiclets, and The Ryen Russillo Show, which recently departed Bill Simmons's The Ringer and relaunched via a new joint venture with Portnoy. The iHeartMedia partnership, announced Monday, is broader, encompassing fifteen titles including My Favorite Murder, Dear Chelsea, and New Rory & MAL. Intriguingly absent for now is Las Culturistas, though iHeartMedia teases that more additions are likely to be announced in the month to come. Perhaps most notably, the slate also includes The Breakfast Club, the influential morning radio show most closely associated with Charlamagne tha God, who currently co-hosts it alongside DJ Envy, Jess Hilarious, and Loren Lorosa.

Netflix is framing both arrangements as "exclusive video podcast partnerships," meaning that full video versions of these shows will live exclusively on Netflix, while their audio feeds will remain widely available elsewhere. An iHeartMedia spokesperson noted that shows can still upload video clips to their social media and on YouTube. Rollout is slated for early 2026, with new episodes and a limited back-catalog window appearing on the service. Taken together, the deals will bring Netflix's total number of video podcasts to just over thirty — that is, unless they announce yet another partnership before the strategy goes live in the new year.

These two new deals subtly reshape how we should think about Netflix's emerging video podcast strategy. The underlying logic remains unchanged: Netflix gains a fresh vein of low-cost, evergreen talk programming that helps it compete for attention against YouTube, which has rapidly absorbed much of the podcast ecosystem and, more broadly, has been positioning itself as a direct rival. In return, Spotify, and now iHeartMedia and Barstool Sports, secure another massive distribution outlet capable of pushing their shows to even larger audiences. Those distributors also presumably collect licensing fees, along with the cachet of being associated with Netflix, which still carries a more premium aura than YouTube.

On the flipside, the expansion makes Netflix's original Spotify arrangement feel far less singular. Thirty-odd video podcasts is still a relatively modest slate, small enough that each show could, in theory, receive meaningful promotion and visibility. But for Spotify, already facing huge questions about the sustainability of its non-music investments as YouTube continues to loom, there's likely some discomfort in being just one of several major podcast suppliers on the platform. Bill Simmons could've been the face of podcasts on Netflix; now he's just one of many.

One additional layer worth noting is what The Breakfast Club signals about the kind of news-adjacent and political content Netflix is willing to host. When the Spotify deal was originally announced, I was fairly convinced Netflix would steer away from anything that might come close to touching that kind of material. While The Breakfast Club is primarily a culture and entertainment fixture, anchored in hip-hop coverage and celebrity gossip, it has also evolved into a key stop for politicians, particularly during election cycles.

Charlamagne tha God, in turn, has increasingly come to occupy a political-adjacent role of his own, a positioning that could offer Netflix a pathway into topical discourse without fully committing to traditional news programming. Keep in mind: The mid-terms are next year.

Plenty of questions remain. Will Netflix announce additional partnerships before the year is out? How, exactly, will video podcasts be surfaced on the platform? Will they warrant a dedicated tab in the interface, or be treated like most other programming? That is, discoverable only if they rise up a recommendation rail, receive a front-page push, or are located via the platform's cavernous search function? How and when will other streaming platforms follow suit — beyond Tubi (!?), which recently poached Crime Junkie from SiriusXM? Strap in, kids: The latest phase of the Podcast Wars has only just begun.