



Teemu Virta
Evaluation of Web Design and Functionality
Web Marketing Research for EMI Finland

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
Bachelor of Engineering
Industrial Management
Bachelor's Thesis
16 April 2012

Author(s) Title Number of Pages Date	Teemu Virta Evaluation of Web Design and Functionality - Web Marketing Research for EMI Finland 76 pages + 1 appendix 16 th April 2012
Degree	Bachelor of Engineering
Degree Programme	Industrial Management
Specialisation option	Global ICT business
Instructor(s)	Nora Norrlin, Contact Person Thomas Rohweder, Principal Lecturer
<p>The main objective of this project was to evaluate EMI Finland's web site systematically by using best practices of the industry and also, by comparing the site to the most central competitors' and their subsidiaries' web sites.</p> <p>The first half of this study consists of three parts. The first part introduces web design and the purpose of web sites. The second part is the main section dealing with theory covered in this project. This main section explains best practices used in web design. The third part summarizes the established best practices via a web design evaluation tool that is used to analyze the music industry web sites chosen for this project.</p> <p>The second half of this study is the practical part. In this section the evaluation tool is used to systematically evaluate ten music industry web sites including EMI Finland's web site. Each web site is first evaluated individually and then brought together in a large comparison matrix. Conclusions are made by analyzing this comparison matrix and the individual evaluations. These conclusions are then used to make a proposition for EMI Music Finland on what should be developed on their web site.</p> <p>The key findings of this project were that EMI Finland web site is a little above average when compared to other web sites in the industry. Three major issues found on the EMI web site are poor social media integration, lack of quality management regarding content, and lack of captivating features. These issues are carefully considered in the practical part. Guidance on how to tackle these issues is given in the propositions section.</p> <p>This project was conducted with support provided by Thomas Rohweder from Metropolia, and Nora Norrlin, the marketing manager for EMI.</p>	
Keywords	Web, Design, Marketing, Evaluation

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	EMI Music Finland	1
1.2	Research Problem and the Project Goal	1
1.3	Research Process and Methods	3
2	Best Practices	4
2.1	Web Site Essentials	5
2.2	Internet Marketing	7
2.2.1	Internet Marketing Overview	7
2.2.2	Search Engine Marketing and Optimization	9
2.2.3	Social Media Marketing	9
2.2.4	Advantages and limitations	10
2.3	Q2C Model	10
2.4	Web Site Design and Branding	11
2.5	Navigation and Information Structure	14
2.6	Web Site Content	16
2.7	Web Site Functionality and Interactivity	17
2.8	The Evaluation Tool	20
3	Systematical Evaluation of the Web Sites	23
3.1	Atlantic Records	24
3.2	Century Media Records	28
3.3	Columbia Records	31
3.4	EMI Music Finland	34
3.5	Epitaph Records	39
3.6	Interscope Records	42
3.7	Sony Music Entertainment	45
3.8	Spinefarm Records UK	48
3.9	Universal Music Finland	51
3.10	Warner Music Finland	54
3.11	The Internet Movie Database (IMDb)	57
3.12	Comparison Matrix	63
4	Practical Implications	65

4.1	Proposition for EMI Based on the Research	65
4.2	General proposition for companies	69
5	Conclusion	71
5.1	Summary	71
5.2	Evaluation	72
	References	
	Appendix 1. Evaluation Tool Fill-in Sheet	

1 Introduction

1.1 EMI Music Finland

EMI Finland is a division of EMI Music which belongs to EMI Group. The EMI Group, also known as EMI Music or simply EMI is a multinational music company based in London. It is one of the world's leading music companies. In fact, EMI Music is the fourth-largest business group and family of record labels in the recording industry and one of the so-called "big four" record companies. The big four of record companies comprises Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group and EMI with EMI being the smallest in terms of music market shares in the US (2005) and the only UK based company in the top four. The rest of the companies are US based.

EMI Music consists of numerous record labels such as Virgin Records and Parlophone. Artists on EMI labels include The Beatles, Coldplay, David Guetta, Iron Maiden and so forth. It is very likely that at least one of five artists a person can name is an artist on EMI label.

EMI's task is to bring artists and fans together by driving action and creating value wherever music is experienced. And right now, music is mainly experienced via the Internet through software such as iTunes and Spotify. This is why it has become more and more important for music industry companies to keep up to par with technology in the Web and this is what this research focuses on.

1.2 Research Problem and the Project Goal

There was a day when companies went online because "everyone else had a website", but now during the past few years the concept of websites has changed drastically. Today, a company even has the option to only exist in virtual space. This means that they sell, buy, connect and market through online means only. Now how does this become a problem? The problem arises when users judge a company by their online presence only. We all spend so much time a day on the internet that the company might just appear as a website for a customer, because they don't have anything else

physical enough to reach for. Online features continue to expand and it takes a lot of research and online use to keep up-to-date with the latest technology. This is why companies like EMI Music have the endless problem of staying relevant through and on the internet. The internet is full of opportunities to catch, which would and will make EMI more attractive to everyone from a regular music listener to the artists and investors. (Sweeney et al. 2007: 33)

This study will concentrate on how EMI would become more appealing to a regular music listener and how that listener would get the most out of EMI's website.

The goal of this project is to evaluate EMI Finland's web site systematically by using best practices of the industry and also by comparing the site to the most central competitors' and their subsidiaries' web sites. The project will also explore a single industry independent website in order to enable valuable benchmarking and facilitate the introduction of new ideas into the EMI Finland web site.

This project has three expected outcomes. The first outcome is a fully functional web site evaluation tool that can be used to evaluate various music industry web sites systematically and equally. The second expected outcome is a large comparison matrix of all the web sites evaluated in this project. And the third outcome is to give EMI a proposition on how to update their web site in order to stand out from the masses.

The project will not delve deep into the actual programming and fine tuning behind the sites, but will focus on providing insight on the practices and features that could be advantageous for EMI in the online market. The results will tell whether EMI is missing a crucial element from the site or if they are doing everything flawlessly. In the proposition section EMI will be given advice and recommendations on how to enhance their web site.

1.3 Research Process and Methods

The project process consists of the steps included in the block diagram presented in Figure 1 below.

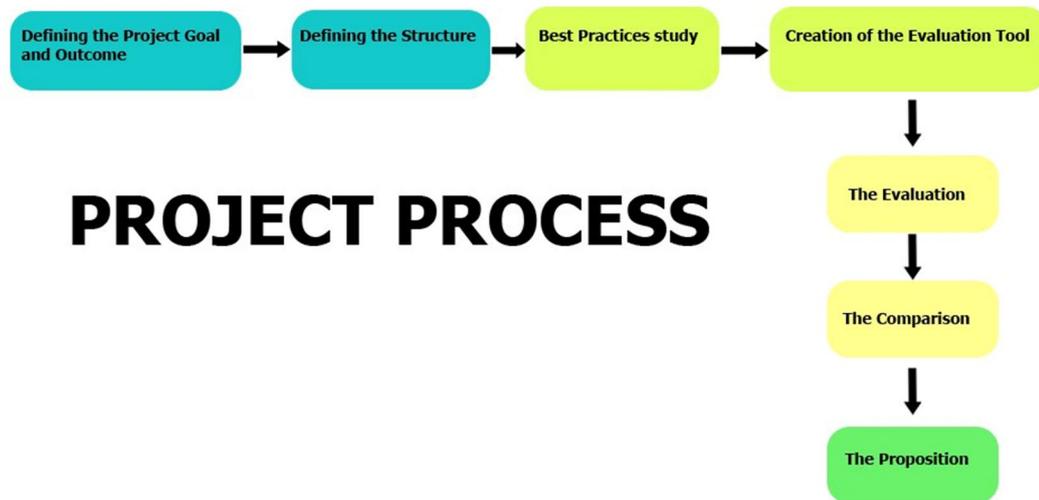


Figure 1. Project process block diagram

This project starts with defining the project goal and expected outcome. These two things are important to keep in mind so that the project will not get sidetracked. After the goal and outcome have been defined, the project needs structure and therefore a table of contents is created. The project is carried out under the guidance of Thomas Rohweder, Principal Lecturer from Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Meetings with him are arranged regularly during and before the project.

When the project gains structure it is time to build up on the theory behind the subject. In order to gain deep enough knowledge on web design and web marketing, two months are used simply to study the industry. After reading up on 20 or more sources on how to create an appealing, well connecting and wisely constructed web site, the knowledge gained is used to build a tool for measuring web sites and their functionality.

The web site evaluation tool is used to gather intelligence from different music industry sites in the simplest form in order to facilitate efficient analysis and visual comparison

between the sites. Every web site is evaluated by using the exact same tool and evaluation process. This information is then used to provide EMI Music Finland feedback on how their web site compares to other web sites in the industry and also, to provide a proposition for EMI on how to make their web site even better and how the web site would reach the consumers more efficiently.

The tool itself will be a picture with sectors including aspects that define a perfect web site. These aspects are explained carefully throughout the best practices section and then summarized via the tool. Every aspect will be evaluated on a scale from 0-5, so that it will be possible to mathematically solve what is lacking and what is not by comparing to other sites.

All of the sites will be analyzed individually according to the created tool. The scores are commented on with the help of pictures from the site and with visualization. The end result will be a large matrix including the sites and their corresponding scores. The analysis of the large matrix will focus on how EMI Finland web site compares with the other evaluated sites. From the end result it is possible to say, which site ranked the best and which worst and if there are any links between the sites. It can also be that several sites keep repeating the same flaws. This will also be commented on.

Based on said matrix it will be possible to make a proposition for EMI on which aspects should be upgraded and how. Other companies' web sites are also given notes about how to improve their sites. This gives EMI the possibility to view the results from every angle.

2 Best Practices

This section explains what is needed from a website in order to be theoretically perfect. The section goes through the visuals, the content, navigation and modern aspects such as social media integration of a website. As mentioned before, this study will only scratch the surface of the programming side of website creation. The purpose of this section is to create an overview of the features and main objects a website should have in order to be theoretically successful. After identifying best practices on how a website should be built, a tool for website evaluation is created. This tool is then used

as a method to measure and compare sites to create conclusions of what EMI Finland website is lacking and also to provide feedback on what features are done explicitly on their website.

Best practices of website design are approached so that the first two sections give an overview of why a company needs a web site in the first place and what is internet marketing. Understanding the purpose of a web site makes it is easier to dig deeper.

The theory of a perfect web site is approached so that it goes from the surface to the bottom. This means that design, visuals and brand are studied before contents and functions of a web site.

2.1 Web Site Essentials

This chapter will list the most important reasons and simultaneously the most essential features of a web site. These things might be self-evident, but somehow during the designing of a web site the focus might and most often will get lost. Of course if one does business one must certainly has a web site, but for what reason?

As the Internet is the first place the company's market turns to when searching for products and seeking for services information, a good web site should provide valid information to satisfy customer needs. The point of an information section is not to boast about success, but to tell people the truth about what the company does. At the same time it will build the business's reputation. A professional image helps building consumer confidence. (Sweeney et al 2007: 75)

A web site is also probably the most effective and affordable way to advertise a business. TV, radio or print ads cost a lot to execute and gets a lot less results for the money spent. And a web site will not stop advertising until it is put down by the company. A print ad only runs for a while and cannot be fixed after printed, a web post on the other hand can be updated on the fly in just a matter of seconds. However, web advertising can easily go overboard. If a web site becomes nothing more than a pile of colorful clutter or bouncy pop-ups, it no longer gets the job done. Subtle ads and lead-

ing the customer is much more user-friendly. The user must feel in charge. (Sweeney et al 2007: 75)

These days a web site is a vital tool for communication with the audience. A web site can provide the most current information about the business to customers, vendors and employees. Now with the ease and real-time of Twitter, Facebook and blogging, the audience will feel connected to the company. Also, every one of those three can be embedded to a web site. If it feels like embedding is an addition to clutter, then neat links to said social media sites will be more than fine. For a music industry company the social media can be used to advertise new artists, upcoming gigs, new tracks or videos from artists and so on. Below is a picture of links to social media sites:

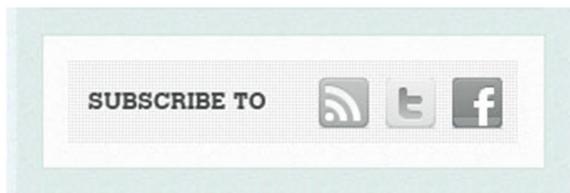


Figure 2. Minimal social media links to avoid clutter (Source: webdesignledger.com)

Social media can be integrated in millions of different ways to a web site. The above is one of the most common and subtle ones. Users of these sites will immediately spot these even if it was just a small logo. (Kaplan, Haenlein 2009)

Communication is also a means to learn about the target market. A web site is a natural place to gather information, be it demographic, geographic or behavioral data. People may, for instance, sign up for newsletters, create user accounts, participate in surveys and so on. There are numerous possibilities to collect personal information and buying patterns from users. Everything can be monitored so that the company can learn what works, what doesn't and what to do better. It can be hard to get users to sign up, though. That is where social media comes in handy. Nearly every web user has a Facebook account. Having people subscribe to the company Facebook page may have the same, or even better, results as creating a user account, with personal information, to a web site. (Sweeney et al 2007: 76)

A very good reason to have a web site is to provide better customer service. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), Support Forums, Contact Information and other things can be used to add customer value. These support pages are usually more useful to technology companies, but why not music industry companies? A lot of users would probably like to know when their favorite artist releases a new album, how to contact the company depending on the matter and so on. Yet again, these pages are about powering the customer, not shoving a piano down their throat. For example, large companies have more than a handful of artists from different genres, but also at least as many listeners of different genres. Would a true Madonna fan want to see a huge pop-up ad of Metallica's new album? No, he would not. Exceptions happen, of course. (Sweeney et al 2007: 76)

For a music company, one reason for the existence of a web site is branding and generating awareness for business, artists, gigs and so on. Therefore it's a good place to showcase these things. A Web site is far more engaging and interactive than a brochure will ever be. It is a good place to showcase success stories on artists and the company itself.

There are many more reasons to have a good functional web site. It is obviously good for the environment and so on, but the ones mentioned above are the most valuable ones. These are the very essentials why a web site should exist.

2.2 Internet Marketing

The Internet is an advertising medium, a form of sales literature, a distribution channel, a sales channel, a supplier chain, a method of customer service, and a source of operational cost savings all at the same time. For many, it is just a wall where everyone else has their company information, too. It is much, much more however. (Zimmerman 2002: 33)

2.2.1 Internet Marketing Overview

The Internet has vastly improved everything from traditional ways of selling to distribution to a wider range of audiences and possible clients. Of course the internet allows

quick interaction between clients, but via email, wireless media and websites the Internet has given marketing a much wider scope of providing information to clients.

In order to be efficient in Internet marketing it takes more than creating and promoting an internet site. It comes down to portraying the company's identity and having the appropriate website functions. Placing media into places such as search engines and social media where the audience most likely searches for it is also a part of internet marketing. (Allen et al. 2002: 11)

While traditional marketing divides the audience into gender, age, geography and so on, internet marketing has a whole different approach. The clients in online marketing are targeted based on activity and interests. If a company sells and distributes music, it should advertise in music and entertainment related websites. For example, YouTube has proven to be a very good marketing ground for musicians and companies alike.

There are many types of internet marketing. Some of the techniques are very simple and provide instant results in visitor traffic, and some are a bit more complicated but may be better in the long term. Figure 3 below shows some of the possibilities of marketing online.



Figure 3. Types of internet marketing (Source: xmakemoney.com 2011)

Every type of internet marketing is perfectly viable still in the year 2012, even though some of the techniques such as SEM (Search Engine Marketing) and PPC (Pay-Per-Click Marketing) have been around for ages. There are also techniques that were born very recently. SMM (Social Media Marketing) and effective Video Marketing are good examples of this. As interesting as every type might be, from a music industry perspective Search Engine Optimization and SMM are the most fascinating ones and therefore they have been chosen to be explored. The difference between Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing is explained in the following chapter.

2.2.2 Search Engine Marketing and Optimization

Search Engine Marketing is an Internet marketing technique that is used to promote websites by increasing their visibility in search engine result pages. It is done by using paid placement, contextual advertising and paid inclusion. Search-engine optimization is the process of setting up one's website so that it ranks well on major search engines, such as Google, Yahoo and Bing when using some particular keywords on site. The difference between SEM and SEO is that SEM is paid search marketing as it requires the user to pay for every click sent to their web site from a search engine. Traffic sent to the site from a search engine's organic results is free and therefore SEO is more inexpensive. (Jones 2008: 14)

SEO used to be very simple. It was abused by simply adding the wanted keyword into the title tag of the web page and then spreading it around the content of the page. By doing this it was simple to rank within the top ten results of a search engine. Now however, it is far more complicated as search-engine algorithms have become so complex. Therefore SEO is often outsourced to professional firms or carefully studied before done. (Jones 2008: 14)

2.2.3 Social Media Marketing

Social media is often looked at as only a means to get connected with friends, but the truth is that it is also a medium. It is a method of communication like print, radio or television. However, unlike watching TV or listening to the radio, it is a very active experience. It is possible to give and take with consumers. CNN, for example, asks its

viewers to give them feedback on Twitter. Practically it is very simple, since a lot of users are already using Twitter and therefore the viewers do not have to fill in any personal data prior to giving their feedback. The viewer just types in what he or she thinks and it is done. (Agresta et al. 2010: 2)

Social media marketing usually centers on the idea of creating content, which attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their own social networks. This way a message spreads from user to user and usually becomes easier to trust as it comes from someone other than the company itself. Communicating with the customer in such a personal way increases brand awareness and customer service. It is also a rather inexpensive platform to implement marketing campaigns. (Briggs 2007: 41-43)

2.2.4 Advantages and limitations

Internet marketing has numerous advantages to make it as attractive a promoting technique as it is. Obviously, it is rather inexpensive when compared to other forms of advertising. While being able to access a huge viewer base with a small amount of money, the consumers are also able to explore and purchase products whenever it is convenient for them. Also, a huge advantage is that the statistics of any marketing campaign can be recorded and reviewed with ease. It is much simpler to analyze what works and what does not.

