

# CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

**Station :** Star Radio Bristol

**Dates Sampled :** 11 – 12 July, 15 July and 16 July, 2006

**Station Character of Service :**

**A SOULFUL, ADULT CONTEMPORARY MUSIC BASED SERVICE, AIMED PRIMARILY AT 30--50 YEAR-OLD BRISTOLIANS WITH LOCAL NEWS AND INFORMATION AND INVOLVING THE MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES.**

**Station Format Detail :**

Star Radio (Bristol) is a music station with speech providing the local flavour. Speech will not normally fall below 20% of weekday daytime output and 20% at weekends and will include weekly speech-orientated three hour sequence for the multi-cultural community, with debate, comment and What's-ons relevant to the inner city. Local news will run hourly at least during peak-time, with national news featured at other times. Extended news of at least 30 mins each weekday daytime. News and information from specific local neighbourhoods will also be broadcast each weekday.

Music played will include a significant amount of Soul, some Soft Rock and complementary pop and R'n'B; but not more than 35% Current/Recurrent tracks. Specialist programmes in non daytime, featuring a variety of genres including Soul, R&B, and a 'Black Music' programme (of up to 5 hours duration), which must all account for at least 20 hours of output each week. Additionally, the music broadcast during weekly multi-cultural programming will reflect the tastes of those communities and include work, sometimes topical, of traditional and modern black/ethnic musicians; it may include styles such as reggae hip-hop, Bhangra, R&B, ragga and soul.

**Format Obligations :** Pre-sampling observations ...

Star Radio (Bristol) serves the City of Bristol, parts of Kingsdown and South Gloucestershire, with a soulful and adult contemporary service targeted at 30-50 year olds. Speech limits across daytime are set at a minimum of 20%; the level of detail in the Format should make this easily achievable. The music obligations are equally detailed, overall highlighting a clear remit to serve the multi-cultural communities across the area through a range of speech and music features. This requirement is enhanced by a requirement for specialist programming.

**Localness and General Format Findings** (excluding news)

During peak-time, local speech consisted largely of news bulletins and stories found in the newspapers, both national and local, (The Times, Western Daily Press and Bristol Evening News). Although formal 'what's-on' features were not signposted during output, local events such as a World Apart Jumpathon for 3-6 year olds taking place at a local mall, a gig by 'My Ruin' at the local Carling Academy, a production of Jungle Book at the Bristol Hippodrome and a Barnardo's sponsored Bristol Half

Marathon were highlighted as events of interest to listeners. Across daytime, traffic and travel news afforded mentions of local place names and were aired regularly. Outside of peak-time, speech mainly focused on showbiz gossip, trivia, and film/entertainment news. During one link a presenter talked about his forthcoming appearance in an advertisement campaign, including the advertiser's strapline, which he informed listeners would be aired on ITV 1, Channel 4 and Sky 1. While the presenter may have been unaware, this was a breach of our rules on commercial references during programming time, in that it blurred the lines between the advertising and programming element of the output.

The 'speech orientated three hour sequence for the multi-cultural community' (aired on Sunday mornings from 0600 to 0900) also contained information about forthcoming events in the Bristol area such as the Ashton Court Festival and the Harbourside Event. While the first two hours were noticeably lacking in speech, this increased in the final hour with the arrival of studio guests and the conversation was able to focus on issues of relevance to the target audience (a forthcoming European youth forum in Dusseldorf to be attended by a local delegation and an ethnic minority bone marrow donor appeal). There was also an appeal for information on the many Asian festivals that take place in the Bristol area.

Over the sample period there was no evidence of the required weekday news and information feature from specific neighbourhoods. However, the station was able to list a number of community stories/initiatives that it had featured over the past few weeks, such as Bristol's Polish Eagles Football Team winning the Unity Shield, the St Paul's Youth Promotion scheme establishing links with a school in Jamaica and the story following the 'World On Our Doorstep' festival, that took place in the Easton area of Bristol.

## **News**

Over the sampling period, hourly peaktime bulletins were aired. Usually 3 minutes in duration, bulletins contained national/international and local stories. Minute long bulletins were aired on the half hour during peaktime. While often leading with a national story (over the sample period a Government energy report was published and there was an escalation of military action in the Middle East) local stories were prominent and accompanied by relevant audio. Local stories included, the Bristol Malawi Educational Project, recycling initiatives in Bristol, criticism of the local NHS for reportedly employing pan-pipers to play at doctors' surgeries across Bristol and the jailing of a Bristol teenager for the killing of a local pub landlord. Sports stories were generally national/ international, e.g. the Italian football league scandal and England Test cricket at Lords. News items were generally impressive, however it was noted that two news clips were aired on Saturday and again on Sunday when they were clearly out of date.

