



SIRS.FM

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The internet has revolutionised the way we work, shop, eat, and play. Everything is instantly available and accessible from the small, powerful computers most of us carry in our pocket every day: our mobile phones.

The way we access and listen to music has transformed too. From the traditional vinyl, tape and CD eras to the Napster and peer to peer (P2P) file-sharing days, to the once juggernaut iTunes. Now, with fast, reliable internet, online streaming is king. Services such as Spotify, Apple Music, and free internet radio stations cater for every musical taste.

Kerrie Meyer popped into the i'i shop to tell me about her recently launched non-profit, local internet radio station.

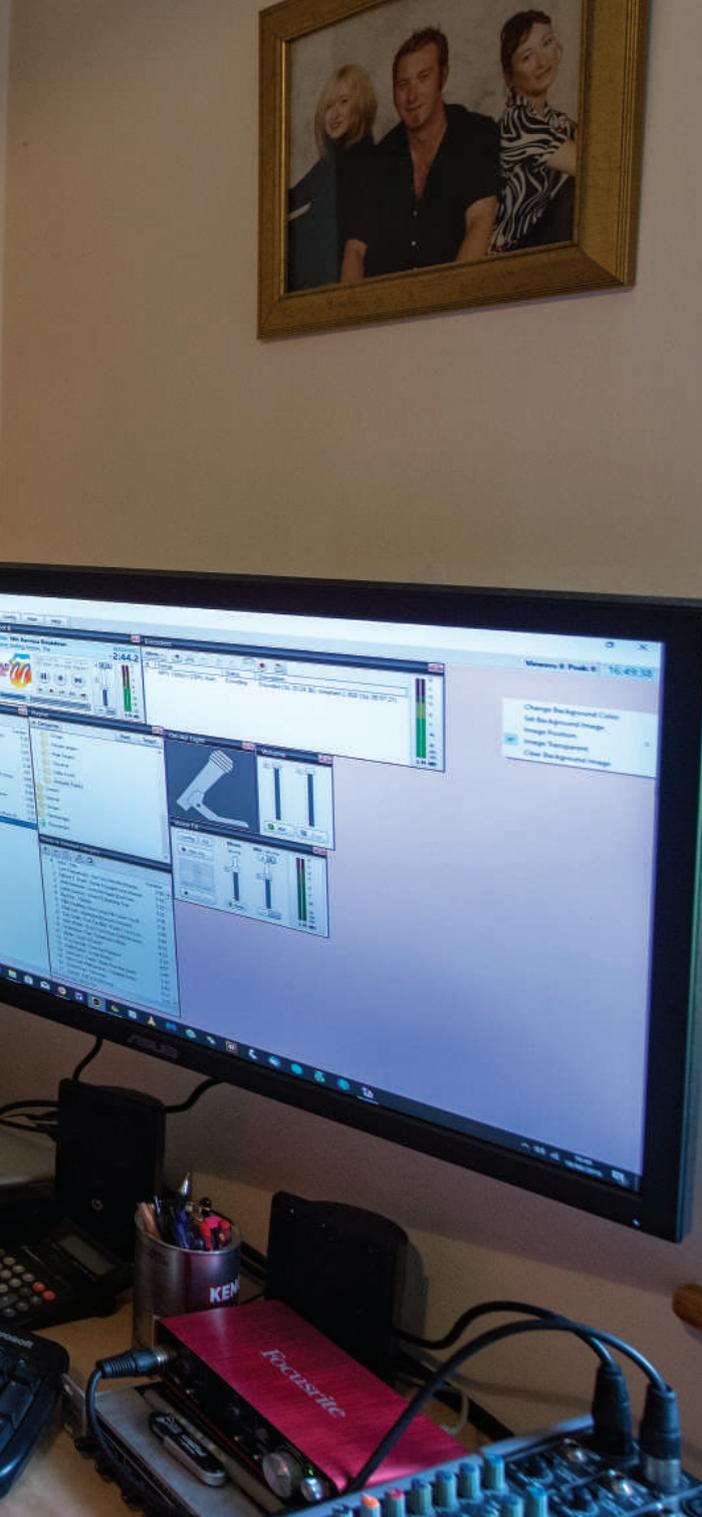
Shetland Internet Radio Station (SIRS.FM) has been gaining a lot of popularity since its inception earlier this year. The station webcasts free music from Dunrossness all over the world.

I reached for my web browser typed in SIRS.FM and tuned

in straight away. The early nineties pop classic "What is love" by Haddaway began playing, which instantly took me back to memories in my late teens. "I've got so many different genres of music from over 18,000 tracks," Kerrie told me. "I've probably got another 5,000 tracks that I haven't processed yet."

"The station is running 24/7 since I started SIRS.FM on the 22nd of April; there are a few little tweaks I've got to do to get advertisers on there." Advertising opportunities for businesses will also be available with free advertisements for small businesses and a small fee for large companies. Links to the business's website or Facebook page are prominent on SIRS.FM website. Any musicians who want to promote their own music Kerrie is happy to help, with a link available on the site to upload music.

Shetland Internet Radio Station is a non-profit venture and welcomes donations through the website. "The most significant



expenses were the PPL/PRS internet broadcast licences, a new fan-free PC and monitor and dedicated software that streams music tracks to a server via Icecast which Kerrie pays a fee for. There's a huge eclectic mix of music from the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s to the 2000s, including Shetland bands and folk music, Country, Celtic, Classical and Jazz - all separated into categories such as Classic Rock, Disco, Rap, Hip Hop, House, Garage, Indie, etc." Lots of donations have been received, with people sending in CDs that SIRS.FM converts into Mp3 format. "We even have our own unique jingles that folk just love!"

Kerrie plans to evolve the station to include regular live DJ spots, interviews in the studio and up to the minute Shetland news, events and weather. "I'm particularly keen to get Shetlanders with strong local accents." She is also happy to have interviews or podcasts sent in through the SIRS.FM website.

At 71 years 'young', Kerrie has a background in amateur radio having held a licence for the last 40 years. She also has experience in marketing and technology. "I've been designing websites since 1995 and naturally built SIRS.FM. Although I'm basically 'retired' I still occasionally design websites for local businesses via my old business Designerweb.net in Wordpress which allows the end-user complete control over the updating of their content," she explained.

Kerrie started a business following her arrival to Shetland eleven and a half years ago; I am sure many residents will be familiar with Islesat. "After seven years, I had installed satellite dishes and equipment in over 4,100 households out of the 11,000 homes in Shetland." This included scores of satellite broadband dishes throughout the island between 2012 and 2015 - when Kerrie finally sold the successful business and 'retired'.

I asked Kerrie what made her want to start a radio station. She had spoken to a lot of people about the music available in Shetland, which is limited by the radio stations accessed through traditional airwaves broadcast on the FM band. "The choice of radio and type of music offered is limited. However, there are over 80,000 internet radio stations worldwide." Kerrie explained how the explosion in consumer choice available online has impacted on traditional radio usage. "People aren't listening to the airwaves as much now. The downside is you've got a radio; it's very easy to turn on and listen to BBC Radio 2 or SIBC in Shetland. I wanted to offer something different to Shetlanders. SIRS.FM is easy to find on Google or Facebook and can be enjoyed on many different devices that connect to the internet."

Inexpensive devices are now available to buy, such as an Amazon Echo, Bluetooth speakers or a dedicated Internet Radio. These devices can receive music transmitted from the internet on a mobile phone, tablet via Bluetooth technology.

"Because listeners are coming from all over the world; SIRS.FM is an innovation for Shetland, where the station can also assist in promoting tourism. A winning combination for everyone on Shetland!"

