

# Soundry Community

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Getting help for something online can often be an intimidating process. Specifically for music producers, there are not many online communities where one can easily get help during music production and feedback on music that they have shared. We aimed to create an online platform that would enable music producers to access help and share their work easily. This report summarizes our process for designing a community platform for Soundry AI's music production community. We will introduce our initial problem, discuss our process for our initial design, describe our interface in our initial design, describe our prototyping assumptions, summarize five usability evaluations and our methodology behind them, and draw conclusions about our design based on our evaluations.

## INTRODUCTION

The team behind Soundry AI approached us to design a community platform for music producers to share music and get help producing.

Soundry AI is an existing AI tool for generating samples for electronic music. They also have a Discord community where users share their music and seek help when needed. The problem is, users of the Discord server don't interact much with each other. Users often share their music without reacting to others' music, and as a result, they receive little feedback. The server is also a challenging environment to get help in when producing. Communities on Reddit and other forums often suffer from similar issues.

Our goal was to design a platform where users can easily share their music and get help producing while also being encouraged to give feedback and help others.

## UX DESIGN PROCESS

Our design process started by meeting with our sponsor, Becky Buckler, where we discussed our goals. Soon after, we began user research and analysis. This includes: Affinity Diagrams, Personas, Tasks, and Requirement statements. We initially interviewed four musicians whom we knew. We tried to recruit people to interview from the Soundry Discord, but we couldn't find anyone willing to participate. After completing the interviews, we created an affinity diagram with important information taken from each interview. We then created tasks based on our affinity diagram, which were: getting help, sharing music, discovering music, and giving help. We also created personas of users based on our interviews and created requirement statements for what we must include in our design.

After speaking with our sponsor, we concluded that these interviews were not representative enough of our intended user base. Our sponsor then provided us with the contacts of two music producers who are also on Discord. After interviewing them, we updated our existing analysis by first creating a new affinity diagram. We then refined the specifics of our tasks and requirement statements to align more closely with the producers' feedback and created new personas.

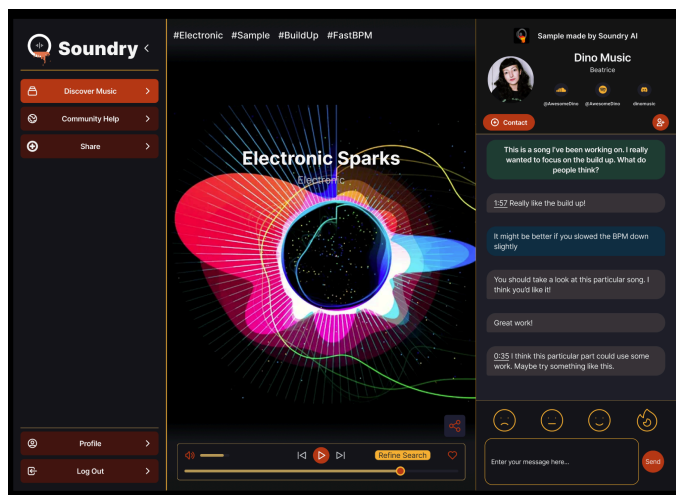
Next, we sketched our wireframe, then implemented it in Figma. The main features of our wireframe were a discovery page, a sharing page, and a help page. We then conducted a heuristic evaluation with it during class and identified several areas for improvement. We also added two tasks: managing shared

content and updating a user profile. With this tweaked prototype, we conducted two user feedback sessions and an expert evaluation in class. This also revealed some things we needed to tweak to improve usability, the biggest being a clearer way to find the content that the user has shared, which we moved to their account page. Above all, the feedback on prototype wireframes helped us implement features we had missed or hadn't considered. Then we moved on to create a high-fidelity prototype by adding colors, replacing placeholder text and images, and implementing the feedback.

