

OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station: U105 (Belfast)
Dates Sampled: Wed 22 August; Thurs 23 August and Saturday 26 August 07

CONTENT SAMPLING FINDING

In addition to hourly news bulletins and regular sports news, weather, and traffic and travel updates, the speech programming across the day also included a number of interviews, local what's on information, a phone-in, features and listener participation. The station's relatively high speech commitment was therefore comfortably achieved.

Daytime news bulletins were broadcast on the hour and exhibited a good mix of local, national and international stories. Daytime and weekend bulletins were routinely 4 minutes in duration. Although the Format does not dictate any set durations for news provision, we noted that extended bulletins were in evidence at 07:00 and 08:00 (6 minutes), 13:00 and 17:00 (10 minutes), and 18:00 (up to 25 minutes).

The music output embraced a wide range of genres, but the emphasis was clearly on older material. Specialist music programming covering rock, soul, country, Irish, disco and nostalgia is scheduled across the week from early evening and exceeds the 10 hours specified in the Format.

This station is operating within its format

U105 Character of Service

A PERSONALITY-LED STATION AIMED PRIMARILY AT THE OVER 45 AGE GROUP IN BELFAST AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, PROVIDING TOPICAL SPEECH, AND MUSIC FROM THE GOLD ERA RIGHT THROUGH TO THE PRESENT DAY

U105 Format Detail

Programming will target listeners primarily aged 45 and over with a mix of pop hits from the 1960s to the present day, plus melodic contemporary releases, soft rock, classic and new country and 'spice' tracks. Older material will dominate the music played with tracks from the last 10 years accounting for not more than a third of the music aired each day. Tracks by Irish artists will feature throughout the schedule. Specialist music genres such as country, rock, smooth jazz, and soul, will account for at least 10 hours in programmes each week.

Speech is an important part of the service and on average, on weekdays, should occupy 30% of daytime output, 35% to 50% in peak, a minimum of 20% in non-peak and 5% in automated overnights; and at weekends, on average, should occupy 30% in peak, 20% in non-peak and 5% in automated overnights. It will include local information for the target audience, discussion of current issues, lifestyle matters and phone-in features, and reflect the unique cultural aspects of the area.

News bulletins containing local/regional news will be aired every hour from 0600-0000, (0700 on Sundays), with breaking news carried as it happens. Up to five hours output may be automated overnight.

Format Obligations: Pre-sampling observations

U105 began broadcasting on 14 November 2005 to provide a service to Belfast and the surrounding area. It should appeal to an older demographic, with a strong local focus and a relatively high speech content. The output should contain regular features and interviews with a degree of listener participation. The music mix can embrace a wide range of genres, but the emphasis should be on older tracks. There is a firm obligation to provide a range of specialist programmes for at least 10 hours a week.

There should be hourly news provision, but the Format does not specify the duration of news bulletins.

Localness and General Format Findings (excluding news)

Across this sampling period there were regular interviews, features and community information pertinent to the target audience. Interviews often further explored items that had been covered in news bulletins. These included a spokesman from the USPCA (Ulster Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) on the increased incidents of dog fighting in the area and the subsequent seizure of dangerous dogs. Iris Robinson MP was asked for her views on whether the national anthem should be played at the upcoming rugby international match between Northern Ireland and Italy. The manager of a drug rehabilitation unit in Newry was interviewed about the work of the centre and the local effect its closure will have. Following two of these interviews, listeners were given the opportunity to put their view about the issue via text or email, and the responses were covered later in the programmes.

Guest interviews had a sports theme with local sportsmen Brian Magee and Glenn Ross discussing their intention to defend their existing titles for boxing and Britain's strongest man respectively. Ellen MacArthur was interviewed about her charity initiatives, future sailing challenges and the loneliness of solo sailing. There were also extended features on eating healthily, pole dancing to keep fit, animal rescue and a gardening phone-in. All of the presenters exhibited a mature presentation style, moving comfortably between interviews to giving background information about the tracks they were playing.

Saturday programming included showbusiness news, a film review, dedications, what's on information, competitions and sports updates.

News

Locally-produced bulletins mixing local, national and international stories were aired on an hourly basis from 06:00 to 24:00, Monday to Saturday, and 07:00 to 24:00 on Sundays. At other times UK-wide bulletins from Sky News were broadcast.

Daytime and weekend bulletins are 4 minutes in duration, reducing to 3 minutes from 22:00. Weekday bulletins include extended news at 07:00 and 08:00 (6 minutes), 13:00 and 17:00 (10 minutes) and up to 25 minutes at 18:00. Breakfast programming also included a headline service.

Local stories were very much in evidence and covered in some depth. Examples include: a man's dismembered body found in East Belfast - this story was updated as more details became known; USPCA report increase in dog fighting and seize over 200 pit bulls in various raids; a crash involving three vehicles in North Belfast causes serious injuries; a woman from West Belfast dies on holiday in Tunisia; Germany seeks extradition of Roisin McAliskey on terrorist charges; a 6 year-old girl mauled by

two rottweiler dogs on a farm; large cocaine seizure, man charged; boys in Belfast improve their grades – latest GCSE statistics; report on attempted abduction of two men in County Down and local drug rehabilitation centre to close despite objections from various affiliated agencies.

Music

The station blends a mix of genres and artists and had a distinctly older sound. The diverse range of tracks across daytime included the following artists: Andy Williams; Dean Martin; Free; Pretenders; Pet Shop Boys; Keane; Manfred Mann; Mamas & Papas; Byrds; Eagles; Sam Cooke; Marvin Gaye; Jack Johnson; Beatles; Eric Clapton; Cliff Richard; Duran Duran; The Kinks; Flock of Seagulls; Snow Patrol; Nelly Furtado; Simply Red; Frank Sinatra; Robert Palmer; Men at Work; Michael Nesmith; Huey Lewis; Billy Joel; Steely Dan; Aztec Camera; Doobie Bros; Beautiful South; Carole King; Small Faces; Dexy's Midnight Runners; Union Gap; O'Jays; Dusty Springfield; Police and Cher. Tracks by Irish artists were also in evidence: Van Morrison; Boomtown Rats; The Commitments; U2; Feargal Sharkey; Thin Lizzy; Kieran Goss and Tara Blaise.

The station's Format also requires specialist provision and this is in evidence across evening programming. During this sampling period we noted that the 'Rock' programme had a heavy metal emphasis and included an interview with local band 'Sorrowful' and showcased some of their music from an upcoming album. Other artists included; Alice Cooper; Nirvana; Jeff Scott Soto; Pat Travers; Snakebite and Led Zeppelin.

Mondays	19:00-21:00	Classic Country
Tuesdays	19:00-21:00	Stage and Screen
Wednesdays	19:00-21:00	Rock
Thursdays	19:00-21:00	Soul
Fridays	19:00-21:00	New Country and Irish
Sundays	07:00-10:00	Christian mixed with secular (roughly 50/50)
Sundays	18:00-20:00	Irish produced
Sundays	20:00-22:30	Nostalgia (40's-early 60's)

In addition, Saturday evening programming from 18:00-22:00 showcases 70s/80s disco music, which included artists such as Shalamar; Detroit Spinners; Ashford & Simpson; Barry White; Billy Ocean; Average White Band; Frantic and Pointer Sisters.

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.