



PRIVATE EQUITY DIVISION

MEDIA MEETS MONEY: INSIDE SILVER LAKE'S TAKEOVER OF ENDEAVOR

**GAIA RATTIGHIERI
LORENZO MONSANTE
NAZ YUKSEL
RICCARDO CORNAGGIA**



Silver Lake's recent purchase of Endeavor Group Holdings represents an inflection point in the long-running confluence of private equity and global media. A transaction of approximately \$13 billion in equity and a transaction valued at up to \$27 billion in enterprise value, Silver Lake has acquired Endeavor in the largest media and entertainment take-private transaction in over a decade. Such a move not only further cements Silver Lake's belief in Endeavor's long-term potential, but also reflects a wider reorientation of how value will be captured across the entertainment industry; toward ownership of talent, rights and platforms. In the report that follows, we delve into the strategic logic, the financial complexion and the industry implications of the transaction to provide an overview of one of the largest bets in the annals of recent private equity history.

Overview of the Deal

Silver Lake is a leading technology-focused private equity firm that agreed to acquire all outstanding shares of Endeavor Group Holdings in a landmark public-to-private transaction. The deal was announced in April 2024 and the definitive agreement sets a purchase price of \$27.50 per share in cash, representing a roughly 55% premium to Endeavor's prior stock price. This offer values Endeavor's equity at approximately \$13 billion, and when factoring in debt and Endeavor's stake in affiliated assets, the deal's total enterprise value is about \$25-27 billion, making it the largest private equity take-private in over a decade and the largest ever in the media and entertainment sector. The acquisition was unanimously recommended by a special committee of independent directors and approved by Endeavor's board, reflecting strong confidence in the transaction.

As a result of the deal, Endeavor will be taken private and its shares will be delisted from the New York Stock Exchange and will no longer trade publicly. Silver Lake and its co-investors are purchasing the shares they did not already own (Silver Lake was Endeavor's largest shareholder, holding about 31% before the deal and 71% of voting power). Notably, Endeavor's valuable stake in TKO Group Holdings, the separate publicly traded entity housing Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), is not part of the sale, meaning TKO will remain a public company and Endeavor (under Silver Lake's ownership) retains its controlling 51% interest in TKO. In other words, Silver Lake is acquiring Endeavor's core businesses while Endeavor's UFC/WWE joint venture (TKO) stays independent on the stock market. The transaction moved swiftly: Endeavor had announced a strategic review in late 2023 to seek better valuation (while explicitly ruling out selling its TKO stake), and by the end of the first quarter of 2025 the take-private deal had closed and taken effect.

Background on Silver Lake

Founded in 1999, Silver Lake is a world leader in large-scale private equity investments in technology and technology-enabled companies. With over \$104 billion in total assets under management and committed capital as of December 2024, Silver Lake is devoted to fostering innovation and growth throughout its portfolio, which together produce over \$250 billion in revenue annually and employ over 430,000 people worldwide.



For more than a decade, Silver Lake has been a major force in the media and entertainment sector. Its 2012 investment in William Morris Endeavor (WME), which subsequently bought IMG and a majority stake in UFC, is among its most noteworthy ventures. As part of a significant reorganization, the company also invested \$600 million in AMC Theatres in 2018 and \$500 million in City Football Group in 2019. Prior to this, Silver Lake was in charge of Dell's leveraged buyout and had invested in well-known Internet companies including Alibaba, Twitter, Airbnb, Skype (which was sold to Microsoft), and others. These actions show a persistent approach to supporting revolutionary platforms at the intersection of consumer experience, technology, and content.

Background on Endeavor

Endeavor Group is a company with a focus on diversified global entertainment, sports, and media, known for its mix of talent representation and owned sports properties. The company started operating in the talent agency business: it was formed through the 2009 merger of William Morris Agency with a young agency called Endeavor founded by Ari Emanuel in 1995. This merger created WME (William Morris Endeavor), instantly one of Hollywood's top talent agencies. Over the next decade, Endeavor (under the WME name) broadened dramatically beyond talent booking, evolving into a holding company encompassing multiple segments of the entertainment industry. In 2014, WME (backed by Silver Lake's investment) acquired IMG, a major sports, fashion and events company, for \$2.4 billion. IMG brought with it a portfolio of global events and media rights businesses from managing elite fashion weeks to producing and marketing international sports competitions. In 2016 Endeavor made a landmark debut into sports ownership by acquiring for \$4 billion the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), the world's premier mixed martial arts league. These acquisitions transformed Endeavor from a talent agency into what is often described as a "sports and entertainment powerhouse" spanning many facets of the industry. In 2017, the holding company was rebranded as Endeavor and by 2021 was robust enough to go public on the NYSE, debuting at a valuation over \$10 billion.

