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# Satellite radio blasts off

*But are you willing to pay the cost?*

BY LINDA JOHNSON  
 Staff Writer

Video may have killed the radio star, but a new format is hoping to give the medium a comeback.

This week, satellite radio hit Canadian airwaves as two companies, XM Satellite Radio Canada and Sirius Radio Canada, started providing pay per listen service.

First impressions of the new service are mixed.

Richmond Hill resident Ron Schryer thinks satellite radio is a great new product.

But he's not going to buy it — not yet, at least.

The new technology is being sold through retailers such as Future Shop and Best Buy.

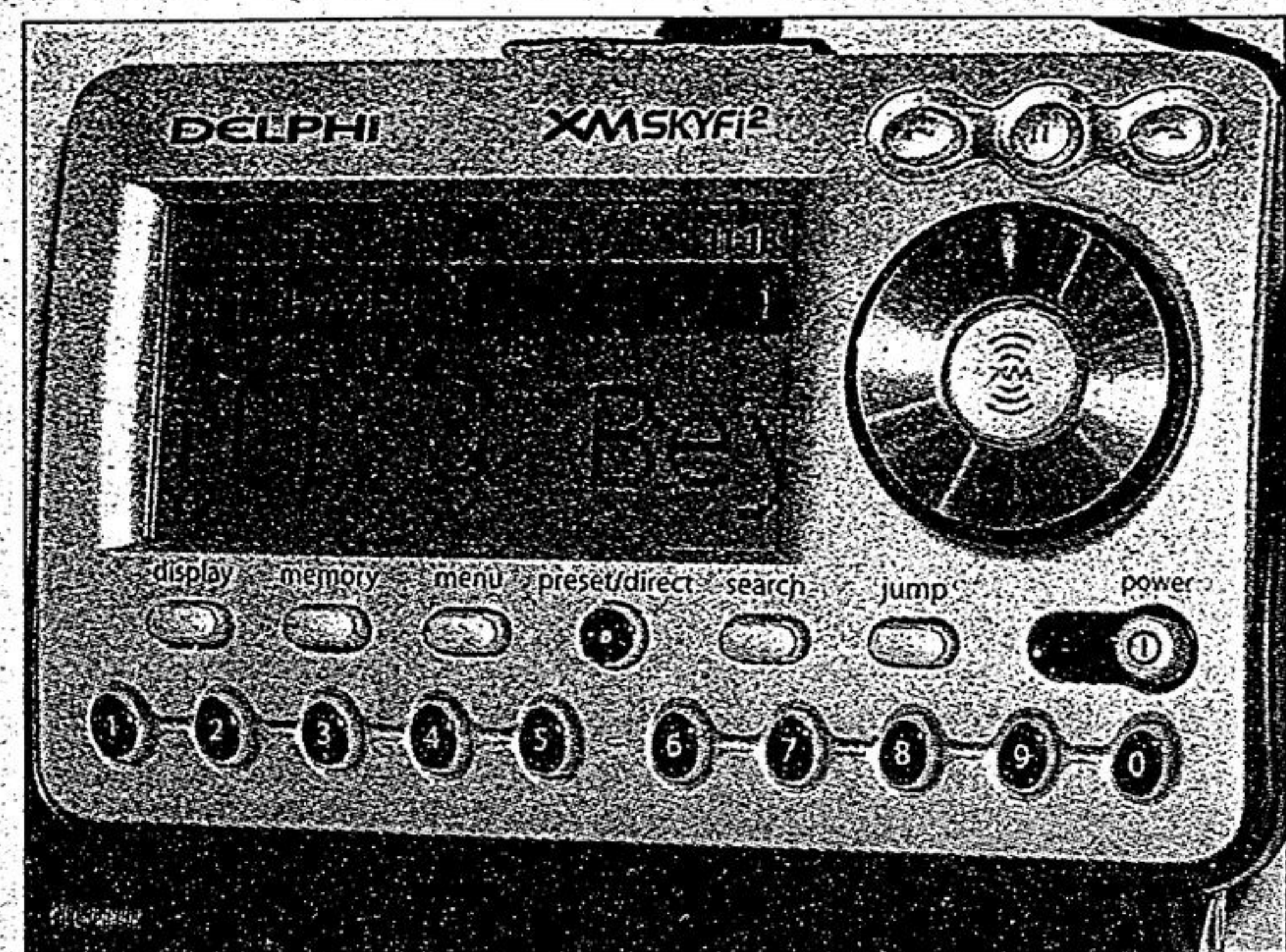
The product is good for remote locations where most stations don't reach. You can also play it over your existing sound system, so you don't have to install extra speakers, Mr. Schryer said.

"The beauty of the satellite radio is you're not limited to your own music. I think of satellite radio as an iPod — you can pick any music you like. The downside is you can't pick the song," he said.

Still, Mr. Schryer, who has an iPod, said he doesn't feel buying a satellite radio is worth it.

"But it depends what stations they offer. If they offered more Canadian content, I might be interested. I'm a big believer in Canadian music and right now, it's really an American product."

Satellite radio refers to stations that broadcast digitally and receive signals usually by communications satellite.



Users will have to purchase devices similar to this to receive satellite radio signals.

The signals travel much farther than conventional radio signals.

Many of the stations are specialty, dedicated to one type of music or to news, talk shows, sports, women's and children's stations.

Unlike regular radio, content is uncensored.

It is sometimes called subscription radio because commercial satellites and end users are required to pay a monthly subscription fee of about \$12 for a group of 80 to 100 stations.

In addition to the fee, you have to buy a receiver, which costs anywhere from \$70 to \$400.

Some shoppers questioned the point of paying anything at all.

"I don't need to pay for radio when I can get it for free," said Ted Raja of Aurora. "I'm not overly concerned about the quality of digital radio because I primarily listen to the radio in my car."

But Jerry Chomyn, co-ordinator of the diploma radio broad-

casting program at Humber College, said satellite radio is the best thing to happen to the medium since FM took hold in the 1970s.

"I think it's an exciting innovation for radio. Radio for too long has rested on its laurels of being AM and FM and, really, as time went on, didn't seem very exciting," he said.

Mr. Chomyn, who also manages the campus radio station 96.9, said the new technology will do for radio what cable and satellite did for TV.

Viewers accustomed to receiving 10 or 15 channels were suddenly able to receive an unlimited number of channels.

The trouble, he added, with conventional radio stations is, though they may try to appeal to a more specialized audience, they still have to attract a broad range of people within the market area.

In contrast, satellite stations can look to the whole country as their market.

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