

## OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station : U105

Dates Sampled : Friday 18 September, Sunday 20 September, Monday 21 September and Tuesday 22 September 2009.

### CONTENT SAMPLING FINDING

**U105 is a broad music station with a particular remit for personality-led programming and information for over 45s.**

**The programming is undoubtedly personality-led, with listener interactivity taking a high profile. The music encapsulates tracks from the fifties and sixties to today's charts, and in addition the station runs a number of specialist programmes, such as country, rock and sixties.**

**Its news output is both prolific and fresh and includes a number of extended bulletins. (The Live at Six news is 25 minutes long and locally-biased.)**

**The 'feel' for Belfast and the surrounding area is at the heart of the programming output, and the station is operating within its Format.**

### U105 Character of Service

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

### Format Obligations: Pre-Sampling observations :

U105 has been on the air for four years. When U105 was awarded its Belfast licence (held by UTV), Downtown Radio, Cool FM and CityBeat were already established in the area, and U105's remit was to compliment those services.

Catering for over 45s would clearly require a reasonably broad range of music, and the Format also highlights the station's requirement for "highly local", personality-led programming.

The minimum requirement regarding locally-made hours during weekdays is ten, although the Public file, which details operation of the station reveals that the station is local 24 hours a day seven days a week. Its size (MCA population) is almost 604,000.

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

The early Sunday programme, Sunday Sunrise, combined music with an array of features, all with regional perspective, including book reviews, religious news, counselling, a 'word for today', a newspaper review, a look back at the week's news, and a competition to win tickets for the Grand Opera House. There was also a high level of listener activity, reacting to guests, topics, and music as well as competitions.

This was followed by a programme with sixties specialist themes, phone-in competitions, and a section when listeners chose the music with requests, allowing considerable local references and relevance.

The afternoon show represented an alternative to the syndicated chart show, featuring two classic charts in Not the Top 40, along with news snippets and comment.

Weekday programming also featured dedications and requests from listeners with their locations or workplaces mentioned, along with competitions such as the interactive "Think Link" and birthday spots. Gig guides and whats-on were spread through programmes as well as having their own guest-based slots to talk about concerts and events in the city.

As well as competitions most programmes carried feature-length pieces from guess-the-film-clip to Juke Box Jury in which new releases are aired. In addition to specialist programmes, presenters frequently referred to specialist music clubs that would be of particular interest.

The music was a broad range and did, as required by the Format, cover from the sixties (and sometimes earlier) to the present day with such artists as Bruce Springsteen, Blondie, Queen, Van Morrison, Simple Minds, Mika and Duke Special covering the remit. There was little repetition. (In one programme the 'demo' recording for Marrakesh Express was aired)

### News :

U105 runs local news from 6am to midnight every day apart from Sunday when the first local bulletin is at 7am.

All daytime bulletins are at least four minutes long and the station runs extended bulletins of six minutes at 7am and 8am, ten minutes at 5pm and runs a 25 minute news special at 6pm.

On the days monitored the news schedule was heavy. Stories were both refreshed and updated regularly .. and website back-up was also available for listeners.

News turn-around appeared fast, as the first bulletins on Sunday contained details of two serious crashes early that morning. Other major stories involved

a third night of street trouble and car-jacking in Co Armagh, local halls being entered and vandalised, a Crumlin Road robbery and the RAF withdrawing from Co Antrim.

Bulletins were re-written and changed appropriately through the course of the day. In addition there was much coverage of local sport with bulletins through the day, including reports on the Belfast Giants (ice hockey).

Weekday bulletins – with half-hour headlines - covered local stories in depth. For instance a search for the body of man missing in a river in North Antrim carried studio quality interviews with friends and relatives and emergency services. Stories on local robberies and the discovery of a device in South Belfast also carried locally-made interviews.

The extended bulletins, Live at Six, provided a big platform for a news round-up and for 'specials'. The Tuesday 'special' included a focus on Matt Baggott, the new Chief Constable of the Police Service of N.I., involving interviews, backgrounders and think-pieces. There was also an in-depth report on health union and hospital issues in Belfast.

All local bulletins monitored contained a majority of local stories over UK-wide reports.

## **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.*

MC Oct 09