

Comp. 171 - Assignment 1  
Product Analysis of Bandcamp

## Product Description

Bandcamp (found at <http://bandcamp.com/>) is an online music streaming, marketing, and management platform. The service allows artists to stream and sell their music and merchandise to a wide consumer array of fans. It also serves as a music discovery tool for consumers and musicians alike. Additionally it allows record labels to easily gather data on their signed artists to better manage them. A major aspect of Bandcamp's premise is that profits from sales go almost entirely to the musicians themselves, rather than to large companies, or Bandcamp itself. The service allows searching by various tags and genres, and also has featured tracks, sometimes complete with articles elaborating on the music and artist.

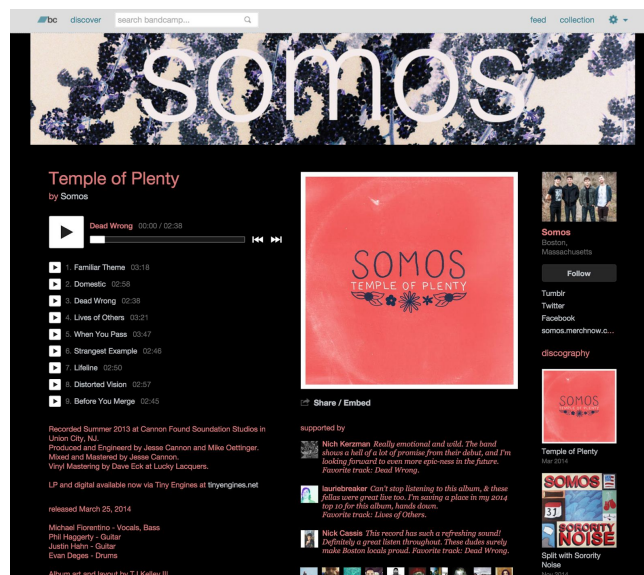


Figure 1. Example of a band's album page

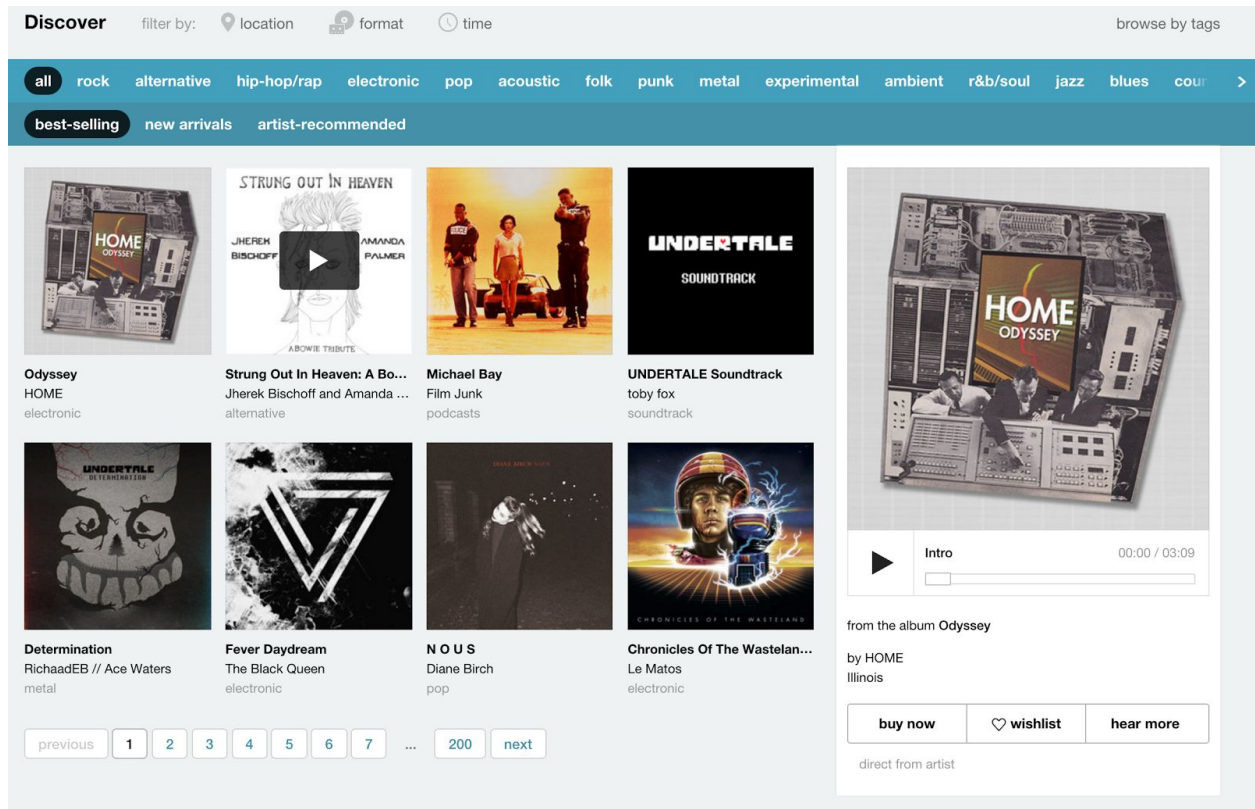


Figure 2. Discover section of the home page

