Encore - Crowdsourcing a Memory

Encore is designed to help its users track and relive their concert experiences. It allows users to log past concerts, plan upcoming concerts, and interact with others who share favorite artists or have a passion for live music. Our app addresses the challenge of fading memories and the limitations of traditional social media apps in capturing and archiving concert experiences.

The app's target audience is quite broad, encompassing music enthusiasts 18–65 years old who regularly attend live concerts and are comfortable using smartphones and social media.

Encore is a solution to our incomplete and disorganized recollections of concerts. We often struggle to remember details of past events, especially as live shows become increasingly multimedia and sensory. Most social media platforms lack comprehensive features for archiving and recreating memories of concerts, and Encore offers a more focused and organized solution for recording and sharing these experiences.

Home Screen - Consistency and Standards (Heuristics)

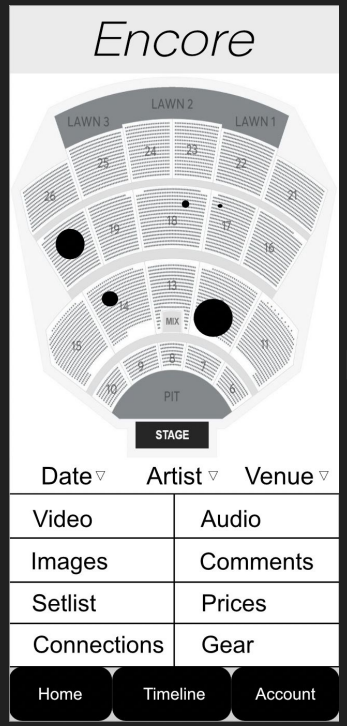
The home screen of any application has a huge influence on the subsequent user flow. In my original prototype, I had conceived of Encore content as being grouped spatially. Users would mark their seats for specific shows before sharing content so that other users could explore from that point of view, whether that be their own section or a section of the venue they didn't get to see or visit.

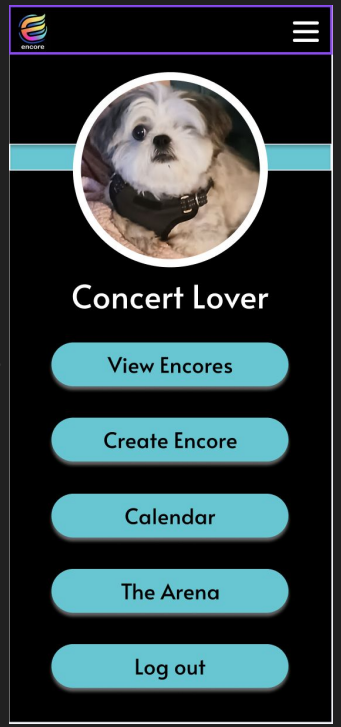
I still think this approach had its merits and works with the tendency of the human mind to map information out spatially.

However, our project had a unique consideration in that there is no direct analog in the marketplace to the application we were designing the way a more traditional app design might. This made it imperative that enough familiarity was built-in to the interface and task flow that the user wouldn't be quickly alienated.

The leftmost of the two screenshots shows my original design—the venue map was clickable, but in my own user tests, this wasn't immediately apparent to participants. That was an early warning it might not be the direction to go. Following Nielsen's first heuristic (Consistency and Standards), my team decided to create the much more traditional home screen on the right, which first guides the user to engage with the app's core feature (creating scrapbook-like "Encores" of media content), and the familiar social feed that ultimately replaced my original home screen design.

Because this flow is much more consistent with users' experience in other social apps, they have better footing to learn and explore those features which are unique and exclusive to Encore.





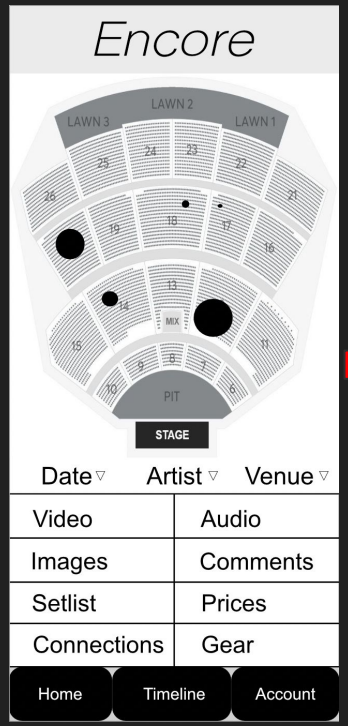
Design Thinking - Finding a Place for the Venue Map

