

FLOW



# Process Deck

Rohan Barad | Personal Project | 2020



ONE SPIT  
WONDER

## WHAT IS FREESTYLING?

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test

**Freestyle** is the artistic practice where rappers improvise lyrics on the spot.

Not only is it fun, but it's also useful for becoming a better rapper, and even gathering inspiration for songwriting.



## PRIMARY PERSONAS

Empathize | **Define** | Ideate | Prototype | Test

### A Win-Win Situation

*Flow* caters to two primary personas, in the hopes of bridging the connection between DJs and Rappers.

**Moving forward,** I will target design efforts to answer these problem statements.



#### DJs

DJs want a promising way to spread their beats so that it can be found by rappers in pursuit of beats



#### Rappers

Young-adult rappers want an encouraging way to freestyle so that they can enjoy and practice the art form

## PRIMARY PERSONAS

Empathize | **Define** | Ideate | Prototype | Test



## Prat

### The Full-Time DJ

Prat is a 25-year-old DJ that has been making beats since middle school. Over time, he's gained experience with tools from beat-making apps to sequencers and synthesizers. Now, he works as a professional DJ, where he dreams of gaining recognition and respect from rappers and fans in the industry.

#### Pain Points

- When he posts a beat to Soundcloud or Youtube, he feels like it's lost in an ocean of music files that will never be discovered
- When his beats are found, someone uses it for their song without giving him any credit
- There's no platform focused on promoting underground DJs

#### Core Needs

- A direct point of contact for inquiries from rappers upon finding his beat
- An opportune platform to share his beat
- A method to help put his beat in the right hands
- Some form of categorization to build an appropriate expectation of his beat

## PRIMARY PERSONAS

Empathize | Define | Ideate | Prototype | Test



# Raffy

## The College Rapper

Raffy is 19. In high school, he found it fun to freestyle with his friends; as a result, he grew very good at it. In college, Raffy decided to pursue rap as a career. He's already made 2 songs on Soundcloud, and to this day, he uses freestyling as a way to inspire his songwriting and find the right beat for his music.

### Pain Points

- Recording audio doesn't guarantee that his track will sound clear or balanced
- Most of the beats that he finds are not royalty free, so he can't produce music with them
- It takes him too long to find a beat that he likes

### Core Needs

- An efficient way to find the right beat
- Technology to record and edit high-quality audio from his freestyles

## SECONDARY & TERTIARY PERSONAS

Empathize | **Define** | Ideate | Prototype | Test



### Jimmy the novice rapper

Jimmy is new to rapping. He likes to freestyle with his friends. He is fascinated by the art form of freestyling, and he wants to learn about more ways to practice and enjoy it.



