

Xtra. Bass.

(UK)(44)

LETITIA
The new voice of 1Xtra



Letitia: Not just another radio head. text ross patrick photography jennie baptiste

ONE YEAR AGO THE BBC LAUNCHED RADIO 1XTRA, a new urban station using fancy new digital broadcasting standards. Wisely, they hired fresh talent for the new microphones, amongst them the hypnotically vivacious Letitia, currently hosting their weekend morning shows. Her shows are like inviting a flirtatious and chatty friend into your home who delights you with her inside tales of the city.

Fresh from promoting drum and bass talent through her Makeda PR agency, she took her first dip on the airwaves with then mic sidekick, Chickaboo, on AMMO CITY's Internet radio. Their popular Makeda's Global Underground show, with chirpy girly banter and top tunes, strained the net casters' streaming budget.

Like many British kids, Letitia Scobie-Dalrymple grew up dreaming of radio DJ stardom. Although in rural Northamptonshire wasn't the best place to catch urban pirate radio, her ears were fed by the eclectic and enduring legend that is John Peel. Chatting to the listener like a granddad playing you jazz for the first time, Peel is still resident on Radio 1, and not just because he lost the hippy hair, said Letitia.

"He just sounded really cool, his way of broadcasting sounded like you were just having a chat with him and if you sent him good music he'd play it, simple!" Letitia ranks the day Peel first rang her, requesting a Makeda-represented tune, next to meeting fellow baldy LL Cool J. "My mum had always wondered why I couldn't get a proper job, she was in the room when John Peel rang; when she heard that, she practically fell over."

Like Peel, who once revealed that he had an STD on air, her style is far from conservative. Interviewed as a one-off for the "Sex Tips for Girls" show on Channel 4 television, she became a mainstay of the series.

"The format of my show is not just music, anyone who tunes in knows I like the banter" she said. "There's limits to what you can say on national radio, but it's all about having fun with wordplay, so when we were talking about the cheese with blue veins it might not be about food! I like to open up to my listeners and give a bit of myself, not hide just because I'm on radio rather than TV."

1Xtra is, of course, a show grounded with the listener, presented by people who just a year ago were turning the radio dial themselves. So how is she spending our BBC license fee? Letitia clearly hasn't left her PR instincts too far behind, "Simply, 1Xtra's here giving the kids what they want. When we're dead, these kids are coming up behind, they're paying the license or right now their parents are, so why shouldn't they get something back?" She enthused.

So finally, the BBC, through 1Xtra, is allowing urban music to be played by someone younger than my dad and with UK flavour. Letitia told me: "We got Dizzee Rascal's stuff and broke it on 1Xtra. Terri Walker, we supported her right across the board. At the time [1Xtra started], people said that there were pirate stations already doing what the BBC are doing, which is fine if you live in London, but as a national station 1Xtra takes these sounds beyond the M25, and is the only one that will play the up-and-coming artists, not just the ones the majors send in."

"This is the kind of radio where you don't have to wait until the graveyard shift at 2am to hear the kind of sound you want. We also have a big international audience, like this guy who lives in Gambia. 1Xtra has late night drum and bass on Friday nights through to Monday morning, so he and his mates got a laptop and hooked up some external speakers and raved all weekend. For people outside of the UK, 1Xtra is also giving them something that would otherwise be difficult to find except from certain select DJs in clubs. I really like a show called X Sounds [6-7 weekdays] where you can request music from around the world. There's no DJ, just the track and the dedication—you're listening to some tracks that haven't been heard for seven years—and some white labels that won't be released until next year. They really involve the listeners, which is what I really appreciate."

And the future? "I love it, it's been a year now, I expected it to change but it's one big happy family." She's becoming a voiceover veteran, and you might already recognise her voice from the new Virgin Atlantic commercial. She'd like to be a cartoon, but not in the sense that old radio DJ's were, and to make "loads of money, just so I'm not going down on bended knee," and enough to move to Bangkok. She says she'll be paying for one extra, too, the boyfriend.

Lucky man. ■

Letitia, that's her show, can be heard on Saturday's and Sundays, 9-12 (GMT) on www.bbc.co.uk/1xtra. UK listeners with digital TV can find her on 919 or freeview on 71.

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