

Anthony Prime

Peter,

No doubt many others will have written regarding the point I'm about to make, but I think it's important enough for me to contribute directly.

I probably listen to a more than average amount of radio, and find the sound quality currently offered by the majority of stations transmitting on DAB to be substandard.

I fully accept that DAB is designed to allow a trade off of quality versus capacity and in principle I wouldn't disagree that the market should decide how that balance should be arrived at, but as in other media markets I would expect certain basic quality standards to be set, be they editorial, technical, or (in the case of music stations) playlist formats.

Unfortunately the BBC having insufficient capacity to deliver their full suite of stations at acceptable bit rates (circa 160kbps or ideally 192kbps) has allowed the industry overall to set an informal standard that produces a large mix of stations but, frankly, compressed into bandwidth that delivers an unacceptable audio quality that often compares unfavourably to FM transmissions. Given this I'm alarmed that there are now proposals to further cut bit-rates. Ultimately DAB should replace FM and AM transmissions, but I don't believe that the current drivers within the industry (and seemingly within Ofcom) take the idea of quality sufficiently seriously to ever allow this to happen.

I would strongly recommend that the BBC should be guaranteed space within newly created capacity to deliver their services at 192kbps (perhaps allowing the world service to operate at 96kbps mono). The commercial market I would suggest can be left to deliver at the rates they feel best suit their listeners. One of two things will happen as a result of this situation, audiences will either rise or fall and bit rates will flex accordingly, but the benchmark technical quality will be delivered by the BBC to demonstrate the capability of the DAB system to users and raise awareness of the poor quality transmissions currently being offered.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Anthony Prime