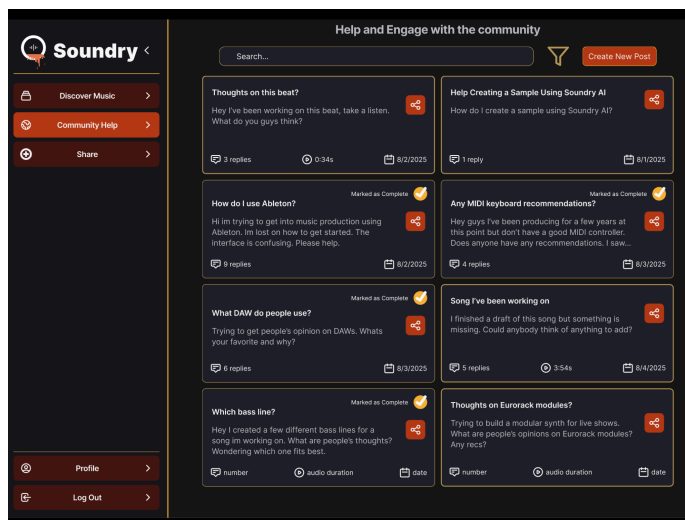
## INTERFACE DESCRIPTION

<https://www.figma.com/design/oMrJLTNzaXS8dj15g9Wg9q/Wireframe?node-id=0-1&t=ljrYsmLoToBH75kk-1>

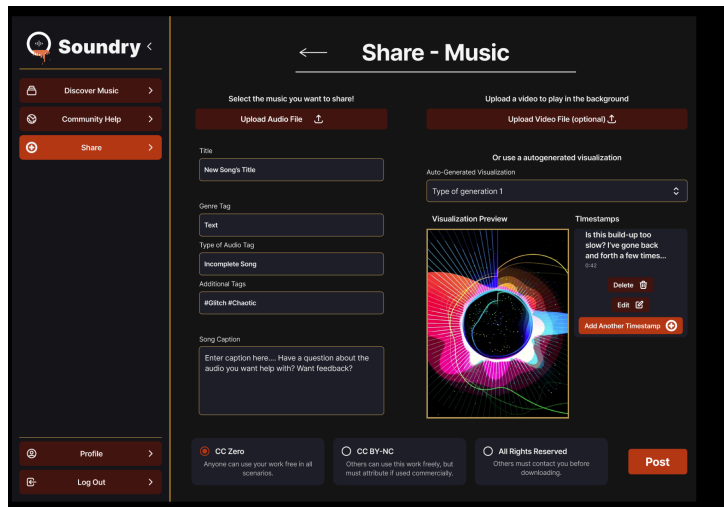
Our interface consists of 3 main pages. There is a page for discovering music, looking at people's help posts, and sharing your own posts. There is also an additional page for a user's account where they can edit their profile and see their posts. All of the pages are navigable via a sidebar. The design opens to the Discover Music page where users can complete the task of discovering and interacting with others' music.



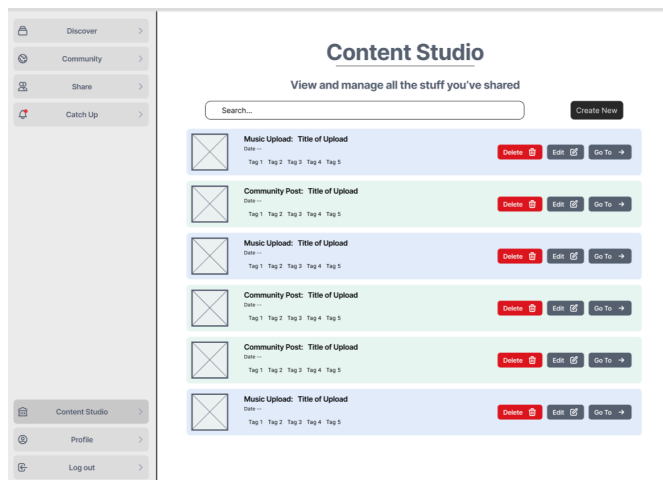
On the Community Page, users can complete the task of helping other users. They can see and reply to people's help posts or share them with someone else who may be able to help.