However, internet marketing does have its limitations. The consumers must have access to the technology required. This includes a personal computer and internet access. In 2012 this is a very minor limitation as internet access is very cheap. Another minor limitation is that the consumer is not able to physically interact with the product pre-purchase. But in the music industry this problem can be easily avoided by giving the customer a sample of an artist's music. (PLR Internet Marketing 2010)

2.3 Q2C Model

A good web site is more than just important words and great sections and advertising effort. It's about structure. A successful web site will always follow the Q2C Model – qualify and convert, shown in figure 4 below.

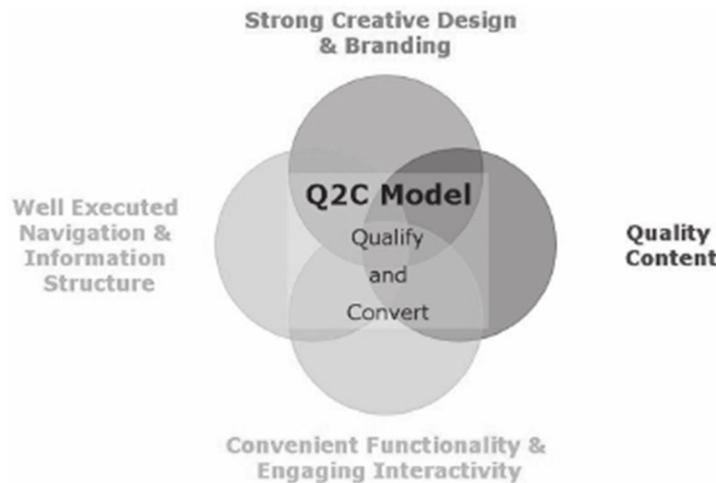


Figure 4. Q2C Model (Sweeney et al 2007: 81)

It does not matter what kind of product the company is selling. If it is a customer service web site, an e-commerce web site or a music industry web site, it will always follow the above model. The layout of a great site must have these four elements:

1. Design
2. Navigation
3. Content
4. Functionality

There is no secret in how to execute these four elements as it is very business dependent, but the chapters below will delve deeper into these aspects and hopefully create a good basis for building a proper web site evaluation tool.

2.4 Web Site Design and Branding

It is a widely known fact that items, objects, buildings, musicians and so on, will attract people just with what they look like. According to a large scale study by Consumer WebWatch, 46.1 percent of a web site's credibility is based on the first look and feel. Even though the study is from the early 2000 and people have entirely different needs from a web site, such as social media integration, it does not mean looks do not matter. The following figure represents a rather un-welcoming web site, not meant for the faint-hearted web designer eyes.



Figure 5. Top 3 of Worst Over-the-Top Websites of 2011 (Source: webpagesthatsuck.com)

The figure above is a picture taken from a site that makes a list every year of the worst web pages created that current year. This page would have been perfectly fine in the 90's, but now people are used to certain standards of design, navigation and functionality, and therefore upon landing this site the mouse cursor would and will hit the "x"-button.

The design of a web site must be engaging, create a memorable experience, extend the brand through the web site and be consistent with messaging. It gives the web site the ability to express the company brand through visuals. And as mentioned before, it must always be designed for the user, the target market. (Sweeney et al. 2007: 82)

However, in web sites the visuals are not created to dazzle the customer with 3D-effects or bright colors. There lies functionality in the choices of colors and fonts. The fonts should be easy to read and the colors should not cause problems in the target market. For example, a light-colored background layered with dark text is much easier to read than bright yellow text on a white background. It is also important to avoid patterned background design so that the site is easier to scan and for the user to quickly focus on the important sections such as the News.

In some cases it is fun and valuable to use image-intensive designs, but in most cases they will cause problems due to a slow loading time in the end user's browser. Studies prove that the average internet user attention span is about 9 seconds. If a heavy home page is still loading after 30 seconds, it has lost 3 users. Therefore slim and agile sites come before picture filled pieces of artwork. (BBC News 2002)

It can be valuable for the web site to help and portray the experience the company is trying to sell. Maybe some company feels that a boat is important, so they want a picture of a boat in the ocean. However it has to do more than just show a picture of an empty boat in a random setting. In order to give people an experience they can relate to and build the desire to participate, the picture should be a high-quality shot of a boat in crystal clear water with members of the target market enjoying themselves under a blue, sun filled sky.

Avoiding banner ads, or posts that look like one, is also a very key thing when designing a web site. It is said that many people automatically ignore anything online that looks like a banner ad. This so-called "banner blindness" has been brought up because sometimes important pictures or pieces of text may be placed in locations on a page where a banner ad would be placed. The same thing goes for sudden popups. Very often a user just closes the popup without reading its content. (Nielsen 2007)

A few years back it was crucial to keep in mind the resolution of a site, but now it is easy to just have a web-site with a fixed width. This means that the page will look the same on every screen. Almost every page uses a fixed width. The only pages that truly still use a fluid design (a design that expands as the screen size expands) are Google and Wikipedia. It is possible for them to have a fluid design because the sites are very content heavy and design is kept minimal and light. With fixed width the size of a web site is not a problem anymore, but there are pages around with very confused sizes. (Iteracy 2011)

The quality of the design of a web site plays an extremely large role in building and maintaining credibility and trust with potential and existing customers. The design is meant for the customer, not for the designer to boast on their artistic superiority.

2.5 Navigation and Information Structure

The same research report (Study by WebWatch) mentioned before can be cited here also, as 28,5 percent of people thought information structure is very important when figuring out the credibility of a web site. This means that sites that are easy to navigate are viewed as more credible. Well done navigation and information structure are vital parts of a web site.

The navigation should be logical, focused around the key objectives of the target market, a breeze to use, error-free and consistent throughout the web site. This means the layout should stay the same when going through different pages of the site; it should naturally guide users to reach their goals. Therefore, all the links should be clearly labeled so that there is no guesswork. For example, a page with contact information should say "Contact Us" or simply "Contact Information".

It is also suggested that the web site should offer various navigation alternatives. This part can easily get messy, but when thought out it will work and help the users to find what they want. A good web site should have, for example, an HTML alternative to Flash. This is good for users with a slow connection and a burning hate for flashy videos, but also for the modern technology Apple touch device users as they do not support Flash. Other devices do, so that is only a minor setback. Also a site search function is highly valuable for companies with large product catalogues. Big music industry companies would also make good use of a musical genre-specific search function as they tend to offer various types of music. And never forget bread crumb navigation so that the user can follow their trail. Very simple web site navigation with clear labels is shown in figure 6 below. (Sweeney et al 2007: 83)

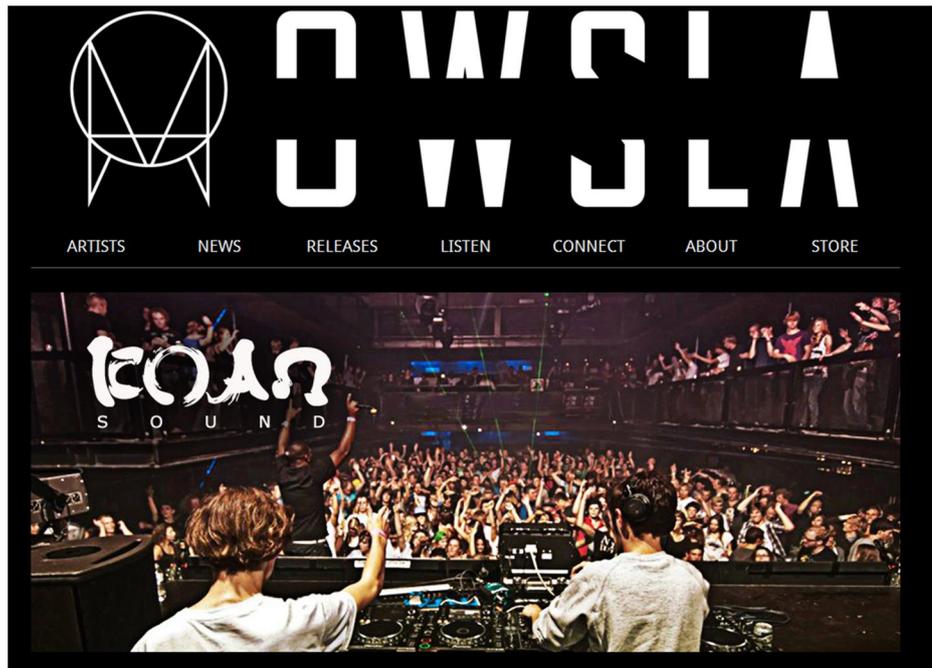


Figure 6. Music label OWSLA web site (owsla.com)

These navigation choices immediately qualify the target market to lead them into the appropriate sections of the web site. The user does not have to wonder what lies behind these navigation options. The only thing that might confuse users that do not use the web so frequently is how to get back to the home page, which is done simply by pressing the large logo banner on the top. This “press the banner to get home” has become an industry standard by now, but will sometimes leave the less experienced users wondering.

If there is an important announcement or anything extremely important, it should be placed prominently above the page fold to capture the most attention. Making links into body text is also an easy way to get links clicked. It is just a matter of where, what and how the items are placed on a page. The further up on the page the item is the more clicks it gets. This is why most of the sites post the most recent news up top and the less recent keep going lower as new pieces of text keep appearing on top of them. Also, too many options will confuse people so it might be better to keep options simple and related to the task at hand. If something is too much, it should be either removed or kept away from the top section where most of the users concentrate on. (Kayla Knight 2011)

Web site architecture should be planned with time and dedication. It is important that the navigation is built for the business the company is running. The navigation of Facebook and Google is totally different, but yet works with the same logic.

2.6 Web Site Content

Good looks and form need substance. Content used to be a hugely undervalued asset. In the 90's the focus was mainly on the technical, then on the visual design and now the Web runs on content. It used to be treated like coal, but now it has turned into gold. A small amount of Web content makes a difference: it makes the sale, delivers the service and builds the brand. But what content is golden and how to treat it as such and most importantly, how does one make the content stand out from the mass? (McGovern 2006: 3)

Creating content has never been easier. We have e-mails, texting, blogging, twitter, Facebook and the list goes on. Of course everything is not valuable, but through analysis and testing, one can find out which content works and which does not. There are ways to write a sentence that will get a reaction from all around the world. No matter what the culture or the market. There are words that make the sale and words that lose it. (McGovern 2006: 4)

However, these sentences and sale-making words usually have a lot of non-important content around them which blurs them in. From the music industry perspective this is called "filler" content. An average album consists of ten to 14 tracks, but many artists only come up with seven good tracks to record. Therefore they need to write a few more tracks to "fill" the album. This is different for websites. According to McGovern the website content should consist of good material only, as the reader tends to skip the filler and the risk is that the important content gets skipped too.

The secret of Web communications and marketing success is in the concept of words that catch our interest. When we see an interesting word, we click and act. This is where the search engines come in. The so-called "search engine optimization" has become an important part of business. It is important to know how people search, not on how search engines work. (McGovern 2006: 11)

Why then do a lot of websites have big fancy intro pages, flash animations and pop ups to grab attention, when the user has already landed on the site? There's no need to get their attention any more. A typical user usually lands on a site to get their questions answered; they do not want anything to get in the way. Every single pop up is a minus in usability and a big plus in the "I'm getting annoyed, get me out of here" experience. Why do you think Google is so successful? All it does is give answers. Nothing flashy, nothing fancy, just Google's logo and a search bar. And after all, Google is only a simple web site, although the part "simple" is highly debatable when it comes to algorithm and non-visual content of the web site. The key thing is to put the customer first.

Putting the customer first is the winning formula on the web. The most competitive advantage for a web site content creator is to have a deep understanding of what the customers care about. (McGovern 2006: 14)

The web site should be written for the target market and it should be answering all of their questions. Everything should be said on the site instead of creating an obstacle for a potential customer. This means that big documents should be in .PDFs, but if the company is selling something, the prices should be posted online. If they want to know the cost of the items, it should be made easy for them to find out what they are. And when talking about the products, only relevant features should be mentioned. The internet does not need TV commercial nonsense. Only relevant benefits of the products' features should be discussed. It is key to not to be boring, but at the same time ease off the marketing nonsense. (Sweeney et al 2007: 85)

2.7 Web Site Functionality and Interactivity

Everything must be easy for the user. If the company is ever going to get anything out of the web site, the site should provide the functionality for the potential customer to take an action and it should work as intended.

A good functionality example would be an airline web site. Amazing design, flawless navigation and good pieces of information do give a convincing picture for a web site, but it is not enough. An information-only web site will not get the job done. The target market wants to be able to look through different choices of destinations, compare

prices, and check if there are any special deals, book a flight, obviously, and so on. Nothing should prevent them from doing so and if the web site is too slow, they will give up. If a web site generates an error during an ordering process, it will scare the customer away. No one wants to throw their money at an unreliable site.

An airline web site could also provide the target market with some self-service tools and engaging features to capture leads, drive immediate sales and promote customer loyalty. There is a list of things an airline web site should have, but remember, too many neat extra features may lead to clutter. However, there are a couple of good to-have features below.

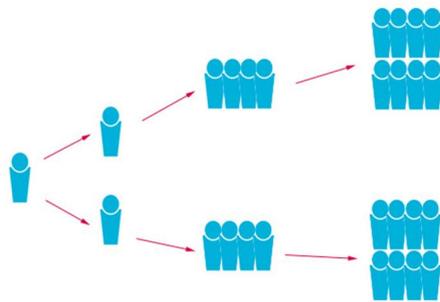


Figure 7. Viral marketing

Viral marketing is a very good way to expand the customer base through the web site. There is nothing better than a “tell-a-friend” feature on a web site that reaches customers around the world. Back in the old day this function may have been some sort of a newsletter or a special offer kind of thing. Now this may be as simple as a “like” button to the company Facebook page. In Facebook, the user’s friends see his or her “likes” and will be able to connect with the company also. This is also related to Permission Marketing, where the company is able to keep in contact with existing and potential customers and send them special offers.

Some of the customers would most likely want personalized user accounts, too. That way they could change personal information, change/cancel flights, manage preferences, and see purchase history and so on. User accounts would also bind the customers to the site because they would find it so easy to use and manage.

There are countless of functions that could be enabled on any web site. An airline web site was used as an example, but both of the functions mentioned above would work on any site. It is important to evaluate the company resources and make decisions what functionality is necessary to sell the business to the target market. And of course, if there are many features that the site is lacking, it can be approached over time. A web site grows over time and the environment changes all the time. And on the other hand, everything should not be added just because it is possible. It is better to approach the customer bit by bit, so that they do not get distracted by unrelated things. Simpler equals much better. (Vince Barnes 2011)

Performance is just as important as functionality, but this is down to how the site and all its functions are coded. If a web site generates errors on a regular basis or does not load within a reasonable time period – remember the attention span from earlier – the user will quickly become frustrated. For example, compressing pictures will give the site a much quicker loading time. Fast is always better when it comes to web sites.

Macromedia Flash used to be a huge problem in the beginning of the 21st century due to dial-up connections. It caused huge performance issues with its heavy animations. It also created frustration due to the fact that the user had to go through the same sequences over and over again, which tries the patience of many a customer. Flash is not used so often any more due to better ways of doing the same thing, but sites with, delicately put, “too much artistic value” will cause frustration among users looking for information only. (Sweeney et al. 2007: 87)

Everything on the web site has to work for the user, not against them. The code should be fast and error free, it should take into account cross-browser compatibility and so on.

A web site will be successful only if the web site is relevant to the needs of the customer and the customers trust the business. This includes privacy and security matters. Finally, the customer is convinced of the value of the products or services that are offered through the site. By doing all the points of the Q2C Model well, the company web site will be a step closer to being a successful one.

2.8 The Evaluation Tool

The evaluation tool is used to evaluate web sites systematically. In this research it is used to gather intelligence from various music industry sites. This information is then used to compare the web sites between each other. The tool has been created based on best practices of web design and web marketing presented during this research. The results of the evaluation tool will provide EMI feedback on how to develop their site further. Figure 8 below represents the tool in its visual form. The contents of the web site evaluation tool are explained below the figure.

