

"THERE IS NO  
SECURITY ON THIS  
EARTH, THERE IS  
ONLY OPPORTUNITY"

GENERAL DOUGLAS  
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## Virgin Radio Italy - success for Italy's newest national radio station

In the early part of 2007, Alberto Hazan, owner of the national stations; 105 and Radio Monte Carlo networks made plans for a radical change of format for *Play Radio* in Italy. With a National licence, *Play Radio* should have been in a strong position to develop a sizeable audience, however despite significant efforts the station was not able to generate significant listening across the country.

The basis of the strategy driving a change of format for *Play Radio* was to find an opportunity for the station that was both unique and appealing – not easy given the traditional dominance of personality radio like *Radio DeeJay* and the heritage of the Government's *Rai Networks*. Finding an opportunity for a new format is never easy but its made even more difficult when there is no real heritage for rock music based radio in the country.

Initial research showed that there was some support for a range of rock music options, contemporary music listeners liked current rock-leaning music – both rock-pop and the more crossover versions of pop-rock. This was interesting, however not really unique as this music was featured on most of the contemporary stations including the market leading stations.

*"finding an opportunity for a new format is  
never easy"*

At the other end of the scale, classic (60's) rock also had some support – but this was not necessarily from those who liked contemporary music. The crossover point revolved around a core of 80's and 90's music.

80's/90's music had gained familiarity through pop exposure however the mainstream artists were also those who had become famous as rock acts and still retained rock credibility with both older and newer

material. Examples included U2, REM and Italian artist Vasco Rossi.

As a result of this research Alberto Hazan negotiated to bring the Virgin Radio brand to Italy.

### A NEW SOUND

Virgin Radio Italy launched in July 2007 and in a further attempt to differentiate itself from its competitors, the station launched with no DJ's. Now almost nine months later the station

remains the only station that only plays music without DJ chat. It is also the only station in Italy that plays rock music exclusively.

In order to define a Rock format which was in keeping with an Italian lifestyle, Alberto Hazan defined the format as '*Style Rock*'. Virgin Radio Italia is also a station that embraces the lifestyle of its target audience in a way that brings rock, contemporary living and fashion together.

Do you have some news, a tip, suggestion or question?

Email [wayne.clouten@bprworld.com](mailto:wayne.clouten@bprworld.com)

### THE RESULT

Initial listening results published earlier in March this year show that Virgin's rock format has found a substantial audience of 1.6 million listeners per day or 3.393 million listeners per week. Virgin Radio Italy has already passed some of its National competitors and is looking for further growth as the station becomes better known among listeners who like rock music.

Commenting on these initial survey figures, Alberto Hazan said...

*"this is a great start for Virgin which is both a new format and a new brand in the Italian market. This station plays a mix of rock music that is defined by our listeners and uniquely tailored to the tastes of Italian rock music listeners. Virgin Radio doesn't broadcast extreme rock but a mix of old and new enjoyable rock....our claim "Style Rock" has helped us tremendously in making Italian listeners immediately understand what our music is about"*



### RESEARCH INSIGHT

As mentioned earlier in this story, the initial market research conducted by BP&R showed that there was interest in rock music amongst a reasonably large section of radio listeners but without any clear existing offering in the marketplace, these listeners with a preference for rock were scattered among a range of formats (stations) and many are still unaware of the fact that there is a new station that specialises in delivering their favourite style of music (rock).



Tracking the awareness of the market is the first critical stage in the launch and growth of the station. The second step is monitoring both listening conversion to Virgin Italy and listener satisfaction with the station's music. An on-going commitment to conducting regular strategic research studies of the station and the market place will ensure that Virgin Italy remains focussed on its target audience and aware of its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.

### INNOVATION

Keeping a station without regular DJ presentation requires both innovative and entertaining production, as well as features that enhance the Virgin listening experience. Some of those features and their presenters are covered later in this story.

The Web plays an essential part of the listening partnership for Virgin listeners in Italy. In addition to a database (Virgin Club) the station has both live streaming and a selection of more specialised music choices in the form of 3 branded niche rock formats.

### MARKETING

As with all new brands, the first job is to generate awareness and clarity in positioning. Virgin radio is simply focussed on communicating the message that Virgin Radio is a new station that plays Rock music.