Today, Endeavor's business is organized into several key divisions. WME represents the core of the group as the talent representation arm, representing many artists, actors, musicians, athletes, and content creators. WME is one of the world's leading talent agencies, negotiating deals and guiding careers for famous entertainers and sports icons. Endeavor's representation segment also includes specialty agencies and units such as WME Sports (covering athlete representation in the NFL and NBA) and other units like IMG Models and literary agencies.

Beyond talent agencies, Endeavor owns and operates sports properties and events. The crown jewel in this portfolio has been the UFC, a global phenomenon in combat sports with broadcasts in over 150 countries. Endeavor's ownership of UFC (from 2016 onward) turned it into a sports league operator, deriving revenue from media rights deals, live event ticket sales, sponsorships, and pay-per-view events. In 2023 Endeavor reached further solidity of its sports empire by merging UFC with WWE to form a new company: TKO Group Holdings. Endeavor holds a controlling stake in TKO (51%), which means that while UFC and WWE now jointly reside in a separate publicly traded entity, they are in fact controlled by Endeavor's shareholders. This structure allowed Endeavor to combine two major brands while still benefiting from their growth.



Strategic Rationale for the Acquisition

Silver Lake's move to take Endeavor private is grounded on a historic relationship and deep belief in Endeavor's future growth. The company initially invested in Endeavor in 2012 and has since aided its revenue expansion from about \$350 million to almost \$6 billion. Silver Lake Co-CEO Egon Durban stated that the firm is "all in" on Endeavor and feels it will be able to gain more flexibility to achieve long-term value as a private company.

Among the key reasons behind the deal is the ability to align management incentives and drive strategic growth outside the bounds of public markets. As noted in the official press release, Endeavor's advanced business model with its talent representation, media production, live events, and sports (naturally through TKO, parent of UFC and WWE) were regularly misunderstood by public shareholders. This is because going private allows Silver Lake to consolidate the business, dispose of non-core assets, and focus on core growth engines.

The deal also offers scope for synergies. Endeavor's businesses will be reorganized under a new "WME Group," bringing together WME, IMG, 160over90, and other media holdings under one unified platform. Additionally, Executive Chairman Patrick Whitesell will lead a new investment platform, supported by Silver Lake, to make further acquisitions in the global sports and entertainment world.

Finally, the deal unites control. Silver Lake and management already held approximately 91.5% of Endeavor's voting rights. The \$13 billion transaction, which implies a total enterprise value of approximately \$25 billion, allows Silver Lake to own and operate Endeavor outright without the pressures of public markets. As Durban emphasized, Silver Lake "has never sold a share" of Endeavor, which reflects strong long-term conviction.

Deal Financials and Premium Analysis

Endeavor Group Holdings is being taken private by Silver Lake in one of the largest recent take-private transactions in the media and entertainment industry and reflects strong financial terms, driving Silver Lake's strong conviction in the long term value of the company. The deal, announced in April 2024, saw Silver Lake buying all the remaining shares of Endeavor that it did not already own and taking the company private once more. Furthermore, the transaction prices Endeavor's equity at approximately \$13 billion and implies an enterprise value (E.V.) of between \$25 and \$27 billion, depending on final levels of debt and cash on the balance sheet at the time of the closing. The figures place the deal among the largest media-related acquisitions of the year — and represents a significant wager on Endeavor's hybrid business model, one that includes talent management, sports (including a controlling stake in the U.F.C.), a portfolio of events and intellectual property rights. Enterprise value is especially relevant in this context as it accounts not only for the equity purchase price but also for Endeavor's outstanding net debt. The use of EV helps investors and analysts understand the total economic value Silver Lake is assuming in the transaction and how it compares to EBITDA and other performance indicators.

The deal valued Endeavor at roughly 11–12X forward EBITDA, a potentially high level, though a relatively fair price when one considers Endeavor's unique assets and its sweet spot



within its industry. The premium may also account for strategic reasons — such as Silver Lake’s familiarity with Endeavor’s business, stemming from its previous minority ownership, and the firm’s belief in management and in long-term industry tailwinds. This strategic justification was allowed to be cushioned by a large cash premium: Silver Lake proposed to pay \$27.50 per share for each share of Endeavor, which represented a 55% premium to Endeavor’s unaffected closing share price of \$17.72 and a 39% premium to Endeavor’s 30-day volume-weighted average price (VWAP).

