

Competitive Analysis: CDWorld.com

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Jason Withrow
Information Architect
INP Associates

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Executive Summary

A competitive analysis was conducted to aid in the development of CDWorld.com, a one-stop online shopping destination for music. This analysis focused on three competitors: CDNow.com, CD Universe, and World Café CDs.

The existence of these competitors indicates that there is indeed a market for selling music online. Two of the competitors, however, extend their offerings beyond music. Both offer movies and accessories for sale, and one also offers console games for sale. This suggests that CDWorld.com may benefit from extending its product offerings beyond CDs to other types of entertainment.

All three competitors use different labeling and organization schemes for browsing their product offerings. Further examination of these schemes will likely prove helpful in determining the optional organization of content for CDWorld.com.

Certain content and functionality appear to be standard in this industry and should be included in the CDWorld website:

- Selling of accessories and other entertainment media
- Wish lists
- Scoped search
- Separate classical music search
- Providing audio clips from albums
- Including a recommender system for related purchases
- Allowing users to review and rate products
- Gift certificates
- Offering an affiliate program
- Supporting online order status tracking
- Creating partnerships or linking with external websites (e.g., pollstar.com, allmusicguide.com) for provision of specialized content

Additional content and functionality that are specific to one of the competitors but which merit further examination, and possible inclusion in CDWorld.com, include:

- CDWorld-generated news, reviews, and interviews
- Express checkout
- An educational resource related to music
- Music downloads
- Message boards
- Wireless access
- Personalization

Competitor 1: CDNow (<http://www.cdnow.com>)

CDNOW
Never miss a beat.™

Search by Artist

>Classical Search

MUSIC

- >Top 100
- >Advance Orders
- >New Releases
- >Music Beat
- >Music News

VIDEO/DVD

- >Top Sellers
- >Advance Orders
- >New Releases
- >Just DVDs
- >Movie Collections

HOLIDAY SHOP

- >Gift Certificates
- >Shopping Services
- >Gift Guides
- >Seasonal
- >Stocking Stuffers

MYCDNOW

- >Wish List
- >Favorite Artists
- >Recommendations
- >Email Preferences

Shopping Cart
contains 0 items

[Account](#)
[Help](#)

Store Spotlight: [Sugar Ray dishes the dirt at Sessions at Hard Rock!](#)

See Our Picks for Best Music, Movies of 2001
Don't miss CDNOW's hotly-contested, annual compilation of the best in tunes and flicks from the past year! Discover essential albums, read our best interviews, find out which DVDs to buy and more!

SHOP :

- Rock
- Alternative/Indie
- Pop
- Jazz
- R&B
- Hip-Hop
- Electronic/Dance
- Country
- Folk
- Blues
- Reggae/Ska
- World
- Latin
- Classical
- Vocal/Instrumental
- New Age
- Christian/Gospel
- Soundtracks

Welcome!

Create a Wish List at myCDNOW!

- New Visitor's Guide
- Site Map
- Read Our [Privacy & Security Policies](#)

IN VIDEO/DVD

Essentials: *Shrek*, *Citizen Kane*, and *Dancer in the Dark* are among CDNOW's picks for the best video/DVD releases of 2001. [More](#)

GOING ON NOW

\$7.99 CD SALE!
ESSENTIAL albums.
LEGENDARY artists.

CDNow Home Page (home page extends for 2.5 screens at 1024x 768)

CDNOW
Never miss a beat.™

Search by Artist

>Classical Search

MUSIC

- >Top 100
- >Advance Orders
- >New Releases
- >Music Beat
- >Music News

VIDEO/DVD

- >Top Sellers
- >Advance Orders
- >New Releases
- >Just DVDs
- >Movie Collections

HOLIDAY SHOP

- >Gift Certificates
- >Shopping Services
- >Gift Guides
- >Seasonal
- >Stocking Stuffers

MYCDNOW

- >Wish List
- >Favorite Artists
- >Recommendations
- >Email Preferences

Shopping Cart
contains 0 items

[Account](#)
[Help](#)

In Music: [Order Essential Gifts: Albums chosen by our editors.](#)

blues

This Week's Featured Artist: Robert Johnson
Robert Johnson is often considered the greatest country blues singer and guitarist. *The Complete Recordings* makes the ultimate case for Johnson's artistry.

