

Celebrity gossip site relaunches after sex tape forced shutdown

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TV personality Terry Bollea aka Hulk Hogan, seen in a 2012 picture, sued Gawker Media over publication of a sex tape, eventually forcing the group into bankruptcy.

Gawker, the gossip website forced into bankruptcy following its posting of a celebrity sex tape, is relaunching under new ownership, the publisher said Wednesday.

Bustle Digital Group said it had hired Gawker's former writers and editors to relaunch the site, which went into [bankruptcy](#) after being ordered to pay \$140 million to former professional wrestler Hulk Hogan over publication of a sex tape.

The Gawker case divided media and press freedom advocates after it was revealed that Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel had funded Hogan's case as part of an effort to drive Gawker out of business.

The case ended in 2016 with a settlement calling for Hogan to be paid \$31 million plus a share of Gawker Media assets sold in bankruptcy.

The Gawker Media brands were sold to media group Univision, and the Gawker website was acquired in 2018 by Bustle owner Bryan Goldberg in a bankruptcy auction.

Leah Finnegan, the new Gawker editor who had worked at the publication from 2014 to 2015, said she decided to accept the challenge of a relaunch after some initial hesitation.

"Who in God's name would want to edit a website that was cratered by an evil tech lord and sullied by a botched relaunch?" she said in a blog post.

"The Gawker name was toxic, but also weirdly revered; an intractable combination... I thought about it. I thought about how I missed laughing at things on the internet. I laughed a lot when I previously worked at Gawker, and I laughed a lot reading Gawker," she wrote.

"Sometimes I would read old Gawker posts just to see if I still had the ability to laugh... There were no good sites to read. The world was lost in darkness and desperately needed light."

Gawker faced fire for its no-holds-barred approach to celebrity coverage, but the court the case raised questions about whether powerful interests can use their resources to silence [media](#) for unfavorable coverage.

Thiel, a prominent Silicon Valley investor and supporter of Donald Trump, acknowledged funding a legal battle against the gossip [website](#) that "outed" him as gay.

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