The required daily weekday extended news bulletin, Bristol Today, (at least 30 mins), was aired at 0600. Across the sampling period, these bulletins took different formats; one included a guest from the Bristol Evening News who reviewed stories from the newspaper. These bulletins were found to be around 25 minute's in duration and included business news, sports and show business news, as well as weather reports. On one day, although the news at 1000 was trailed at 0900, this bulletin did not occur. Later, at 1300 there was 1 minute of dead air, eventually followed by the news halfway through the bulletin.

An additional feature entitled 'The Source', provided a minute-long news bulletin for young listeners; scripted for a younger audience, it was aired twice daily (approx 0820 and 1530).

### **Music :**

The music mix covered a range of genres and was of a distinctly older (particularly 80's) sound. Tracks included, Lionel Ritchie: *All Night Long*, Abba: *The Winner Takes It All*, Bob Marley: *Three Little Birds*, Kool and the Gang: *Get Down On It* and the Communards: *Don't Leave Me This Way*. Core current tracks included Sandi Thom: *I Wish I was a Punk Rocker*, Orson: *Happiness*, Nerina Pallot: *Everybody's Gone to War*, Beverley Knight: *Piece of My Heart*, Corrine Bailey-Rae: *Trouble Sleeping* and The Feeling: *Fill My Little World*. The musical output was well within the upper limit of 35% applied to current/recurrent tracks.

With the exception of music themes, such as the weekday 'Soul and Motown Lunch' and other specific tracks, the music output did not always distinguish the sound of the station as 'soulful', rather it often seemed to generally fall into the 'pop/disco' category. Throughout daytime other music themes included, '5 at 9' where listeners were invited to spot the connection between 5 tracks played to win a prize. There was also 'Top 10 @10', where listeners were invited to guess the correct year.

Specialist programming is defined in the Format as "*featuring a variety of genres including soul, R&B and a 'Black Music' programme (of up to 5 hours duration), which must all account for at least 20 hours of output each week*". This is scheduled outside of daytime and the station directed us to, 'The Sixth Sense' a 2-hour networked programme with the UKRD psychic, as well as their 'Club Classics' programmes aired Fridays, 1900 through to Saturdays 0500 and Sundays, 1700 through to Monday 0500. This output was dominated by disco, dance and pop tracks. While many tracks in this feature justify their classification as 'Club Classics' (Adeva: *Warning*, Sylvester: *You Make Me Feel*, Robin S: *Show Me Love*, Funkadelic: *One Nation Under A Groove*) it seemed to be an obscure interpretation of the Format obligations, made even more unusual by the inclusion of tracks such as, Sinitta: *So Macho*, Abba: *Super Trouper* and Jan Hammer: *Miami Vice Theme*. The Club Classics programmes did not contain any presenter links and many tracks were repeated across the sampled weekend's output, despite the station's "No Repeat Weekend" tag.

Music broadcast during the multi-cultural programming was similar to other music output heard on the station across daytime. There were no musicians representing the musical styles referred to in the Format, however a live rendition from a local acoustic/indie band was aired.

### **Content Sampling Conclusion :**

The station's 20% speech limit is easily achieved and surpassed through regular news, traffic and travel items, as well as frequent recaps of news bulletin and newspaper stories. With a sizeable coverage area, local stories were substantial and accompanied by meaningful audio which enhanced the stories and their local focus. Although not required by the Format, the inclusion of half hourly news headlines and the youth news feature 'The Source', was noted. The required weekday news and information feature from specific neighbourhoods did not appear to be in place;

however, the station was able to inform us of an upcoming feature that would be a useful vehicle for providing relevant programming.

Explicit within the Star Radio (Bristol) Format is that the service should reflect and have resonance with the multi-cultural communities in the area. While not clearly evident throughout the sampling period, the station was able to direct us to a number of appropriate items that had featured on the station over the previous weeks; these items also featured in the station's Public File. Looking ahead, the station has informed us of further plans that will demonstrate their commitment to multi-cultural programming in a more inclusive way.

Currently, the general music programming can only be described as soulful in the broadest terms. While the sampled specialist music programming output (packaged as Club Classics) seemed a dubious interpretation of the Format requirements, the station was able to assure us of steps already underway that will make this element of programming less ambiguous and more reflective of the Format obligations.

However, although the station has assured us of impending changes to the output, the sampling period revealed a lack of speech during the speech orientated three hour sequence for the multi-cultural community and the absence of a definitive black music programme of up to 5 hours duration. For these reasons the station is in breach of its Format and a Yellow Card is to be issued. If we find that these issues have been addressed when we monitor the station's output again, then the Yellow Card will be lifted.

**This station is not operating within its Format and a Yellow Card is to be issued.**

## 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/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/rbl/car/localness/) and station localness and music obligations will vary considerably from Format to Format.*