Site: http://betterpropaganda.com/

About: betterPropaganda (bP) is a music site that specialises in independent music. It aims to highlight artists and labels by offering free downloads of tracks, interviews, reviews and podcasts.
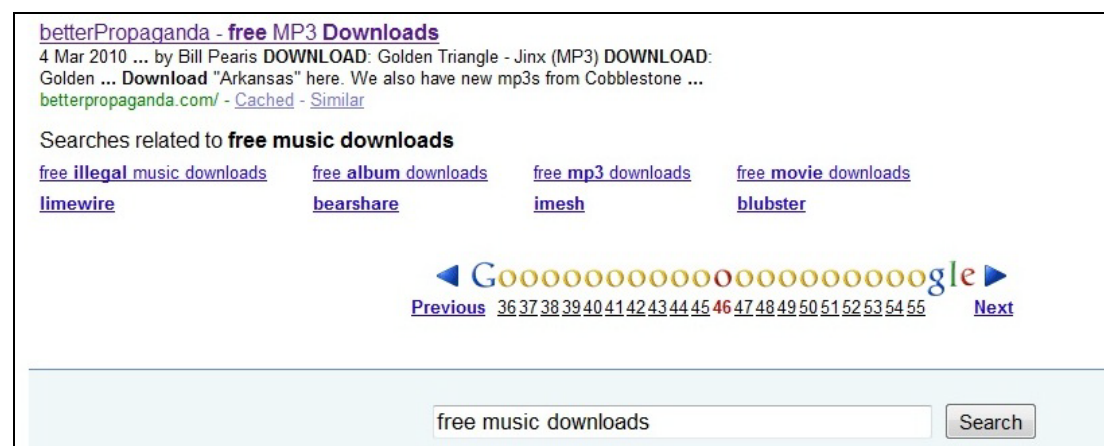
Search Engine Used: Google.

<u>Searching</u>

It will be very difficult for a site such as this to get a high ranking in a search due to the independent nature of the music it is showcasing (indie music isn't as well known as more mainstream music) and because of the myriad of so called 'free' music download sites that appear on the web.

Take your average surfer who is probably not that computer savvy, they just want access to free music. A typical search for them might be:

"free music downloads" – bP appears at a lowly position of Page 46

I can't imagine the average web user (or any user for that matter) going beyond the first page. So let's imagine they have a conscience (or are paranoid about getting busted!) and search for:

"free legal music downloads" – bP doesn't appear at all. Which is a shame because it should be making more out of the fact that it is legal and supported by the artists and labels and just so it can beat the horrible illegal music sites that plague the web.

Ok, so lets try *"free mp3 downloads"*, most users will know the format of the music they want as they will probably have purchased an mp3 player for the music to go on, so this should be a very common search and it is in the <title> of bP's site to boot. In this search bP appears at a more respectable position of Page 8, but I still can't see people searching down that far, unless they specifically want music from

the independent end of the spectrum. So in conclusion your average user will probably not come across this site. If we try someone who has a better idea of what they want, then they would probably use searches such as:

"independent music downloads" – bP doesn't appear at all.

"free indie music downloads" – Page 21.

This is still not good as indie music is the target market of the site. What if people aren't that fussed about downloading; they just want to listen to it, searches might include:
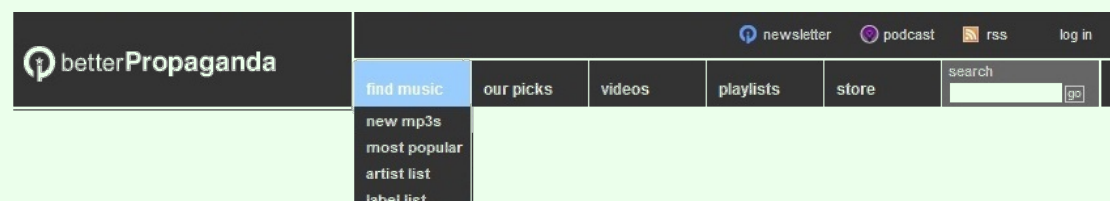
"listen to free music" – bP doesn't appear.

"free online music" – doesn't appear.

So all in all, this site probably won't be found unless the user specifically wants indie music or the site has been recommended through blogs, affiliations or word of mouth.

Improvements

For starters the navigation is done using JavaScript to create a drop-down effect.

This prevents areas of the site called "find music, new mp3s, artists, labels" being crawled. It should repeat the links somewhere else on the site (create another navigation column for example) in simple text form or provide a site map.

The Artist and Label pages of the site are linked by Dynamic URL's. E.g.:

http://betterpropaganda.com/artist_page.aspx?id=1480. This is probably the only way of providing an artist amongst a database of thousands but it does prevent the site appearing in a search such as *"free <artist name> mp3 downloads"*. If static URL's were created then this would solve it. Maybe this wouldn't be feasible for the vast amount of artists that are on the site, but maybe for the labels it could as there aren't as many.

The <title> tag could be more descriptive:

```
<title>
      betterPropaganda - free MP3 Downloads
</title>
```

Maybe by adding 'independent' and 'legal' in, it could be more specific. E.g.:

```
<title>
betterPropaganda – free, legal MP3 downloads from independent labels
</title>
```

The <meta description> tag is actually very good:

```
<meta description="betterPropaganda allows you to use interactive
features to discover, hear and collect the best new music. The site
is loaded with thousands of free, hand selected and fully legal mp3s,
with brand new music uploaded daily." />
```

It is a meaningful sentence which defines what the page is about. It could link the keyword phrases together which may result in a better search ranking. For example instead of 'loaded with thousands of free, hand selected and fully legal mp3s' it could remove the 'hand selected' part to link the keyword phrase 'free, legal mp3s' which is a more likely search entry.

Unlike the <meta description> tag, I think the <meta keywords> tag has too many entries. Maybe a bit of a 'black hat' trick is going on here:

```
<meta keywords="Podcast, Podcasts, Music Recommendations, New
Releases, Pre-Releases, exclusives, Mp3, MP3s, MP3 downloads,
Discover, Rock, Electronic, Hip-Hop, Playlists, Charts, Music news,
music interviews, Newsletters, Downloads, music Reviews, Radio,
Listen, Archive, iTunes, Uploads, Stream, streams, experimantal, dj
mix, independant label , cutting edge, dj, techno" />
```

To improve the keywords I would recommend removing the un-necessary keywords (Discover, Charts, Radio, Listen, Archive, iTunes, Cutting edge) and link the others together to create more meaningful phrases such as the search entries we tried earlier. The keywords from the <title> and <meta description> tags should also go in here. I noticed that a few keywords were spelt incorrectly (see highlighted), this is good to catch common misspellings and typos but the correct spellings should also be provided (which they haven't).

The <img alt> tag has been added to make the site standards compliant, but they have left it empty on all images! E.g.:

```
<img style="padding-top: 5px; padding-left: 14px;"
src="images/star.jpg" border="0" alt=''/>
```

Some useful text should be entered here such as 'free <Artist Name> download' that can be crawled which would provide useful search information.

The only <h1> tags are in the news section (see highlighted):

This doesn't represent any sort of structure for the page. A lot of importance is placed on the <h1> tag in a search rating and to use it on news stories which don't describe your page is a waste. An ideal <h1> tag would be the name of the site (with an additional brief description) such as the one that appears in the top left corner of the page. This logo is (not surprisingly) an image. It should be made into a <h1> and styled using CSS. Also more content should appear on the page such as an introduction to the site, new additions etc. This would give the page a better structure which would make it easier to crawl and could be used in conjunction with <h2> to <h6> tags (of which there are none on this page!)