Equity Value	~\$13 billion
Enterprise Value	\$25–27 billion
Forward EBITDA Multiple	11–12x
Premium Paid (vs. Market)	55% (vs. \$17.72 share price)
Premium Paid (vs. 30-day VWAP)	39%

In particular, Silver Lake appears to view Endeavor’s diversification across sports, entertainment, and representation as a strong hedge against sector-specific volatility. The firm’s control over high-growth segments like mixed martial arts (via UFC and WWE through TKO Group Holdings) likely contributed to the willingness to pay a high multiple.

Prior to the announcement, Endeavor’s stock had underperformed broader market indices, partially due to investor skepticism regarding the company’s sprawling portfolio and structural complexity. By offering a premium well above market expectations, Silver Lake effectively reset Endeavor’s valuation and provided liquidity to public shareholders, many of whom may have questioned the firm’s public market trajectory. In the context of a cooling IPO and M&A market, the transaction also illustrates how private equity can act as a market stabilizer—stepping in when public valuations are depressed and unlocking value through operational improvements and longer-term capital horizons.

Deal Financing and Capital Structure

The transaction was financed through a combination of equity and debt provided by Silver Lake and its co-investors, reflecting Endeavor’s equity valuation of \$13 billion. Silver Lake contributed both new capital and rollover equity and was joined by a group of prominent institutional co-investors: Mubadala Investment Company; DFO Management (Michael Dell’s family office); Lexington Partners; CPP Investments (investment arm of the Canada Pension Plan) and funds managed by Goldman Sachs Asset Management.



In addition, key members of Endeavor’s leadership including Ariel Emanuel, former CEO and now Executive Chairman of WME Group, Patrick Whitesell, and Mark Shapiro, now President and Managing Partner of WME Group, reinvested part of their equity alongside Silver Lake, reinforcing alignment between management and the new ownership. Patrick Whitesell, former Executive Chairman of Endeavor, is leaving his role to launch a new Silver Lake backed venture with \$250 million in seed funding, focused on investing in and developing assets across sports, media, and entertainment.

The debt financing amounted to \$4.5 billion in senior secured credit facilities, including a \$1.25 billion term loan A, a \$3 billion term loan B, and a \$250 million revolving credit facility. This was complemented by a \$3 billion margin loan secured by shares in TKO Group Holdings and related entities, further supporting the overall funding structure.

Industry and Market Implications

Silver Lake’s acquisition of Endeavor, described as the largest public-to-private deal in the media and entertainment sector in over a decade, shows how private equity is becoming a key force in shaping the future of this industry. By taking Endeavor private, Silver Lake gains more flexibility to focus on long-term growth, without the short-term pressure of public markets. The company now controls a wide range of assets, including live sports, talent agencies, and tech-based production businesses.

This deal reflects a shift in where value is created: not just in content itself, but in owning the platforms, data, and intellectual property behind it. There are two sides to this development. On the one hand, studios, rights holders, and media-tech startups could benefit from new investment and global exposure.

On the other, greater private equity involvement could limit creative freedom and put pressure on companies to deliver quick financial returns. As more control shifts to international investors, policymakers and regulators may need to consider how to protect the cultural voice and creative independence.

Challenges and Risks

Although Silver Lake’s purchase of Endeavor is an aggressive strategic play, there may also be roadblocks to the transaction. One significant headache has already been regulatory scrutiny. Because of Endeavor’s significant position in both sports and entertainment — including its control of UFC and WWE through TKO Group, and the company’s oversized role in talent representation through WME — the deal could attract particularly intense scrutiny over whether it introduces anti competitive effects in overlapping areas.

The financial structure of the deal could also be risky. The deal is expected to be highly leveraged and be valued at \$25 to \$27 billion in enterprise value. When interest rates are elevated or macroeconomic conditions are less favorable, the debt-service obligations could impede



Endeavor's near-term operational flexibility and long-term performance, particularly in areas such as live events that are tied to economic cycles.

This risk profile is further increased by the operational complexity. Endeavor's varied and complex business model, including athlete representation, event production and content rights, among other businesses, may complicate the integration post-acquisition. Rationalising such a diverse portfolio in a private ownership construct is going to take strategy, discipline and some hard restructuring choices.

And finally, becoming private from public ownership has certain implications. Being private means more strategic options and bigger-stock-and-investment balls — and it also means removal of public-market scrutiny. Without this oversight, Endeavor may face new governance challenges, including aligning internal stakeholders and ensuring disciplined execution.