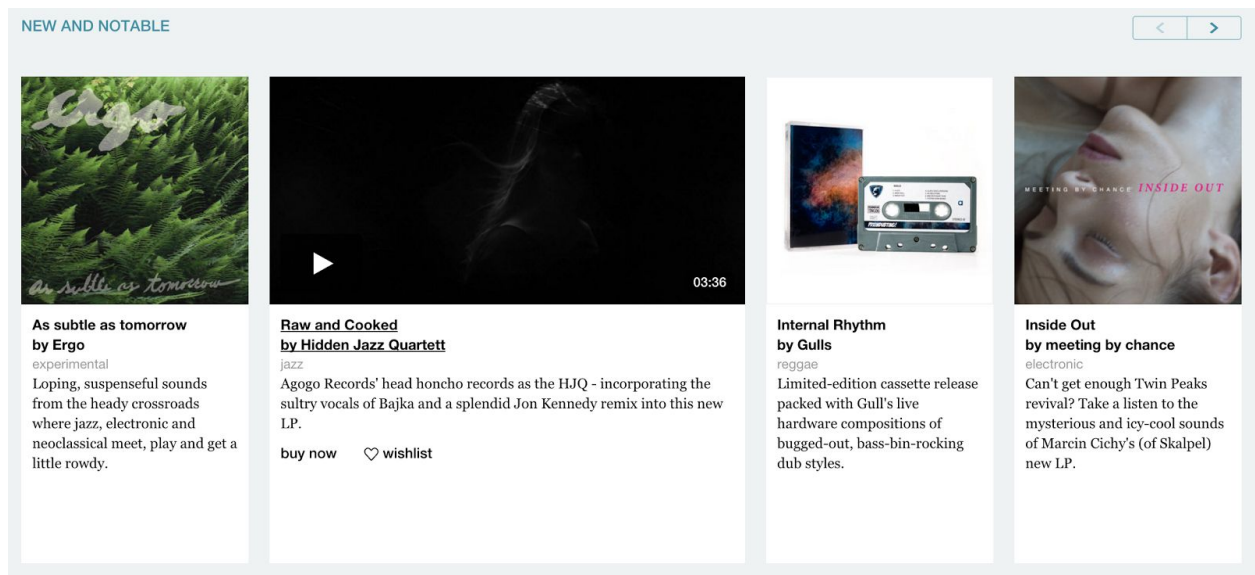


Figure 3. New and Notable section of the home page

## User Analysis

Bandcamp is primarily targeted at the young adults millennial generation, however it's user base truly extends to anyone who has adopted the idea of listening to

music via online streaming. Therefore the target age range can be approximated as about 15-32 years old. It is intended for individuals who are accustomed to the modern web, and it is geared towards people who are familiar with the process of streaming and purchasing music online. The product is not very manually demanding, and like almost all other GUI based web applications, it requires the use of the mouse and keyboard, or on the mobile app, the use of a finger to interact with the screen. Bandcamp is made for people who are accustomed to the digital age and nearly always having their technology at their fingertips, whether at home or on the go.