EXPLORE BLUES

- Acoustic Blues
- Chicago Blues
- Contemporary Blues
- Country Blues
- Electric Blues
- Jazz Blues

BLUES ARTISTS A TO Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

New Release
Discovered by musicologist Alan Lomax, Muddy Waters was unquestionably one of the pillars of Chicago blues. This 12-song collection offers a hearty helping of Muddy's '50s sides, from the title track to the legendary "Country Boy," R&B hit "Long Distance Call," "Sittin' And Thinkin,'" and many more.

Muddy Waters
Hookie Coochie Man
Add to Cart \$7.99

New Release
A bracing collection of classics from the Texan who electrified the blues. Naturally, this 11-song set includes its immortal namesake, "Stormy Monday Blues," as well as "Everyday I Have The Blues," the guitar theatrics of "T-Bone Blues Special," and other landmark recordings from the 1940s and '50s.

T-Bone Walker
Stormy Monday
Add to Cart \$7.99

Change Genre

CDNow Sub Page (sub page extends for 2.5 screens at 1024x 768)

Content/Functionality

CDNow.com offers a vast array of CDs, videos, and DVDs (as well as accessories) for purchase online. Special interest should be paid to the diverse genres of music being sold, the personalized My CDNow service, and their customer support services, including a help desk and guided tour.

Specific content/functionality includes the following (groupings were created for this analysis and do not reflect the structure of content on the website):

Products Offered:

- The genres of music sold include:
 - Alternative/Indie
 - Blues
 - Cast Recordings
 - Christian/Gospel
 - Classical
 - Comedy/Spoken
 - Country
 - Electronic/Dance
 - Folk
 - Hip-Hop
 - Jazz
 - Kids/Family
 - Latin
 - New Age
 - Oldies
 - Pop
 - R&B
 - Reggae/Ska
 - Rock
 - Soundtracks
 - Vocal/Instrument
 - World
- All genres of music are browsable (alphabetically by artist) and are also divided into sub-genres.
- There are approximately 160 total categories (genres and sub-genres) of music.
- Videos/DVDs are also available in the following categories:
 - Action/Adventure
 - Comedy
 - Drama/Romance
 - Horror
 - International
 - Kids/Family
 - Musicals/The Arts

- Music Videos/Concerts
- Mystery/Thriller
- Scifi/Fantasy
- Special Interest
- Western
- Box sets, compilations, imports, special editions, and specialty formats are available for music and Videos/DVDs.
- Additional products for sale online include:
 - Accessories (Storage Cases, etc.)
 - Electronics
 - Gift certificates

Technology Used:

- Database-driven website
- CGI scripts serve pages
- A wireless version of the website is available.
- Spanish-language versions of the pages are available.
- Message boards
- Secure shopping cart
- Audio clips (Real Media and Windows Media formats) for some songs
- Users can rate albums
- Online order status checking is offered
- Sign-in for returning customers
- Music downloads
- Recommender system based on identifying other purchases made by customers who bought the product shown on screen.
- Use of cookies to track customer information and for personalization.
- My CDNow (personal profile on site)
 - Receive e-mails for sales, upcoming albums, etc.
 - Ability to set preferences regarding music of interest
 - Favorite album lists can be created.
 - Online wish lists can be created (identified by email address)

Search Functionality:

- Scoped search in all products by: Artist, Album Title, Song Title, Record Label, Video Title, Actor/Director.
- Classical search (searching classical music) scoped by: Composer, Performer, Conductor, Instrument/Voice, Orchestra/Ensemble, Record Label/Catalog Number.
- For each domain within classical search, there is also a browsable list of popular composers, performers, etc. (depending on the domain). From this

browsable list, results for an individual are further subdivided by the specific sub-genre of his/her work desired.

- Advanced classical search is also available.
- Search tips are offered.

