

CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station : XFM Manchester 97.7

Dates Sampled : 19, 20, 22, 23 November 2006

Station Character of Service :

XFM WILL PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE MUSIC FORMAT FOR 15-34 YEAR OLDS IN THE MANCHESTER AREA. PLAYING GENERALLY GUITAR-LED , QUALITY MODERN AND CLASSIC 'MUSIC WITH ATTITUDE' CREATED BY ARTISTS WHO CHALLENGE THE MAINSTREAM POP AESTHETICS.

Station Format Detail :

Artists featured will generally be alternative, credible, youthful and committed to challenging the aesthetics of mainstream pop music. Alternative genres will include: Alternative Rock, Modern Alternative, Britpop and Pop Rock.

The output will be guided by these principles, rather than by chart success – past or present - and so will rarely have significant overlap with other local radio stations, though these artists may occasionally enjoy chart success over the lifetime of the licence in line with fluctuations in popular tastes.

Daytime output will consist of at least 70% current and recurrent alternative tracks with the balance being 'classic rock and indie tracks,' defined as classic alternative and heritage rock tracks that have inspired alternative acts. 45 hours per week of specialist shows will showcase the fringes of alternative music and reflect the diverse tastes of music fans in Manchester, such as dance-rock, underground hip hop and electronica.

All aspects of XFM's output, contemporary and classic, general and specialist, will feature artists from Manchester and the surrounding area prominently. Many tracks will be selected by local listeners via requests, including dedicated request programming of at least two hours per day.

Daily programming (hourly during daytime) will contain local listings for live music and other cultural events, music news and news containing a mixture of international, national and local reports in line with the tastes of the audience. Weekly output will include at least three 'live' sessions (each at least 15 minutes) and at least three unsigned artists.

Comedy is a key interest to the target audience; XFM will accordingly broadcast specialist comedy shows and seek to include comedy elements within general programming where appropriate.

Format Obligations : Pre-sampling observations ...

XFM Manchester came on air in March 2006 and has a well-defined musical obligation to provide credible contemporary music, at least three live sessions per week, and specialist programming (45 hours a week) which should complement the main mix.

The service should provide hourly news during daytime that includes a mixture of topical news together with music news and other cultural events of interest to the target audience.

Comedy is a key interest to the target audience and therefore comedy elements should be contained within general programming where appropriate.

Localness and General Format Findings (excluding news)

Weekday programming included regular 'gig guide' listings and general information about upcoming concerts. The release of the new Oasis album '*Stop the Clocks*' generated a good deal of discussion and listeners were asked to identify their favourite track. There were sound bites from those queuing outside record stores, explaining their eagerness to buy a 'best of' collection.

There were regular awareness features, entitled '*Staying Safe*' produced in conjunction with the Greater Manchester Police, targeting the student community and giving advice on how to avoid being victims of crime.

Regular weather, traffic and travel were in evidence during breakfast and drivetime slots.

Promotions for '*Rock School*' were frequent. This feature encourages local bands to record and submit their interpretation of a cover version. These are subsequently featured during daytime output.

Live sessions are included within Clint Boon's '*Music Response*' evening programme, Guy Garvey's *Payola*, and '*Xposure*' with John Kennedy. During this sampling period, there were contributions from established artists as well as unsigned bands: *Damien Rice*; *Air Traffic*; *The Early Years*; *Tunng*; *Sunday International*; *Little Neemo* and *The Reason*. There was also a one-hour set recorded for the station by *Muse* which was broadcast on Monday evening from midnight to 1am.

Presenters such as Clint Boon (from Inspiral Carpets) and Andy Rourke (ex-bass player of The Smiths) provide knowledgeable and enthusiastic input for the music played.

Listeners are encouraged to submit their dedications and requests, and this inclusive aspect of the station's programming is presented as an integral part of the station sound.

During this sampling period, stand-up comedian Paul Tonkinson presented the breakfast show, and listener stories and experiences provided a further backdrop to the various comedy features peppered throughout the programme. Sunday morning programming included an appearance from stand-up comedian Gary Morris during the Michelle Mullane programme. He gave his wry observations on singing Christmas carols; James Bond films; body exfoliation and celebrity magazines.

News

News provision was on the hour, with headlines at peaktimes. The news bulletins contained hard-edged stories together with items of appeal to music aficionados. Stories covered included: Tony Blair's visit to Pakistan; Russian spy poisoned; Manchester gun gang jailed for smuggling offences; Cocaine use in UK highest in

Europe; Pete Docherty arrested; Futureheads dropped by record label; George Harrison's guitar sold for record amount. Weekend bulletins included comprehensive sports coverage.

Music

Daytime programming comprises current tracks featuring bands such as: *Kasabian; Fratellis; Keane; Kooks; Razorlight; Arctic Monkeys; Richard Ashcroft; Oasis; The Feeling; Embrace; Albert Hammond Jnr; Zutons and Snow Patrol*. Classic rock and indie tracks were represented by tracks from *Inspiral Carpets; Suede; Depeche Mode; The Jam; Joy Division; Echo and the Bunnymen; Stone Roses; Happy Mondays; David Bowie; Talking Heads; Smiths; AC/DC; Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix*. Both current and heritage tracks strongly feature Manchester bands.

45 hours of specialist programming across the week includes various strands of alternative music: Indie classics and anthems; electronica; indie disco; Northern and Basement Soul. X-Posure is broadcast live from London. Import/Export is pre-recorded and co-presented from London and the K-Rock studios in New York.

Content Sampling Conclusion:

Speech programming reflects the interests of the target audience with regular gig guides and information, together with the opportunity to win concert tickets.

The news service delivers locally-produced bulletins with actuality during daytime, and a headline service at breakfast/drivetime. Music news is incorporated alongside topical stories.

Daytime music provides a distinctive contemporary mix with a sprinkling of heritage tracks that draws on the wealth of Manchester's music scene. There is a commitment to live sessions and showcasing unsigned bands. Manchester's thriving music scene is well represented. Specialist programmes exploring various genres are evident across the week.

The station's Public File is accessible on its website and gives a comprehensive explanation of the station's obligations.

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.