

WRS

# The problem with music streaming

This project started out as an assessment of the effect of music streaming on its users, artists and listeners alike. I was inspired by reading I'd done about how much money artists are able to make from streaming.

What I found is that the “all music, all the time” streaming model has **cheaped the creative labor of creating music**, led to a **more passive listening experience**, and **damaged the connection between artists and their audiences**.

This matters because streaming has permanently changed our cultural attitudes about art, its value, and who owns it. The current model has damaged the creative agency and freedom that musicians have over their work, turning artists into content machines.

# My research

I researched the effects of streaming on smaller musicians income, psychological ownership of music in the streaming era, recommendation algorithms, and artists' agency over their music online.

I interviewed two musicians who are building fanbases over the internet, as well as a music journalist.

# My research

## STREAMING PAYOUTS

RANK	PLATFORM	PAYOUT PER STREAM
<b>01</b>	<b>NAPSTER</b>	<b>\$0.01900</b>
<b>02</b>	<b>TIDAL</b>	<b>\$0.01250</b>
<b>03</b>	<b>APPLE MUSIC</b>	<b>\$0.00735</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>GOOGLE PLAY</b>	<b>\$0.00676</b>
<b>05</b>	<b>DEEZER</b>	<b>\$0.00640</b>
<b>06</b>	<b>SPOTIFY</b>	<b>\$0.00437</b>
<b>07</b>	<b>AMAZON</b>	<b>\$0.00402</b>
<b>08</b>	<b>PANDORA</b>	<b>\$0.00133</b>
<b>09</b>	<b>YOUTUBE</b>	<b>\$0.00069</b>

SOURCE: DIGITAL MUSIC NEWS

(from 2019)

# Interviews



**Allison:** music journalist. They are eager to support smaller artists, but finds it difficult to move away from streaming. They brought up how **finding an artist through social media is more likely to lead to them becoming a genuine fan of an artist**



**Sebastian (Sebii):** rapper, producer, singer, has had a few songs go viral on TikTok, has built a really close community of fans and musicians through social media. Gets a couple hundred thousand to million streams per song, but **streaming is not the main way he makes money.**



**Lyric:** rapper, producer, singer, he is **more focused on building a genuine fan base than making money off music right now.** He needs money to market his music to more people, but he can't make that money using his music right now.

# Key findings

Smaller artists see streaming as a way to **build an audience, rather than a way to make money.**

Recommendations through **word of mouth or social media tend to lead to more real fans** than those through editorial playlists or algorithms.

The idea of owning music has become slippery in the age of streaming. Streaming services **don't own the music, but they give it away** to listeners for next to nothing.

The almost unlimited surplus of music that we have access to on streaming services makes it possible to passively listen to music all day. This has also affected the sound of music, **songs are shorter and made to grab your attention quickly.**

There is a demand for ways for artists to **build community online**, while **maintaining their agency** over their work and **monetizing their music.**

# Stakeholders

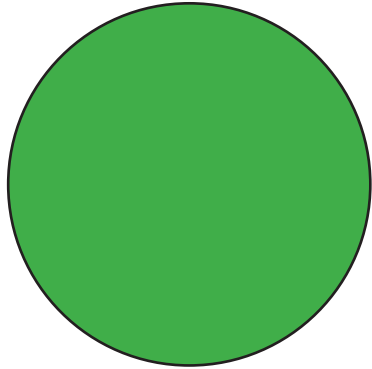
## Listeners

- Need to find new music.
- Want to see their favorite artists succeed.
- Want to talk about music.

**Musicians** (more specifically, independent artists without access to local venues, irl communities, gear, etc.)

- Need to make money on their music.
- Need a way to get their music to listeners.
- Want their music to be appreciated

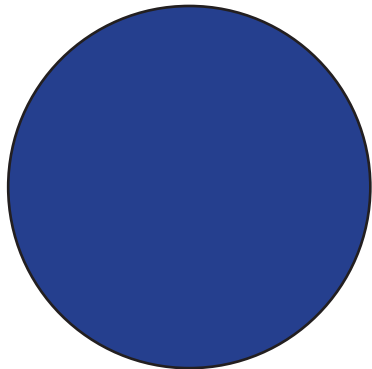
# Personas



Nat, 19

Nat is an avid music listener. They use Spotify, but they know it isn't the best way to support their favorite artists. They follow all their favorite musicians on Twitter and Instagram, and often check to see who their favorite artists are interacting with to find new people to follow in the community.

