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BBC Worldwide to launch online music service

Free streaming thanks to ad support

by Verity Burns published on 27 August 2008

BBC Worldwide is to launch an ad-supported online music service, where music lovers will be able to get their hands on both free and paid-for access to audio and video content from the BBC's archives.

This will include coverage from all the big festivals as well as content from shows such as Top of the Pops, putting the service in direct competition with the iTunes and similar services from Amazon and Sky (due to launch later this year).

The service is set to launch with at least 1000 music tracks, and will feature around 300 of the BBC's TV and radio music programmes such as Radio 1's popular Live Lounge.

Ultimately, the service could offer around 50,000 music audio tracks and around 3000 hours of video content if the BBC's archive was exploited to its fullest.

A test launch of the service is pencilled in for November, it's thought, with the full launch to be ready for January.

The great difference with the BBC service compared to others out there at the moment, is that you'll be able to stream content, in it's full-length versions, completely for free. You'll only have to fork out money if you want to download the material - either for a limited time or for permanent ownership. Also handy is that the downloaded content will be DRM-free, unlike content downloaded from iTunes, meaning you'll be able to copy your files to multiple devices.

The way they'll fund the free content is obviously through ads, which it is understood, will feature throughout the content - pre-roll, mid-roll and post-roll. Obviously the website will feature ads on it



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too, all adding up to keeping the content free. It is thought the ads will make up half of the service's overall revenue, the other half coming from subscription revenues.

A BBC Worldwide spokesman said: "We're exploring a range of opportunities around direct to consumer websites and the utilisation of the BBC music archive. At present, no launches have been approved".

As for pricing for downloaded content, it's yet to be finalised. However, it is thought that the BBC will probably match Apple's price point of 79p per audio track to begin with.