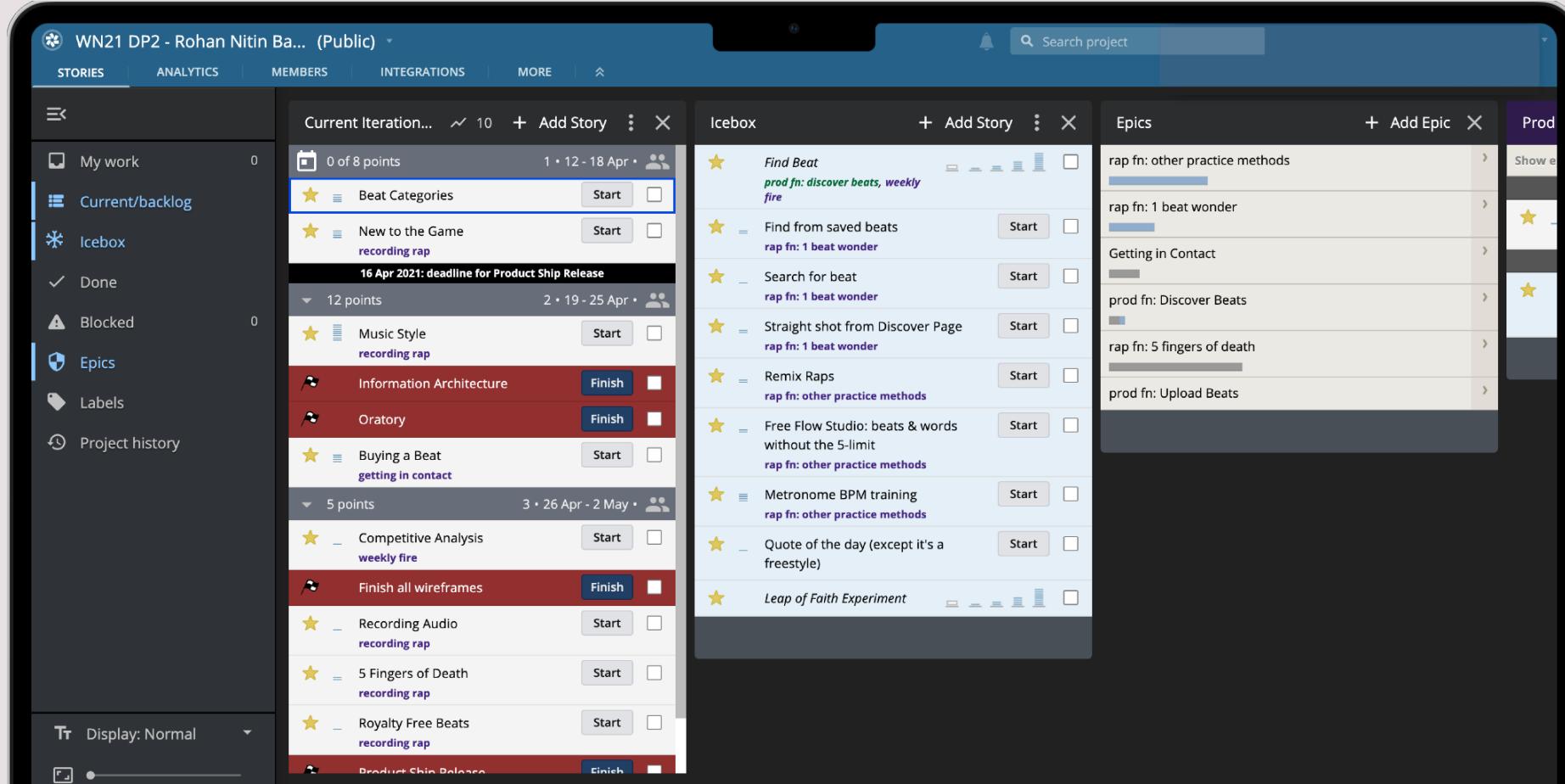
### Aurko the rap enthusiast

Aurko loves studying the art and history of rap. He really enjoys seeing the rap world connect in a multitude of ways.