Ordering Options:

- Advance ordering is available for most items.
- Gift wrapping and including a message are available.
- Bulk orders (50 items or more) receive special rates.
- Standard shipping options are offered.
- Major credit cards are accepted.
- Upgrading shipping is a service offered.

Supporting Content:

- Contact CDNow
- Company Information
- Job Listings
- Feedback/Questions Form
- Privacy and Security Policy
- Return Policy
- Terms and Conditions
- Help Desk
- New Visitor's Center with a guided tour of website (screenshots and step-by-step instructions)
- Sitemap
- Affiliate/Partner Program (called Cosmic Credit)
- Corporate Partnership (called C2)
- Music & Movie Collections (assembled by CDNow staff)
- CDNow Charts and Billboard Charts, with links to purchase items.
- CDNow reviews and interviews
- Artist biographies from the All Music Guide (allmusicguide.com)
- Music news (from allstar, CDNow's news service)
- Gift guides (collections of various CDs/Videos/DVDs put together by CDNow)
- Stocking stuffers (various products, all \$10 or less)

Strengths

The greatest strength of this site is the rich cross-linking between products and related information, made possible because of the database-driven nature of the website and (presumably) the use of good meta data.

Specific strengths include the following:

- The logo links back to the Home page, a good web convention to follow.
- Quick links are located at the top of each page and are consistent.
- Minimal, tasteful graphics
- Shopping cart and account links are available from every page.
- It is easy to move between English and Spanish versions of pages.
- Search tips are available
- Using headings in the navigation bar on the Home page (Shop, Browse, Explore, and Partner with CDNow) helps organize and 'chunk' an otherwise too-lengthy list of links.
- Guided tour has quick links to 'Start Shopping', 'Create a New Account', and 'Sign In To Your Account', which are logical destinations when the user has finished the tour.
- Pages seem to load in an acceptable amount of time on a 56k modem.
- Excellent cross-linking:
 - Purchasing items (adding them to the shopping cart) is available from numerous places: search results, music charts, etc.
 - When viewing an item, links are available to work from the artist in other media (such as videos/DVDs for a CD), related genres, related artists, web links, an artist biography, reviews, news, and messages boards for that artist.
- Limited use of breadcrumbs (more extensive usage would be beneficial)
- Screens listing the albums available for an artist are laid out well and the albums are divided into logical groupings (advance orders, albums, import albums, compilations, etc.).

Areas for Improvement

The areas for improvement center mainly on data inconsistencies/errors in the database and site navigation issues. The overwhelming number of links on the site can be confusing, while it is difficult to remain oriented in the lower levels of the site. Navigation to previous pages often requires use of the 'Back' button.

Specific areas for improvement include the following:

- Spanish version of website still has some content in English, such as product descriptions.
- Pages are too long, requiring excessive scrolling.
- The large number of 'boxes' on some pages (such as the Home page and the main page for different musical genres) makes the pages hard to visually scan.
- Windows spawned by links at the bottom of the page are too small for their content and involve horizontal scrolling. They also do not take you directly to the desired information.
- Some of the 'web links' and 'videos' for artists are incorrect, pertaining to different artists. This is most likely an issue with how the information was entered in the database.
- Use of the 'Back' button is frequently required because it is hard to return to your previous location otherwise.
- No explicit 'Home' link.
- It is unclear what constitutes the 'global navigation' for the site.
- The user is presented with too many links at once.
- Not all the products have thumbnails of their covers.

Competitor 2: CD Universe (<http://www.cduniverse.com>)

cd Universe music movies games

Home Customer Service Order Status Affiliate Program Specials Shopping Cart

Live Music Spectacular
It's impossible to go back in time. But you can always relive those magical moments of a phenomenal live recording!
[Click here](#)

The American Music Awards
Catch the year's hottest artists and personalities as they step into the limelight at the 29th American Music Awards.
[Click here](#)

Quick Search
GO
Artist Soundtrack
Title Label
Song Search
[Classical](#)