There are several primary subcategories of users that Bandcamp is targeting: artists, fans, and labels. Each one of these types of users has different specific needs, which will be described in the Task Analysis section below. The artists are professional, semi professional, and even casual musicians that either want to sell their music, or purely create a digital home for their music. The labels are managers of multiple artists that need to be able to track the activity of the groups they manage. The fans are individuals that purely want to browse, consume, and comment on music.

## **Task Analysis**

As mentioned above, there are three primary user groups, each with different tasks that they may want to perform. The potential tasks and needs of the three groups are addressed independently:

### Artists:

- Create and manage a profile, possibly from multiple accounts if several bandmates require access to profile management.
- Post music on their profile for others to listen to, purchase, and download.
- Sell merchandise to fans from their profile.
- Manage old releases and display discography.
- Link fans to social media accounts and personal websites.
- Display song lyrics.
- List album credits.

- Issue updates and posts.
- Reply to comments and otherwise communicate with fans.

### Fans

- Listen to, purchase, and/or download music from favorite artists.
- Discover new music, either from an artist the user is already familiar with, or from a new artist entirely.
- Learn more about an artist or band.
- Buy merchandise from a band.
- Gather contact information about the band (i.e. emails, phone numbers, social media pages).
- Follow artists to stay up to date on the artist's activity.
- Follow other listeners to keep an eye on their taste and potentially learn about new music.
- Comment on music to interface with artists and other listeners.
- (High Level) Give direct support to favorite artists.

### Labels

- Manage multiple band profiles from one centralized account.
- Manage finances at a macro and micro level. (e.g. overall label income as well as income from individual albums.
- A profile page for hosting information about the label, such as what artists are signed, contact information, news.

## **Context, Situations, and Environment**

This product can be aptly used in many circumstances. It has both a desktop and mobile version, so browsing Bandcamp is possible both at home and on the go. The only restricting factor is availability of a browsing device, as well as availability of wifi or some means of mobile data consumption. Bandcamp can be used actively and passively; you can actively browse through music, or you can passively continue listening to an album once you select to start playing it, as Bandcamp will automatically

play the songs sequentially. This means that this application could be used either on the go or when stationary, since there is the option of not having to interface with the mobile application while purely listening to a selected album. This means that multitasking is possible, so the tool is still viable while walking or driving, for example. This tool could be very useful in any situation where an individual would want to listen to music. Some common examples that come to mind are on a commute, at the gym, while studying at home or in the library, or in the car.

## Conceptual Design

The conceptual design, or conceptual model, is broken down according to the template provided in the lecture slides. Additionally, the points made in this section do not elaborate upon the very low level elements of design such as links or text. It is assumed that the reader has a basic understanding of web interfaces and the underlying basic (HTML-like) elements that ultimately compose a page:

### Objects

- Play Button
  - The interface used to initiate the playback of video or audio content.
  - **Attributes:** The image of a sideways triangle in a small, rectangular enclosure.
    - **Actions on:** Click with mouse or tap with finger to begin content playback.
  - **Relationships:** Tied to an audio or video file of some kind.
    - **Actions on:** Frequently, if the user clicks a play button, it will expand the visual representation of the video or audio content.
- Album
  - A collection of one or more audio tracks.
  - **Attributes:** A square image that is the album's cover. The album is composed of one or more audio tracks, and depending on which page the user is viewing an album or collection of albums on, these tracks may or

may not be directly visible to the user. Albums can also contain comments or information about the album and those who created it.

- **Actions on:** Clicking on the album cover will bring the user to the main page for the selected album, or if already on the main page, it will spawn a lightbox with a larger version of the album cover image. This page features a large display of the album cover, and a complete listing of the album's audio tracks. Clicking on the play button associated with any given track will play that track. Users can leave comments on an album upon purchasing the album.
- **Relationships:** Albums are frequently featured as a part of a collection, such as the feed, or an artist's discography.
  - **Actions on:** The user can click on different album covers in the collection to navigate between the options.
- **Article**
  - A written article with interspersed photographs, videos, and audio clips or songs.
  - **Attributes:** An article is comprised of an amalgamation of text, photos, video, and/or audio. On the home page, articles are represented by a single image and an associated blurb of text describing the article. On the main page of the article, the content is vertically laid out, so that the user can scroll through the interwoven mediums.
    - **Actions on:** Users can click on the home page representations of the article to bring them to the main page for the article. Once on the main page, the user can interact with the individual segments of content in their respective ways. The user can play video and audio content, click links to follow them, enlarge pictures by clicking on them, and scroll through the text and other content of the article.
  - **Relationships:** Articles can be featured as part of a frequently updated set on the front page.

