

SPOT SAMPLING REPORT

Station: Original 106 (Solent)

Dates Sampled: 6 September, 7 September and 8 September, 2007

This is a Spot Sampling Report carried out in response to concerns about a specific part of the station's output. It will be followed in due course by a full Content Sampling Report which will monitor all aspects of the station's output.

Spot Sampling Report finding:

This Spot Sampling report was triggered following complaints received by Ofcom that Original 106, the "Adult Alternative" station for the Solent region, is not delivering the music policy set out in its Format.

After carrying out a detailed analysis of the music logs from three days of Original's output, we found that the station, which its Format states is "an album-led music service", was clearly exceeding the percentage of Top 20 hit singles that its Format permits it to play, and particularly during daytime hours. We concluded from our analysis that an unacceptably high number of the music tracks being aired by Original were mainstream pop records that do not sit happily with the station's "Adult Alternative" remit, and were therefore out-of-Format.

Original 106 is not operating within its Format and a Yellow Card warning has been issued.

Original 106 Character of Service

ADULT ALTERNATIVE RADIO – A CREDIBLE MIX OF ADULT-ORIENTATED MUSIC, WITH PARTICULAR APPEAL FOR 40-59 YEAR-OLDS, WITH 24 HOUR LOCAL NEWS

Original 106 Format Detail

Original 106FM is an album-led music service. Songs that are, or have been, in the Top 20 Chart will account for no more than 35% of the station's output.

The service will play predominantly album tracks over the full range of adult-orientated genres including Adult Rock, Adult Soul/R&B/Blues, Adult Mellow and Adult Eclectic from the 60s to today. Every hour of daytime music will include a variety of era and genre, and no single genre or decade will account for more than 35% of songs played.

Specialist music programmes that complement the main music mix will be scheduled every weekday evening. (Minimum 10 hrs per week).

Speech is an important part of the output and should include sport, weather, travel, interviews and features. Speech should not make up less than 30% of the station's daytime output, and not less than 40% in breakfast and afternoon drivetime. Bulletins containing local news will be broadcast hourly, 24 hours a day. An extended 15 minute bulletin will be broadcast every weekday in afternoon drivetime.

Full Spot Sampling Report

Original 106, serving the Solent region of southern England which incorporates Portsmouth, Southampton, Bournemouth and the Isle of Wight, was licensed by Ofcom in September 2005 and launched in October 2006. It was notable for being the first ever analogue licence in the UK to be awarded to an Adult Album Alternative format.

This Spot Sampling report was triggered following complaints made to Ofcom concerning Original's music delivery against what is set out in the station's Format.

Original's Format document requires the Character of Service to be "Adult Alternative Radio" with particular appeal for 40-59 year-olds. The Format's detail states that Original will play "predominately album tracks over the full range of adult-oriented genres including Adult Rock, Adult Soul/R&B/Blues, Adult Mellow and Adult Eclectic from the 60s to today." The album-orientation of the station is further reinforced by a Format requirement that tracks that are, or have been, in the in the UK Top 20 singles chart will account for no more than 35% of the station's music output. There is also a requirement that no single genre or decade must account for more than 35% of the music played on the station.

The complainants alleged that the 35% cap on Top 20 hits was not being observed by Original, and a number of the tracks being aired were "out-of-Format" (i.e. not consistent with its promised "Adult Alternative" Character of Service). As a consequence, this was positioning the station uncomfortably close to existing Adult Contemporary stations in the Solent marketplace.

Given the very specific nature of these complaints, and that Ofcom had already carried out a full Content Sampling Report of Original 106 earlier this year (prior to the alleged change of direction in Original's music policy), it was decided to undertake a quick Spot Sampling Report that would focus solely upon Original's music output.

We asked Original to provide three days of music logs, and we also listened to the station's audio for one of those days to check there was not a tendency for the station's presenters to deviate significantly from the music that had been scheduled for broadcast.

Our analysis of the logs showed that Original was consistently playing a higher percentage of Top 20 hits (past and present) than the 35% permitted by its Format. Across the three 24-hour periods monitored, the average percentage of Top 20 hits played was 44%, while the percentage was significantly higher during daytime hours (an average of 56% across the three days) and at weekday peaktime (averaging 67%).

We agreed with the complainants that a number of tracks being aired by Original were mainstream pop records that do not sit happily with the label "Adult Alternative." Examples of tracks we heard during the three days of monitoring that were considered to be inconsistent with the promised Format included Take That/*Patience*; Duran Duran/*The Reflex*; Clout/*Substitute*; Shalamar/*I Can Make You Feel Good*; Dan Hartman/*Relight My Fire*; Andrew Gold/*Never Let Her Slip Away*; Whitney Houston/*How Will I Know*; Rupert Holmes/*Escape (The Pina Colada Song)*; Maria McKee/*Show Me Heaven*; Junior/Mama Used To Say; Tavares/*Don't Take Away the Music*; and Tight Fit/*The Lion Sleeps Tonight*. That is not to say, of course, that other tracks from these artists might not be suitable for Original 106's Format, or that

Original 106 could not play any of these individual tracks in the future – rather, we were concerned that that the overall proportion of tracks that were considered to be out-of-Format was unacceptably high.

We therefore concluded that Original 106 is in breach of its Format, and a Yellow Card warning has been issued. If we find that these issues have been addressed when we monitor the station again, then the Yellow Card will be lifted.

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 <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/contentssampling/>.

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 enshrined within each station's Licence. 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/radio/ifi/rbl/car/localness/ and station localness and music obligations will vary considerably from Format to Format.