

OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station: Palm FM (Torbay)

Dates Sampled: Tuesday July 3, Wednesday July 4, and Saturday 7 July 2007

CONTENT SAMPLING FINDING

Palm FM's speech minimum (30% daytime and 10% non-daytime) is achieved through news, traffic and travel updates, general presenter discussion, what's on items, listener participation and community information.

The quota requiring 18 hours of live and locally-produced programming is also being met.

Daytime news provision is on the hour and exhibited a good mix of local, national and international stories. Two extended news bulletins per day (15 minutes at lunchtime and a 30 minute magazine programme at 18.00) explore local news items in more detail.

Palm FM's music meets the requirement in its Format for variety and low repetition. The music policy overall has a generally 'older' feel, with tracks released after 1999 not accounting for more than 25% of music output. During the late show (weekday evenings 21.00-00.00) the music was noticeably more eclectic and broader in scope, including some album tracks in the mix.

This station is operating within its format

Palm FM Character of Service

A full local service dedicated to listeners in Torbay combining a wide variety of classic and contemporary music together with high-quality, locally-produced news, detailed weather reports, comprehensive traffic & travel and a distinctive range of speech and information features focussed on matters of local interest and relevance.

Palm FM Format Detail

Palm FM will play a wide variety of classic and contemporary tracks from the last forty-five years with no era dominating and relatively low repetition (current material appearing no more than three times daily; other material not usually more than once in every two days). Tracks released after 1999 (including current and recurrent material) will not account for more than 25% of the output. A range of specialised and thematic music-based programmes of appeal to specific groups within the wider population will be broadcast on weekday evenings and at weekends.

Speech is an essential element and will account for around 30% of daytime output and at least 10% in non-daytime. Locally-produced news bulletins, combining local, national and international stories, will be broadcast at least hourly from 0600 to 1900 on weekdays and from 0700 to 1300 at weekends, with additional headlines, sport and extended news segments during daytime as appropriate. At other times externally-sourced news bulletins will be broadcast hourly. On weekdays, an extended lunchtime bulletin of around 15 mins. duration, and a locally-focussed evening news magazine programme will be broadcast. A weekly round-up of news and features interspersed with music will be broadcast at the weekend.

Other speech will include weather, local traffic & travel, "what's ons", community information, guest interviews and discussion, listener participation and other items with local focus relevant to Torbay. The service will be live for at least 18hrs daily.

Format Obligations: Pre-sampling observations

Palm FM was awarded the local commercial radio licence for Torbay in September 2005, and began broadcasting in May 2006.

The station's Format requires it to provide a service for the Torbay and the surrounding area, providing speech content that has a predominantly local focus alongside a wide variety of music. The station has an unusually high requirement to broadcast live (as well as locally-made) programming for 18 hours per day.

Localness and General Format Findings (excluding news)

Outside of formal news bulletins, a large proportion of Palm's speech content was in the form of listener participation, often through competitions such as "guess what's in the shopping bag" and the locally-themed "I can see....where am I standing".

The station's Format requires "guest interviews and discussions", and on one of the sampling days 'Miss Torbay' was interviewed about a local beauty contest.

Traffic and travel updates were included regularly throughout Palm's schedule. As part of the 'Jamline' feature, members of the public rang the station to broadcast breaking traffic news.

Other local material we heard during the sampling period included regular 'what's on' updates, and 'Crimesdesk', featuring a community police officer offering security advice.

News

Locally-produced bulletins mixing local, national and international stories were aired on an hourly basis from 06:00 to 19:00 on weekdays, and 07.00-13.00 at weekends. Bulletins, typically, lasted four to five minutes, with an extended 15 minute bulletin at weekday lunchtimes and a locally-focussed half-hour news magazine programme broadcast weekdays at 18.00.

Local stories averaged around three per news bulletin. Examples during the monitoring period included the 'Bookmark challenge', awarded to Torbay children by local libraries in recognition of completing reading tasks; an initiative to encourage children to grow vegetables in an allotment for local zoo animals; a man who had disappeared off the Devonshire coastline; a hot air balloon given approval by Torbay council to be flown on the beach promenade; and a drug addict who was spared jail following an incident in Paignton with a supermarket duty manager.

Outside of daytime, externally-produced national and international news bulletins were broadcast at hourly intervals.

Music

Palm FM's Format requires "a wide variety of classic and contemporary tracks from the last 45 years" with no era dominating and a requirement for relatively low levels of rotation. There is also a 25% cap on tracks released after 1999.

On the days monitored the station's music output was compliant with these parameters, with a wide variety of different music genres being aired, drawn from

several decades. Artists heard during the monitoring period included Bob Dylan, Manfred Mann, Blondie, The Osmonds, Jamelia, Bon Jovi, Wham!, Rod Stewart, Phats and Small, Elton Jon, Fleetwood Mac, The Everly Brothers, Maroon 5, Cliff Richard, The Brand New Heavies, U2, Avril Lavigne, Bananarama, The Beatles, Cat Stevens, Barry White, Earth Wind & Fire, Paulo Nutini, Bruce Springsteen, INXS and The Kinks.

The station's Format also requires specialist or thematic music-based programmes to be broadcast on weekday evenings and weekends. At weekends, this requirement is being met through programmes such as 'The Saturday Dance Party' and the eclectic 'Strawberry Fields' on Sunday afternoons. While there were no clearly-branded specialist music shows broadcast on Palm during the week, we nevertheless felt that CJ Monroe's adult-album oriented late show (21.00-00.00) was sufficiently distinct from the station's daytime music output to be considered thematic, with a host of album and adult alternative tracks included such as Bruce Springsteen/*Devils and Dust*, Jimi Hendrix/*Burning of the Midnight Lamp*, Todd Rundgren/*I Saw The Light*, Lou Reed/*Satellite of Love* and Bob Seger/*Night Moves*.

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.