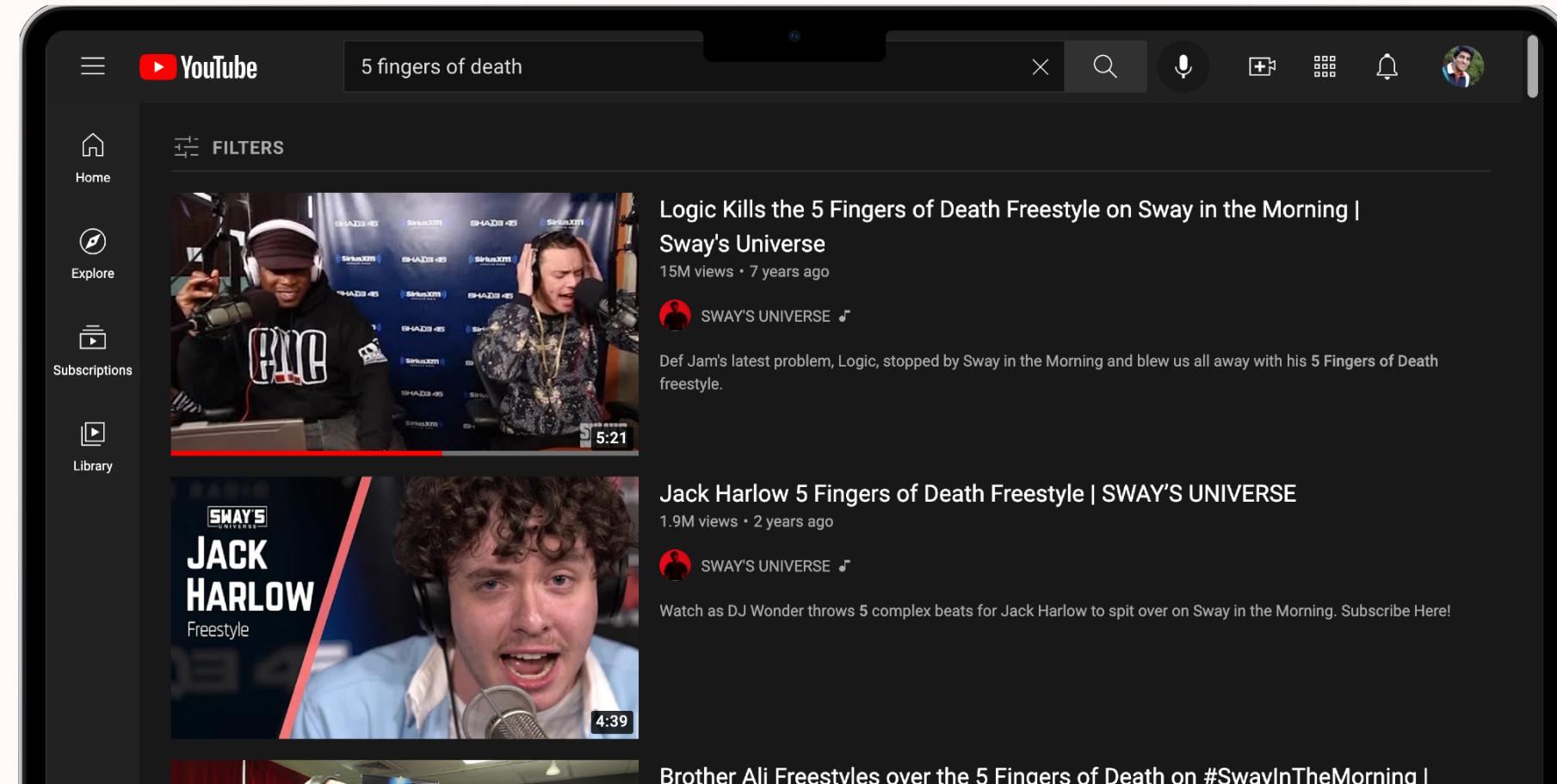
### Jack the famous rapper

Jack is a famous rapper. He has 2.2 million followers on Instagram. Jack would love to practice his talent on Flow. More importantly, he'd love to see if there's fire beats on Flow that he could use.



## Simple. Lovable. Complete.

I wanted to create a feasible solution that's still *finished*. Thus, I adopted the **SLC** or "Slick" model to determine a set of features that completely solves the problems I've listed. On **Pivotal Tracker**, I utilized epics, iterations, and an icebox to prioritize and implement each feature.



## The 5 Fingers of Death

The 5 Fingers of Death is a fun activity where rappers freestyle to 5 different cue words or “fingers”; with each finger, a new beat plays. Altogether, this encourages rappers to freestyle, while also helping market the plethora of beats uploaded by DJs.