Features

THIS CD IS 30% OFF
Pagano, Lindsay
Love & Faith & Inspiration
She's just 15 years old but Lindsay Pagano is not your average teenager. Her debut CD *Love & Faith & Inspiration* demonstrates her sophistication, cleverness, and dynamic vocal range.
Our Price: ~~CD~~ **\$8.39**
\$11.98 List (You Save \$3.59)

THIS CD IS 30% OFF
Wu-Tang Clan
Wu-Tang Iron Flag
Back from their last release *W* the Wu-Tang Clan delivers another groundbreaking album. *Wu Tang Iron Flag* is a collection of distinctive and experimental sounds.
Our Price: ~~CD~~ **\$13.29**
\$18.98 List (You Save \$5.69)

THIS CD IS 30% OFF
Bell Biv DeVoe
Bbd
Bell Biv DeVoe is back with this eagerly awaited release. With
Our Price: ~~CD~~ **\$8.39**
\$11.98 List (You Save \$3.59)

THIS CD IS 30% OFF
Master P
Game Face
Master P is back with the exciting new release of *Game Face*. Master
Our Price: ~~CD~~ **\$13.29**
\$18.98 List (You Save \$5.69)

Browse
Box Sets R&B
Blues Rap
Celtic Reggae
Christian Rock/Pop
Classical Singles
Country Soundtracks
Electronic Spoken Word
Heavy Metal Vocal / Nostalgia
Jazz World
Kids / Family All Categories
Latin
New Age

Click [here](#) to send this page to a friend

Departments
Wish List
Music Charts
Gift Certificates
Free Downloads

CD Universe Home Page (home page extends for 2.5 screens at 1024 x 768)

cd Universe music movies games

Home Customer Service Order Status Affiliate Program Specials Shopping Cart

Rock -> Top Sellers
Sub Categories: Rock/Pop • Rock/Pop Collections • Punk • Oldies
Oldies Collections • Music Video • Musical & Performing Arts • Pop Music • Pop Music • Rockabilly • Punk Collections • Rock And Roll • Concert • Dance • Box Sets • Enhanced CD • [More...](#)

Quick Search
GO
Artist Soundtrack
Title Label
Song Search
[Classical](#)

Browse
Box Sets R&B
Blues Rap
Celtic Reggae
Christian Rock/Pop
Classical Singles
Country Soundtracks
Electronic Spoken Word
Heavy Metal Vocal / Nostalgia
Jazz World
Kids / Family All Categories
Latin
New Age

Top Sellers
Future Releases • Recent Releases

25 Items Click price to put in cart

1. [Concert For New York City](#) (2001) ~~CD~~ **\$18.05**
★★★★★

2. [America: A Tribute To Heroes](#) (2001) ~~CD~~ **\$22.55**
★★★★★

Departments
Wish List
Music Charts
Gift Certificates
Free Downloads
Music Accessories

CD Universe Sub Page (sub page extends for 3 screens at 1024 x 768)

Content/Functionality

CD Universe offers far more than CDs. Their online offerings include CDs, movies (both VHS and DVD), and a wide variety of console games. The categorization of music, movies, and games all merit close examination, in terms of how well this categorization corresponds to the scheme used by CDNow. The inclusion of the educational CD University is also a notable and unique type of content for an online music seller.

Specific content/functionality includes the following (groupings were created for this analysis and do not reflect the structure of content on the website):

Products Offered:

- The genres of music sold include:
 - Blues
 - Celtic
 - Christian
 - Classical
 - Country
 - Electronica
 - Heavy Metal
 - Jazz
 - Kids/Family
 - Latin
 - New Age
 - R&B
 - Rap
 - Reggae
 - Rock/Pop
 - Singles
 - Soundtracks
 - Spoken Word
 - Vocal/Nostalgia
 - World
- There are a total of 373 categories (genres and sub-genres) of music.
- Music and movies box sets are also sold.
- The genres of movies sold include:
 - Adventure
 - Children's
 - Comedies
 - Criterion Collection
 - Documentary
 - Dramas
 - Foreign
 - Horror
 - Mature