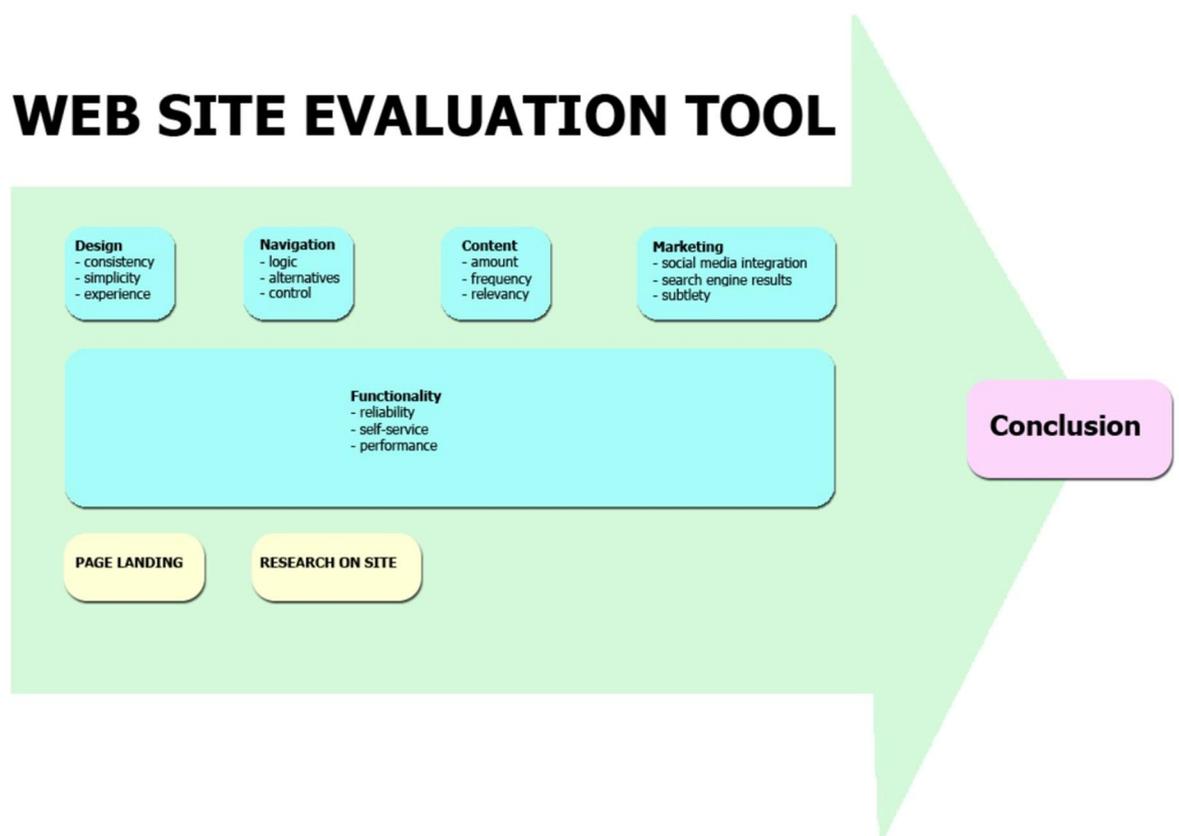


Figure 8. The web site evaluation tool

There are five aspects of evaluation in the tool: Design, Navigation, Content, Marketing and Functionality. These aspects were chosen as they form the very essence of the structure and purpose of a web site as realized during best practices studies. In every aspect there are also three sub-categories that define the aspects with more depth. The aspects and their sub-categories are explained below. All of this information can also be found in the previous chapters of the best practices section.

The design of a web site tells the user immediately if the developers have invested time and thought to the site. It is the barrier that has to be penetrated before the user starts browsing the site. The design of a web site should be *consistent* with messaging. It should not confuse the user with changing graphics or other visuals. Colors and fonts should contribute to the *simplicity* of design and the customer *experience* should be smooth, enjoyable and clutter-free.

A web site should work fast with natural guidance and seamless *logic*, therefore providing good navigation on the site. A user might need navigation *alternatives* such as HTML if they do not have flash support and a site search function on large sites is always a bonus. The amount of navigation options provided should be limited and the user should not end up feeling that he or she has lost *control* of the site.

Evaluation of the content of a web site is based on how *relevant* the content of the web site is. The web site should not provide unnecessary content such as flashy marketing nonsense. The core of web site content is to offer *frequent* updates aimed directly at the target market. Whether or not there should be a huge *amount* of content on a web site can be debatable, but from a marketing perspective there should be at least a few information sections about the company and its products. The content can also be spread into social media and other sites connected to company main page.

In the year 2012 it is important to stay on top of technology and therefore *social media* integration provides huge value to the marketing side of a web site. It is important to have a social media page, have a link to it and most of all, to make it seem active. And although most of the sites have taken care of their *search engine* results so that the site appears in the top 10 results of Google and Bing, it is good to have the results revised every once in a while with various key words. But having a link to Facebook everywhere and the top 10 search results filled with only the company's links is not the way to go. As fascinating as all the marketing and new technology may be, *subtlety* is still the key for reaching the audience.

Finally, the evaluation tool comes down to functionality. Functionality is most likely the only aspect of a web site that has to be evaluated over a little bit of time. Of course,

the *reliability* of a web site may come evident immediately when trying to connect to the site, but that can just be bad luck. The connection issues may be caused by almost anything. It may be worth pressing the “refresh” button in the browser a few times. However, the functionality aspect is more about the actual *performance* of the site when browsing through different pages. Are the functions sluggish? Is the site compatible with more than just one browser? Are there too many unrelated functions or could the site need even more *self-service* tools? These are the questions the user has to ask when evaluating the functionality of a web site.

By using the definitions of these aspects, the web sites inspected in this research may be looked into with great detail. As figure 8 suggests, the process of evaluating a single site goes from left to right. The order of steps has been chosen due to the nature of the aspects. Design is best evaluated by first impression and by simply browsing through the pages, but the following steps after design require a bit more concentration on what the site holds inside. All of the aspects of this evaluation tool have been chosen and constructed according to the best practices of web design and functionality.

While evaluating the web sites it may be quite complex to make notes as there are so many steps to go through. An evaluation fill-in sheet was created solely for note-taking and summarizing purposes. The sheet helps the user to stay on top of the site content and not get mixed up with what has already been evaluated. It also includes a table for filling in the scores of each aspect. The scores and the evaluation process are explained in the following chapter. The fill-in sheet can be found as an appendix.

3 Systematical Evaluation of the Web Sites

This is the section in which 10 music industry web sites, including EMI Music Finland's web site and an additional industry independent web site, are evaluated by using the evaluation tool and the knowledge gained from the earlier section. The sites are evaluated by using three of the most popular web browsers: Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and Microsoft Internet Explorer. The most popular web browsers have been chosen according to w3schools.com browser statistics research. The research may be looked up on their site. The link to their site is provided in the references.

The web sites evaluated in this research are competitors of EMI Music Finland and have been chosen according to their net sales and internet presence measured via social media and search engines. This includes the big four major corporate labels that dominate recorded music and some of their subsidiaries. Most importantly, EMI Music Finland's site is also evaluated by using the same principles in order to provide honest feedback and a development proposition for the future.

While using the evaluation tool, every aspect and their sub-categories are given a score from 0 to 5 according to how the site meets the requirements. Zero is the worst and five the best possible score. The values scored from the sub-categories are then used to calculate the average value of the aspect they are under. The average value of the aspects will also be calculated in order to give the web sites their total score.

All of the sites included in this research are first evaluated individually and then brought together in a large matrix to provide mathematical comparison between the sites. Individually, the sites are listed in alphabetical order, but the end result matrix will present which site ranked the best and which ranked the worst. Each individual evaluation will include a short informative section about the company, an evaluation score table, explanation of the results, and a few screen captures from the actual site. Every site is evaluated by using the exact same method, therefore enabling truthful and accurate comparison between the web sites.

3.1 Atlantic Records

Atlantic Records is an American record label. Since 1967 Atlantic has been a wholly owned subsidiary of Warner Music Group. Its artists include such great names as Led Zeppelin and Sean Paul. The Atlantic Records web site evaluation scores are shown in the table below.

Evaluation Overall 4.1

Design	4.7	Navigation	4	Content	4.3	Marketing	3.3	Functionality	4
Consistency	5	Logic	4	Amount	5	Social Media	5	Reliability	4
Simplicity	4	Alternatives	4	Frequency	3	Search Engine	3	Self-service	4
Experience	5	Control	4	Relevancy	5	Subtlety	2	Performance	4

Table 1. Atlantic Records evaluation scores

The Atlantic Records web site is very modern. At first glimpse it looks very confusing, as it is so different from what the user might have been used to. After a few minutes the site starts to make sense and there is nothing the user would not want to click. The experience is imposing with a lot of interactive functions from integrated YouTube videos to contests to social media functions as seen in figure 9 below.

The screenshot shows the Atlantic Records website home page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for ARTISTS, TOURS, THE STACKS, TIME CAPSULE, ATLANTIC VIP, STUDIO1290, and STORE. Below the navigation bar is a search bar and a red 'Listen to Atlantic Records Radio' button. The main content area features a large banner for Cody Simpson's 'THE WELCOME TO PARADISE TOUR'. The banner includes a photo of Cody Simpson playing a guitar, the tour name in large letters, and a list of tour dates and locations: 2/2 - BOSTON, MA; 2/3 - POTTSVILLE, PA; 2/4 - NEW YORK, NY; 2/5 - PHILADELPHIA, PA; 2/7 - TORONTO, ON; 2/8 - MONTREAL, QC; 2/10 - ALBANY, NY; 2/11 - CLEVELAND, OH; 2/12 - PONTIAC, MI; 2/14 - CHICAGO, IL; 2/16 - MILWAUKEE, WI; 2/17 - CINCINNATI, OH; 2/18 - INDIANAPOLIS, IN; 2/20 - SILVER SPRINGS, MD; 2/21 - NORFOLK, VA; 2/23 - ATLANTA, GA; 2/24 - TAMPA, FL; 2/25 - FT. LAUDERDALE, FL; 2/26 - ORLANDO, FL. There are 'TICKETS' and 'TICKET INFO' buttons. Below the banner is a section titled 'CUSTOMIZE YOUR ATLANTIC RECORDS EXPERIENCE' with a Facebook 'Customize Your Stream' button and a link to 'Listen to Atlantic Records Radio'. At the bottom, there are several promotional tiles: 'YOUR 1 SHOT' contest, 'IN THE NEWS' for Ty Stone's new album, 'IN THE NEWS' for Grouplove's album, and 'FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY' music business program.

Figure 9. Atlantic Records home page

The site is consistent and very simple in design. The posts on the site consist of large square blocks that act as links to news, competitions, online stores, and more. The only negative aspect of the site's design is the threshold to look deeper, as the site may feel complex on first glance.

The navigation logic on the site is basic. There is a navigation bar on top with the most important features such as the artist list, link for the online store, a tour list, and a few others. All of the legislative and more formal links are presented in the bottom in smaller print in order to not distract the user from the media and marketing. Also, the top navigation bar follows the user as he or she scrolls down the page. Apart from the normal navigation options, there are also choices that may not tell the user immediately what they are for. Such as “The Stacks” which seems to be a page with links to everything related to Atlantic Records.

There are various navigation alternatives such as a search function and a browse function for all of the artists on the label. This can be seen in figure 10 below.

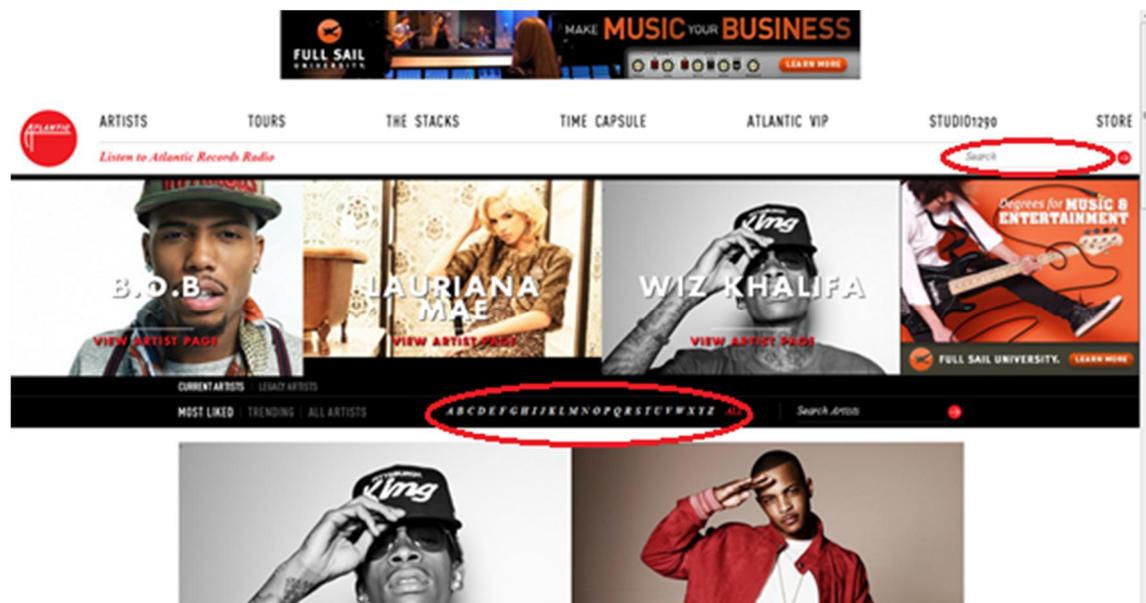


Figure 10. Atlantic Records navigation

If the user wants to browse all of the artist photos and not use the ABC browser, he or she may just scroll down the “Artists” page. The navigation is good, but the site is missing a bread crumb navigation option and therefore cannot score a perfect five.

The site has been structured really well and the user always knows which site he or she is on. The search results are very good and functional. There are a few links that direct the user away from the Atlantic Records page, especially on the front page, but apart from those few the user can confidently press any link and stay in control.

There is a lot of relevant content on the site. The amount of content is hidden fairly well with a lot of “read more...” options and therefore it does not seem overwhelming, but encouraging. All of the relevant artist information is on the site, but also included are links to other sites with more information on tours, interviews, and so forth.

The site is very customer oriented as every piece of news is related to an artist. The updating of content is also frequent, but the “Artists” page is not up to date. Some of the artist discographies are a few releases old and therefore the user cannot be sure whether the information is up-to-date or not.

To add to the content, social media is everywhere on the site. All of the navigation boxes that present a piece of news or something else related to an artist, have a small dog-ear with a “Like” button beneath them. The dog-ear and some of the other social media functions are presented in the figure below.

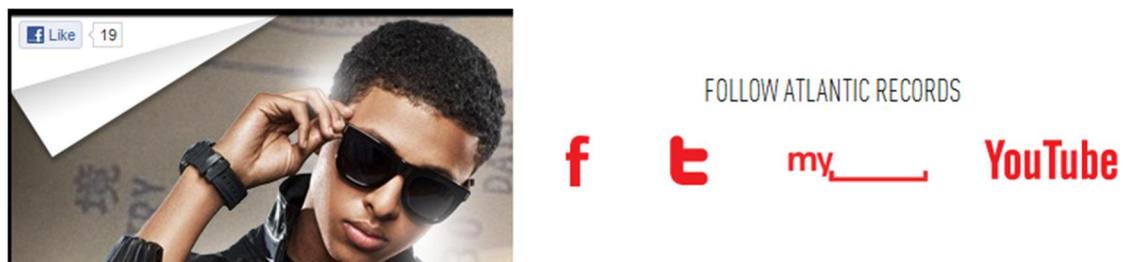


Figure 11. Atlantic Records social media integration

YouTube links are also scattered around the page and many of the artists have links to their own social media pages. These innovative functions make Atlantic Records web site stand out from the masses.

The search results for Atlantic Records are in a stable shape. Atlantic Records shows up on the first page of the search “Atlantic”, but searches such as “record label” do not show Atlantic Records in the first few pages. Fortunately, Atlantic can be found via Warner Music.

Atlantic Records has chosen a pretty aggressive way of marketing. There are a lot of options to buy artist merchandise, to take part in competitions, to “Like” something in

Facebook, and the list goes on. Nevertheless, there are no popups to distract the user from his or her task and the user does not have to click on everything on the site, but it can be hard to differentiate the news from the ads on a site this intense.

Apart from social media functions and online stores, the site offers the possibility to sign up for a newsletter and to become an Atlantic VIP. With a VIP account, the user gains a lot of benefits including promotional codes for tickets and merchandise, and exclusive content. Everything else seems to be in good shape except for the “Tours” section. It is most probably under development, but right now it only offers a concert list from one artist. None of the filters work. The site also features a “Shows near you” function that is connected to the Tours section, and therefore it does not work as intended. With all of the social media functions and other interactive tools it is hard to say if Atlantic Records has gone over the top with interactivity, but the tools are most certainly impressive.

With a good connection all of the images load quickly, but there are some minor bugs such as the one presented in figure 12 below.

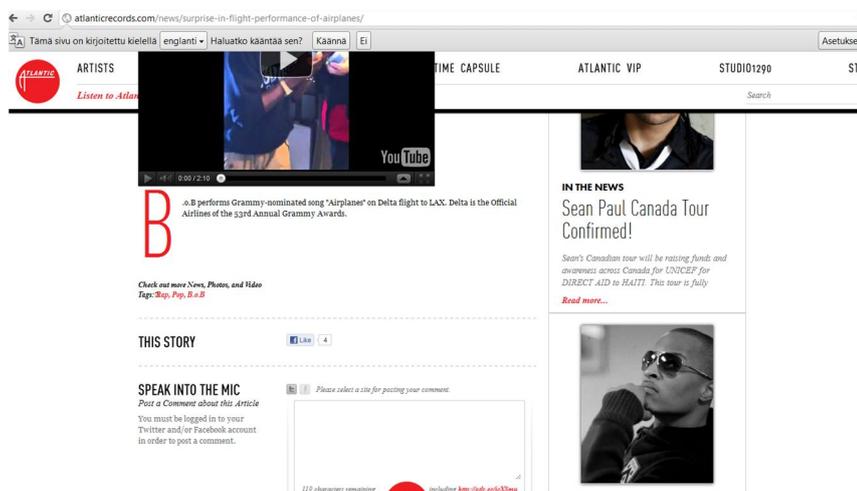


Figure 12. Atlantic Records YouTube embedding bug

The above is a bug that derives from the anchored navigation bar on the top. Some of the embedded YouTube links act in a certain way and therefore come on top of everything else on the page. For this reason this bug may be hard to fix, but without the anchored navigation bar the YouTube window would work perfectly.

Other than a few minor bugs, there are absolutely no errors on the site and there is no Adobe Flash integration. The performance is surprisingly good for a modern site. It works on every available browser, but the site will be very slow on a dial-up connection due to a large amount of pictures. The site has been developed for modern browsing and therefore should not be viewed with a slow connection. According to best practices, every site should offer alternatives for viewing. The Atlantic Records site should offer a possibility to browse the site without the heavy-load pictures.

3.2 Century Media Records

Century Media Records is an independent record label founded in Germany, now with offices around the world. The label specializes in many different styles of heavy metal music, including bands such as Lacuna Coil, Shadows Fall and a Finnish band Sentenced. The Century Media Records web site was evaluated and its evaluation scores are listed in table 2 below.

