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Audible Celebrates Art and Evolution of Storytelling at 2024 Sundance Film Festival

As the leading creator and provider of premium audio storytelling for over 25 years, the company offers thousands of audiobooks and podcasts as well as premium original content

By Rande Dawn ▾



John Salangsang for Variety

For 40 years, the Sundance Film Festival has lit up Park City, Utah. And for five of those 40 years, Audible has brought an extra dimension to the stories being spotlighted and generated as the festival's



Founded in 1995, Audible is a leading content service that reaches a global community of loyal listeners. And its execution of sonic storytelling is one reason why the company continues to attract a pool of talented creatives.

“When we meet with somebody and they’ve got a really exciting, incredible idea and you can see their passion — and they have reasons for why this medium works — well, that’s when the magic happens,” said Kate Navin, Audible’s head of creative development, North America. “It really starts with that pitch from a creative, their strong idea, their background and their excitement for the medium.”

For decades, the company has emphasized quality performances and productions that challenge writers, producers and actors to explore and create while expanding their abilities to reach a bigger audience. “I’m very grateful to Audible, because the voice that I’ve had the ability to cultivate, there has been the voice that allows my imagination to soar,” Giancarlo Esposito [said](#) during the annual *Variety* x Audible “Cocktails and Conversations” sessions, which invite visionaries to discuss new projects and give insights into the art of narrative in all its forms.

The actor, who stars in and executive produced the upcoming crime drama series “Parish,” added, “That imagination is what’s informing every story that we have. ... We have an opportunity to really express ourselves as who we really are and let go of all the things that prevent us from showing each other our authentic selves.”

During that same panel, Alok Vaid-Menon, the subject of short doc “Alok,” spoke about their decision to partner with Audible. “I just want to thank [Audible] first and foremost because I’m very particular about who I work with and why,” the writer said. “I wanted to make sure that my creative autonomy was respected in this process, and I wanted to create a life for my poetry that was experienced fundamentally different than reading.”

About their collection of works featured on Audible, Vaid-Menon added: “What was really special about the poems we created was we got to collaborate with sound producers and create soundscapes with every single poem. It made me start to really recognize that poetry is painting with words, and actually synesthesia is the norm as a poet because we realize that you can taste metaphors. You can feel the break in a stanza, and so I wanted to have a full sensory experience to the poetry that wouldn’t be there if you were just reading. I think audio is actually a completely new art form, and that’s exciting to explore together.”

Podcasts were another hot topic among attendees at the *Variety* Studio, presented by Audible. On the popularity of podcasts, “Presence” star Chris Sullivan noted that the uptick “indicates that the long format interview, the long format story, is something that people are interested in investing their time in.”

Audible’s ability to draw names of global significance suggests that its podcast programming will continue to have staying power. And a bonus: Audible has thousands of titles to choose from, all free

and critically acclaimed projects, including podcasts, at the Audible Listening Lodge on Main Street.

While Audible offers thousands of exclusive narrative programs, audiobooks and podcasts, it doesn't shy away from the visual component of storytelling. In fact, Audible Originals and exclusive projects serve as source materials for films and TV series.

Many in the entertainment industry also enjoy partnering with Audible because of how different the creative process is. "I just did an Audible narrative podcast and got to assemble a lot of friends for it," said actor Glen Powell, who premiered his film "Hit Man" at the festival.

"When you're scheduling a movie, there's so much prep involved and logistics ... and it's a little more public, a little more vulnerable. With this podcast, I can pull a bunch of my friends and play around in a booth, create something really special," he said. "It's actually really entertaining because on a performance level, you're engaging a different muscle. I thought you had to sell it more because there is no visual to accompany the audio, but actually you have listeners leaning into the small intricacies in your performance, so actual nuance and subtext sells in a way I didn't expect it to. It's really fun."

With Audible's strong presence at Sundance and strong relationships with creators, the company is constantly innovating. "Our audience is very smart, and they love that exercise of imagining," Navin said. "It does something a little different with your brain when you're consuming audio content. And we think about that a lot."

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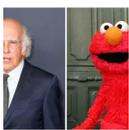
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