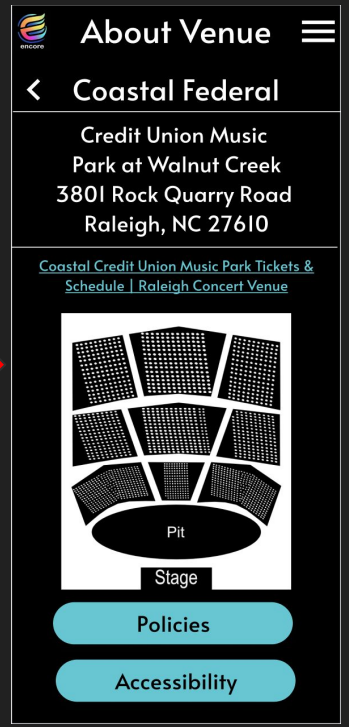
While the team ultimately decided to can the idea of using the venue map as a home screen, user testing between all four of our original prototypes revealed that users liked having the venue map in the app and missed it in those prototypes where it wasn't present.

This naturally brought up the question of where to include the map.

Ultimately, we made the decision to link the venue map screen (as well as other detailed venue information screens) within the calendar feature, which more generally functions as the concert planning portion of the app. We came to this conclusion by empathizing with our average user, and finding this logical place for the venue map became abundantly clear after navigating through the prototype with the assigned task of preparing for a concert that was happening this week.

With that in mind, providing a link to the venue overview directly from the event page on the user's calendar was a natural and intuitive placement.

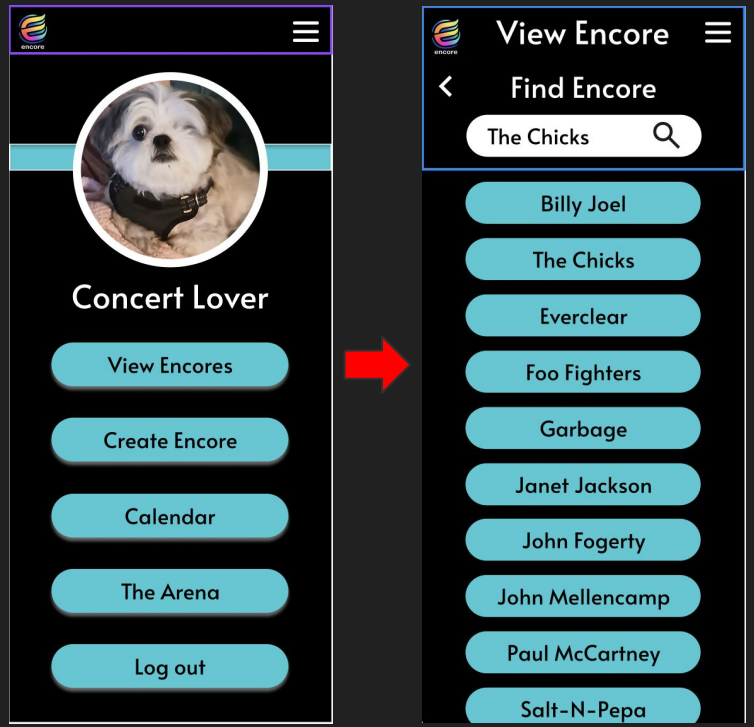




Research Insight - Encore Collection

In the user testing portion of development, a particularly helpful suggestion from one of our participants was the ability to favorite her most-revisited pieces of content for quick and easy access within the app.

This insight was applied and manifested as the “View Encores” section of the prototype (pictured on the right). As the first option the user will see on the home screen, the user’s own content is given top priority, and a simple and intuitive search function further streamlines things.

