

What can an 11th century flour mill tell us about preparing for the future?



MASTERCHEF, Produced by Shine TV for BBC, Shot at 3 Mills Studios

So here we are at the 2017 MBI Media Summit - two days of insight, discussion and debate about the future of the UK and international media industry.

Looking over the Summit's packed agenda, we got thinking about how could we as a studio, and as part of UK media industry, prepare for the future? Can you really future proof your business? Do you even want to? Future proofing sounds like you are trying to stop the future, like water proofing or bullet proofing. If there is one thing you can't stop it is the future.

Continued success only comes when you embrace the future, so whether you are a nimble-footed 'true indie', part of an international media giant, or a bricks and mortar business like 3 Mills Studios, in the new media landscape, as we all know, it's a case of ADAPT OR DIE. (to quote P.W. Botha, or if you prefer, Brad Pitt in Moneyball).

3 Mills Studios knows a bit about adapting to change. Built on an island, the site of London's oldest continuously

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occupied industrial centre and dating back to the eleventh century, 3 Mills milled flour, then gunpowder, became a gin distillery, was bombed during WW2 then developed as a film studio in the 1980s. It is now thriving as London's largest film and TV studio.

But we need to continue to adapt as the studio landscape continues to change. A new facility is planned for Dagenham, right on our doorstep. That will be a challenge for us, but one we are also very excited about as it will attract more productions to East London.

The international demand for high end TV drama continues to drive demand for our stage space, and indeed demand for UK screen production expertise generally, but is this also our - and the industry's - Achilles heel?

Do we risk being overly exposed to international partners whose decisions can be influenced by fractional moves in exchange rates and tax credits? Or are these partners attracted by the creative strength and skill level of our industry, and will that creativity and skill ensure there will always be a strong place for MADE IN THE UK media businesses?

At 3 Mills Studios, we believe firmly in the latter - but how then do we as an industry maintain and enhance these levels of skill and creativity?

Megan Gaiser, ex-CEO of Nancy Drew games producer Her Interactive, believes that "creativity is the mother of diversity. And vice versa. If you lead with creativity, then diverse thinking is the result. And if you have a diverse staff, you can get more diverse thinking and more creative results."

Thoughts echoed by Idris Elba during his speech to Parliament last year: "Diversity in the modern world is more than just skin colour - it's gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, social background, and most important of all, as

far as I'm concerned - diversity of thought."

On the money side, McKinsey & Company's 2015 Diversity Matters report proves that a commitment to diversity improves a company's financial performance.

With the launch of the Creative Diversity Network's DIAMOND programme last year, the UK screen industry continues to address the issue of diversity on screen, behind the camera, and in terms of company-wide employment, which can only be good for the future of the industry.

But a media business also needs to consider the diversity of the content it creates and how this affects its plans for the future. Does one focus on film or TV, scripted or non-scripted, daytime or prime time, Terrestrial or OTT, or all of the above?

At 3 Mills, diversity is one of the keys to our success - from

the backgrounds of our onsite team to the variety of productions we consciously seek out to fill our stages: live action and stop motion animation feature films, UK and US dramas, entertainment favourites like MasterChef, all mixed in with blockbuster West End and Operatic rehearsals. It is the diversity of our client base - in every sense - that drives the energy and creativity which is the heartbeat of 3 Mills.

We don't just rent black boxes for people to shoot stuff in either. We are a key part of London's - and the UK's - screen production ecosystem, and we actively engage with bodies such as the Production Guild, UK Screen, BSAC, BAFTA, the BFC and others because we care passionately about the UK creative industries.

Enjoy the 2017 MBI Media Summit and come to see us soon at 3 Mills Studios - London's Island of Creativity.

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THE ROYALS, Produced by Lionsgate TV for E! Channel. Shot at 3 Mills Studios