

Name and title: John Cole

Representing: Self

Comments:

Based on my own experience, I believe the malais of commercial radio is structural rather than cyclical. There is a great over-supply of stations providing almost the same mixture of pop music and unintelligent chatter. The small factory where I work employs about six assemblers doing repetitive tasks. There has always been a radio playing and in past years everyone listened to it. It still plays (usually Radio 2 now) but almost everyone wears earphones and an MP3 player to listen to their own individual choice of MP3 music tracks or podcasts downloaded from the internet.

The over-supply has two undesirable effects. Firstly, it wastes radio spectrum. Although the BBC has advertised DAB broadcasting for its improved sound quality, the actual sound quality is noticeably worse than FM stereo. That is a result of packing too many stations into each DAB multiplex. It is surely shameful that this 21st Century 'hi-tech' transmission is allowed to be functionally inferior to the 1960's technology of FM.

Secondly, the dubious financial viability of many commercial radio stations leaves the country vulnerable to their being supplanted by broadcasters whose motives are not commercial but ideological. While 'community radio' has a cosy ring to it, the fact that minority ethnic, political, or religious groups may in fact be a majority in particular local areas means that such groups are vulnerable to ideologically motivated community broadcasts. Ofcom must surely be aware that constant monitoring of a large number of local stations is effectively impractical, especially if they broadcast wholly or partly in a minority language or patois.