

**Department for Culture, Media & Sport:
BBC Digital Services Review**

Digital radio services (Tim Gardam)

Response from Friends of Radio 3 (FoR3) on the digital radio music services

Friends of Radio 3 (FoR3) is concerned that, despite the fact that new digital radio music services have been introduced (in particular, the ‘sister’ stations to Radio 1 and Radio 2, **1Xtra** and **6 Music**), Radio 3’s serious classical output has been progressively reduced to make way for a range of light, popular and specialist musics, all either removed from, duplicating or of a similar type to those on Radios 1 and 2.

We consider the remits adopted for the new digital music networks are pertinent in two respects:

1) they are centred on contemporary popular music at a time when – as BBC management has pointed out to us – an interest in developing genres (e.g. world, roots, film music, crossover) is expanding:

[It appears that **6 Music**’s remit in particular (designed, so we have been told by the BBC Director, Music and Radio, Jenny Abramsky, to cater for ‘fans of the popular music of the 70s, 80s and 90s’), is very restricted, especially considering that Radio 2 is, if anything, overloaded with the range of its popular, ‘adult pop’ and specialist coverage. We observe that **6 Music**’s listening figures have, to date, been poor, the reach last quarter less than half that of the Asian Network, and also significantly less than **1Xtra**’s.]

*2) that the BBC appears to be wilfully disregarding the fact that the UK population is an ageing one: with Radio 1 already targeted on the under 25s, both **1Xtra** and **6 Music** aim to cater for the musical tastes of the younger end of the age spectrum (**1Xtra** similar to that of Radio 1, **6 Music**, seemingly, up to the mid 40s or so):*

[The Radio 2 audience for specialist musics such as jazz, country, folk, roots, blues, as well as that for light classics, tends to be, like the Radio 3 audience for classical music, of an older age group than that for pop.]

Friends of Radio 3 questions the necessity for a Public Service Broadcaster to provide round-the-clock popular music on three separate stations (Radio 1, **1Xtra** and **6 Music**), as well as filling much of a fourth (Radio 2) when a number of serious musical tastes are now competing for airtime (thus affecting the output of Radio 3 which must, so we are told, ‘reflect current trends’).

Since there are no plans for a cultural digital radio service to mirror that of Radio 3, it seems not unreasonable to expect the BBC to devote its single ‘high culture’ station to seriously treated classical and associated musics and to high quality arts programming; and to contain its coverage of popular/lighter/alternative music on Radio 1 – **1Xtra** – Radio 2 – **6 Music**, where, with the new digital services, there is now double the airtime compared with five years ago. Instead, anything rated remotely ‘serious’ is now covered on Radio 3 while all the new digital airtime plays pop music.

For Friends of Radio 3 (www.for3.org)

Dr Sarah Spilsbury

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