SEO FOR MUSIC WEBSITES (PART II)

Last year, MusicBiz created the first illustrated guide to SEO for Music Websites, a primer on enabling licensed services to increase rank on search engines. "**SEO For Artist Websites (Part II)**" hones in on some additional key points in optimizing websites site and keeping those pesky search bots well fed.

## Tips on How to Improve Your Search Ranking

Search Engines take into account hundreds of factors to determine their ranking of a site. The following are some essential tips that can be applied to improve your site's visibility in search results.

Evaluate Crawlability Using Google Webmaster Tools

- ▶ To use these tools, you must first establish ownership of your domains.

- ▶ Utilize tools such as Fetch As Google to check the crawlability of your site and to troubleshoot errors.

Create Crawlable Artist-, Album- and Song-Oriented Pages

- ▶ Many DSP (Demand-Side Platform) sites have high reputation but few pages to crawl and little text mentioning specific artists, albums, or tracks.

- ▶ Only pages visible to Google can contribute to a site's rank.

- ▶ To achieve a higher ranking, individual artist, album, and song pages should be created.

- ▶ All pages should contain plain language text that includes commonly searched music words (MP3, Download, Torrent, Free).

  - ▶ Don't just include all these words in a jumble. Incorporate them into the words on the page in a way that is logical and sounds like normal speech when read out loud.

  - ▶ Relevance is determined in part by the phrases on the page, so placement of artist and album name is important. Listing "torrent" directly next to an artist name isn't as necessary as having the word on the page in plain language.

  - ▶ Omission of these words leaves search engines to return only results for unlicensed sites that use these terms. Language incorporating these words can be used creatively but accurately, even at the bottom of the page. For example: "We provide AAC files which provide better sound quality than MP3 files," "Free or P2P torrent and mp3 files may compromise the security of your computer…" or "this content is not legitimately available via torrent."
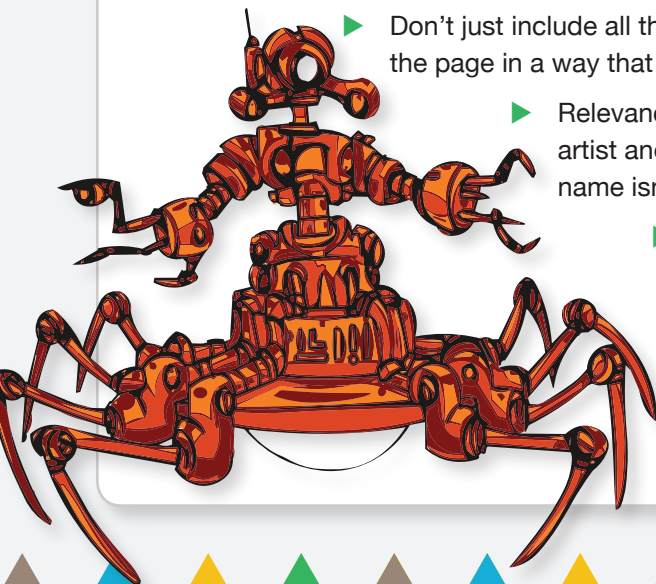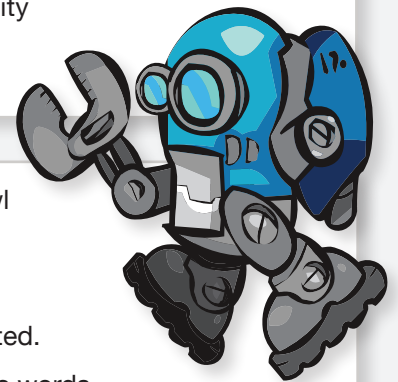
Create Landing Pages with Top Artists

- ▶ Landing pages with live links to individual artist, album, and song pages will increase rank, as it facilitates crawling.

- ▶ DSPs should consider listing currently popular acts on landing pages.

- ▶ Create additional content (interviews, reviews, or other text) for the top 10-20 artist pages in the same way that a retailer might feature its top products, such as Amazon Kindle.

- ▶ For example, maintain an up-to-date list of the top streaming tracks.

- ▶ Sites that rely on Javascript (and Flash) are difficult to crawl and usually block external access by search bots.

- ▶ If your site does make heavy use of JavaScript, make sure that search engines can crawl the JavaScript – don't block it in a robots.txt file.

- ▶ This is an area that Google is already focused on more broadly than for music sites.

- ▶ Google offers DSPs an opportunity to discuss and work on resolving individual Javascript crawl issues on an individual basis, and basis, and they can request information directly at avascript-crawling@google.com.

Optimize URL

- ▶ Use Responsive Web Design (RWD) as opposed to subdomains (e.g., m.site.com) to avoid splitting the site's ranking between multiple URLs.

- ▶ Avoid dilution of rank to multiple pages for the same artist, album, or song by using rel=canonical to indicate the preferred URL for a page.

- ▶ Use artist, album name, and possibly title in URL structure.

- ▶ For example: http://www.servicename.com/artist-name/album-name.

- ▶ It is fine to use unique numerical IDs but they should be supplemented with readable text

- ▶ When using delimiters, Google strongly recommends the use of dashes as opposed to underscores or spaces within text descriptions.

Optimize Snippets

- ▶ Meta-description tags can be placed in the head of an HTML page and can help with ranking and better display of your results on Google.com. Google may choose to show your meta description as the result snippet in its search rankings.

- ▶ Use contextually relevant page-oriented language in snippet.

- ▶ E.g., "Download Justin Bieber My World mp3 here" instead of just repeating the words over and over.

- ▶ Google ignores meta-keywords, but you may use them for your own internal purposes. Other search engines may use them as well.

- ▶ Further tips for optimizing snippets can be found on the Google Webmaster blog.

Optimize Page Title

- ▶ HTML page titles often only contain only artist names.

- ▶ Including more plain language in page titles can increase rank for related searches.
  - • E.g., "Listen to Beyonce", "Download Beyonce"