

CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station : Cool FM

Dates Sampled : 17, 18, 20 and 21 May 2006

Station Character of Service :

A ROCK AND POP STATION AIMED AT 15-35 YEAR-OLDS IN THE BELFAST AREA.

Station Format Detail :

Cool will play a mix of current tracks mixed with heritage 80s/90s tracks. In non-daytime the schedule should include some specialist music programmes which complement the main mix (eg dance, indie, oldies etc).

Speech (which will normally make up at least 10% of daytime output) should include regular lifestyle/leisure features as well as travel, weather and so on. Bulletins containing local/regional news should run hourly at least during peaktime, with national features featured at other times.

Format Obligations : Pre-sampling observations ...

Cool FM serves the Greater Belfast area and is a youth targeted service that doesn't have a high level of Format requirements in relation to speech obligations and specialist music provision. The station should play a mix of current tracks together with music from the 80s and 90s. There is an obligation to provide bulletins containing local and regional news at least during peak time.

Localness and General Format Findings (excluding news)

Weekday programming included entertainment items and one of the mid-morning programmes included a phone interview with American rock band Orson, who featured in the station's play list. There were workday requests and dedications and a competition item in which listeners had to guess the location of a presenter, which gave a further local flavour to the output. Presenter links included information about music tracks and light-hearted stories from the world of show business. There were also regular weather, traffic and travel bulletin updates.

News

News bulletins were generally dominated by local stories and covered in some depth. Bulletins were up to 5 minutes during peak time and at 1pm there was an extended bulletin of 8 minutes. At other times they were a minimum of 3 minutes. During the sample period the range of stories included: coverage of the funeral of murdered schoolboy Michael McIlveen, hundreds had turned out in Ballymena; report on the Parades Commission latest statement; plans for a new waste transfer facility; local translink shuttle initiative; Public Accounts Committee called into question; Scotland's First Minister visits Belfast and Advisory Service continues to need funds to support

those affected by the troubles. Weekend bulletins were equally as comprehensive and included extensive coverage of sports news.

Music

The station focuses on current and some recurrent tracks with music from the 80s and 90s blended into the main mix. The play list included artists such as Orson; The Feeling; The Zutons; Black-Eyed Peas; The Kooks; Red Hot Chilli Peppers; Bon Jovi; Richard Ashcroft; Snow Patrol; Ordinary Boys; Jack Johnson; Keane and Sheryl Crow and Sting. Heritage tracks from the 80s and 90s included: Oasis; Belinda Carlisle; Huey Lewis and the News; George Michael, Savage Garden; Depeche Mode; Eric Clapton; Billy Joel; Patti LaBelle and Cyndi Lauper. Regular features which showcase tracks from the 80s and 90s are in evidence both during daytime and evening programmes.

Specialist music such as dance and alternative, as defined in the Format, is scheduled outside of daytime. There is a dance programme on Saturday evening from 1800-2100 and 0100-0400. From 1900-2100 on Sunday new releases are featured alongside play listed material. New material from bands such as: The Futureheads; Jupiter Ace; Lordy; Feeder; Delay; Prince and Sons of Jim were featured. In addition there is a weekday evening feature that showcases certain indie/alternative tracks. The syndicated Hit UK is scheduled on Sundays 1600-1900.

Content Sampling Conclusion:

The station's 10% speech limit during daytime is easily achieved and surpassed through news, regular traffic and travel and general entertainment items of appeal to its audience.

The news service is comprehensive and local stories are covered in some depth. Bulletins are up to 5 minutes during peak time and during this sampling period there was an 8 minute bulletin at 1pm. At other junctures bulletins are a minimum of 3. Weekend provision varies between 3 and 5 minutes

Daytime music provides current and some recurrent tracks and music from the 80s and 90s is blended into the mix. Some of the music features, for example 'Classic One at One' make a point of showcasing tracks from those decades and there are similar features to be found - weekday late night 'Bedroom Sessions' and a Sunday feature 'These Are The Decades'

Specialist music programming that compliments the main mix includes a weekend dance show and a Sunday and Wednesday evening programme that features newly released alternative tracks in an accessible mix.

This station is operating within its Format

Notes on Content Sampling

Ofcom's Content Sampling Procedure:

In Ofcom's move of emphasis from input regulation towards output regulation, content sampling has become an important regulatory process. Ofcom has already published the methods to be applied when formally listening to local commercial stations to create a content sampling report. These methods and processes are published at www.ofcom.org.uk/XXX.

Background Information

Content sampling is a major Ofcom tool in judging the level of station compliance with regard to

- a) Public File*
- b) Localness*
- c) Music*

Content sampling may be carried out as part of an organised process, or may be as the result of a complaint.

Public File

Public File obligations are [to be] enshrined within each station Format. The Public File and/or station website will, in many cases, not only support the findings of content sampling, but signpost monitors to output that enhances specific aspects of localness and music, whether or not it involves the specific days being monitored.

Localness and Music

Localness guidelines are available on Ofcom's website at www.ofcom.org.uk/xxx and station localness and music obligations will vary considerably from Format to Format.