Evaluation Overall 4.1

Design	4.3	Navigation	3.7	Content	4	Marketing	4	Functionality	4.3
Consistency	5	Logic	4	Amount	4	Social Media	4	Reliability	5
Simplicity	5	Alternatives	3	Frequency	4	Search Engine	4	Self-service	4
Experience	3	Control	4	Relevancy	4	Subtlety	4	Performance	4

Table 2. Century Media Records evaluation scores

The Century Media Records web site is very enjoyable and calm to browse. Every page has the same template and the pages are easy to follow and read. The site is very consistent and the design is simple, yet modern. The site contains very little clutter and no popups. Like any other metal music web site, the Century Media Records web site contains a lot of dark elements. However, the site has been done very elegantly with no Flash or hard to read segments. The pages contain hardly any moving parts and the main focus is the content. As a downside, there is nothing that would particularly catch the user's interest and make him or her come back to the page, but the site successfully achieves a comfortable browsing experience.

It is very easy to navigate on the Century Media Records site. The top navigation bar includes very standard elements and the links provided within the content lead to the

expected pages. The user will always know what to expect when clicking on a hyper-link and this is not as often the case as a web designer would think. The site contains no alternatives for navigation apart from an artist search on the "News" page. However, the programming of the site is very simple and the user will most likely not crave for any alternative ways for navigation. During the research period the navigation proved to be very swift and the site manifested zero errors.

The Century Media site contains a mediocre amount of content. Every artist has a small tour list, a short biography and some links to pieces of news and media. The web site also offers information related to the record label itself. As for the frequency of the content, the web site and social media pages are updated on a daily basis. The company is relevant on several pages, but according to best practices of web design the information should be focused on leading the traffic into the right place. With traffic leading to many different sites it will be hard for the company to measure the users, as many of the consumers using Twitter will also be using Facebook. The same goes for Google+.

Fortunately, the content is very artist focused which is most valuable for consumers. The figure below represents some of the value the home page presents to the consumer.

The screenshot displays the Century Media website's home page, organized into three main sections: Current Releases, Upcoming Releases, and Tour Dates.

CURRENT RELEASES

		
THE DEVASTATED Devil's Messenger 20/02/2012	CALIBAN I Am Nemesis 06/02/2012	LACUNA COIL Dark Adrenaline 23/01/2012

UPCOMING RELEASES

			
DARK TRANQUILLITY Zero Distance (EP) 05/03/2012	ADRENALINE MOB Omertá 19/03/2012	3 INCHES OF BLOOD Long Live Heavy Metal 26/03/2012	BORKNAGAR Urd 26/03/2012

TOURDATES

Caliban	21/02/2012	Zuerich, Switzerland
Heaven Shall Burn	21/02/2012	Makasar, Indonesia
Winds Of Plague	21/02/2012	Zuerich, Switzerland
Winds Of Plague	22/02/2012	Paris, France
Caliban	22/02/2012	Paris, France
Krisiun	22/02/2012	Montpellier, France
Caliban	23/02/2012	Lyon, France
Winds Of Plague	23/02/2012	Lyon, France
Orphaned Land	23/02/2012	Eskisehir, Turkey
Orphaned Land	24/02/2012	Ankara, Turkey

[SHOW ALL TOURDATES](#)

Figure 13. Century Media consumer value

As a bonus to just viewing the concert dates, the user is also able to buy tickets to certain concerts. Not nearly all of the concerts offer the possibility to buy a ticket directly from the Century Media site, but this is most likely an area Century Media is improving on at this exact moment.

It was mentioned earlier that Century Media is relevant on various social media sites. Century Media is also the first record label to have an open soundcloud.com link on the page. Soundcloud is a social media page for musicians and record labels to share their music in the best possible file format for listening purposes. Fans and other people are able to comment and rate the songs as they listen. However, it may be that Century Media is trying to tackle too many territories at once and therefore some of these pages will and are suffering from a lack of frequent content.

Century Media uses very subtle marketing on the web site. The music industry and particularly heavy metal music industry lives by artist merchandise, therefore the only actual advertisement on the page is a rather large Century Music store banner that follows the user from page to page. On certain pages it gets replaced with artist photos. The figure below represents the subtle advertisement on Century Media's web site.

The screenshot shows the Century Media website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for ARTISTS, NEWS, RELEASES, MEDIA, TOURDATES, STORE, STREETTEAM, and THE LABEL. A 'Choose your Country' dropdown menu is visible with flags for the USA, UK, and Germany. Below the navigation is a 'Join the Mailinglist' section with a text input field and 'SUBSCRIBE' and 'UNSUBSCRIBE' buttons. The main header features the large, stylized text 'CMDISTRO.COM' with the tagline 'YOUR PREMIERE METAL MAILORDER!' underneath. Below this, the page is divided into several sections: 'NEWS ARCHIVE' with a 'Subscribe to News' button, 'CHOOSE ARTIST' with a dropdown menu, and 'ON TOUR' with a list of artists including Aborted, Adrenaline Mob, Arch Enemy, Architects (UK), Asphyx, Borknagar, Caliban, Dark Fortress, Dark Tranquillity, and Darkest Hour. The news section contains two articles from February 2012 about the band ASPHYX, mentioning their album 'Deathhammer' and its release dates in Europe and North America.

Figure 14. Century Media advertisement

Other than on site advertisement, Century Media is also prominent in the search engines. Century is a common English word, but the record label manages to climb the first page upon search. Century Media also appears on the first page on a search such as “heavy metal label”.

Century Media’s marketing also heavily relies on viral marketing. The home page features a media player based on Soundcloud. This allows the Century Media fans to interact with each other and forward the player link to unaware fans and future fans. Century Media also have a newsletter and a street team. The site offers the possibility for the fan to join a street team that promotes an event or a product on the streets. In this case the Century Media street team promotes the artists on the label.

On the whole, the site functions well and is very enjoyable to browse. The site features nothing phenomenal, and while it is not a problem it does give the user the image of Century Media just trying to secure its ground and not try anything new. The site is in such a good shape that some experimentation would not shake its ground at all.

3.3 Columbia Records

Columbia Records is an American record label. Columbia is owned by Sony Music Entertainment. Many famous artists reside under the Columbia name such as the 16-time Grammy winner Beyoncé, Bruce Springsteen, AC/DC and Adele to name a few. The evaluation scores of Columbia Records web site are in table 3 below.

Evaluation Overall 3.2

Design	2.7	Navigation	3.3	Content	3.3	Marketing	3.6	Functionality	3
Consistency	4	Logic	4	Amount	2	Social Media	4	Reliability	4
Simplicity	2	Alternatives	3	Frequency	5	Search Engine	3	Self-service	3
Experience	2	Control	3	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	4	Performance	2

Table 3. Columbia Records evaluation scores

The Columbia Records web site gives a good first impression as it feels very simple on the home page. However, the modern first look fails by being very complex upon further navigation on the site. The site is not very enjoyable as the design is too over-

whelming and distracts the user from content and other features. The figure below represents the site after the first navigation choice.

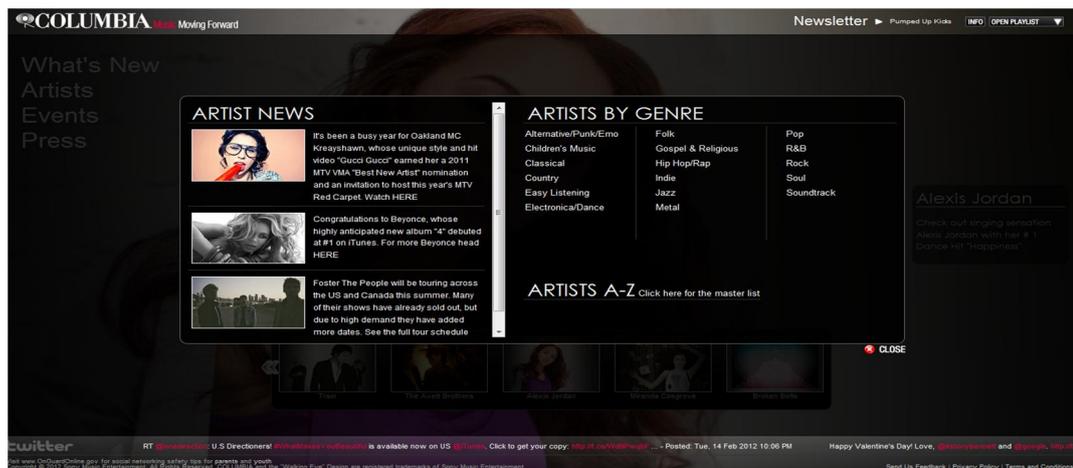


Figure 15. Columbia Records Artists page

This site is a perfect example of why a web site must stay away from patterned design. Even though the background is blurred and the user's location is represented in the middle, all of the other features from the home page such as the real time twitter feed in the bottom stay visible and add to clutter. The site makes it very hard to stay focused on the content.

The navigation logic on the Columbia Records site is very basic from a consumer perspective. There are no links or navigation options that appear confusing, but the site offers no search functions or lighter navigation options for users with bad network connection. Some of the navigation links guide the user to another web site and the "close" button is in different corners on every page which makes it difficult for a user to stay in control.

The web site makes up little of the above by providing the user a possibility to browse all of the artists or artists by genre. The figure below displays a very innovative navigation tool used on the Columbia Records site.

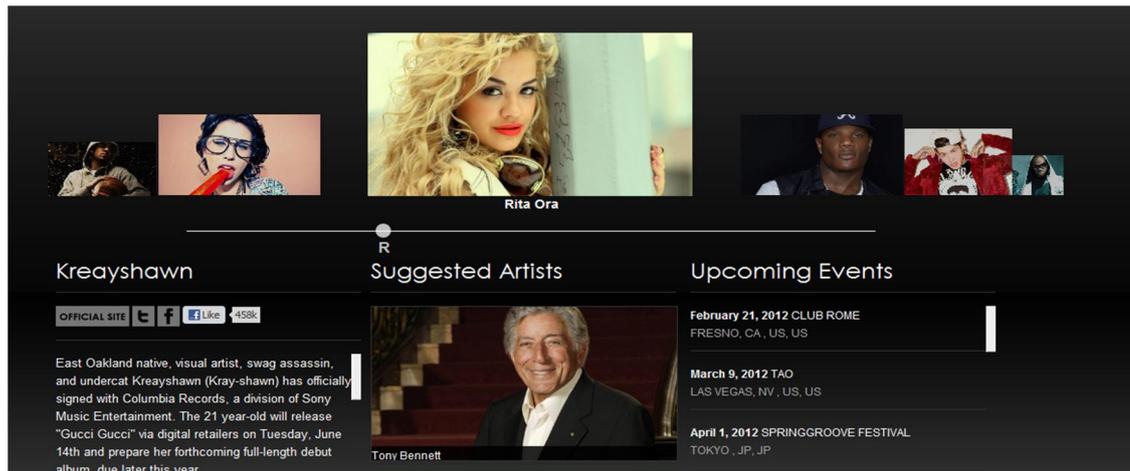


Figure 16. Columbia Records navigation tool

The tool works in the same fashion as the famous multimedia player iTunes. It is possible to browse artists by simply clicking on the artist photos or by dragging the button along a navigation line. The navigation line represents the artists in an alphabetical order from left to right. Information on the artist in the center of the tool will be presented below the navigation line. This navigation tool works very well with a large list of artists, but it feels very unnecessary on genre specific lists. For example, having three artists to browse on does not need a tool such as this one.

All of the content on the site seem relevant to the product, that is the artists, but with content from news to biographies to social media messages it is hard to separate the good from the bad. There is so much information on the site that it is very hard to process and for a user it is not easy to pick up just one piece of good content. The real time Twitter feed also gives the user a good perspective on how frequent the content is. The site features news from last week, yesterday, today and this minute. With content coming in every second a lot of good information may get lost during the process.

The user is able to browse through all of the artists and their upcoming events, but there is no possibility to order tickets directly from the site. The user will be forced to use Google for this process. There are also a few other functions such as a media player and the possibility to sign up for a newsletter. The site features no phenomenal self-service tools.

The marketing effort of Columbia Records is solely to put out as much content as possible. This is a common way of marketing as it enables the user to be responsible of researching more on an artist, while the site only puts the information available. The site also features a lot of social media integration. The lower part of the site provides a constant real time Twitter feed and there are Facebook and Twitter links for every artist. However, there are no apparent links to Columbia Records highly active Facebook page.

There are aspects out of the web site that affects the site's marketing. The main concern with Columbia is the name. The search engine results range from sportswear shops to universities to bars and so on. Even Wikipedia states that Columbia is one of the most common names in the United States. Despite the generic name, Columbia Records manages to fit on the first page of the search "Columbia", but not in the top five.

The performance of the site is rather poor. It takes a while for the browser to load all the needed pictures and parts on the site. The site does work like an average web site after loading the components, but on a slow connection the browser might take a good five minutes to load all the components. Even with a fast connection it may take as long as ten seconds. With the attention span of nine seconds the user will leave the site.

Despite the bad initial performance, there are no errors on the site after the loading is fully completed. The site works just as intended if the user manages to wait for the browser to load all the needed components. Overall the site has some very valuable content and innovative functions, but the heavy-load navigation and the difficulty of separating good content makes it hard for the site to stand out as a benchmark site.

3.4 EMI Music Finland

EMI Music Finland is a subsidiary of EMI Group that has been in Finland for 40 years. EMI is a British multinational music company. On November 2011, EMI sold its recorded music operations to Universal Music Group and its music publishing operations to Sony. Before this, EMI was the fourth-largest business group and family of record la-

bels in the recording industry. Artists such as The Beatles, Frank Sinatra and The Beach Boys have worked under the EMI label name. The EMI Music Finland web site was evaluated and its scores are listed in the table below.

Evaluation Overall 3.9

Design	4	Navigation	3.7	Content	3.7	Marketing	4	Functionality	4
Consistency	4	Logic	4	Amount	4	Social Media	3	Reliability	4
Simplicity	4	Alternatives	4	Frequency	4	Search Engine	5	Self-service	4
Experience	4	Control	3	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	4	Performance	4

Table 4. EMI Music Finland evaluation scores

The EMI Music Finland web site is very simple and elegant in design. The font choices and background are according to best practices and are very pleasant to view. The design features nothing out of the extraordinary, but manages to pull off a look that fits well in modern web design. The design provides easy access to navigation and content. The home page includes some Adobe Flash below the navigation bar in a “featured artists” type of advertisement. The banner itself has been done very well and it functions with ease on browsers that have Adobe Flash plugin installed, however the vertical text is very disturbing to read. The advertisement would benefit from an alternative way of programming to replace Flash and possibly a top-down type of solution for the vertical text.

The site design is consistent from page to page and it does not cause any confusion. The content of a page opens in the middle in a very classic way, but some of the advertisement on the right hand side can cause a little disturbance with moving elements. Fortunately, the banner is small in size compared to the actual content and therefore it does not capture a lot of attention.

The navigation is standard and done according to best practices. Everything important has been located to the upper part of a page and as the content becomes less recent or not as consumer related, it drops down closer to the bottom. The home page on the EMI Music Finland page contains very little actual information. The page is designed to feature the most recent links and pieces of news that lead the user across the page.

The navigation on top is easy and fast to use. The page names are standard and do not cause confusion. The yellow box representing the location of the user on the site is

very simple and absolutely great. The user will instantly know that the page has loaded correctly as the yellow color pops out of the otherwise very dark design. In figure 17 below, the user has landed on the Jukebox page and by looking at the navigation bar he is instantly aware of his location.

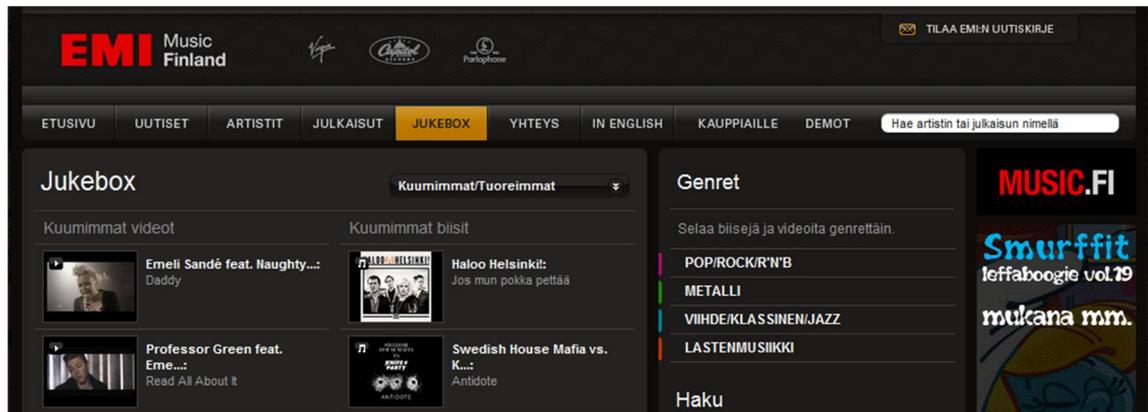


Figure 17. EMI Music Finland Jukebox page

The page offers the user the possibility to search on site. On the first few tries the search did not work. The search bar does not include a button to press for search and therefore the user has to guess that “Enter” is the key to conduct the search. The key did work after a couple of tries, but without a visual “search” button it is hard to say when the search works if it does at all. The search also features a drop down feature that gives the user the possibility to choose what piece of information is most closely related to what the user is searching for. The feature works very well, but most of the users are used to pressing “Enter” or a search button to conduct the search and therefore after quickly typing the search they may miss the drop down feature completely.

There are a lot of links to various web stores that offer the possibility to order an EMI Music CD. However, it can be confusing for the user to pick a store. How does he know which store is the best for him? What is closest to his location? Are the prices different depending on the store? If the user wants to download a song instantly on his PC the same thing happens. Too many options cause great confusion. The list of possibilities for CD shops is shown in figure 18 on the next page.