Conclusion

Silver Lake's purchase of Endeavor represents a major inflection point in the larger media and entertainment world by demonstrating the growing touch of private equity in the future of complex, high-growth, multi-asset businesses. This transaction takes Endeavor off the public markets, allowing it to refocus its long-term strategy and pursue growth opportunities in its three core verticals: talent representation, live events and sports media. The premium valuation and aggressive financing plan demonstrate Silver Lake's high conviction in the company's value and long-term prospects, and its belief in the ability to execute upon a transformational value creation strategy," the company said in a statement.

Still, the agreement is not without complications. The high leverage, regulatory risk, and complexity of integrating businesses in its model make a successful closing of the transaction a real question. This will be essential as the business evolves and goes through a transition period under private ownership, and is required to ensure the strategy is clear and employees remain focused, internal governance is kept tight and the restructuring plan executed in a disciplined manner. Handled well, though, the purchase threatens to become the benchmark for how private equity-funded transformations in the entertainment industry — in which scale, content and platform ownership are what long-term value is built upon — are done.



Works cited:

1. "Silver Lake Completes \$25B Take-Private of Endeavor, Rebrands it as WME Group." PE Insights. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://pe-insights.com/silver-lake-completes-25bn-take-private-of-endeavor-rebrands-it-as-wme-group/>
2. "Latham & Watkins Advises Endeavor on Completed Take-Private Acquisition by Silver Lake." Latham & Watkins. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.lw.com/en/news/2025/03/latham-watkins-advises-endeavor-completed-take-private-acquisition-silver-lake>
3. "Endeavor Announces Completion of Acquisition by Silver Lake." Silver Lake. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.silverlake.com/endeavor-announces-completion-of-acquisition-by-silver-lake/>
4. "Silver Lake Partners on \$7.5 Billion Endeavor Acquisition Financing." Davis Polk. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.davispolk.com/experience/silver-lake-partners-75-billion-endeavor-acquisition-financing/?utm>
5. "Endeavor Announces Acquisition by Silver Lake Completed, Company to Go Private." The Power With Net. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.tpww.net/2025/03/endeavor-announces-acquisition-by-silver-lake-completed-company-to-go-private/?utm>
6. "What Silver Lake's Endeavor Deal Means for the Future of Media and the UK Market." Lee & Thompson. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.leeandthompson.com/news/what-silver-lakes-endeavor-deal-means-for-the-future-of-media-and-the-uk-market/>
7. "Endeavor's \$25B Next Act: Why the Sports Giant is Going Private." Front Office Sports. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://frontofficesports.com/endeavors-25b-next-act-why-the-sports-giant-is-going-private>
8. "Endeavor's Move to Go Private Will Form a New Media Company." Front Office Sports. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://frontofficesports.com/endeavors-move-to-go-private-will-form-a-new-media-company/>
9. "Endeavor Agrees to Be Bought by Silver Lake at \$13B Valuation." The Wall Street Journal. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/endeavor-agrees-to-be-bought-by-silver-lake-at-13b-valuation-3a44c438>
10. "Talent Agency Endeavor to Go Private in \$13bn Deal with Silver Lake." Financial Times. Accessed May 5, 2025. <https://www.ft.com/content/5eef3d49-03fb-4210-b9f1-161f1a2690e4>
11. "Endeavor Agrees to \$13 Billion Buyout by Silver Lake." Investing.com. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://uk.investing.com/news/stock-market-news/endeavor-agrees-to-13-billion-buyout-by-silver-lake-e-93CH-3413589>
12. "Endeavor Goes Private for \$13B + Valuation Multiples." RockWater. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://wearerockwater.com/endeavor-goes-private-by-silver-lake/>
13. "Endeavor to Go Private in \$13 Billion Deal with Silver Lake." Reuters. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/endeavor-go-private-13-bln-deal-with-silver-lake-2024-04-02/>
14. "Silver Lake to Take Full Ownership of Endeavor." Variety. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://variety.com/2024/biz/news/endeavor-private-deal-silver-lake-1235967392/>



15. "Endeavor to Go Private in \$13B Deal." Bloomberg. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-04-02/silver-lake-to-buy-rest-of-endeavor-in-13-billion-deal>
16. 1. "Endeavor Group Holdings, Inc. (EDR): History, Ownership, Mission " DCF Modeling. Accessed May 5, 2025. <https://dcfmodeling.com/blogs/history/edr-history-mission-ownership>
17. "How Endeavor Became a Sports and Entertainment Giant." Axios. Accessed May 5, 2025.
<https://www.axios.com/2024/04/03/endeavor-history-growth-ufc-wwe>