[GB] British Radio Authority Imposes Fine and Shortens Licence After Attempt to Deceive it

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The British Radio Authority announced on 6 September 1999 that it has fined Oxygen FM (Oxford) Pound Sterling 20,000 and shortened its eight-year licence by two years. The station is targeted at students and is staffed by volunteers, mainly students. This may go some way to explain the events which had occurred. A complainant had alleged that Oxygen had breached the programme format in its licence which required it to include debate, discussion and science and arts programmes. To investigate this, the Authority asked for tapes of the output on 1 March; tapes must be retained for 42 days. To avoid submitting the tapes for that day, Oxygen broadcast a day's output during the 8 of March which pretended to be that of 1 March; the output included repeated references to this being the first day of the month and did include discussion and debate programmes, with trailers for similar forthcoming programmes. Tapes of 8 March output were sent to the Authority labelled as those for 1 March. Unfortunately for the broadcaster, the news broadcasts referred to events which had occurred on the 7 and 8 March including the deaths of Stanley Kubrick and Joe DiMaggio. On discovering the deception, the Authority required the output for 8 March; the broadcaster then sent the output for 15 March labelled as that of 8 March. The Authority then collected tapes for the entire week only to find that none of the 21 tapes supplied contained broadcasts of the week in question.

As a result the Authority decided that Oxygen had `shown shocking disrespect for its listeners as part of an attempt to deceive its regulator' and imposed the penalties referred to above using its powers under the Broadcasting Act 1990 .

Radio Authority News Release 128/99, 6 September 1999.

"A Pinch and a Punch - and a £20,000 fine", The Guardian, 7 September 1999.

http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,3899363,00.html

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