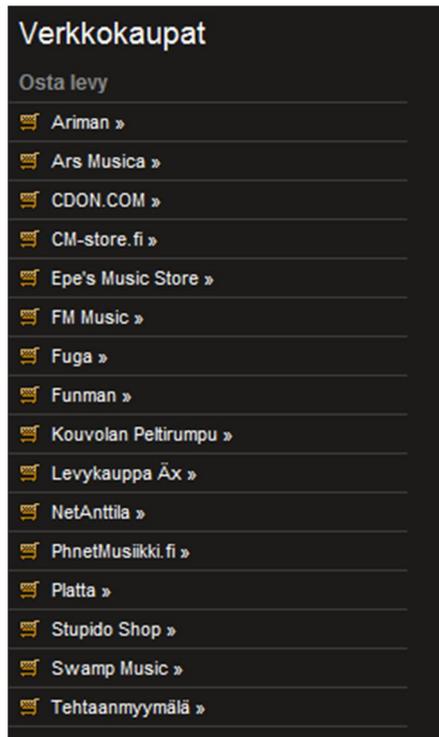


Figure 18. EMI Music web store links

The EMI Music Finland web site contains a lot of content. All of the artists have written biographies with additional links for information on their own representative web sites. There is also a huge amount of news from as recent as today to as far as the year 2005. Fortunately the “News” page features a search possibility with a few filters. The web site also contains an album release page with the possibility to browse by genre, which is very convenient, and a Jukebox page. The Jukebox page is very convenient for a consumer. The page lists music and videos from EMI artists in the order of what is the most watched or listened, and what is the most recent. This is good for consumers who want to know what is new and hot. If the user wants to search a bit deeper, it is possible to scroll the options or browse songs and videos by genre. The system works nicely, but unfortunately the videos are streamed in Adobe Flash and therefore cannot be viewed with some mobile devices or browsers without Flash support.

By viewing some of the most recent album releases from the front page, it becomes very apparent that there are a few different admins updating the album information or there is a lack of interest to make the information pieces consistent. Some of the album pages consist of a bit of information and a track listing and some of the album pages consist of only the other. This is not a major problem, but some of the users

may feel discriminated if their favorite artist album does not get the same attention as the other artists.

EMI Finland search results are good. With a name such as EMI it is easy to control the first page of search results in Finland as there are no words that relate to EMI in the Finnish language. Search such as "levy-yhtiö" also provide one hit from the EMI site on the first page of Google. However, the link leads to the artist page of Irina which is kind of odd.

There is very little social media integration on the EMI Music Finland web site, but it is there. EMI has integrated social media with subtlety on the home page and also on the side advertisement banner on the right. Social media is very important in the 2012, but the users of online world have been guiding their vision away from banner ads for fifteen years now. To reach maximum potential, it would be beneficial for EMI to place links to social media in the lower navigation bar with other contact information. This way the links are out of the way, but can be found if needed. Social media links do not have to pop out as every user on the internet expect companies to have presence in Facebook and Twitter.

The artist pages are very in depth and offer the possibility for the user to buy CD's, visit artist web sites, and view videos and listen to music. If the user enjoys a song he can purchase it directly from iTunes as EMI provides a link for it, or add the song to his playlist in Spotify. It is also possible to share music and videos directly to Facebook and Twitter from the EMI site. However, EMI should definitely consider using YouTube for streaming as the videos are much simpler to share and allow immediate feedback and commenting from users. The videos and songs also download very slowly and this may be due to the user having to stream the file from EMI Finland server. If the file was located on a YouTube server, the download would be fast even with multiple people streaming simultaneously.

EMI Music Finland and many of the sites in this research offer the possibility for the user to subscribe for a newsletter. It sounds like a good idea to gather user information, but with proper social media integration there is no need for the user to collect spam messages from companies any longer. This also benefits the companies, as al-

most all of the same personal information provided in subscribing to a newsletter can be found via Facebook and Twitter. Proper social media integration is and will be more efficient than a newsletter.

The EMI Music Finland web site has a very minor glitch. A small image was unable to load on the "30 Seconds To Mars" artist page during the research. The image error is not a vital performance issue, but according to best practices the page should function as intended and if there is a problem, the user should not see it. An error such as this is very visual and may cause distrust in the user. Every error on a page will cause the user to less likely click on anything that involves using money online, in this case, ordering CD's or downloading songs online. The user may find oneself pondering: "What if the error happens as I enter my credit card information? Is my money safe?" and so on.

During the research no other errors occurred. The EMI Finland web site is very enjoyable to browse and provides a very simple experience. The site includes a lot of what the user could possibly need, but some of the things could be reworked to function better. Overall the site may not be stellar, but it grants a professional image. With a little risk-taking the site would rise above average.

3.5 Epitaph Records

Epitaph Records is an American independent record label. The label was formed by Bad Religion guitarist Brett Gurewitz for the purpose of selling Bad Religion records, but nowadays it is a large record label. Current big names on the label include such rock acts as Bring Me the Horizon, Parkway Drive and Weezer. Epitaph Records evaluation scores are presented in the table below.

Evaluation Overall 3.3

Design	3	Navigation	3.7	Content	3.7	Marketing	3.3	Functionality	3
Consistency	4	Logic	4	Amount	3	Social Media	5	Reliability	3
Simplicity	2	Alternatives	4	Frequency	4	Search Engine	3	Self-service	3
Experience	3	Control	3	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	2	Performance	3

Table 5. Epitaph Records evaluation scores

The Epitaph Records web site is a site that tries too hard. While the basis of the site is written in regular HTML, almost everything else has been done in Adobe Flash. This will cause problems with browsers without an installed Flash plugin and a problem with consumers with a slow internet connection. The home page is immediately filled with tons of features and it is very hard to differentiate the content from the advertisement. The experience of browsing the site continues to confuse as the user delves deeper into the site. Every page is packed with a lot of content and features, forcing the web designer to use very tiny details. The figure below represents the Epitaph records landing page.



Figure 19. Epitaph Records landing page

The navigation is logical and very standard, but the navigation bar itself consists of too many options. The web designer has been forced to design the bar really small, as it would not fit on the page otherwise. A small navigation bar gives the user a feeling that there is nothing important behind the links. Fortunately, the home page features a very big and a functional search button. This allows for very easy navigation as the search structures its results very visually. The page also features bread-crum navigation for simple exploration.

The site is very crowded with content. It is filled with various "Featured" lists of artists, music, videos, new albums, and so forth. The site gives the expression that it is only used as an advertisement wall for Epitaph. A lot of the home page links lead to blogs,

Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Although Epitaph Records site does include very frequent news and an up to date tour calendar, these third party sites provide more recent information on Epitaph Records and its products.

However, Epitaph has done very well in adding very detailed descriptions of the artists and their albums on the web site. All of the albums and artists also include an "If you like this artist, check out..." section which can be very handy for consumers looking for new music as many users struggle with the never ending quest of finding new music. If the user has signed up on the Epitaph Records web site he can also comment on the albums and, believe it or not, the comment sections on Epitaph Records web site are actually used. This is very rare due to social media pages that have taken over the control of internet messaging.

Epitaph Records do have a lot of social media links and the links are there for a reason. The label is very busy with social media. They have a huge amount of followers in Twitter and Facebook with their frequent and refreshing posts. Other self-service functionality that Epitaph Records web site features include a tour list, media players, ringtones page, videos, "goodies" as Epitaph puts it, and a lot more. Everything can be shared to a friend and this makes the Epitaph Records site a very valuable viral marketing tool. The site also has a link to Epitaph's artist merchandise store. However, all of these functions would be more valuable if they were not scattered all over the page. Epitaph should either focus on the most important functions or create a dedicated page to host all of the content distracting features.

The site is in no way a poor web site, but all of the features and functionality may scare the possible customer away. Epitaph has to develop a more definitive navigation bar and a cleaner look for the user to properly enjoy the site. The world in 2012 is also still filled with a lot of users with a poor internet connection and therefore it may be highly valuable to reconsider if there would be another option to replace all of the Adobe Flash functions. There are also features on the Epitaph page that other pages should seriously consider looking into, such as the "If you like this, check out this" function.

3.6 Interscope Records

Interscope Records is an American record label founded in 1991. It is owned by Universal Music Group. The label includes big names such as 50 Cent, Blink-182, Eminem and Gwen Stefani. Interscope Records is also signing contestants from American Idol since 2011. Interscope Records web site evaluation scores are in the table below.

Evaluation Overall 4.0

Design	3.7	Navigation	4.3	Content	3.7	Marketing	4.3	Functionality	4
Consistency	4	Logic	4	Amount	4	Social Media	5	Reliability	3
Simplicity	4	Alternatives	4	Frequency	4	Search Engine	5	Self-service	5
Experience	3	Control	5	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	3	Performance	4

Table 6. Interscope Records evaluation scores

The Interscope Records web site is enjoyable to browse and there are a lot of features that will make the user come back to the site. One of the features is its simplicity. The design is simple and easy to use, even though the color choices are really odd. The colors are used to separate sections of the page from each other, but the mixture of green, teal, pink, blue, white, gray and orange is not flattering at all. The home page has a rather large amount of clutter, but fortunately there are no pattern backgrounds and the font is simple, therefore making the content easy to read. The odd color choices also help defining the clutter in to distinguishable sections.

Navigation of the site is logical and fast. The navigation bar features all of the standard links such as "Artists" and "News", but also some links out of the ordinary such as "Premieres". The said "Premieres" link is in fact just an ordinary Video page that presents the most recent videos. The navigation bar would be even leaner, if the most recent videos could be integrated under the "Video" page.

Unlike most of the sites online, Interscope has managed to perfectly integrate a Google search tool on their site. It may not offer the user the most beautiful list of search results, but it works. The feature is presented in figure 20 on the next page.

The screenshot shows the Interscope Records website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the 'A&M RECORDS' logo on the left and 'FOLLOW INTERSCOPE' with social media icons on the right. Below the navigation bar is a menu with links for 'HOME', 'ARTISTS', 'PREMIERES', 'VIDEO', 'NEWS', 'TOUR', 'RINGTONES', and 'REGISTER'. A search bar is located to the right of the menu. Below the menu is a banner featuring a woman's face, a colorful circular graphic, and the text 'LoveRance' and 'Download on iTunes'. The main content area is titled 'SEARCH RESULTS' and shows search results for '50 Cent'. The results include a list of items with titles, descriptions, and links. On the right side, there are 'Google-mainokset' (Google ads) for 'G-Unit Wear', 'Uusi Panteri Street', 'G-Unit', and 'Enemmän Poster 50 Cent'.

Figure 20. Interscope Records search function

Many of the features are located in various places around the site. On most sites it would be a disturbance, but Interscope has integrated it in such a way that there is no page with two of the same functions. A good example of this is the "On tour" list, which features different lists on different pages. On the home page it features the upcoming concerts during the next few days from all artists, but on the artists page it only features tours from the selected artist. There are also many other features on the site. The customer can order ringtones, download music via links to iTunes, watch videos and order concert tickets. The site is very customer oriented.

The site does not only consist of features and such, it also has a very wide range of valuable information on the company and its artists. The "Artists" site is very in depth, but it lacks an artist biography. Fortunately, every artist page has a media browser. The user can listen to the artist's songs and make up his or her own mind concerning the artist. The artist page has more or less everything related to the artist and if the page is not enough, it is also possible to visit the artist's own web site. Figure 21 on the next page is a screenshot of Interscope Records artist page.

The screenshot shows the LMFAO artist page on Interscope Records. The top navigation bar includes links for HOME, RELEASES, MEDIA, NEWS, DATES, RINGTONES, and FEED. A large photo of the two band members is featured prominently. Below the photo is a 'NEWS HEADLINES' section with several articles, including 'Redfoo & The Party Rock Crew at Tao February 10th!!', '1st Party Rock at Marquee Mondays in Las Vegas of the Year!!', and 'Sexy And I Know It is #1 on Hot 100 Billboard baby!!'. To the right of the news section is a 'FAN COMMUNITY' section with a 'Join The Community' button and social media links. Below that is an advertisement for the album 'Sexy and I Know It' featuring a 'Download on iTunes' button. Further down is a 'RELEASES' section with a link to 'Sexy And I Know It... The Remixes (9/27/2011)'. At the bottom, there is an 'ON TOUR' section listing a concert in Stockholm, Sweden.

Figure 21. Interscope Records artist page

Advertising on Interscope Records page is fairly subtle as there are no popups or anything else aggressively trying to get the users attention. But, if the user focuses on the content he will realize that most of the links placed on the home page, for example, are indeed for advertisement purposes. There is a headphone ad featuring various Interscope artists, a few rather large "download on iTunes" links, new album releases links, polls, and so on. Advertising may seem subtle, but it certainly is there.

Interscope is also really relevant on the search engines and social media sites. The name "Interscope" is well chosen as the search results only present links that guide the user to Interscope Records web site. The label also has a huge following on Twitter and Facebook compared to other record labels. Both pages are updated very frequently by Interscope. Social media integration on the web site is done well. The site features social media links in the navigation bar and in a bottom bar that can be closed by user choice. There are also more than 2000 links to YouTube videos that can be watched on site. Every video can be shared directly to Facebook from Interscope Records web site. This is very convenient and user friendly.

The site is very well programmed and does not take long to load. No errors occurred during the research period on any of the chosen browsers. Some of the videos do not work due to YouTube copyright matters and this should be fixed, as the user does not

necessarily know this is not an Interscope issue. The admin of the web site should take care of non-responding links. YouTube videos are also in Adobe Flash format. If the user does not have a Flash plugin installed he will have to do the installation manually.

The site does have its flaws and the design is not candy for the eyes, but overall the site is very functional and provides a lot of features for a music consumer. With a few minor adjustments the site would be everything a consumer would ever need from a music industry site.

3.7 Sony Music Entertainment

Sony Music Entertainment is one of the big four recorded music companies. Their roster includes such artists as Foster the People, Michael Jackson and Jimi Hendrix. Sony Music Entertainment is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony Corporation of America. SME's revenue in 2010 was 5.7 billion USD.

The company does have a Finnish subsidiary, Sony Music Finland, but due to confusing search results it was not available for evaluation. The search results are reviewed in the evaluation of Sony Music Entertainment below the score table.

Evaluation Overall 3.5

Design	4.7	Navigation	3.3	Content	3.3	Marketing	3.3	Functionality	3
Consistency	5	Logic	4	Amount	4	Social Media	4	Reliability	4
Simplicity	5	Alternatives	3	Frequency	3	Search Engine	2	Self-service	3
Experience	4	Control	3	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	4	Performance	2

Table 7. Sony Music Entertainment evaluation scores

The Sony Music Entertainment web site has a very consistent light-colored theme. It features a very simple and elegant non-Flash artist slide show as a background for the navigation bar. The site does promote a lot of other web sites and record companies under the Sony label, but due to the sparse setting of these promotion ads, the marketing effort stays very subtle.

The site is very pleasant to look at in full screen and it offers all of the features a web site needs to offer, but the users that have their browser in windowed mode will have

a hard time browsing the page due to a programming error presented in figure 22 below.

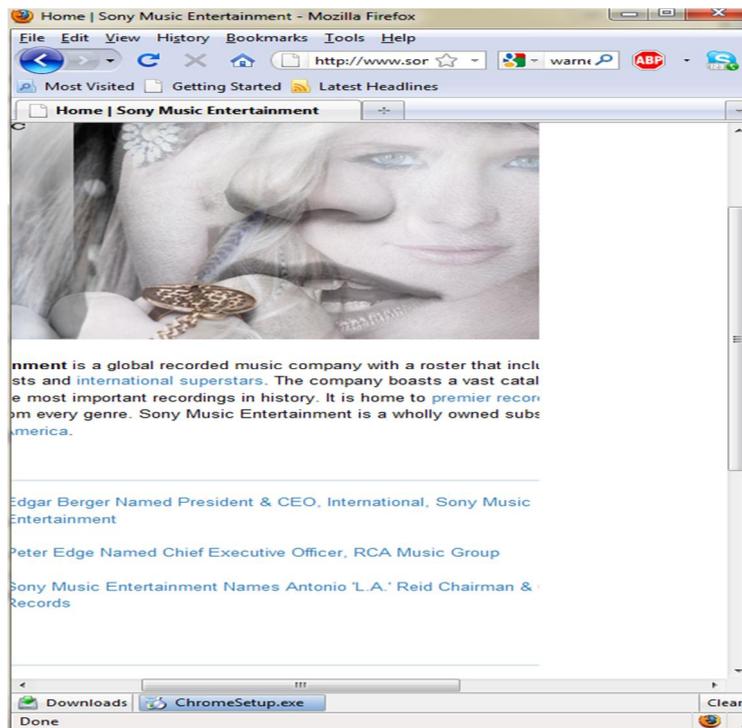


Figure 22. Sony Music Entertainment web site being cut in half in windowed mode

When the site is not in full screen, it is not scrollable from side to side as it cuts out the rest of the page that does not fit on the browser window. This is a major inconvenience for users with small 11 to 13 inch laptops.

The navigation of the site is simple and works as intended, but some of the pages are quite irrelevant as most of their content can also be found on other pages on the site. Therefore, it would be simple to give the navigation bar an even leaner look by merging some of the pages.

The page has quite a lot of content and therefore it features an easy to use Search function on the "News" page. Some of the other pages could also use alternative navigation methods. The "Artists" page itself does not have a lot of content. There is no information on the artists other than links to their own sites and their online stores. Upon clicking the picture of an artist, the user will be redirected to the artist's home page and the user loses control of the site. Having a brief informative section below

each artist would retain the control on the user and give the user an option to explore more via clicking on the artist's home page link.

The SME web site has a lot of content and information on the company itself and the "News" page features a long history of news that can be viewed to as far as the year 2006. Unfortunately some of the news may have month between them, some a day. The content is not very consistent and a lot of the news concerns the events that happen inside the company, such as the naming of the new CEO and so on. From a customer point of view, the interest lies more on the product – the artists – not the company itself. There is no full artist catalogue on the site, only featured artists, but fortunately the highly active Twitter and Facebook page offer a lot of news on the company's artists. And even though there is no YouTube integration or videos on site, it is evident that SME is actively following the new technology.

