Radio Festival 2016: Creative Economy - *Is* it all up for grabs?

Siobhan Kenny, Radiocentre’s CEO, hosted a discussion at Radio Festival on 26 September entitled “It’s All Up For Grabs!”, a session looking at the opportunities for content makers and creators of audio.

The panel members were Helen Boaden, Director of BBC Network Radio, Steve Carsey, Director of Original Programming at Audible UK and Phil Critchlow, CEO of major indy TBI Media and Chair of The Radio Independent’s Group.

With 60% of BBC radio content due to be open to competition from 2022, both the BBC and independent producers will face big challenges and opportunities in the next few years.  In addition major players like Amazon (owner of Audible) will also be looking to seize the biggest possible share of the pie.

The new arrangement at the BBC (under the banner of Compete and Compare) dominated much of the discussion, with Phil Critchlow welcoming the opportunity but stressing that commissioners of content would need to be transparent and even-handed in their approach so that producers could be confident that they were competing on a level playing field.

For Audible, Steve Carsey said that it was using the range of audio content on its platform (from podcasts to short form comedy content) to drive broader consideration of its own products, such as audio books, as well other products and services provided by Amazon.  He hoped the opening up of the whole system might result in the BBC coming to them directly with programme ideas.

Helen Boaden agreed that this could be a possibility and a natural evolution of BBC Studios being more independent.  While platforms will evolve she also feels strongly that linear radio will prevail for some years yet, due to its established audience.  For her, the huge challenge, for both radio and TV, lies in keeping up with rapidly evolving demands of the younger demographic. She confirmed that she will not be involved in this next phase, however, as she will be [retiring from BBC Radio in the next few months.](http://radiotoday.co.uk/2016/09/helen-boaden-confirms-retirement-from-bbc-radio/)

The overall feeling was that there are genuine opportunities opening up for the whole audio/radio sector – watch this space.

ENDS

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