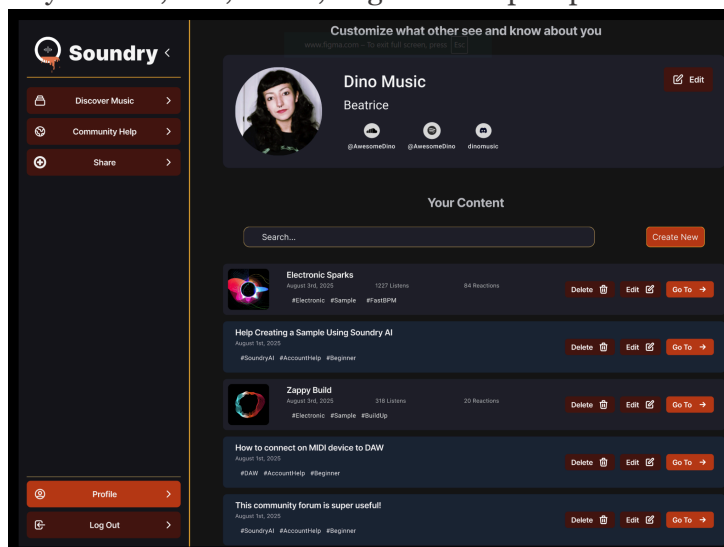
On the Share page, users can complete two tasks: sharing the music they have made and asking for help if they need it. When making a post, users give it a title, description, tags, and can attach audio or video.



For the task of editing or deleting your past posts, we originally had a separate Content Studio tab. Through our early user tests and expert evaluation, we learned quickly that people did not intuitively understand that that's where they would go to delete and edit their posts.



So, for our high fidelity prototype, we moved a user's posts under their Profile page. Here they can see, edit, delete, or go to their past posts.



Other than moving where a user's content is, we didn't have many other big design changes between our low, medium, and high fidelity prototypes.

## **PROTOTYPING ASSUMPTIONS**

- Our primary requirement is an algorithm that delivers personalized audio tracks to users. A competitive algorithm would take significant engineering, user data, and testing to implement effectively.
- We assumed that adding ways for users to edit other people's audio tracks directly would be possible to implement, even though some companies have struggled to implement something like that before
- We assumed that auto-generating a variety of backgrounds for songs when users don't select their own would be easy to implement.
- We ignored any content moderation and security issues when it comes to users sharing their own .audio files
- We indirectly assume that lossless audio, such as FLAC (Free Lossless Audio Codec), would be feasible to implement in terms of cost and efficiency. It was a common request throughout our interviews.
- We didn't list specific formats of audio and video files supported since we assume it will support all major video and audio codec's (most notably formats like .mov, which Apple uses a lot but is not generally widely supported).

## **USABILITY EVALUATION**

### **Evaluation Objectives**

We conducted a usability test to determine whether our high-fidelity prototype was intuitive and effective for target users. We wanted to discover what parts of the design users might get stuck on and if there was any parts that were confusing.

### **Tasks / Scenarios**

Task 1: Viewing music on the Discovery page

Scenario: You just opened the app and want to listen to new music. Explore what's playing and interact with it by leaving a comment.

Task 2: Looking at posts on the Community page

Scenario: You want to help another user improve their production. Find where a user has asked for help and respond to their question..

Task 3: Sharing music

Scenario: You've finished a track and want to share it. Go through the process of posting your song.

Task 4: Deleting past upload

Scenario: You watch the video you just posted, and you realize it was the wrong audio file!

Task 5: Asking for help

Scenario: You're stuck on a mix and want feedback. Post a help request.

## Participants

Our participants consisted of friends and family with a variety of backgrounds in technology and music. Ages 17-55 and mixed genders. A total of 8 users were recruited.

## Usability Metrics

We measured usability across the three core dimensions:

Effectiveness: % completion, it's completed if they do what is asked.

Efficiency: Time on task, how long it took the user to complete the task.

Satisfaction: 1-5 scale on ease of use and open-ended feedback.