As mentioned earlier, Sony Music does have a Finnish subsidiary Sony Music Finland, but it seems as if they have taken their web site down recently. Upon searching "Sony Music Finland" on Google, the only reasonable result is the Sony Music Finland Facebook page. However, Google does offer links that should lead to sonymusic.fi, but all of the links land to sonymusic.com English home page. One of the results is also the Warner Music Finland web site as seen in the figure 23 below.

The image shows a Google search results page for the query "sony music finland". The search bar at the top shows the query and a search button. Below the search bar, it indicates "About 4,610,000 results (0.19 seconds)". On the left side, there are filters for "Everything", "Images", "Maps", "Videos", "News", "Shopping", and "More". Below these are filters for "Any time", "Past hour", "Past 24 hours", "Past week", "Past 2 weeks", "Past month", "Past year", and "Custom range...". The main search results are as follows:

- Virallinen Sony FI kauppa | Sony.fi** (Ad - Why this ad?)
www.sony.fi/Sony_VAIO_CTO
 Tutustu uuteen Sony VAIO C Intel® Core™ i7-2620 malliin. Osta nyt!
 VAIO E: jokapäiväiseen käyttöön - Taidokasta suunnittelua sinulle
- Sony Music Finland - Levy-yhtiö - Espoo, Finland | Facebook**
fi-fi.facebook.com/SonyMusicFinland - Translate this page
 Sony Music Finland | Facebook: ... Jos haluat olla yhteydessä henkilön Sony Music Finland kanssa, sinun on ensin rekisteröidyttävä Facebookiin. Rekisteröidy ...
- Sony Music Finland - Levy-yhtiö - Espoo, Finland - Katso täältä...**
fi-fi.facebook.com/SonyMusicFinland?sk=app - Translate this page
 Jos haluat olla yhteydessä henkilön Sony Music Finland kanssa, sinun on ensin rekisteröidyttävä Facebookiin. Rekisteröidy. Se on ilmaista, ja kaikki voivat liittyä ...
- SonyMusicFIN - Twitter**
twitter.com/SonyMusicFIN - Translate this page
 Sign up for Twitter to follow SonyMusic Finland (@SonyMusicFIN). Sony Music Finland.
- LCMDF | Free Music, Tour Dates, Photos, Videos**
www.myspace.com/lecorpsmincedefrancoise
 CONTACT FINLAND - SONY MUSIC FINLAND Katja.Vauhkonen@sonymusic.com.
 BOOKING WORLD - PITCH & SMITH kalle@pitchandsmith.com ...
- Warner Music Finland**
www.warnermusic.fi - Translate this page
 Sat, Mar 3 - Kaapelitehdas
 Warner Music Finland jo kolmatta vuotta Suomen suurin musiikkiyhtiö ... Maailmalla johtavat musiikkiyhtiöt Universal Music ja Sony Music jäivät Suomessa ...

Figure 23. Sony Music search results

Warner Music has obviously done well in invading their competitors' search results. Apart from searching for the Finnish site, typing in a search for Sony Music is rather simple. However, upon searching with the word "Sony" the music section is not even on the first page. Sony has a huge array of products, but the search engine results are very confusing.

The simple programming and the absence of Adobe Flash videos provide a reliable browsing experience on the site. During the evaluation session there were no errors and all of the links presented on the page work as intended. The page also has a few very valuable self-service tools such as links to official artist stores on the "Artists" page, a Job search option on the "Careers" page, and the possibility to follow on Twitter and "Like" on Facebook. But there is certainly room for more. For example, the navigation has a link to a page called "International" that features all of the countries and their flags in which SME has offices. The flags do not have any other function than to present the user how large the company is. If the user is not from the US, he or she would probably like to visit their home country web site by clicking on the flag. This would provide value to the company as now, for example, there is no information on what has happened to the Finnish site.

The site is very enjoyable with every browser available in full screen and it will most likely take less than a month before the Sony employees notice the *faux pas* with the windowed mode. Overall, the site could easily go over the score 4 with some review on performance and search engine issues.

3.8 Spinefarm Records UK

Spinefarm Records is a heavy metal focused record label based in Finland. Spinefarm is part of Universal Music Group, but operates as an independent business unit. Spinefarm features well known heavy metal artists such as Amorphis, Apocalyptica, Children of Bodom and Volbeat.

Right now Spinefarm Finland is working on a new web site and therefore the evaluation will be done on the Spinefarm UK site. The evaluation and scores of Spinefarm UK web site are treated below.

Evaluation Overall 3.3

Design	3	Navigation	2.7	Content	3.7	Marketing	3	Functionality	4
Consistency	4	Logic	2	Amount	4	Social Media	2	Reliability	4
Simplicity	4	Alternatives	3	Frequency	4	Search Engine	3	Self-service	4
Experience	1	Control	3	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	4	Performance	4

Table 8. Spinefarm Records UK evaluation scores

The site has a very heavy metal design. It is bleak, murky and gloomy with a touch of animation on an Adobe Flash banner. The banner is wisely designed. It is a Flash animation on the browsers with Flash plugin support, and a simple JPEG photo on browsers without Flash. The site is very simple, but the graphic decisions make it look amateurish. Even if the site is designed for a heavy metal crowd, the design can have a professional touch. Right now, the site may cause strange reactions for any other audiences.

The navigation on the site features common navigation options such as "Bands", "Contact", and so on. However, Spinefarm has decided to include two navigation bars: one on the top and one in the bottom. This would make sense if the page would consist of lengthy articles, but the pages on Spinefarm UK's page are mostly very short. This is not the only navigation error. The navigation on the "News" page is a bit odd as shown in the figure below.

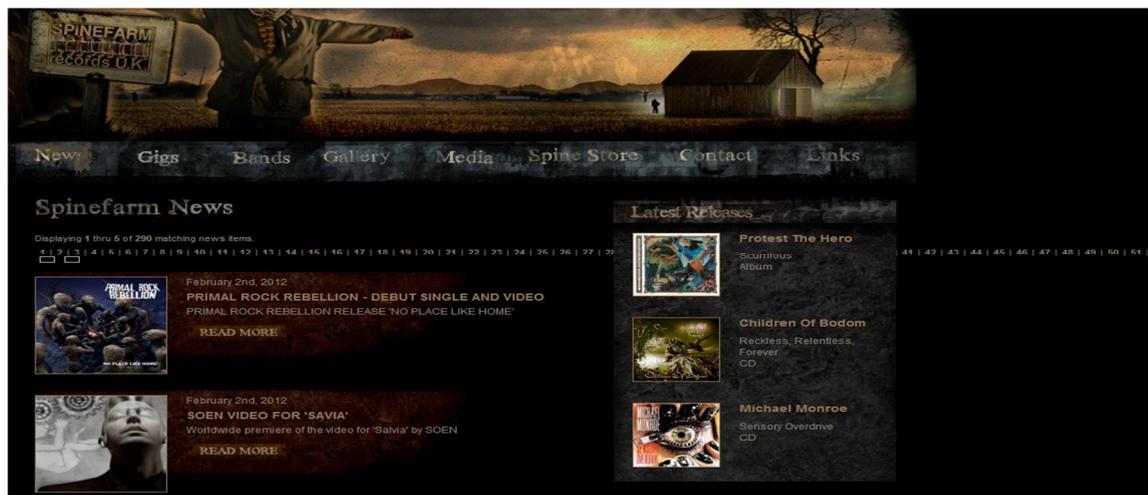


Figure 24. Spinefarm Records UK News page navigation

The design looks very bad as it crosses one of the information boxes on the right. This is not the only problem with it. The navigation options it's supposed to provide do not make sense either. It is very hard to find a piece of news from a certain time, as the

only references to time are numbers from 1 to XX. Does the user find the news he is looking for under number 46 or under number 21? It will take a lot of time to search for a specific piece of news from a certain point of time.

The user does have some control on the site, but without bread crumb navigation the user will get lost a few times as some of the pages can go very deep. The search function may also cause a bit of confusion. It is a nuisance to use as it throws the user out of the page and presents the search results in Google. The search should be definitely done on the page.

The site contains a lot of content. Artist biographies are very long and news is rather frequent. Every concert and release has their own pages that contain information and the possibility to buy a product. The site provides a lot of media concerning the artists such as videos, an mp3 player and a promotion photo gallery. Due to the amount of content, every page has a band search function presented in the figure below.



Figure 25. Spinefarm Records UK band search function

The function above works well and provides results on the page. If the chosen band has no information on the site, a proper error message is shown.

The relevancy of the content however can be debatable as there is so much content that it is hard to separate the valuable information from the rest. But, according to best practices of web design, everything should be simplified for the user. Therefore, most of the content should be moved under the artist biographies. This frees up space in the navigation bar and makes it easier to navigate through the masses of content this page provides.

The absence of social media integration may be comparative to the amount of written content on the site. The only real appearance of social media is on the "Media" page, where the page provides a link to Spinefarm's YouTube channel. Spinefarm UK has a very active Facebook page and integrating it to the web site would provide great additional value for the company.

As for the search results most of the search "Spinefarm" results concern the Finnish site. However, the UK page is located on the fourth spot of the search which is very good. Upon searching "Spinefarm UK" the web site comes right on top, but the rest of the links on the first page direct the user to the Finnish site.

Without pop-ups and real-time social media widgets the marketing effort of Spinefarm Records UK seems very subtle. The company approaches marketing in a way in which the news, artist biographies and promotion photos sell the product. There are no popups, but a lot of news and posts that may lead to a page where the user is given a chance to buy a product.

Even though the design of this web site is not the most elegant, the site's performance is very good and it offers the user a lot of options to work with. A metal enthusiast will most likely find him or herself ordering tickets and physical CD copies in no time as this site features both of those possibilities. The site also provides addresses to local "Spine Stores" for the band t-shirt hungry metal crowd.

3.9 Universal Music Finland

Universal Music Group is one of the big four music industry companies. UMG has a 23% market share of the industry and is therefore the largest company in the business. It's most famous artists include Lady Gaga, Bon Jovi, U2 and Metallica. The revenue of UMG in 2010 was 4.5 billion euros. Universal Music Finland Oy is a subsidiary of UMG and its market share in Finland is about 20 %. The Universal Music Finland web site was evaluated and the scores are presented in the table below.

Evaluation Overall 4.0

Design	4.3	Navigation	3.7	Content	3.7	Marketing	4.3	Functionality	4
Consistency	5	Logic	3	Amount	3	Social Media	4	Reliability	4
Simplicity	4	Alternatives	3	Frequency	5	Search Engine	4	Self-service	4
Experience	4	Control	5	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	5	Performance	4

Table 9. Universal Music Finland evaluation scores

The web site design is very simple and yet elegant. The design is consistent throughout with a simple black layout and white font. There are no popups to disturb the user upon landing the site. The site does however feature an artist photo slideshow on the home page. It is very sleek and easy to look at, but it is done in Adobe Flash and therefore not all the browsers are able to view it without installing a third party plugin. The picture below shows what happens with Internet Explorer.

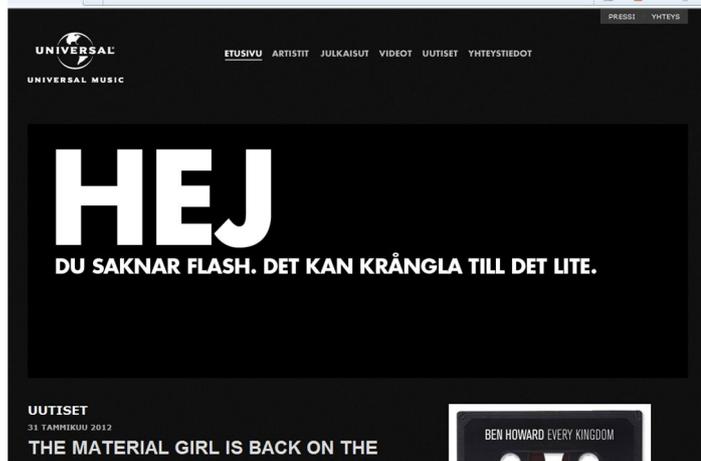


Figure 26. Universal Music Group home page without a Flash plugin

For some reason, the error text is in Swedish while the page is in Finnish. Despite the problem with Flash, the customer experience is very enjoyable. There are a lot of features around the home page that get the user's attention, but none of the functionalities distract the user from their current task.

The site offers standard navigation. It is almost impossible to get lost on the site as the content per page is limited and the navigation stays always on top of the page, even while browsing through different pages. The news section also offers the possibility to view older entries from as far as 2010. The logic of navigation is however a bit confusing. The site features two different buttons for the "Artists" page and the "Contact" page. Both of these buttons lead to the same page, but locate in a different place on

the site. These buttons can be viewed as navigation alternatives, but the site does not offer that much content to actually need navigation alternatives.

The content is informative with a few exceptions. The “Artists” page features only artists that Universal Music Finland deems as topical artists on their label. Does the label have more artists? How could a potential customer find that out? Some artists hardly have any information on them. Under Eminem the only information available is “stay tuned”. The “Artists” section is also a bit confusing with its choices of language. On a Finnish page the user would expect to see everything written in Finnish. This is not the case on this web site. There are pieces of information written in English and pieces written in Finnish. However, the best part in the web site content is its frequency. The page news and concert list are updated very frequently. There is a maximum of week between updates. Twitter and Facebook provide a lot of content also.

The marketing on Universal Music Finland's site is very subtle. There are a few links to Spotify and iTunes on the artists section, but also on the front page slideshow. In addition to that, the rest of the marketing effort seems to rely on social media integration. Universal Music has a YouTube account, a Facebook account and a Twitter account. Every social media page seems active and the site provides access to all of them. The figure below illustrates how the integration has been implemented.

The screenshot displays the Universal Music Finland website with several key elements:

- Main Content:** Finnish text announcing Metallica's 30th anniversary celebration at the Sonisphere Festival 2012 in Helsinki, including ticket prices and purchase information.
- Video Player:** A YouTube video player for Lana Del Rey's "Born To Die" is embedded in the top right.
- Facebook Integration:** A Facebook widget shows the "Universal Music Finland" page with 7,105 likes and a grid of user avatars.
- Twitter Integration:** A Twitter widget for the account @UNIVERSALMUSICSUOMI is visible at the bottom right.
- Footer:** The page footer includes the date "01 HELMIKUU 2012" and a headline "Van Halen palaa tauolta uusi albumi".

Figure 27. Universal Music Finland social media integration

These links, however, are not the only functionality the site has to offer. The site features also a "Video" page, which is designed for a movie player page where a Flash user can view music videos from various UMG artists. The movie player has a very good function for sharing videos, but unfortunately YouTube links are more reliable and therefore are used more often.

Overall the site works fairly well on all of the selected browsers and even without the Adobe Flash player plugin, the site is perfectly good to use. No errors occurred within a 30-minute period of use. However, due to strange choices in navigation and cross-language content, the site cannot be given the best score possible.

3.10 Warner Music Finland

Warner Music Group is the third largest family of record labels in the music industry. It is one of the big four record companies. WMG includes such artists as Aerosmith, Cher and Nightwish. WMG revenue in 2008 was 3.5 billion USD. Warner Music Finland is a subsidiary of WMG and their web site is evaluated in this section.

Evaluation Overall 3.5

Design	3.7	Navigation	2.7	Content	3.3	Marketing	3.7	Functionality	4
Consistency	5	Logic	3	Amount	3	Social Media	3	Reliability	5
Simplicity	3	Alternatives	3	Frequency	4	Search Engine	5	Self-service	3
Experience	3	Control	2	Relevancy	3	Subtlety	3	Performance	4

Table 10. Warner Music Finland evaluation scores

The web site has a very consistent graphical design. The colors are very easy for the eyes and the text font is subtle. Every page consists of the same ads, which adds to the consistency, but takes from the simplicity. The site contains no Adobe Flash videos or popups and can therefore be opened with any web browser, but unfortunately the site is very full of advertisement. The figure on the next page has been taken from the Warner Music Finland home page.

Figure 28. Warner Music Finland home page

As the above figure illustrates there is very little room for the actual content on the page and therefore the page has to be scrolled down a lot to provide any reading material. This so-called “eye candy” advertisement also adds to the user’s confusion while browsing this particular site. The site does offer all of the main features a web site needs to offer, but most of the pages have too much advertises that distract from the content. With a little parsing, this problem would be fixed.

The navigation bar is simple and built exactly as the theory proposes, but the navigation inside the pages is very confusing. The “Artists” and “Releases” pages have been designed with no parsing. The list of artists goes from all the way from A to Z and with a company this huge, the list happens to get very long. This page could benefit from a more elaborate design. The “Releases” page does the exact same thing.

There is also a little lack of control on the Warner Music Finland site. In a case where a user would like to get information on a specific artist by clicking on their picture under the “Artists” page, the user gets sent right off the Warner Music page. By clicking on an artist the user will soon find him or her on the artists’ home page. It might open right on top of the Warner site or as a new tab in the web browser; it seems to be quite random while it should be consistent. There is no information on the artists on

the Warner site itself. It is very hard to find out what the artist does without the use of a search engine such as Google.

However, the page does have a lot of other relevant content and that is why it has a "Search" function. The function does work on some level, but the user cannot be sure whether the search has been executed or not as the function refreshes the results right on the home page. Also, the search results are quite confusing as figure 29 below may illustrate.

The screenshot shows the Warner Music Finland website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'ETUSIVU', 'UUTISET', 'ARTISTIT', 'JULKAISUT', 'VIDEOT', and 'YHTEYS'. Below the navigation, the main content area is titled 'Warner Music Finland - Viikkouutiset vko 4'. Underneath, there is a section for 'ALBUMIT:' featuring 'Sean Paul: Tomahawk Technique (Atlantic)'. To the left, there is a sidebar with a Facebook widget for Warner Music Finland, a 'TULEVIA KEIKKOJA' section listing upcoming shows for Jason Derulo, Michael Bublé, and The Sounds, and a 'WARNER FACEBOOKISSA' section. On the right side, there are promotional banners for 'The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 1' and 'CHEEK - PYRKIN VÄHENTÄÄ'. The search results for 'Skrillex' are visible below the Sean Paul result, showing the album 'Skrillex: Bangarang (Atlantic)' and a brief description in Finnish.