- **Actions on:** These various articles can be clicked to read. They are featured by the staff of Bandcamp, in an effort to direct more user attention and traffic to those articles.

- Profile

- The user's persona within Bandcamp.
- **Attributes:** A fan's profile consists of a profile image, a banner image, a collection of purchased and downloaded albums, a wishlist of albums that the user would like to purchase or download, a collection of people following the user, and a collection of people being followed by the user. Note: I unfortunately do not have access to the artist and label account tiers, so I cannot perform more in depth analysis of their conceptual model.
  - **Actions on:** The user can change their profile picture and add albums to their collection and wishlist by pressing the associated button on the album's main page.
- **Relationships:** People can follow each other's profiles, resulting in a wide social network of listeners.
  - **Actions on:** The user can follow other users, and other users can follow this user by navigating to the respective user page and selecting to follow that person.

- Merchandise

- Physical items that can be purchased online, for home delivery.
- **Attributes:** Pictures and descriptions of the physical item for sale.
  - **Actions on:** Users can click the pictures to further inspect them, can select options about the item, and ultimately purchase the item.
- **Relationships:** Merchandise is band specific.
  - **Actions on:** While users under the fan category cannot change the status of who the merchandise belongs to, I imagine that the label

and band accounts would have more features that could control price and who the finances go to, for example.

- Feed

- A news feed of the activity of fans and artists that a user is following.
- **Attributes:** A series of postings about the purchasing and downloading activity of individuals that the user is following. It also displays the recent activity of bands that the user is following.
  - **Actions on:** The user can click on any of the recent purchases on their feed to play the album. The user can also add the album to their wishlist, hear more from the artist, or buy the album.
- **Relationships:** The feed is associated with an individual's profile.
  - **Actions on:** The user can tailor their feed by following or unfollowing anyone they would like to.

- Collection

- Items that the user has purchased or downloaded.
- **Attributes:** A complete listing of all the album covers purchased/downloaded by the user. The album information is displayed beneath the album covers, and the user has the ability to select a favorite track from the album, and leave a comment on the album.
  - **Actions on:** Click on the album cover to play the audio content. The user may click on a dropdown menu to select their favorite track from the album, to be displayed to other Bandcamp users. They can also leave a text comment in a text box to be displayed on the album's page.
- **Relationships:** The collection is tied to a single user's profile.
  - **Actions on:** The user can select to display or hide any of the albums in their collection, and they can add albums to their collection by downloading or purchasing new albums.

- Wishlist



- Items that the user would like to purchase or download.
- **Attributes:** A complete listing of all the album covers desired by the user.

The album information is displayed beneath the album covers.

- **Actions on:** The user can choose to play the album by clicking on the album cover. Upon hovering over the album cover, the user is given options to purchase the album, send it as a gift, or remove it from their wishlist.
- **Relationships:** The collection is tied to a single user's profile.
  - **Actions on:** The user can select to add or remove any albums to or from their wish list.

## Design Metaphors

- Play Button
  - The play button is designed to look like the play buttons that have been common in physical music equipment for decades.
- Album
  - The audio files are arranged in collections called albums, to mimic how songs are collected onto a record or CD in the physical world.
- Profile
  - The profile is a metaphor for the self. It contains a collection, wishlist, and feed that belong to the individual behind the profile.
- Collection
  - The collection is a metaphor for an individual's record collection.
- Wishlist
  - The wishlist is a metaphor for a Christmas-esque want-list.
- Feed
  - The feed is somewhat of a metaphor for the conversation that happens between patrons and artists at a record store.