## Procedure

We tested using the Figma high-fidelity prototype on Desktop. The users were told their initial situation, and as they navigated through the prototype, a moderator verbally described the screen to make up for the lack of interaction in the prototype. For example, on the discover page, the moderator told the user to imagine a song they enjoyed was playing with an audio-visualizer video (which wasn't present in the prototype). The moderator otherwise observed without intervening.

## RESULTS

Team members recorded the time it took them to complete each task, and the average of the times was used as the target. Recorded results from usability tests of 8 users:

### Task 1: Discover and interact with music

Usability Metric	Measure	Target	Observed
Effectiveness	Completion %	100%	100%
Efficiency	Time on task	0:15	0:12-1:10   avg. 0:31
Satisfaction	1-5 ease of use	5	4-5   avg. 4.87

### Task 2: Navigating and giving help to community

Usability Metric	Measure	Target	Observed
Effectiveness	Completion %	100%	100%
Efficiency	Time on task	0:16	0:15-:50   avg. 0:27
Satisfaction	1-5 ease of use	5	3-5   avg. 4.50

### Task 3: Posting music

Usability Metric	Measure	Target	Observed
Effectiveness	Completion%	100%	100%
Efficiency	Time on task	0:30	0:25-1:10   avg. 0:52
Satisfaction	1-5 ease of use	5	4-5   avg. 4.87

**Task 4: Deleting past upload**

Usability Metric	Measure	Target	Observed
Effectiveness	Completion%	100%	100%
Efficiency	Time on task	0:17	0:20-2:44   avg. 0:52
Satisfaction	1-5 ease of use	5	3-5   avg. 4.37

**Task 5: Asking for help**

Usability Metric	Measure	Target	Observed
Effectiveness	Completion%	100%	100%
Efficiency	Time on task	0:14	0:08-2:17   avg. 0:34
Satisfaction	1-5 ease of use	5	3-5   avg. 4.62

**Usability Issues**

Task/Screen	Usability Issue	Design Change Recommendation	Severity
Task 1 Discover page	It's not obvious that the video/audio is paused when the website is first opened.	Clearly indicate that the user can start listening to the music by clicking on the visualizer or clicking the play button.	2
Task 4 User Profile page	When you scroll on the posted content, the "Your Content" title appears over the user profile surface.	Fix the layering.	1
Task 1 Discover page	It isn't clear what current tags the user is searching for	Add a small view to the discover page that shows the current refined search.	2
Task All General feedback	The text boxes in the prototype were hard to use because there was no feedback when inputting them.	Make the prototype's inputs populate on click.	0 – Just prototype

**DISCUSSION**

Generally, we found that our user interface was not too confusing for users and that the overall user experience was not significantly hindered by design decisions. Funnily, one of the users in the test felt challenged to do it as fast as possible, and in some cases managed to complete the tasks faster than the benchmark time. This shows that to some, the interface was very intuitive and fast to learn.

We based these design recommendations on where users got stuck during our usability evaluations. Many of these considerations are also important if this expands into an actual website, since they involve browser-specific considerations. For example, in the case of task 1, even if music were set to autoplay when you open the site, many browsers will override that setting and will not allow the site to autoplay media on

load. The second one is self-explanatory: a mistake caused user confusion that needed fixing. The next issue focuses on keeping users informed about prior decisions as much as possible. Maintaining a permanent overview of selected tags, similar to how some sites display selected filters, is a viable approach to addressing this tag issue. The last issue is just a small problem with the prototype to make it more intuitive and understandable.

We achieved 100% completion on all our tasks, demonstrating that none were overly complex or impossible to accomplish. Regarding the failures of this evaluation, the Likert scale was likely biased because the participants were close to the moderator. It is a relatively safe guess that family members and friends are more likely to sugarcoat issues and give inflated scores.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Given more time and resources, we could have significantly improved our prototype by turning it from something that feels like a prototype into something that engineers could use without guessing our intentions. Realistically, more in-depth user research with paid incentives would make a massive difference in our final result. We will address the design issues identified in our usability evaluations and will make the appropriate changes in our final design. Regarding limitations from our evaluations, using family and friends for the evaluation introduces intense bias and would have been unacceptable in any other circumstance.