## SECONDARY RESEARCH

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test

List of Hip Hop Genres



Subgenres	Alternative (Hipster hop) · Boom bap · Bounce · British (Road rap) · Chopped and screwed · Chopper · Cloud rap · Comedy · Crunk (Crunkcore) · East Coast · Freestyle rap · G-funk · Hardcore (Dirty rap) · Gangsta rap (Mafioso rap) · Horrorcore · Memphis rap) · Hyphy (Jerkin') · Instrumental (Chillhop) · Latin (Chicano rap) · Miami bass · Mumble rap · Nerdcore (Chap hop) · Political (Conscious) · Progressive rap · Religious (Christian · Jewish) · Snap music · Southern · Trap music (Afro trap · Drill (Brooklyn drill · UK drill) · Latin trap · Phonk · Tread · UK trap) · Turntablism · Underground
Fusion genres	Country rap · Electro · Emo rap · Hip hop soul · Hip house · Industrial · Jazz rap · New jack swing · Pop rap · Punk rap · Ragga · Rap opera · Rap rock (Rap metal (Trap metal) · Rapcore) · Trip hop
Regional	Afroswing · Bongo flava · Boomba music · Cumbia rap · Genge · Gyp-hop · Hip hop galsen · Hipco · Hiplife · Igbo rap · Kwaito · Low bap · Merenhouse · Motswako · Na mele paleoleo · Nuyorican rap · Romany hip hop · Songo-salsa · Stronda · Urban Pasifika · Vigilante rap · Zenji flava

rap beat instrumental slow



rap beat instrumental slow  
rap beats instrumental slow sad  
rap beats instrumental slowed down  
hip hop beat instrumental slow  
rap beats freestyle instrumental slow sad  
rap beats freestyle instrumental slow old school  
rap beats freestyle instrumental slow love  
rap beats freestyle instrumental slow then fast  
beat rap instrumental trap hard slow  
slow rap beat instrumental with bass  
slow love rap beat instrumental  
guitar beat instrumental rap hip hop slow

Hip Hop Production



3 Elements

- 3.1 Drum beat
- 3.2 Sampling
- 3.3 Samplers
- 3.4 Turntables
- 3.5 Synthesizers

rap beat instrumental fast



rap beat instrumental fast  
rap beats instrumental fast hard  
rap beat instrumental aggressive fast  
rap beat instrumental sad fast  
rap beat trap instrumental fast  
rap beat instrumental freestyle fast  
rap type beat instrumental fast  
free rap beat instrumental fast  
rap beats freestyle instrumental fast tempo  
rap beats freestyle instrumental fast hard  
rap beats freestyle instrumental fast old school  
rap beats freestyle instrumental fast no copyright  
rap beats freestyle instrumental fast playlist

## Beat Categories

Categorizing beats is essential to helping DJs put their work in the right rapper's hands; however, I needed help determining what each category should be.

To do this, I first looked on [Wikipedia](#); in particular, I studied how Wikipedia outlines or categorizes the entire experience. In a sense, I used their outline to inspire my information architecture.

Next, I dug deeper into one of the most common categorizations among rappers: fast and slow beats. To find other keywords that compliment this, I watched for recommendations that [Youtube's](#) search algorithm would give me as I type.

## DESIGN PROCESS

Empathize | Define | **Ideate** | Prototype | Test

## Information Architecture

With a list of essential solutions, I mapped out where each feature should be in order to make the experience effective and convenient for Prat and Raffy.