Figure 29. Warner Music Finland on-site search results

The search typed in was a well-known Warner label electronic music artist "Skrillex", but the first result is Sean Paul. Why did Sean Paul come before Skrillex?

Warner Music Finland has integrated some good features on their website. They have a Facebook page, which is updated quite frequently. The site also features some YouTube integration, which can be shared to various social media sites directly from the Warner site. There is a very good looking concert schedule included in the site's sidebar that shows concerts from various big names from the label, but for the user's disappointment the schedule tool does not give the user the possibility to order tickets or get more information on the concerts.

With google.fi the search results are astonishing. Warner comes up first with all the obvious key words such as “Warner”, but it also makes the first page with key words such as “music label” and “levy-yhtiö”.

The site works very nicely on every chosen browser as there is no need for Flash support. The site loads fast and there are no errors. However, there is a very tiny little icon, seen in figure 30 below, that was unable to load on any browser.



Figure 30. A small programming error

The icon serves as a button that guides the user to the Warner Music Finland Facebook page and for some reason the picture on it is unable to load. Most of the users are probably going to ignore it or not even notice its existence, but it certainly is there.

3.11 The Internet Movie Database (IMDb)

IMDb was chosen as a good example of how a web site should be designed and how it should perform. The web site is an online database of information related to movies, television shows, actors and other matters related to visual entertainment media. It is among the top 50 most popular web sites according to Alexa, a web site that ranks web sites by traffic. IMDb was also chosen as one of the top 100 web sites of 2011 on PCMAG. IMDb is now owned by Amazon.com. The web site is different from a standard web site as it is constructed as a database, but it was chosen for this research as it may evoke innovation to look a bit out of the ordinary. IMDb has been evaluated with the same principles as all of the music industry web sites. The evaluation scores of IMDb can be viewed in table 11 on the next page.

Evaluation Overall 4.7

Design	4.7	Navigation	4.3	Content	5	Marketing	5	Functionality	4.7
Consistency	5	Logic	4	Amount	5	Social Media	5	Reliability	5
Simplicity	5	Alternatives	5	Frequency	5	Search Engine	5	Self-service	5
Experience	4	Control	4	Relevancy	5	Subtlety	5	Performance	4

Table 11. IMDb evaluation scores

The IMDb site is very simple. The basis of the site consists of four colors: white, black, yellow and a few shades of grey. The choice of font makes the page as easy to read as a book. Large proportions of the site are also covered with movie related pictures as movies are what IMDb is all about. This is also the biggest secret behind the success of IMDb. The site is about movies and movies only. If the user really wants to know something about the company itself, he would have to navigate to the lower end of the page.

The web site layout stays consistent throughout the pages. The only page that distinguishes itself from the others is the “IMDbPro” page. This page is designed to stand out and give the user a prestige sensation and therefore lure the user to sign up on IMDbPro. The user gets a lot of useful new features and IMDb gets a lot of feedback and personal information for development and marketing purposes.

IMDb is a very enjoyable web site design-wise. The design does not cause confusion and it makes the navigation and information exploration a wonderful experience. Nothing gets in the way and the design enables an easy look at the navigation. The home page may seem a little cluttered as the company has developed a lot of new features along the life cycle of the site. However, the main function, the IMDb search bar, is integrated into the navigation on top and is therefore on an uncluttered zone. Despite the slightly abundant home page, the web site offers the user a real Internet adventure. Figure 31 on the next page represents IMDb upon page landing.

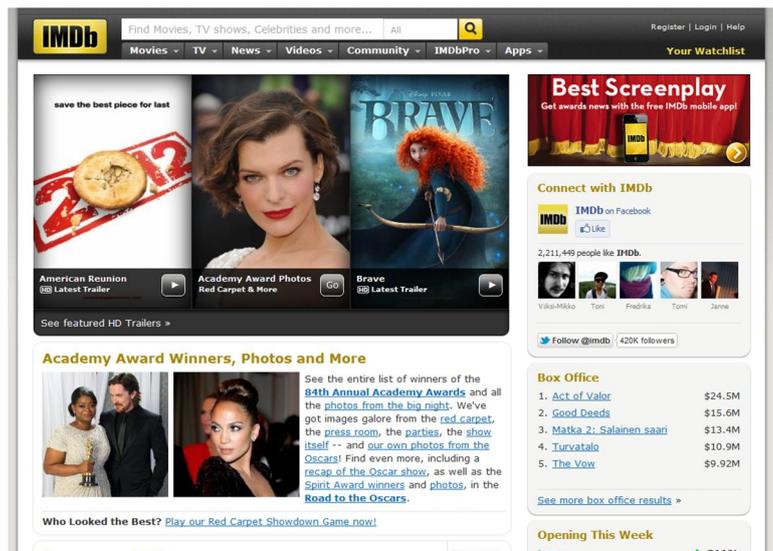


Figure 31. IMDb home page

The IMDb is a database and therefore its navigation is a little different from a normal web site. The top navigation bar does not consist of the standard options such as "About Us", "Products" and "Contact". All of the options are parts of the database. If the user does not know he has landed on a database page, he will probably look around the home page a bit and realize it in a few seconds and the navigation will start to make sense. However, according to best practices the navigation is not the sharpest one possible. The web site has a lot of content for the navigation to cover and therefore the navigation is not the lightest either. When the user decides to put the cursor on the "Movies" option in the navigation bar, he will realize the amount of content that goes into IMDb. A figure representing this event can be viewed below.

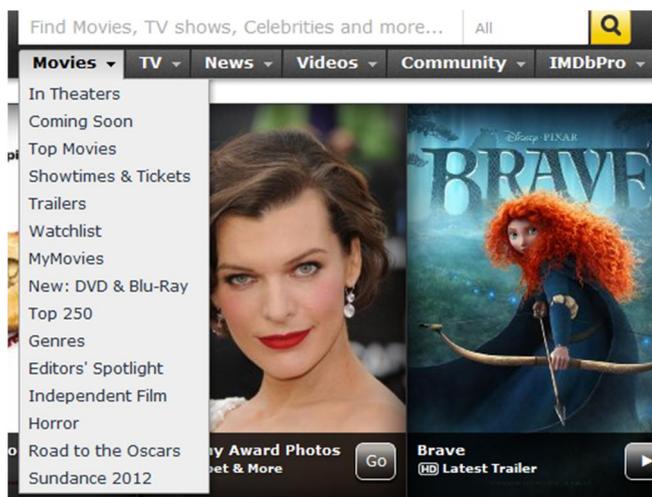


Figure 32. IMDb navigation bar

The list of options is long, but it does serve a point. As the database has grown larger it has to be filtered down somehow. The other option would be to remove everything and just include the search bar. But on the other hand, Google exists already. For this reason IMDb web designers have surely found this filtering possibility to be far more rewarding and user friendly. The user will also find that the content contains many hyperlinks for further navigation, and, fortunately, the site offers very good bread crumb navigation on the bottom of the page in case the user gets lost in the information jungle. This must-have function is shown in figure 33 below.

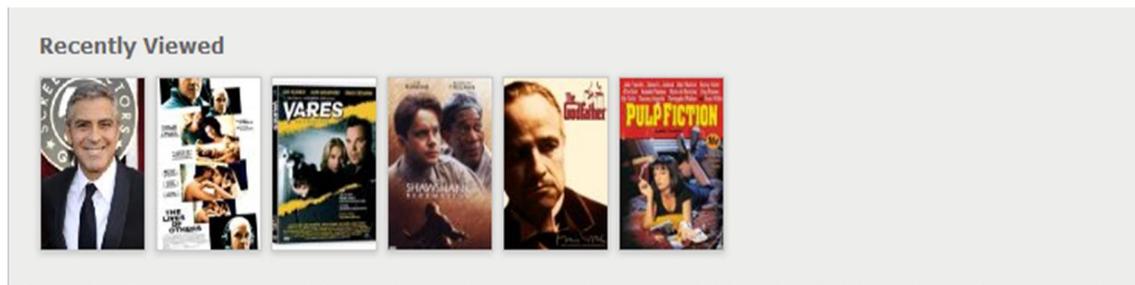


Figure 33. IMDb bread crumb navigation

Apart from the amount of navigation options the navigation is simple. If the user finds dropdown options disturbing, the lower end of the page also functions as an alternative to navigation. However, the search function is probably the most excellent piece of navigation on the IMDb site and this is a perfect example of how a search function should work. The search bar gives the user the possibility to search for various movie related matters such as movie titles, actors, directors, and numerous others. The search opens on top of the old page and shows all of the search results within perfect structure. It may be that one of the key ingredients of the success of IMDb may lie on the astoundingly useful search bar. Due to the attention span of a user and the high bar set by Google there is no reason to implement a search bar on a site if it does not function as well as this one does.

The amount of content in the IMDb is immense. It will be very hard for the user to carry out a search that has no results. The very goal of IMDb is to answer every movie related question the user may have. The only downside of the web site is that the IMDb mainly focuses on American and British films, but many well rated foreign films are included. Even a few Finnish products have made the site.

IMDb content is not only focused on listing information about movies and actors. There are also many other quite useful features such as a top 250 list which is based on scores that IMDbPro users have rated the movies by. The rating system is also extremely useful for a regular user. The user may be balancing between a few movies to purchase based on the plot information only, but the user rating can offer to be a good decider and a money saver. This is one of the most useful features on the site.

The amount of content and features is just impossible to imagine without using the site. The user is able to watch movie trailers, order movie tickets, read news on movie industry and be a part of the IMDb community. The community is very active and if the user is a movie enthusiast, he or she will most likely find a lot of useful threads about movies on the forums. The forums are also well integrated within the site and the members of the community are able to write reviews on movies. Usually a user review system like this may be highly unreliable, but like most of the affairs on the IMDb, the relevancy of the reviews is also solved with a rating system by the other community members.

Probably one of the most innovative functions on the IMDb site is the "Watchlist". If the user is using IMDbPro, he or she may note down movies that would be interesting to watch. It may seem simple and useless especially if the user has a pen and a piece of paper, but having a list that gives instant information about movies is very handy. This may also be a very interesting function for the music industry. Web site integrated "Artists to listen to" lists would probably be of great use for a music hungry consumer. One might wonder if all of the features on the IMDb site are useful. Probably not, but the way IMDb lays the content out in the navigation and on the pages is priceless. If the user wants something movie related, he will get it from IMDb.

IMDb is very active on both Facebook and Twitter. IMDb has over 2 million likes in Facebook and over 400 000 followers in Twitter. The frequency of updates in both IMDb site and social media is short. There are over five posts a day on every site and none of the posts are irrelevant. In the movie industry it may be easy to post nonsense news about the daily life of a famous person, but IMDb manages to keep it formal and informative only. Social media is all about giving the users an image of the company the company wants. It is easy to post about everything even slightly related to movies

or music, but it takes skill to be picky and choose good updates. The integration on the IMDb web site is also very subtle. The home page features a small window with the option to “Like” on Facebook and “Follow” on Twitter. On movie pages it is also possible to see how many people have liked a certain movie and if there are any friends that have liked it. This is useful for the social media generation and is a good way to connect people and stay viral.

It may be due to sheer popularity that IMDb has reached the top of search engines with various simple searches such as “movie”, but this is certainly something every web site should look up to. The goal is to be number one on every imaginable search that could be related to the web site and IMDb has that bit covered. As for other marketing efforts IMDb is very subtle. There is no other advertisement on the IMDb web site other than a small banner that promotes a free IMDb mobile application. On some of the pages this mobile application advertisement is replaced with a very simple non-colored piece of advertisement that does not distract the user. This advertisement is seen in figure 34 below. Can you find it?

The screenshot shows the IMDb website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Find Movies, TV shows, Celebrities and more..." and a search icon. Below the search bar are navigation tabs: "Movies", "TV", "News", "Videos", "Community", "IMDbPro", and "Apps". On the right side of the top navigation, there are links for "Register", "Login", and "Help", and a "Your Watchlist" button. The main content area is for the profile of George Clooney. It features a large photo of George Clooney on the left, followed by his name "George Clooney" and roles "Actor", "Producer", and "Director". Below this is a biography: "Born in Lexington, Kentucky, as son of Nick Clooney, a TV newscaster of many years, who hosted a talk show at Cincinnati and often invited George into the studios already at the age of 5. Avoiding competition with his father, he quit his job as broadcast journalist after a short time. George studied for a few years at Northern Kentucky University... See full bio >". It also lists his birth information: "Born: George Timothy Clooney, May 6, 1961 in Lexington, Kentucky, USA". There are links for "More at IMDbPro", "Contact Info: View agent, publicist, legal and company", and "Represent George Clooney? Add or change photos". Below the biography is a row of movie posters and a section for "789 photos", "276 videos", and "13409 news articles". A yellow banner states "Won Oscar. Another 64 wins & 112 nominations See more awards >". The "Known For" section shows a row of movie posters. On the right side, there are "Sponsored links" for "Asteri Kirjanpito" and "Huolehdi hyvinvoinnista", a "Share this page:" section with Facebook and Twitter icons, and a "Quick Links:" section with a dropdown menu showing "overview".

Figure 34. IMDb on-site advertisement

Overall the IMDb is an amazing web tool and a web site that is still one of the top sites after twenty years of existence. The design is still modern and the web site performs with excellence. The movie trailer page is still a bit out-dated with its Adobe Flash programming, but otherwise the web site performs on the top of its league. The site has

so much to offer for every industry in the Internet that it should be used as one of the benchmark sites solely for the purpose of showing how a huge amount of content can stay simple and interactive.

3.12 Comparison Matrix

This section is dedicated to the Comparison Matrix in which all of the evaluated web sites of this research are listed in an order from best to worst. The comparison matrix results will be dealt with on a very high level as most of the information related to evaluation is located within the individual evaluation sections. It is important to note that while the sites have major differences in some of the aspects, all of the web site scores are rather balanced. Due to the nature of the evaluation and the chosen scale from 0 to 5 it is quite common for an aspect to reach a score between 3 and 4. This can also be seen in the total scores as the score range is between 3.2 and 4.1. The only page that managed to score high above 4.1 was IMDb and while it was chosen as one of the best sites available, it does not reach a perfect 5 in total. The comparison table can be viewed below.

Evaluation Score Summary Average score:: 3.8

Web site	Design	Navigation	Content	Marketing	Functionality	Total
IMDb	4.7	4.3	5	5	4.7	4.7
Atlantic	4.7	4	4.3	3.3	4	4.1
Century	4.3	3.7	4	4	4.3	4.1
Interscope	3.7	4.3	3.7	4.3	4	4
UMG Fin	4.3	3.7	3.7	4.3	4	4
EMI Fin	4	3.7	3.7	4	4	3.9
Sony	4.7	3.3	3.3	3.3	3	3.5
WMG Fin	3.7	2.7	3.3	3.7	4	3.5
Epitaph	3	3.7	3.7	3.3	3	3.3
Spinefarm	3	2.7	3.7	3	4	3.3
Columbia	2.7	3.3	3.3	3.6	3	3.2

Table 12. Web site evaluation ranking

The matrix is very interesting to look at. The results show that navigation is the weakest link of most of the sites. None of the sites, including IMDb, scored over 4.3 in this aspect. However, design and functionality seem to be the strongest points of web design in the music industry. While evaluating the sites it became apparent that it might be easy to get caught in the visual aspects of the web sites in the entertainment indus-

try. Many of the sites have very well thought out designs that enable easy and logical navigation, but some of the sites have been drawn in to the more artistic way of portraying a web site. While visual effects are important in television media, Internet is a whole different medium. It is logical to merge beautiful visuals with good audio to portray a full audiovisual experience, but for this reason there are separate music videos. A web site should be light to use and the content easy to reach. As seen with YouTube, Google, and Facebook, it is easy to tell that in 2012 the average Internet user respects a web site with simple and easy navigation. The key of web design is to make the web site fast and natural to use, and therefore it is a shame that none of the web sites in this research demonstrated how web site navigation works at its finest. However, there are a few with quite good navigation to look up to.

It is also interesting to see how none of the biggest names in the industry manage to break out from being average. It may be that these companies have not felt the need to invest in the Internet as the names are big enough on their own. However, Internet is one of the largest media today and the majority of music consumed by music listeners is on the Internet. The consumers expect a certain level of web design from companies involved with the Web and the companies should meet those expectations. It is fascinating to see how an independent record label such as Century Media has put more resources and effort into web design than the giants and it has paid off.

EMI Music Finland managed to be the average web site of this evaluation. The average score of the web sites was 3.8 and EMI managed to top that slightly. EMI has managed to score better than most of the big four record companies, but UMG wins by having a little better quality in design and marketing. EMI Music Finland web site weakest points are its social media integration, lack of quality management in content and slow buffering music videos. The aspect in which EMI manages to come out strongest is design as it is very simple and pleasant to look at. The EMI Finland web site is one of the few music industry web sites that is able to stay away from confusing visuals and overflowing home pages. EMI could have done much worse and still have an average web site, but by implementing some fresh content and polishing the navigation the web site could easily make the top two and distinguish itself as the music industry company of the virtual world.

4 Practical Implications

This section has been created for EMI as a proposition on how the company should proceed on developing their web site. This section also includes a general proposition field which can be reviewed by EMI to gather general information on what the music industry companies are doing wrong as a whole on their web sites. The general information section will also make note of the aspects that are done particularly well in the industry.