They value the opportunity to **connect with artists and other fans**, the ability to **financially support their favorites**, and a supportive, **tightly knit community** where they can share their opinions on music.



Cam, 24

Cam is a music producer. They've been producing electronic music on their laptop since they were a teenager, and started using DistroKid to put it on Spotify a few years ago. They've amassed a couple ten-thousands of Twitter and Instagram followers, and one of their songs went semi-viral on TikTok last month. However, they struggle to make money from streaming.

They value the opportunity to **sell their music and merchandise in ways that work for them**. They've seen **how useful social media has been** in marketing their music to listeners, and want more ways to build **an online community focused around music**.



# Competition

## **Bandcamp**

Bandcamp is good for selling and buying music and merch, but the social capabilities are less developed. It is a streaming service alternative but with a more direct money-to-artist system.

## **Splice**

Splice is an online musical asset library, with video lessons. It's accessible, but there isn't much of a community aspect to the platform, and is only available with a monthly subscription paid to Splice, not directly to creators.

## **RateYourMusic**

Really passionate community of music fans and listeners, but no system for artists to engage as musicians and monetize their music.

## **Patreon**

Good for selling subscriptions to premium content, but most of the social communities that surround these creators are centered outside of the platform (other social media/Discord).

**My project addresses the shortcomings of these platforms, by allowing for artists to sell their music and other content on the same platform where the music communities live.**

# Design

**Mus** is a hybrid music marketplace and social network.

Artists can use the platform to sell albums, EPs, singles, as well as musical assets like sound packs, stems and video lessons. They can choose to make these products free, paid, or available through monthly subscription.

Users can use the platform to buy things from their favorite artists, follow their favorite artists, discuss music with their friends, and see what their friends are listening to.

Mus puts the marketplace on the same platform as the digital community, giving artists more agency over how their music is sold and represented.



**Mus**  
an artist-first  
music marketplace

# **Buy and sell:**

Albums

Singles

Stems

Samples

Sound packs

Beats

Lessons

*and more.*

**Set your own prices**

Make your releases free,  
paid, or exclusive to  
your subscribers.

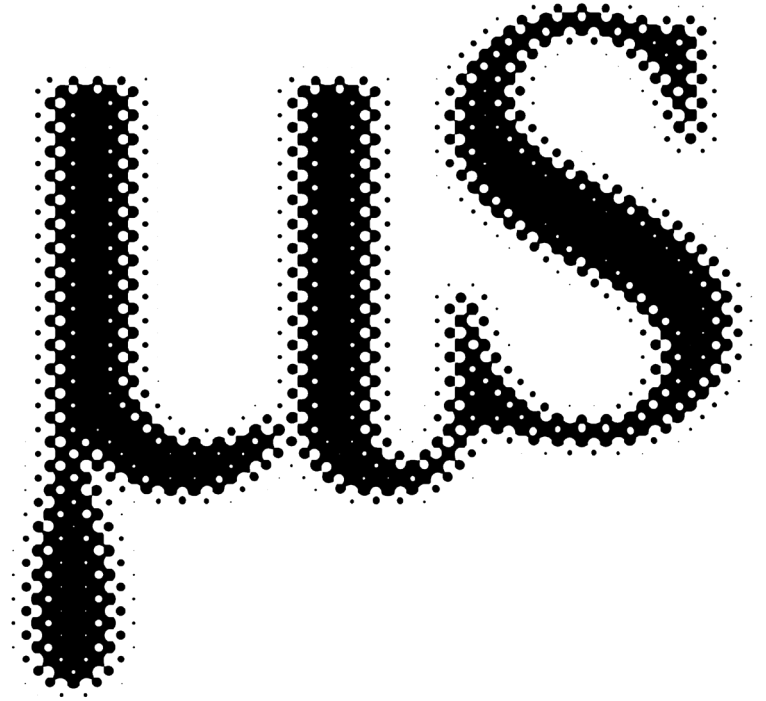
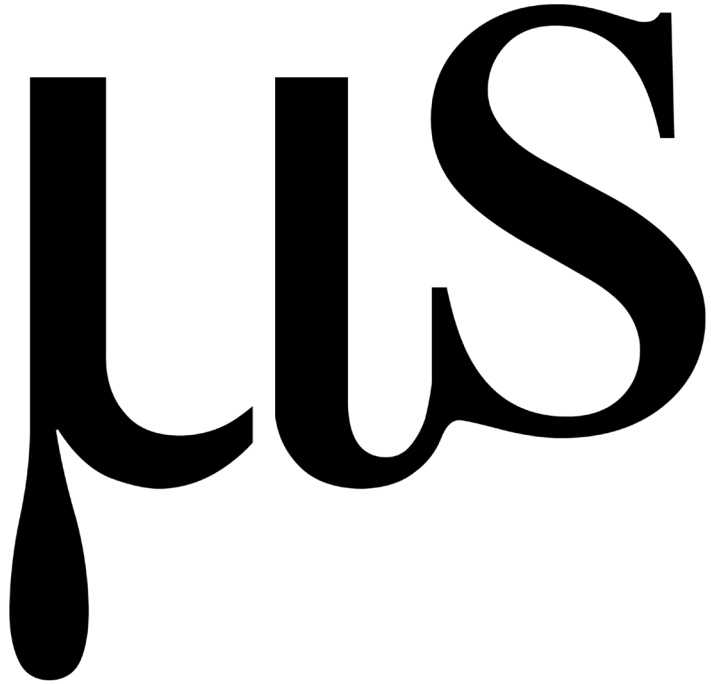
# **Connect and collaborate**