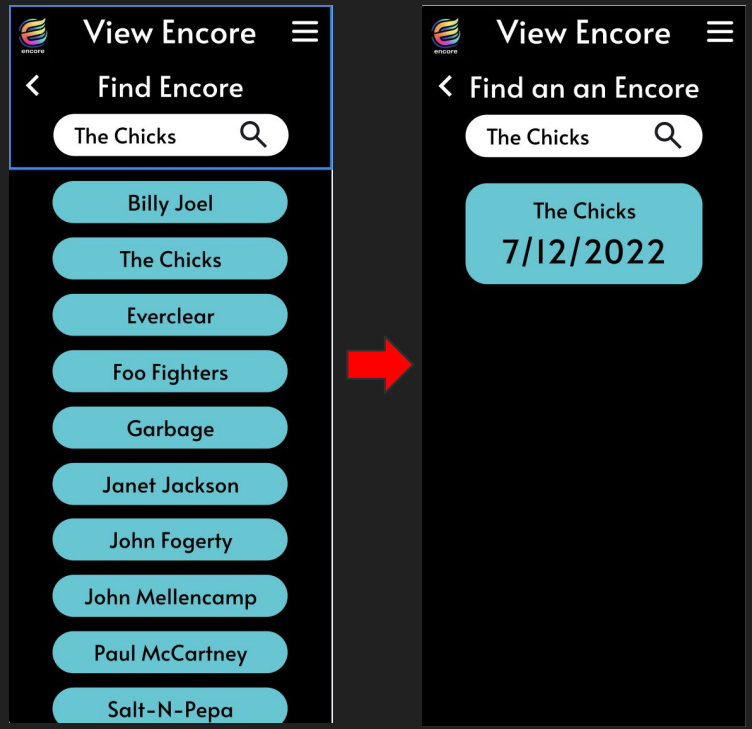


Fitts' Law and the Expanding Search Results

This change came rather late in the development process. In the original implementation of our Encore collection screen, the buttons for search term matches would remain static—the same size and including the same information as on the left screenshot.

However, one wouldn't likely have more than a few matches for any given artist, so this left a lot of unused, negative space below said buttons. Not only did it seem like a waste, it was antithetical in spirit to the purpose of the search (that is, make it quicker and easier to access a specific Encore). While there would be fewer buttons to parse through after searching, the button would still be rather small and require precision to touch.

With Fitts' Law in mind, the solution was simple and twofold. The buttons could dynamically scale as fewer were present on the screen simultaneously. This would make the button larger and easier (read: quicker) to touch, but it would also allow for a piggyback solution to another problem: the date could be displayed legibly on the button itself to differentiate multiple Encores involving the same artist.



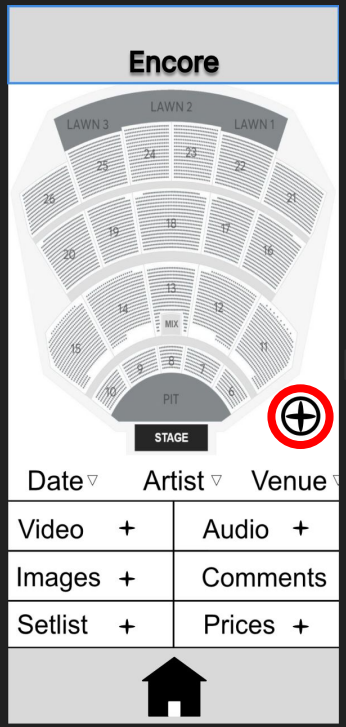
Icons - Recognition over Recall

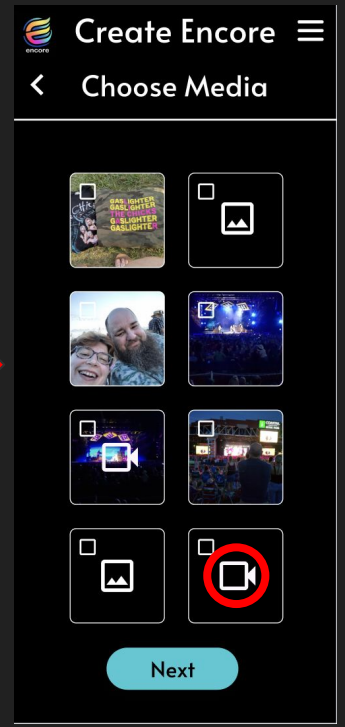
In my initial prototype, I had a few instances of using icons whose functions weren't entirely clear. On the left is circled such an example—as mentioned in a previous slide, the venue map was meant to be clickable to add one's seat from a show as a sort of geotag for their content. The "plus" symbol was the clickable button to initiate this task.

However, in user testing, this was not entirely clear to participants. The plus is a universal signifier of addition, but it was applied too broadly in the prototype. Without proper context or labeling, it was anyone's guess where clicking it would take them.

In the final prototype, we didn't make the mistake of totally abandoning icons—they certainly have their place and time, and are absolutely necessary when properly applied. On the right is a screenshot from our prototype that shows such an instance where a video icon is applied, and it's intended representation and function is abundantly clear to anyone who regularly uses software.

This, of course, is encompassed in Nielsen's heuristic principle of Recognition rather than Recall. The use of the video icon asks the user to mentally file away no additional information—it accesses a portion of memory they already have, and leaves their working memory free to comprehend the less familiar functions of the app that will demand their attention.