The purpose of this research has been to evaluate EMI Music Finland's web site and other web sites in the industry to provide EMI feedback on their site's functionality. The EMI Music Finland web site has been first evaluated individually and then compared to other music industry company web sites. All of the evaluation has been done according to best practices of the industry. The following chapters will deal with the issues that should be addressed by EMI on their website and also the aspects that should be kept as they are.

4.1 Proposition for EMI Based on the Research

The EMI Music Finland web site is an average web site. There is nothing particularly alarming on the web site that would make its user cringe and leave the site immediately, but there is nothing particularly captivating either. The web designers have created a web site that will pass as average and that is fine as most of the web sites struggle with balancing design with navigation and somehow manage to squeeze in a bit of informative content. However, if EMI Music Finland wants to separate itself from the millions of other web sites in the Web a few changes would make it easier to shine as a diamond between the pearls.

Design is probably the strongest feature on the EMI Music Finland site. The page layout is consistent and it features very little disturbance from the actual content, however, there is some Adobe Flash on the site and an advertisement banner that may disturb the user from the content. For this reason it would be beneficial to make the advertisement banner even smaller and with even less animation. As for the Flash banner on the home page, it could be replaced with an HTML alternative that functions just

like the Flash one except it would be lighter to use. One of the advertisement banners on EMI web site can be seen in the figure 35 below.



Figure 35. EMI web site advertisement

The search function on the EMI site is really good, however it would benefit from a style IMDb is using on its results page. This way the users that accidentally miss the dropdown menu upon the search will get the same information on a whole page. Also a separate search button would be of use for users that are not used to just pressing the “Enter” key.

The best thing about navigating on the EMI web site is the yellow box that represents the user’s location on the site. Other sites should definitely take note of this as it is very easy to get lost between all the information music industry sites offer. The worst part of navigation is the amount of options at certain parts. The most noticeable is the amount of web store options. The consumer wants simplicity and that simplicity would be one option only. Taking note of the IMDb style of having just one and simple option, “Amazon.com”, would improve user confidence. The web store options on EMI web site can be seen in the figure 36 on the next page.

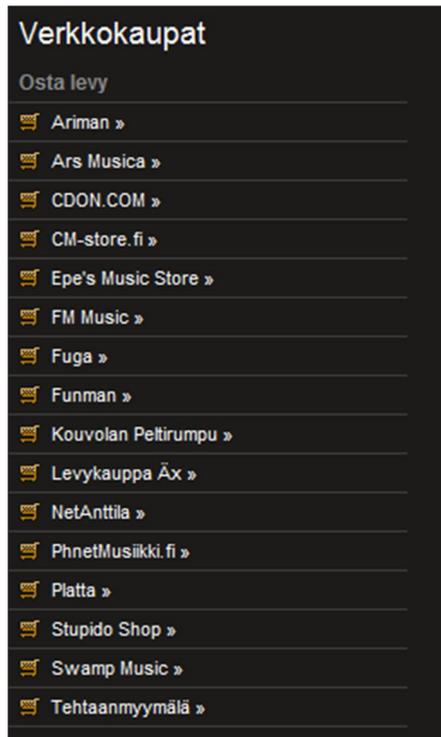


Figure 36. EMI web store links

The site has a lot of content and that is what the user is interested in. But from a consumer point of view, it can reflect a feeling of bad marketing and a bad product if the information given on the products is not constant. Of course it may be that it is a conscious decision to put out products that make the other products shine, but considering the situation of the music industry, it is without a doubt beneficial to market every product as the best product available.

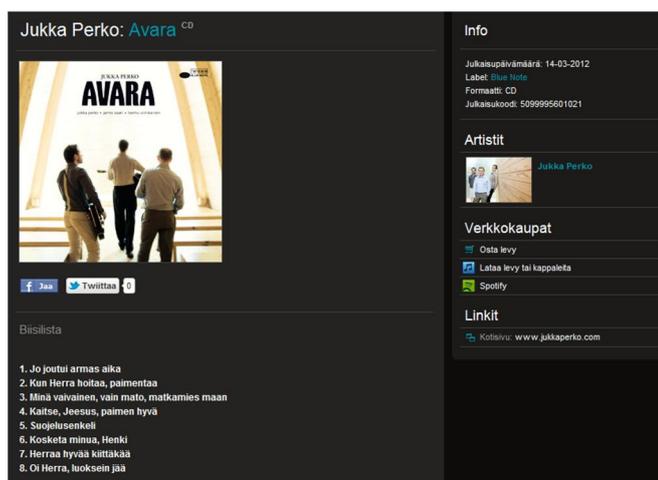


Figure 37. An example of a low information album update

As for the social media content, there should definitely be more. Right now the social media links are placed on the home page of the site. This is what most sites do and it is fine, but the bottom bar of the EMI Music Finland is quite empty and it could be valuable to locate the social media links there. This way the user can find the links at any moment and at any page. The home page will also gain more space and look more inviting. Integrating social media on the artist pages may also be useful. The users love to see how many "Likes" an artist has and for some users this is also the measure of how good and famous the artist is. Atlantic Records web site has a good way of ranking the artists by the amount of Facebook likes they have. This might be worth taking a look at.

Now in the year 2012 social media is blooming and this affects everything. EMI Finland should revise their newsletter system inside the company and evaluate if it is really bringing value to the company. If it feels like it is of no use or the situation could be better, it might be valuable to implement the system into a social media page such as Facebook. Today's consumers enjoy real time information and instant interaction. With Facebook both of these are possible. Facebook offers numerous possibilities to implement a newsletter. One of these could be simply to release newsletter content via status updates.

It is also of most importance that the web site is reviewed at least bi-weekly. The photo bug on the "30 Seconds To Mars" artist page may cause inconvenience as it can induce distrust in the user. Every single error on the site may cause the user to consider whether it will be safe to purchase anything from the site or whether the information given can be trusted. Even if the web store is on a third party site, the user may decide to leave the web site immediately and forget about purchasing records.

Another performance related issue is the way EMI has uploaded videos on the site. As it may seem good to have an own on-site video player, it is also a case of re-inventing the wheel. Since the existence of YouTube, uploading videos has been a simple process and with the social media capabilities of YouTube it is a very efficient viral marketing tool. This research has also been pointing out a lot of facts about YouTube being a better option to other Adobe Flash video players because it offers other options of downloading the video file. For example, Apple's famous iPhone down-

loads a YouTube video in mp4 format which enables viewing on a device without Adobe Flash installation. This change might be beneficial for mobile browsers that happen to land on EMI Music Finland web site and for most of the Internet population also as YouTube is now the norm of video viewing on the Internet.

After EMI has fixed all of the tiny problems on the site, it is time to look at the future of the site. What are other music industry sites doing to develop their sites? What is the direction of web sites in general? Is social media replacing web sites for good? Whatever the answer to these questions may be, there are always possibilities to develop the site and make it more appealing to the customer. One of the best new features that emerged during this research is the IMDb watch list system. The idea is simple: the user may gather movies that he may want to see in the future. For the music industry the idea would be the same: to gather artists and music videos the user wants to see and hear. This way the user may collect interesting artists from the site into one place and listen to previews by them after browsing the web site or during browsing. The idea is simple and efficient.

All of these changes mentioned above are just scratching the surface and brought forward as results of this research. However, it is up to EMI Music to read all of the web site evaluations in this research and see if there are any good features that feel beneficial for the EMI web site.

4.2 General proposition for companies

Overall the music industry web sites evaluated in this research are in a good shape. Every web site manages to stay around average or a little bit above average on all of the aspects evaluated, but there is a lot of fluctuation on what has been done exceptionally well on different sites. Many sites have fine visual design and many sites have easy navigation, while some sites manage to do poorly on both of these aspects, but have excellent content instead. The list goes on. However, there is a common pitfall: too much effort.

How can there ever be too much effort? In the Web it is very common. It is not just something the music industry companies do. This is a very basic mistake and easily

happens when any web designer is left alone with his decisions. The web designer wants to include everything he can and therefore he ends up adding features that are not too important for the company or are implemented in an unorthodox way. If the web designer does not arrange user testing, the site will soon end up being a show gallery of the designer's skills and it will be hard to use by anyone other than himself. The same mistake can occur if the company, who are not familiar with web design, wants a list of features on their web site that cannot be implemented in a sophisticated way. In this case the web designer has to do his best to keep the company happy.

The very core of the existence of web sites is to deliver information to the user in a swift manner. This means that the site should have focused content, fast and natural navigation, simple visual design and very subtle marketing effort. All of this should be done in such a way that the performance does not suffer. Most of the sites in this research have very marketing oriented design and while it may seem to achieve good results, it is often very annoying for the user. As pointed out in best practices, it is important to have the web site designed in such a manner that the user is in control. For example, various advertisement banners and pop-ups make the user feel like he is being force-fed with unwanted content. While none of these sites have any advertisement pop-ups, most of the sites have very heavy home pages. A very typical music industry web site home page consists of a navigation bar, some artist links, some new album links, some social media advertisement, a few pieces of news and some more advertisement. An experienced user would find the navigation bar instantly, but someone with even the slightest uncertainty will find oneself confused. The reason why the home page is so important is that the rule of first impression is also applicable in web design. If the home page looks bad, chances are that the user realizes all of the information he is after can be found on Wikipedia.

The key of web design is to make the web site fast and natural to use. The web site should be simple and usable on any given computer, Internet browser or broadband speed. The year 2012 is filled with technology and new features for the Web, but if something can be done it does not mean it should be done. Web design should be approached in a very simple manner: quality content and natural navigation.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary

The purpose of this project was to evaluate EMI Finland's web site systematically by using the best practices of the industry and also, by comparing the site to the most central competitors' and their subsidiaries' web sites. The Web is full of new features and technology for the companies to use, and it is not easy to keep up-to-date with the available technology. While new features are important, it is crucial to keep in mind why a web site is created in the first place. A proper research on the condition of EMI Music Finland's web site was executed and results gathered.

The main objective, and the research question to be answered, was to concentrate on how EMI would become more appealing to a regular music listener and how that listener would get more out of EMI's web site, and also to evaluate how the EMI Finland web site compares to other web sites in the industry. The research question was answered. It was discovered that EMI web site is a little above average when compared to other web sites in the industry. A proposition on how EMI could rise above average was created based on best practices of web design and comparison results. The results show that overall the web site is in good condition but in order to become more than average there are a few key things EMI should consider revising.

The approach in conducting this project was to first gather a huge amount of theory knowledge on web design and create a web design evaluation tool to serve as a summary of best practices of web design. This tool was then used to evaluate 10 music industry web sites including EMI Music Finland web site, and an additional industry independent web site in order to bring valuable benchmarking to the research. The evaluation tool proved to be an excellent method for evaluating the web sites. Data collection with the evaluation tool was very straightforward and rewarding. A great deal of good information was found during the research on the sites, but at times it was hard to weigh the aspects and to score them fairly compared to the other sites. Nevertheless, as the evaluation proceeded it became easier and easier to study the web sites objectively.

The key findings of this project were that EMI Finland web site is a little above average when compared to other web sites in the industry. Three major issues on the EMI web site are poor social media integration, lack of quality management in content, and lack of captivating features. It is worth noting that there is nothing on the web site that needs urgent attention, however, this study provides EMI with information on how to rise above the average and how to keep their web site relevant as the Internet world evolves.

The project also provides information about the condition of web sites in general in the music industry. Design and functionality seem to be the strongest points of web design in the music industry. Many of the sites have very well thought out designs and enable easy and logical navigation, but some of the sites try too much and fail to catch the user's attention. The research shows that there is a lot to learn and to avoid while benchmarking other music industry web sites.

5.2 Evaluation

The project was very easy to approach from the beginning to the end. It was fun to conduct the project with such independency as it enabled efficient work and the possibility to schedule the project according to my timetable. The resources needed from EMI's behalf were very limited in this project and therefore the results exceed all expectations.

The overall results of the study are very interesting, but there are a few matters in the project that caused some uncertainty. In a subject such as web design it was very hard to find fresh theoretical data in a physical form. Some of the books used in this research have been published in the early 2000. The Internet is evolving fast and therefore guidelines used ten years ago hardly apply in 2012. Fortunately, with a reasonably small amount of effort it was possible to differentiate useful data from the outdated. But due to this reason many web articles were used as theory in this subject. All of the data was gathered from known sources and therefore it is trustworthy.

Another possible issue is the timespan between the web site evaluations. The whole evaluation process took a little more than a month and therefore there are small differences on the evaluations. However, the same evaluation method has been used on

every site. The small differences are highly valuable to EMI as no evaluation is the same. EMI can find something new from every evaluation.

The most satisfying aspect in this project was to be able to construct a great tool, make use of it and see the end results. The whole evaluation process was fun and natural to do. The project subject itself is highly interesting and therefore it motivated me during the whole process. Being given the chance to work for a company in the music industry is nothing short of a dream. After seeing the condition of some of the music industry web sites, the industry still manages to interest me.

The results of this project have also proven to be useful for EMI Music Finland. EMI is aware of some of the issues on their website, but the information provided in this research will help them to process the issues with more knowledge. The new issues found on their web site via this research will be assessed within the company. The data collected in this research will also be used in future EMI web site and social media projects to further develop new features on their web site.

All in all, the project has left me with good new knowledge on web sites, web design, and the music industry. It is also very satisfying to hear that this project has not been done in vain. Now it is only a matter of time for EMI web site to reach its full potential.

References

Alexa – The Web Information Company web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.alexa.com/>

Allen, Cliff Kania, Deborah Yaeckel, Beth. Wiley, New York. 2002. One-to-One Web Marketing: Build a Relationship Marketing Strategy One Customer at a Time (2nd edition)

Andreas M. Kaplan, Michael Haenlein. 2009. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media.

Atlantic Records web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://atlanticrecords.com/>

BBC News article. 2008. Profile: British music giant EMI. Available in WWW-format: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/7188861.stm>

BBC News article. 2001. Turning into digital goldfish. Available in WWW-format: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/1834682.stm>

B.J. Fogg, Cathy Soohoo, David Danielson, Leslie Marable, Julianne Stanford and Ellen R. Tauber. 2002. How Do People Evaluate a Web Site's Credibility?

Century Media Records web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.centurymedia.com/>

Columbia Records web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.columbiarecords.com/>

EMI Music Finland web site. 2011. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.emi.fi/>

EMI Music web site. 2011. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.emimusic.com/>

Epitaph Records web site. 2005. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.epitaph.com/>

Gerry McGovern. A & C Black, London. 2006. Killer Web Content. Source: ebrary.com

Interscope Records web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.interscope.com/>

Iteracy. 2011. Web page size and layout. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.iteracy.com/>

Jennifer Kyrnin. 2011. Top 10 Tips to a Great Web Page. Available in WWW-format: <http://webdesign.about.com/od/webdesignbasics/tp/aa112497.htm>

Jones, Kristopher B. Visual. 2008. Search Engine Optimization: Your Visual Blueprint to Effective Internet Marketing

Kathy E. Gill. 2009. Web Design Tip: Avoid Banner Blindness. Available in WWW-format: <http://wiredpen.com/2009/07/29/web-design-tip-avoid-banner-blindness/>

Kayla Knight. 2011. Planning and Implementing Navigation. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2011/06/06/planning-and-implementing-website-navigation/>

Jakob Nielsen. 2007. Fancy Formatting, Fancy Words = Looks Like a Promotion = Ignored. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/fancy-formatting.html>

PCMag article "The Top 100 Websites of 2011". Available in WWW-format: <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2397663,00.asp>

Phillip Crowder, David A. Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, USA. 2008. Creating Web Sites Bible (3rd Edition)

PLR Internet Marketing Article. 2010. Internet Marketing – Advantages and Limitations. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.plrinternetmarketing.com/internet/internet-marketing-advantages-and-limitations/>

Rex Briggs. 2007. The Momentum Effect.

Stephanie Agresta, B. Bonin Bough, Jason I. Miletsky. Course Technology. 2010. Perspectives on Social Media Marketing.

Susan Sweeney, Andy MacLellan, Ed Dorey. Maximum Press. 2007. 3G Marketing on the Internet.

Sony Music Entertainment web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.sonymusic.com/>

Spinefarm Records UK web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.spinefarmrecords.co.uk/>

Thea M. van der Geest. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Philadelphia, PA, USA. 2001. Web Site Design is Communication Design

The Economist article. Jan 10, 2008. The music industry: from major to minor. Available in WWW-format: http://www.economist.com/node/10498664?story_id=E1_TDOJRGGO

The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.imdb.com/>

Terry Felke-Morris. 2011. Web Design Best Practices Checklist. Available in WWW-format: <http://terrymorris.net/bestpractices/>

Universal Music Finland web site. 2012. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.universalmusic.fi/>

Vince Barnes. 2011. Web Site Functionality. Available in WWW-format:
<http://www.htmlgoodies.com/introduction/intro/article.php/3473631/Web-Site-Functionality.htm>

Vincent Flanders. 2011. Web Pages That Suck – Learn Good Web Design by Looking at Bad Web Design. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/>

W3Schools.com Browser Statistics. 2011. Available in WWW-format:
http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers_stats.asp

Warner Music Finland web site. Available in WWW-format: <http://www.warnermusic.fi/>

Zimmerman, Jan. 2002. Marketing on the Internet: Your Seven Step Plan for Succeeding in e-Business Now That the Hype is over.

Evaluation Tool Fill-in Sheet

Evaluation Tool Fill-in Sheet

Evaluation	Overall	0							
Design	0	Navigation	0	Content	0	Marketing Effort	0	Functionality	0
Consistency	0	Logic	0	Amount	0	Social Media	0	Reliability	0
Simplicity	0	Alternatives	0	Frequency	0	Search Engine	0	Self-service	0
Experience	0	Control	0	Relevancy	0	Subtlety	0	Performance	0

Design

Consistency:

Simplicity:

Experience:

Navigation

Logic:

Alternatives:

Control:

Content

Amount:

Frequency:

Relevancy:

Marketing Effort

Social Media Integration:

Search Engine:

Subtlety:

Functionality

Reliability:

Self-service:

Performance: