

## USER REPORT

# Omnia.fm Gets Big Air for K-Rock

by Steve Kingston  
Program Director  
WXRK(FM)

NEW YORK This city has more music stations than any market in the country.

There's too much at stake in the over-radioed No. 1 radio market in the country, as well as too many choices for the listener. And since New Yorkers are notoriously an impatient bunch by nature, if you don't grab them in the first five seconds, you lose their interest — maybe forever.

Developing a signature sound allows us the flexibility to create texture that is unique to WXRK(FM), much like our programming.

One decision that's been easy for me is what kind of processor to use to get the sound I need. With the reputation of Frank Foti and **Cutting Edge** in creating the competitive punch of hot stations in major markets, it was a no-brainer. I went with Omnia.fm.

## Golden ear

Frank Foti is known for owning the best ears in the business. He's fought and won the processing wars in New York, having been the architect of Z100's sound at its inception.

And he's working with WXRK Chief Engineer Richie Herby to craft a sound that's uniquely K-Rock, New York.

Herby said of Omnia.fm, "With its easy to handle interface, the Omnia will allow you to get up and running in minutes. The fat round bottom blows away the competition hands down, while its well-defined top end allows the vocals and announcer to cut right through. Let's cut to the chase, it's the first box ever made that will get the PD off your back!"

Building a musical position after Howard Stern is essential for the success of WXRK, and this "audio weaponry" is a great addition to our arsenal.

The supplier says six of the top 10 most-listened-to stations in the United States use Omnia.fm. K-Rock, New York, is on that list, although each of us in these markets can work with the advanced features of Omnia to get a unique identity, which is part of the artistry of processing for a station like K-Rock.

Like most PDs, my needs go beyond loudness — not that that isn't important.

Consolidation may have rendered the loudness issues moot in some markets, but our listeners still punch up the volume and, in fact, a lot of the new music today seems to demand it for the full effect. With Omnia we come through with enough muscle to grab that attention that I said was so critical.



Cutting Edge Omnia

Yet with many alternative groups, there are subtleties that have to come through. There's a much greater emphasis on the music in our format than in some others and you also have quieter artists where the voice and lyrics are important, too. Omnia gives us the loudness but it doesn't grunge up the highs or the bass. During vocals you notice the difference.

One other goal of mine is to avoid listener fatigue. Our listeners tend to stay with us longer, either while commuting, getting stuck in New York traffic, on Walkmans or even at work. Heavily processed stations playing music that has already been "crunched" can turn listeners away. This is especially true of males 18-34, which is our target demo.

Omnia's clipper and composite filter and its distortion control won't let that happen.

There are plenty of features that I like. One

is that it's digital, so it's clear and precise, yet gives the fullness and depth of analog.

Omnia is user-friendly for easy adjustments. The front LCD screen shows a graph for AGC, broadband or multiband and lets me see the limiter in action.

There are a lot of factory presets designed into Omnia but it allows us to create and save user presets. And upgrades are easy and cost-efficient with a PC card.

I don't want to give all our secrets away, but Omnia also has plug-in modules to further customize our sound. There's one for a hot, in-your-face station sound and others for softer formats. What it boils down to are a lot of flavors and combinations so no two stations, even with similar formats in the same market, have to sound alike.

## Digital world

It makes sense to me to be using an all-digital processor like Omnia, since radio today is a digital world. With Omnia's digital (AES/EBU) inputs and outputs I don't need to worry about putting another digital box into the chain. With the analog and dual composite outputs, there's no worry about a seamless integration with other equipment. Plus Omnia is designed to work with IBOC DAB when it finally gets here — if it ever does.

One other concern about digital is the fact that as listeners' ears have gotten more in tune to hearing digital quality from CDs, they are less forgiving of any sound that doesn't live up to their expectations. Once again I have to credit Cutting Edge.

There was a time when processing a station like K-Rock was a big tradeoff: You could sound loud or you could sound clean, but you had to choose one or the other. Today, thanks to Omnia, that's not a choice I have to make.

For more information contact Cutting Edge in Ohio at (216) 241-3343, fax (216) 241-4103 or visit the Web site at [www.omniaaudio.com](http://www.omniaaudio.com)