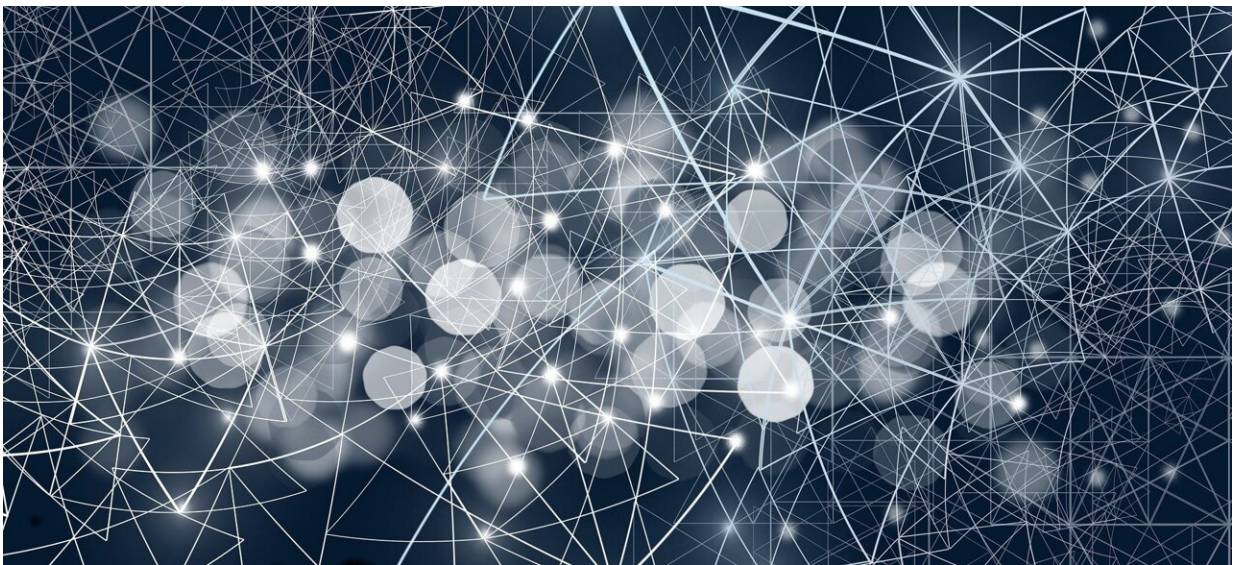


George Carlin estate settles with podcasters over fake comedy special purportedly generated by AI

April 3 2024, by Andrew Dalton



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The estate of George Carlin has agreed to a settlement with the media company it sued over a fake hourlong comedy special that purportedly used artificial intelligence to recreate the late standup comic's style and material.

In the [settlement agreement](#) filed with a federal court Monday, and a proposed order from both sides that awaits approval from a judge, the

podcast outlet Dudesy agrees to permanently take down the special and to refrain from using Carlin's image voice or likeness in the future without the express written approval of the estate.

The settlement meets the central demands laid out by the Carlin estate in the lawsuit filed on Jan. 25.

"I am grateful that the defendants acted responsibly by swiftly removing the video they made," Carlin's daughter Kelly Carlin said in a statement. "While it is a shame that this happened at all, I hope this case serves as a warning about the dangers posed by AI technologies and the need for appropriate safeguards not just for artists and creatives, but every human on earth."

George Carlin, among the most influential standup comedians of the 20th century, died in 2008.

In the audio special, titled "George Carlin: I'm Glad I'm Dead," a synthesis of the comic delivers commentary on current events. A companion Dudesy podcast episode with hosts Will Sasso and Chad Kultgen — the company and the two men are the defendants in the lawsuit—was released with the men playing clips and commenting on them.

Messages seeking comment from Kultgen and Sasso were not immediately returned.

At the beginning of the special posted on YouTube on Jan. 9, a voiceover identifying itself as the AI engine used by Dudesy says it listened to the comic's 50 years of material and "did my best to imitate his voice, cadence and attitude as well as the subject matter I think would have interested him today."

The plaintiffs say if that was in fact how it was created—and some listeners have doubted its stated origins—it meant Carlin's copyright was violated.

The lawsuit was among the first in what is likely to be an increasing number of major legal moves made to fight the regenerated use of celebrity images and likenesses.

Carlin estate lawyer Joshua Schiller of the firm Boies Schiller Flexner LLP in a statement calls the settlement "a blueprint for resolving similar disputes going forward where an artist or public figure has their rights infringed by AI technology. Our goal was to resolve this case expeditiously and have the offending videos removed from the internet so that we could preserve Mr. Carlin's legacy and shine a light on the reputational and intellectual property threat caused by this emerging technology."

The AI issue was a major sticking point in the resolution of last year's Hollywood writers and actors strikes.

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