

## OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station : BRMB

Dates Sampled : Sunday 20 September, Monday 21 September and Tuesday 22 September 2009.

### CONTENT SAMPLING FINDING

This station was monitored as part of Ofcom's routine sampling procedure. We were conscious that the station had not long been in the hands of its new owners and were prepared for a 'settling in' feel, although it transpired that was not much in evidence.

The station output is clearly targeted directly at 25 to 34's and is very chart and pre-chart oriented to appeal to younger listeners, too, and therefore comfortably fits the music remit within its Format.

Other programming is developing with a clear regional and local perspective and a desire to both 'belong to' and 'own' the Birmingham radio landscape, with local programmes around the clock. (The Format requires at least ten hours). We were also aware that programmes will be developed and adjusted by the new owners, Orion, so the schedule we heard may not be the schedule for the future.

The inserts, features, 'specials', competitions and interactivity – along with the hourly local news and its ties with extra detail on the station website - lead us to conclude the station is operating within its Format.

### BRMB Character of Service

**A LOCALLY ORIENTED CONTEMPORARY AND CHART MUSIC AND INFORMATION STATION FOR UNDER 44s IN THE BIRMINGHAM AREA**

### Format Obligations: Pre-Sampling observations :

BRMB is the heritage station for the Birmingham area, having launched as part of the first group of commercial stations licensed to operate outside London in 1974.

It is a CHR station operating in a busy West Midlands market-place alongside its sister station, Gold, licensed to appeal to a slightly older audience, and other stations including easy-listening Smooth Radio and Adult Contemporary station Heart and dance station Galaxy.

BRMB was recently purchased by Orion Media, along with other Midlands stations, so at the time of monitoring some programme changes were still to bed in, and some staff recruitment still being carried out.

The Public File has been amended to reflect the new direction and 'feel' of the station.

#### General Format Findings (excluding news) and music :

The Sunday monitoring captured the last two hours of the specialist "Dance Anthems" programme (although the schedule was being scrutinised during the period). This featured artists such as Mr Hudson, Empire of the Sun and Kid Cudi.

General music output was heavily contemporary and very chart-oriented, reflecting its Format demands precisely and in line with its branding of "Birmingham's Hit Music Station". Core artists included Shakira, Lady Gaga, Beyonce and Mika. Programming also highlighted the station's debut play of the Stereophonics' latest single, with interview. Tracks such as Travis' 'Why Does it Always Rain on Me?' also feature at times, but very much as 'spice' to the main chart-based and pre-chart offerings.

Sunday's breakfast and morning was dominated by music and showbiz and competition plugs, but with local touchstones such as local dedications and birthdays and local events guides like the Style in the City celebrations as well as linking the tracks played with local Birmingham performances, such as that from Beyonce, and inviting and reading local text messages. The station takes the Big Top 40 Show for its three-hour run on Sunday afternoon. There were particular motorway problems on the Sunday which were also highlighted with updates outside the formal half-hour reports, sourced directly from the Regional Highways Agency.

There were also cross-promotions for sister station Gold and its specialist programmes, such as the evening sports round-up.

The station also presents 'one-off specials' which included, during the monitored period, a "Peter Andre Takeover" programme. This ran, pre-recorded, for an hour on the Monday evening. Such 'specials' as this, and of a recent Sugarbabes 'Takeover' programme, feature in the BRMB Listen Again web facility which is promoted on air.

Weekday programming at breakfast was typically slightly heavier on speech and showbiz with its double (and sometimes treble) -headed presentation. Its local emphasis was created through items such as the BRMB Phone Tap (wind-up call), local competitions and involvement with debates like 'putting your foot in it' which, while not specifically locally-based, create local involvement with listener call-ins.

Daytime programming continued in a similar manner with regional and local references (for instance, the Top Ten at Ten, a guess-the-year hour, gave away tickets for a city-based exhibition) along with set items such as weather and travel. The late-night programme, from 10pm to 1am, was a mixture of phone-in, text-in and music with interactivity from across the region.

### News :

Weekend news, as would be expected, heavily featured sport coverage, with a concentration on local football clubs, Birmingham, Aston Villa, West Bromwich Albion and Wolves. Much of the coverage featured studio quality (as opposed to 'phone quality) interviews with players and managers, which were used within news bulletins.

Local news featured in all locally-read weekend morning bulletins and was refreshed regularly, with audio alternatives. In addition, bulletins cross-referenced with the BRMB website news section which carried a busy schedule of news stories from across the region which did not necessarily get featured in the on-air bulletins. These included reports from local 'pet' farms in the light of the swine flu outbreak.

Weekday news through daytime also heavily cross-promoted the website Birmingham region news section in its local coverage. Again, many stories, such as education standards and school results in the west midlands, were followed through with studio quality audio inserts and refreshed regularly.

Other major stories covered on air included a court case following a local stabbing, a charity walk through the city, local by-election fraud allegations, Birmingham visitor initiatives, interviews with Birmingham students on grants, a shooting at a local club, Birmingham tax refund problems, and police action following fighting at a Birmingham derby. Most were accompanied by interviews or voiced reports or both.

## **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/ffi/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.*

*MC Oct 09*