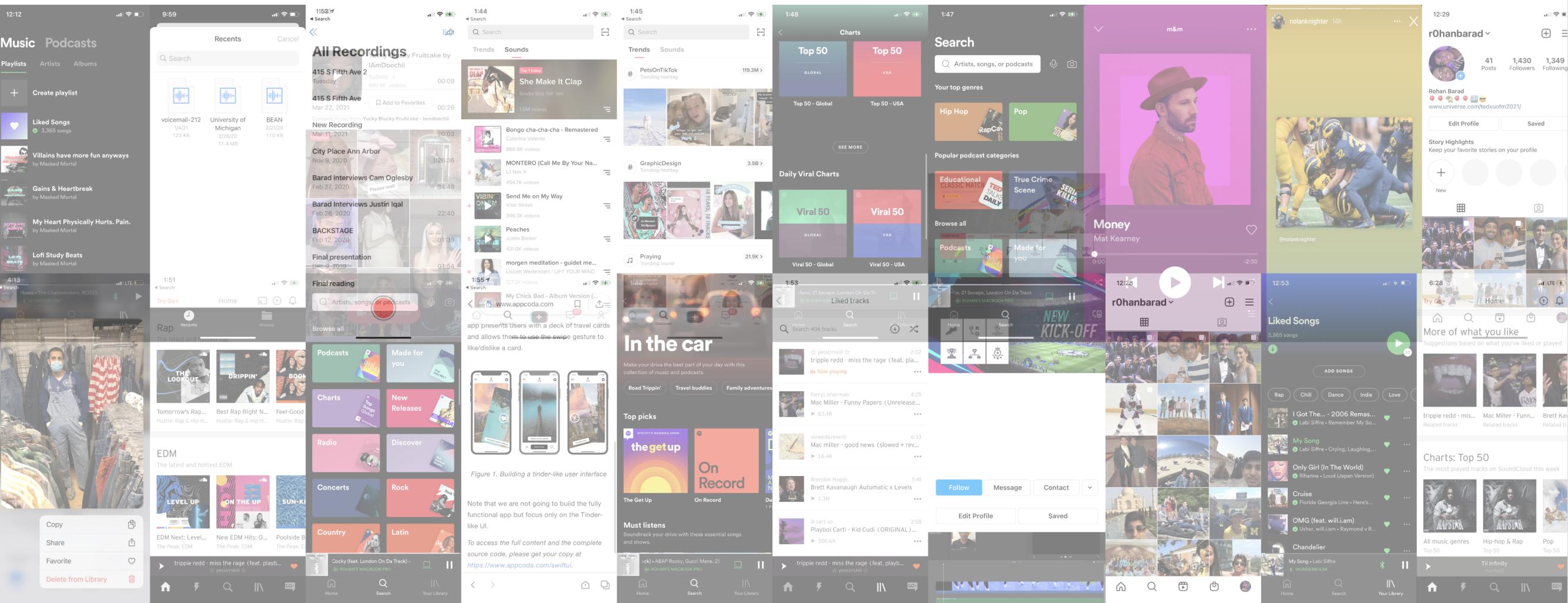


## DESIGN PROCESS

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test

During the low fidelity stages, I naturally gained inspiration from apps that I use, such as Instagram and Spotify's gradient backgrounds.

## Inspiration

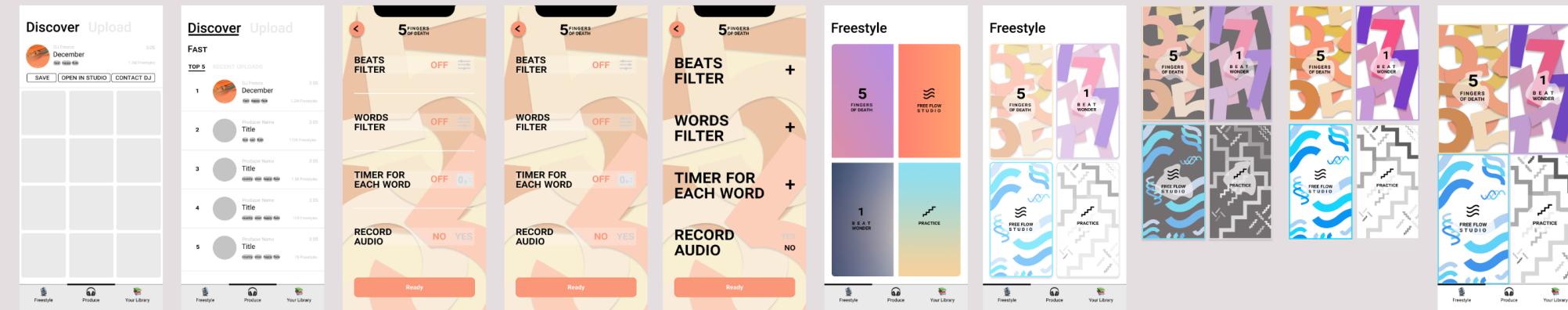
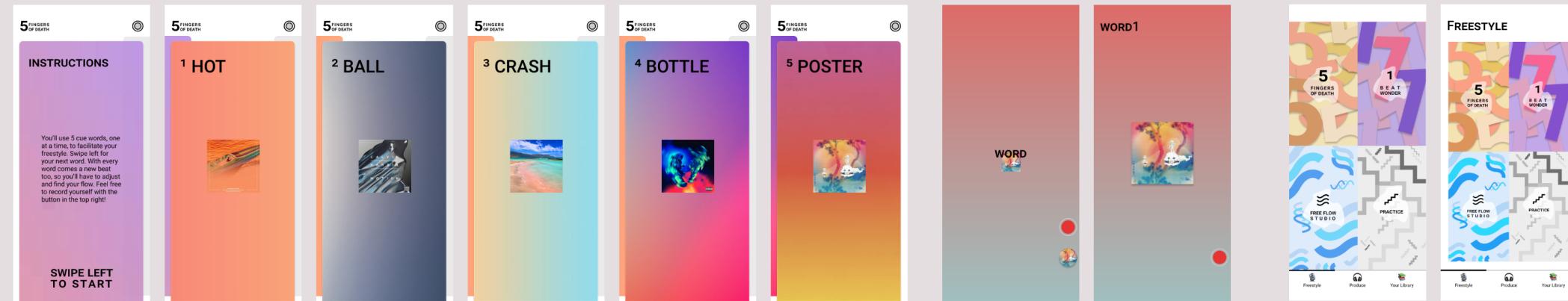