Subscribe to your favorite artists to access exclusive content and Discord servers with other fans and musicians.

# **Get feedback**

Leave reviews on releases,  
and get feedback from your  
listeners on your own work.

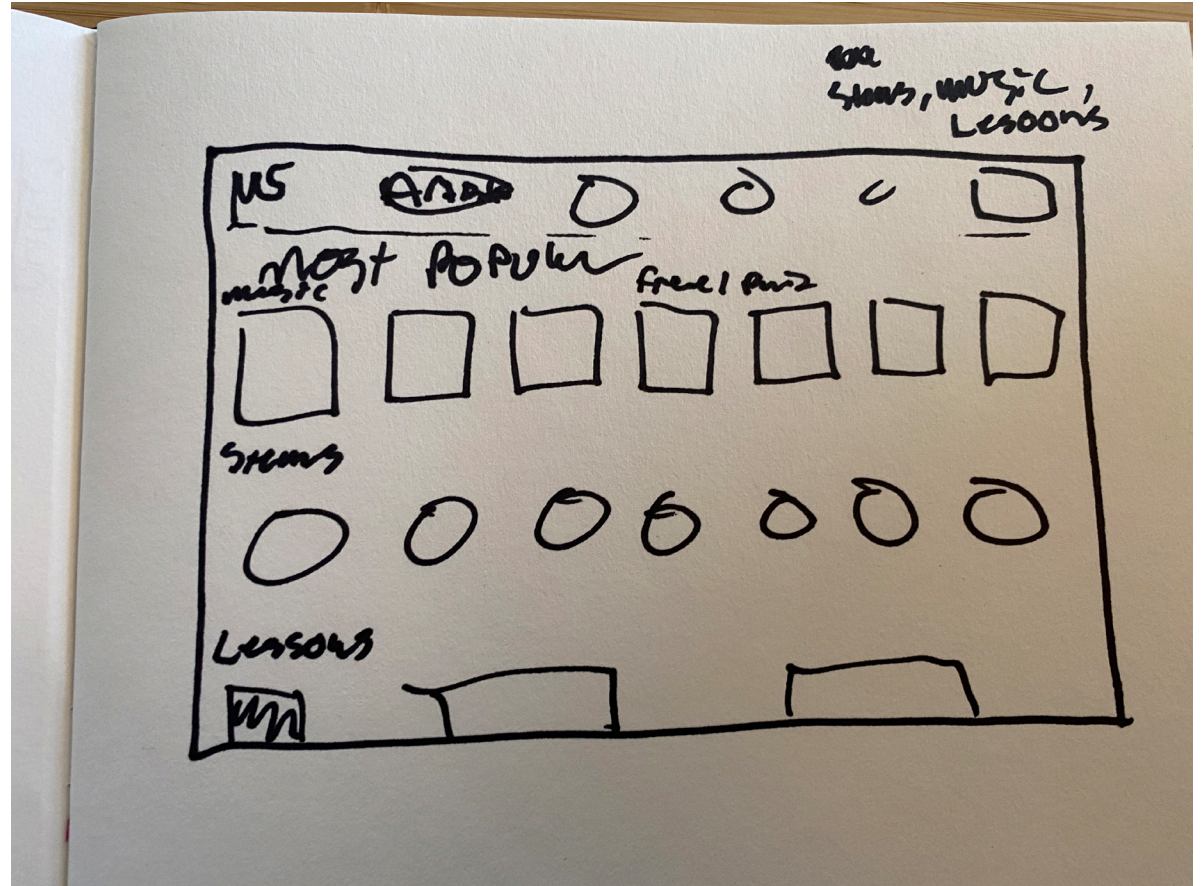
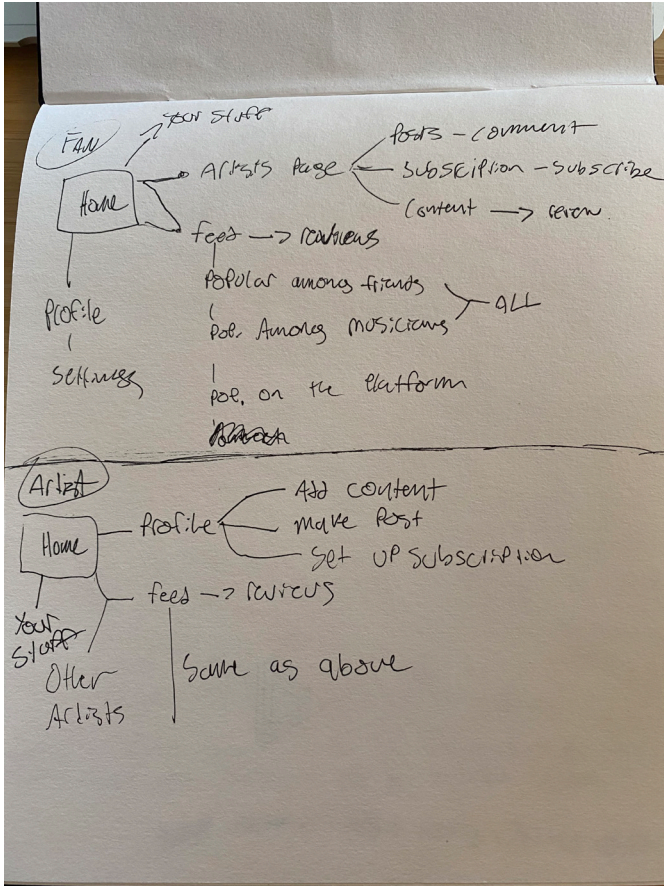
# Design



Logo design: Greek letter "mu" + "s" = mus



# Design



sketch of user journeys and front page

# XD Prototype

**click**

# Feedback

An early version of this project was going to be a completely new music streaming service. I pivoted away from that after my interview subjects began talking so much about the role social media plays in their search for new artists. I decided that monetizing the music away from the platform was more sustainable, as it would still remain if the streaming platforms went away.

I got feedback from my friend John Krumpe, the biggest music fan I know. He is always digging up obscure music, also produces music of his own.

He gave me the idea to not separate the users into separate profile types for fans and artists. A lot of big music fans also make music, and every musician is a fan of music. He really likes to see who his favorite artists' favorite artists are.

He also gave me the idea for topic based message boards, which I think would be a good place for discussion to happen completely separately from the marketplace element of the website. It would keep people coming back, even if they aren't buying something.

My peers at the ETBD Expo seemed excited about the platform's set your-own-price features, as well as the expansion beyond just albums and singles and into musical assets, and private Discord servers through subscriptions.

# E.T.B.D.

TECHNOLOGY: Mockups are semi-functional and clickable.

BUSINESS: Platform is used to buy and sell music and music related media.

DESIGN: Deliverable has fully fleshed-out visuals. Design, research, iteration were used in the creation of the concept.

**and on that note...**