- Musical
- Sci-Fi
- Sports
- Westerns
- There are a total of 498 categories (genres and sub-genres) of movies.
- Movies for sale can be browsed by format: All, DVD, VHS.
- The genres of games sold are organized at the highest level by platform:
 - Game Boy
 - Gameboy Advance
 - GameCube
 - Nintendo 64
 - Playstation
 - Playstation 2
 - Sega Dreamcast
 - Xbox
- Within each platform, products are divided into the following genres:
 - Accessories
 - Adventure
 - Children's
 - Fighting
 - Flight Sim
 - Puzzle
 - Racing
 - Role Play
 - Shooter
 - Sports
- There are a total of 64 categories and sub-categories of games.
- Accessories (storage, carriers, blank media, etc.) are also sold
- Gift certificates are available

Technology Used:

- Database-driven website
- Active Server Pages technology is used to retrieve content from the database
- Users can e-mail a friend the URL of a specific page on the website.
- Online wish lists can be created (identifier is e-mail address)
- Secure shopping cart (shopping cart contents are saved for 6 hours)
- Online order status checking
- Audio clips (Real Media format) for some songs
- Recommender system based on identifying other purchases made by customers who bought the product shown on screen.
- Related artists links are provided on CD product information pages
- Ability to write your own reviews for products (rated on a scale of 1-5 stars)

- Affiliate Program with online reports to see visitor click-through information, items ordered, orders shipped, and commission history. Account management can also be done online.

Search Functionality:

- Quick search in music scoped by: Artist, Title, Song, Soundtrack, Label.
- Classical search scoped by: Composer, Conductor, Performer, Orchestra, Work Title, Catalog Number.
- Advanced search functionality in the classical music domain.
- Search tips are available
- Quick search in movies scoped by: Title, Actor, Director, Studio.
- Quick search in games scoped by: Game Title, Manufacturer.

Ordering Options:

- Express checkout
- Payment by major credit card or via personal check
- Standard shipping options are offered
- Ability to specify different hold times for multiple-item orders (perhaps one item has not come in yet and the rest are ready to go)
- Ordering limit of nine units per item
- Pre-ordering of new releases is offered

Supporting Content:

- Return Policy
- Shipping Prices for U.S. and International
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Customer Comment Policy
- Contact Information
- Safe Shopping Guarantee
- Privacy Statement
- Specials
- Bargain Bin Games
- Games Charts from Games Universe
- Free screen savers, mainly of album covers
- CD University (educational resource)
- Help for playing RealAudio files
- Links to pollstar.com from CD product pages for touring information

Strengths

The greatest strengths of the CD Universe website are its consistency and simplicity. The consistency is in its layout, horizontal global navigation bar, and right-hand navigation column. The simplicity stems from the tabbed approach to the top level of the site and the clear division of content into three domains: music, movies, and games.

Specific strengths include the following:

- The horizontal global navigation bar is easily discernible and constant across sections of the site.
- The logo links back to the Home page, a good web convention to follow.
- Tabbed navigation is good to use because it is very familiar to users.
- The right-hand navigation column stays consistent within each main section (music, movies, games).
- Page layout remains consistent
- Fixed-width design keeps line lengths manageable
- Each page provides clear directions for bookmarking
- Pages are not overloaded with information and load quickly on a 56k modem.
- Having help pages for RealAudio will likely assist some users
- Quick links to top-sellers speeds up navigation for users wanting those frequently sought items.
- Product information pages are divided into logical sections (import, cassettes, etc.)
- The global navigation bar is repeated at the top and bottom of pages, which is excellent for long pages.

Areas for Improvement

The most significant issue with the site is the fixed-width, left-aligned layout, which is optimized for viewing at 640 x 480 resolution. This layout does have its advantages (for printing and to prevent horizontal scrolling), but at high resolutions there is a significant amount of white space to the right of the page content.

Specific areas for improvement include the following:

- The fixed-width, left-aligned layout leaves a great deal of unused space at higher resolutions.
- Sometimes icons indicated that sound clips were available for an album, when none were offered.
- Some product pages for accessories assume you are viewing a music album and have text asking if the user would like to review the album (when in actuality the product on the page is a carrying case or some other accessory).
- Image thumbnails of music covers were available for most, but not all, titles.
- There is a ordering cap of nine units per item.
- No explicit 'Home' link.
- Pages can be too long, requiring excessive scrolling.

