



Speakies

The British Audio Awards

What are the judges looking for?

The Speakies is looking for compelling stories, well told and excellently performed.

The Speakies is seeking well-produced audio titles that are true to the intentions of the original script, which also bring into play elements that are unique to audio, including voice, pacing, music and sound effects, to enhance the listening experience.

Narrators, including author narrators and professional actors, should deliver a clear, well-produced performance that is true to the original story and intentions of the author. Pacing, style and characterisation, alongside clear pronunciation, are all aspects of the reading that the judges will focus on.

The Speakies is audio-first and is therefore looking for entries where voice (or voices) has been used to enhance the text. For example, a well-known narrator might bring in a new audience for a pre-existing title; an adaptation might make a text more accessible to a wider audience; or an authentic rendition of a particular text might provide the listener with additional information about the text.

In the performance categories, there will be an emphasis on acting and the skills of the narrator or cast over the text itself. In some

cases, a great performance might prove to have been the difference between a book or drama achieving lift-off or not. In others, there may have been particular challenges around reading the material, such as its length or the language used.

The Speakies is keen to amplify the hard work of producers, so please do include details of how the audio was brought to fruition. What decisions were made around the narrator? Was it a single actor or cast? Was the audiobook produced in-house or via a third-party production house? How closely involved was the author? Was the text adapted to suit the different medium?

The judges will be looking for examples of excellence on the technical side, including use of the audio medium and new technologies available to producers. Judges will focus on smart editing, smooth, mistake-free narration and continuity of the reading.

The Speakies is also looking for successful audio businesses, who should submit for Audio Business of the Year. Here we are seeking innovative, and forward thinking audio businesses working in the books and theatrical space, of any size.

Who can submit?

Publishers, producers and platforms, as well as authors and performers and/or their agents, may submit audiobooks and audio drama. However, please read the terms and conditions below.

Submitters do not need to be based in the UK and Ireland, but the audio must have been made available to listeners in the UK and Ireland during the period. For the drama and performance categories, publishers, producers, narrators, actors and/or their representatives may submit entries.

What to submit

The audio should stand on its own and will be listened to by our judges, so please make sure that is available to them. Beyond that, we would love to read about your success – how well the audio was reviewed, whether listeners enjoyed it, whether it won any other prizes or accolades; we also want to know how it did commercially, evidenced either by charts success or sales numbers.

The Speakies understands that not all audio products have the same level of promotion, and titles may land differently with their audiences. However, this is a competitive space, and therefore our judges would like to hear how you brought your product to market, what your ambitions were for it and how you went about achieving them.

If there is an existing print title, please outline briefly how the audio differed from the original text and whether it landed differently with the two distinct audiences.

In the case of originals and dramas, please detail how you approached the campaign in the absence of a pre-existing product, and you how made sure your audio product stood out.

Please provide details of the casting decisions, how you chose the producer and what choices were made regarding the recording. In the case of adaptations, dramas and original work, please outline how you created the audio.

For multi-cast productions, please provide additional material outlining how the recording was done, how the production team managed the talent and how the text was successfully adapted for multiple voices.

In the performance categories, please detail how the narrator(s)/performer(s) executed their role(s), what approach they took and what challenges the text presented. There should be an emphasis on the acting and skills of the narrator/cast.

For Audio Business of the Year, please tell us about your operation and how it is succeeding and innovating in the audio space. All relevant businesses may submit, including publishers, producers and retailers. Please include any audio as part of your zipped material (full audiobooks or drama do not need to be uploaded for this category, but excerpts will help). A shortlist will be announced before the event, with one winner revealed on the night. Tickets for shortlisted companies will be sold separately.

Please include

Please make a digital version of the audio available to the judges either by uploading a version to the awards site or providing a download link. These versions will not be made available beyond the judges, and are essential for the shortlisting process. In certain circumstances, the Speakies will arrange access to submitted titles, if not otherwise available.

The audio file should be submitted in a zipped file. Please also include within this zipped file a PDF of up to 1,000 words covering the requirements listed here, alongside any supporting graphics, via the awards website. Please include within this file a hi-res image of the authors/narrators and any relevant book jackets.

If you encounter any difficulties, please email speakies@thebookseller.com

Other guidance

The Speakies exists to amplify the work of everyone involved in the process of bringing spoken-word audio to the market, so please do acknowledge all colleagues who bring these products to fruition, including producers, performers, editors and proof-listeners.

You may review the categories on the events website. Please contact the award's administrator for further category guidance. Not all titles fit easily into the designated categories; the chair of the judges will make a final decision on placement prior to shortlisting, with publishers informed ahead of any public announcement.

The Speakies reserves the right to change or retire the categories should there be no suitable titles eligible for inclusion.

Terms and conditions

Audiobooks need to have been published in the UK and Ireland during the year July 2024 to end June 2025.

Standalone (i.e. original) audiobooks are eligible, as are multi-cast versions of existing books. Rerecordings of previously published books are also eligible, but please note the publication criteria above. In the event of there being any confusion around the eligibility of a project, the chair of judges will make the final decision.

The Speakies is open to English-language (only) books. This includes books in translation, as long as the audio translation has been published during the year.

Publishers – or the rightsholders – of shortlisted audiobooks agree to make a contribution of £1,500 towards the general promotion of the winning and shortlisted audiobooks and use the official shortlisted and winning branding. For shortlisted publishers with fewer than 10 employees, the contribution is zero. Publishers will receive invites to the winners ceremony as part of this fee, and more may be made available on application.

For the audiobook categories, titles not submitted by publishers will be considered but only with the full approval of the publisher or other rightsholder, who will then be subject to the shortlist fees as stated above. Other parties, including producers, however, can collaborate on the submission, and should be credited in the entry.

For the drama and performance categories, publishers, producers, narrators, actors and/or their representatives may submit entries. There is no shortlist fee. However, shortlisted companies and performers will be expected to buy tickets to the winners ceremony. A limited number of free places will be made available to those otherwise unable to attend.

Publishers wishing to limit the number of titles shortlisted should contact the organisers in advance. Publishers will be notified in advance of the shortlist’s publication.

Publishers – and others – submitting for the Speakies should use their best endeavours to ensure that writers, narrators and actors attend the winners ceremony on Monday 24th November and that they agree to make themselves available for promotional activity around the awards. The Speakies will work with an external PR company to make sure shortlistees and winners maximise promotional opportunities.

Shortlisted and winning publishers agree to endeavour to use official artwork on future versions, social media and their own websites in order to assist in the promotion of additional sales.

The Speakies recognises that artificial intelligence will be part of the audiobook production process and may, in certain areas, prove to be a useful tool for producers and publishers. However, the clear preference for these awards is to recognise human narration, and this will be privileged throughout the judging process. Any use of AI for voice or translation must be declared with the circumstances of its use explained; such titles will be shortlisted only at the judges’ discretion.

AI recordings are not eligible in the performance categories.