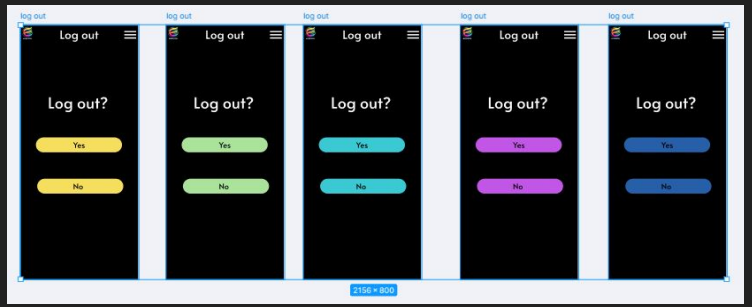




Accessibility and Maintaining Readability

In the first iteration of our final prototype design, most of the buttons and graphics were simply black, white, and gray (top screenshot). Considering our backgrounds are black, this lack of contrast was both detrimental to readability, and less than inspiring to look at.

When we decided to introduce some color, we drew a palette from the Encore logo using Adobe Color (https://color.adobe.com/create/image). The bottom screenshot shows the color options generated in this process, and we determined that the middle blue shade both fit our vision for the UI, and passed Adobe's own automatic accessibility checking tool for readability.



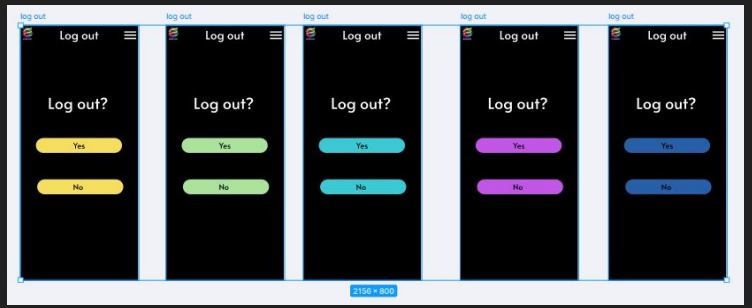
Aesthetic and Minimal Design - Using a Single Color

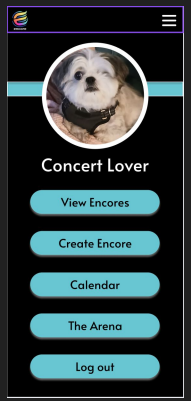
Having already drawn a thematic color palette from the logo, we had the idea to diversify the colorings for various buttons throughout the app to add to the overall vibrancy of the aesthetic. One place we particularly thought this idea would fit were long lists of buttons, such as in the lower screenshots presented here.

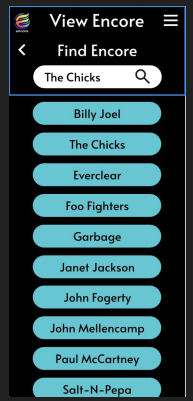
However, testing it with our own eyes and leaning on Nielsen's heuristic principles of Aesthetic and Minimal Design, we determined it was best to stay minimal with colors.

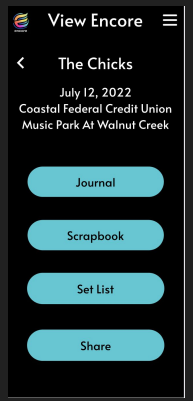
While we had hoped multicolored lists would break up the visual monotony, they only created confusion and optical strain in practice. Additionally, because our app has such a strong social element, videos and images would already break up the visual monotony we were trying to subvert.

This fact alone justifies the use of a single color, as the simple, unobtrusive UI helps that kind of content stand out that much more.