Usage of external media has been mainly focussed on outdoor, with significant exposure in the major cities of Italy. Not unexpectedly performance is best in the home market of Milan (Lombardy region).



### Virgin Radio Music Features:



#### Music History– hosted by Paola Maugeri.

The greatest rock songs, their beginnings, the bands and the characters that made the story is told in music in the show presented by Paola Maugeri. This show is also available through podcast download.



#### Rock in Translation.

Whether in Italian or in English, music is made of notes, but rock is, above all words. Mammuth interprets the words of famous rock songs, creating a canvas of colourful words and music, which becomes 'Rock in translation'



#### Rock Party– hosted by Ringo.

Ringo is the Artistic Director of Virgin who also presents two hours of rock chosen by Virgin Radio, this is a true rock party at home for a non-stop fun!. Rock Party is aired late on Saturday nights and later that the following week on Friday nights.

**A TASTE OF VIRGIN ITALY**

Chris Cornell / You Know My Name	2006
Police / King Of Pain	1983
Hoosiers / Worried About Ray	2007
Classic	
10CC / I'm Not In Love	1975
U2 / Beautiful Day	2000
Raveonettes / That Great Love Sound	2003
Smash Mouth / Walkin' On The Sun	1997
Stereophonics / My Friends	2007
Bad English / When I see You Smile	1989
Rooney / Blueside	2003
Dead 60's / Riot Radio	2005
Classic	
Peter Frampton / Show Me The Way	1976
Bruce Springsteen / Girls In Their Summer Clothes	2007
Fastball / The Way	1998
Linkin Park / Numb	2003
Hard-Fi / Suburban Knight'S	2007
Talking Heads / Once In A Life Time	1980
Daughtry / It'S Not Over	2007
Classic	
Jethro Tull / Locomotive Breath	1971
Coral / In The Morning	2005
Velvet Revolver / The Last Fight	2007
Ash / Goldfinger	1996
Muse / Starlight	2006
Tears For Fears / Head Over Heels	1985
Foo Fighters / Baker Street	1998
Reverend And The Makers / Heavyweight Champion Of The World	2007
Classic	
Stealers Wheel / Stuck In The Middle With You	1973
Fall Out Boy / I'M Like A Lawyer With The Way I'M Always Trying To Get You Off (Me + You)	2007
Fun Lovin' Criminals / We Have All The Time In The World	1996
Negramaro / Mentre Tutto Scorre	2005

**VIRGIN RADIO – WEBRADIO**

Together with a new FM transmission and live streaming for web-users, Virgin Radio also has a brand new web Radio suite. Choices include:

**VIRGIN CLASSIC ROCK**

'VIRGIN Rock Classic is on-line 24 hours 7 days a week. Core artists include Queen, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Doors, Nirvana, Deep Purple, Who, Aerosmith, Rolling Stones and Metallica:

VIRGIN Rock Classic focuses on the stars and the super bands including the British and international icons that have written the history of rock. These are the timeless Hits from great pioneers with their immortal songs.

*"It's only rock and roll, but I like it ."*

**VIRGIN ALTERNATIVE**

Alternative Rock is dedicated to the most fashionable artists of the world music scene. Including; Interpol, The Gossip, Art Brut, Wombats, The Go! Team, Get Up Kids, My Bloody Valentine together with indie rock icons like Bjork and Soulwax.

**VIRGIN EXTREME ROCK**

VIRGIN Extreme Rock, includes music by; System Of A Down, Alter Bridge, Korn, NOFX, Metallica and Soundgarden among others ... Virgin Italy goes to the boundaries of Rock and beyond!



**The Virgin Chart – hosted by Music Director Marco Biondi.**

Marco plays the best and the most played, creating the 20 most popular songs on Virgin Radio in an exclusive ranking. Playing on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons this programme relies on the active participation of Virgin listeners to keep it both fresh and entertaining.

**BPR congratulates the entire Virgin radio team, especially:**

**Managing Director & Owner, Alberto Hazan**  
**Station Manager, Francesco Miglioizzi**  
**Artistic Director, Ringo**  
**Head Of Music, Marco Biondi,**  
**Responsabile Programmazione Musicale, Alex Benedetti.**

**You can visit the Virgin Italia site at:**

<http://www.virginradioitaly.it/home.html>