Competitor 3: World Café CDs (<http://www.worldcafecds.com>)



worldcafecds.com

click here to
▶▶ Listen Live

[Holiday Music](#)

[Americana](#)
[Blues](#)
[Celtic](#)
[Children's / Family](#)
[Electronic](#)
[Folk](#)
[Funk / R&B](#)
[Jazz](#)
[Pop & Rock](#)
[Singer / Songwriter](#)
[Spoken Word](#)
[World](#)

[World Café® CDs](#)
[World Café® Retailers](#)

[Top 50](#)

[Essential Albums](#)

[Live at the World Café®, Volume 12](#)

Another volume of exceptional songs recorded on the road and in the World Café® Music Studio. Featuring Warren Zevon, Sarah Harmer, RL Burnside, the Crash Test Dummies and more!

[More World Café® Recordings](#)
▶ Add to Cart

[Specials on Upcoming Releases!](#)

We've got the latest releases from **Mick Jagger**, **North Mississippi All Stars**, **Jewel**, **Paul McCartney**, **Barenaked Ladies**, **Natalie Merchant**, **Kris Delmhorst**, **Eagle Eye Cherry**, **Lenny Kravitz**, and many other *World Café* favorites!

[Click here to order...](#)
▶ Add to Cart


[Francis Dunnery - Man](#)

MAN is the first self-produced, self-distributed title by Francis Dunnery. It is only available through his website and, through a special agreement with Francis, at worldcafecds.com! It is an amazing CD that is both poignant and personal. His song "Wounded and Healing" has become a huge favorite with our listeners. Here's your chance to get it now!



[More Singer/Songwriter Recommendations](#)
▶ Add to Cart

World Café CDs Home Page (home page is shorter than 2 screen-lengths at 1024 x 768)





worldcafecds.com

click here to
▶▶ Listen Live

[Americana](#)
[Celtic](#)
[Children's / Family](#)
[Country](#)
[Electronic](#)
[Folk](#)
[Funk / R&B](#)
[Jazz](#)
[Pop & Rock](#)
[Singer / Songwriter](#)
[Spoken Word](#)
[World](#)

[World Café® CDs](#)

[Recent & Upcoming](#)
[World Café® Guests](#)

celtic

[Enya](#)
A Day Without Rain
Featuring her distinctive flowing music and multi-overdubbed trance-like singing
WB47426
Order \$17.98

[Poozies](#)
Raise Your Head: A Retrospective
Features their version of 'Another Train'
COM4290
Order \$16.98

World Café CDs is a member of the [BookSite™](#) Network
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World Café CDs Sub Page (sub page is just over 1 screen-length at 1024 x 768)

Content/Functionality

World Café CDs was chosen as the third competitor to analyze because it offers a website that sells just CDs (and CDs from a variety of genres), without including other types of entertainment products. The website is affiliated with a radio station.

Specific content/functionality includes:

- Music search scoped by: Artist (sometimes called Band), Album.
- The genres of music sold include:
 - Americana
 - Blues
 - Celtic
 - Children's/Family
 - Electronic
 - Folk
 - Funk/R&B
 - Holiday
 - Jazz
 - Pop & Rock
 - Singer/Songwriter
 - Spoken Word
 - World
- World Café CDs (CDs of live recordings at the affiliated radio station) are also available.
- Listing of World Café retailers
- Live streaming audio from the station (Windows Media format)
- Secure shopping cart
- Major credit cards are accepted and standard shipping options are offered
- Help page (mailto: link to support address)
- Database-driven website
- CGI scripts serve the product data from the database

Strengths

This is a simple and small website, with minimal graphics, so pages load quickly. The small size of the website prevents users from getting lost.

Areas for Improvement

The main issues that arise with this website are that the page layouts shift (elements will switch locations from page to page or the entire layout will change) and that the information about each CD is very sparse. There are no screenshots of any of the albums, no track listings, and just a short one-sentence description (which is sometimes omitted).