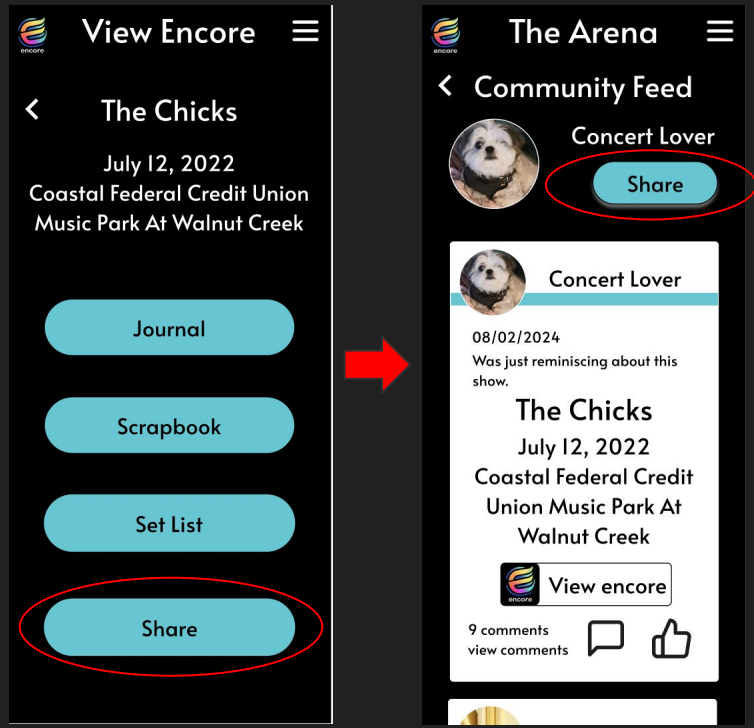




Flexibility and Efficiency of Use - Multiple Ways to Share

Following Nielsen's heuristic principle of Flexibility and Efficiency of Use, there were two logical places to allow users to share one of their created Encores from. Each comes at a point in their respective task flows where the user would be most likely to think to share it.

The first is immediately upon creating an Encore or revisiting it in their collection (leftmost screenshot). The user might also be most driven to share upon seeing other people post Encores in the Community Feed, so an option is included there as well (right screenshot).



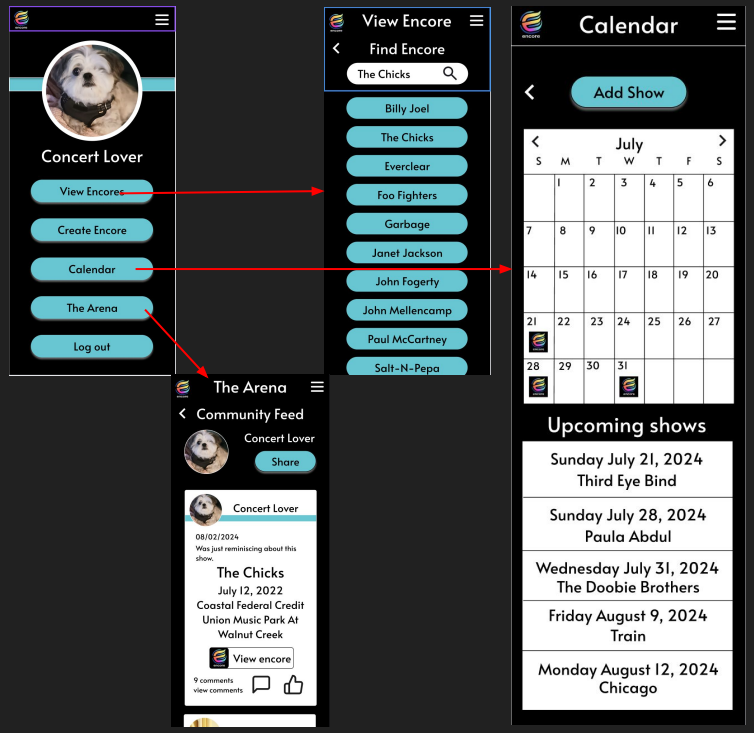
Formative Research Insights - Named Sections

My group had most of the core features we wanted to include in our prototype before any of us began designing our individual ones—the central content-packaging feature (which became an “Encore”), a planning element (later encompassed by the Calendar section), and a social/sharing feature (eventually manifesting as “The Arena”).

However, none of these features was explicitly or consistently named between our projects. Furthermore, they weren’t as modularized as they became in the final prototype, and different sets of features would intermingle between screens.

We decided to put to work some insight we discussed and included in our formative research report—group these sets of features together under defined, named sections. This made the home screen much easier to conceptualize, and added some catchiness to our platform.

Every app has a social feed, but we have “The Arena.” Every app has content, but we have “Encores.” And every planning app has a calendar, but we have…well, sometimes it’s best to keep things simple.



References and Citations

J. Nielsen, “10 Heuristics for User Interface Design,” *Nielsen Norman Group*, Apr. 24, 1994. https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usabilityheuristics/

Venue map for original prototype courtesy of BankPlus Amphitheater at Snowden Grove (https://www.bankplusamphitheater.com/events/seating-charts)

Final prototype venue map created by Josh Flenniken (me)

Color analysis conducted using Adobe Color (https://color.adobe.com/create/image)

All prototypes designed in Figma

Photographs within prototypes provided by the authors

Encore Logo by Ben Prisk, based on design by Dall-e

Venue information courtesy of https://www.coastalcreditunionmusicpark.com

Setlist information courtesy of Setlist.fm (https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/the-chicks/2022/coastal-credit-union-music-park-at-walnut-creek-raleigh-nc-13b54961.html)

Camera and thumb icon courtesy of Simple Design System provided by Figma

All other icons courtesy of Material 3 Design Kit on Figma