## **Design Critique**

Overall, Bandcamp has a very user friendly design. It facilitates the ability to casually, noncommittally listen to music, while also allowing users to purchase music to start a personal collection. It also opens a number of communication channels between fans, artists, and labels. For bands, Bandcamp provides a personalizable, do-it-yourself-like profile where they can personally sell all the material they would like to. For labels, it crucially facilitates the ability for managers to quickly view data analytics and manage time-sensitive financial transactions. Bandcamp has become a robust service for listening to music, and in my experience, it has been very enjoyable to use. That said, there are a few minor improvements I would suggest.

## **Design Improvements**

Since most of the artist profile pages of the site are at least partially designed by the individual in charge of the account, I only have design suggestions for the home page. Additionally, for conciseness, I constrained my comments in this paper to the desktop interface. The individual constituent segments of the home page are nicely designed, but the page lacks an overall flow, and the segments seem to be ordered in a strange way. To analyze the page from top to bottom, the website immediately uses a large amount of its vertical space on the navigation bar, and the top banner image display. This is a requirement for many websites, but it seems that the information could be at least slightly condensed to reclaim some more space for content.

Following the banner, there are two lines of text displaying the total amount of money paid to artists in the last 30 days, as well as since the launch of Bandcamp. This small amount of content takes up a lot of space, which I actually think ends up serving as a benefit to Bandcamp, because it highlights the fact that Bandcamp makes it a priority to give artists their fair share of income. While this may not directly make the site more usable from a user perspective, I think it could be argued that the two lines of text can have a powerful psychological impact on the user, ultimately making the experience more positive. I think that perhaps these statistics could be incorporated into the banner

above it and an overlaid text box. This would be a nice compromise, because though it would no longer have its own vertical real estate on the page, it would be higher up on the page, which would also serve to highlight the content.

Following the financial statistics is a feed of everything being purchased at the present moment. While I really like this widget, and I like the design of it, I don't think it belongs so high up on the page. I think it could go far lower down on the page, or it could be shrunk and fit into a smaller feed off to the side of the page. Personally I would first choose to place it lower down on the page.

The next two sections, "New and Notable" and "Featured" are both worthwhile sections of the home page, however their titles are confusing. Upon inspection, it is clear that "New and Notable" is a small collection of featured new music, and "Featured" is a short collection of articles. I would vote to change "New and Notable" to "Notable New Music" and I would change "Featured" to "Features" or "Featured Articles" to make a stronger reference to the metaphor of reading a newspaper filled with articles.

Following the two content heavy sections is the most user interactable section on the site, the Discover section. This section can be used to discover new artists and genres by sifting through a large, frequently updating collection by selecting categorizing tags. This section feels very out of place in the middle of the page, and I think it is because there are so many user interactable top bars to the section, and top bars in the middle of a page are very disorienting. I think that for this design to work, it would really need to be at the top of the page or just under the banner. I would hesitate to place this at the top of the home page, however, because this section has its own link in the top bar of the page, which is always visible on screen, no matter where you scroll. I think that highlighting the link in the top bar would give a very powerful visual effect, and it would shorten the home page and give it a better flow.

The last section on the page is the "Fan Spotlight." I think that this section is a very cool idea, but I have one design suggestion. I think that it could use a subheading that separates the fans' profile pictures from the display of the collection below. I would choose a subtitle like "Jack's Collection."

Ultimately, I think that Bandcamp is very well designed, and has a very good conceptual design, because it closely models real world music consumption. This product has a very good desktop and mobile service, and I think it should continue to be developed for any popular developing technologies. My suggested changes are fairly small in the grand scheme of the website, but I do think that it would make the front page of the site more engaging and attractive.

### **Future Testing**

Since this service is so fully developed and well established, I would resort to later stage, more complex user testing to test my changes. I would probably tend to most heavily rely on A/B testing, and other user analytics that I can collect from having multiple versions of the site deployed. I would compare how long people tended to browse the content of the home page, to see if users tended to prefer one design or another. I would also compare how many times the users had to undo their actions, or immediately go back to their previous page, to see if one design yielded a better alignment between executed actions and expectancies. Additionally, I would hold guided interviews, where I would ask users to perform specific tasks using the different designs, and compare feedback on the various options.