## DESIGN PROCESS

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test

Midway through the design process, I made some layout changes to certain screens. Here's some designs that were cut and replaced.

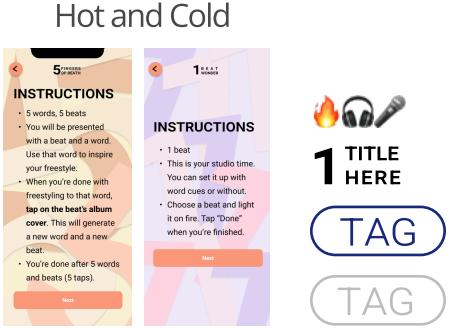
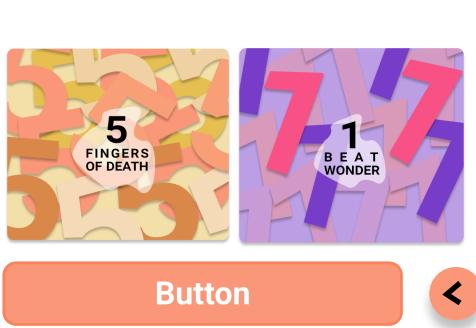
## Design Decisions



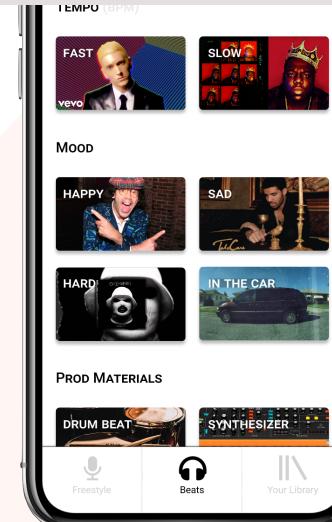
## STYLE GUIDE

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test

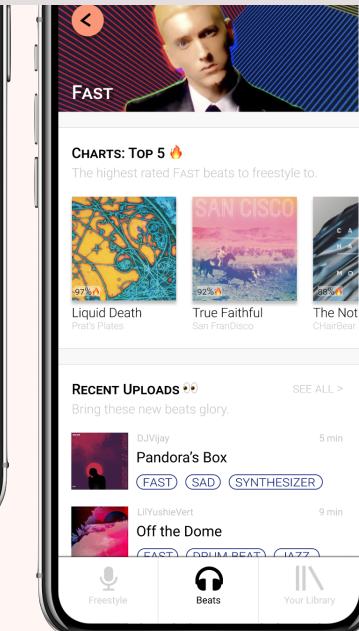
## Design Elements



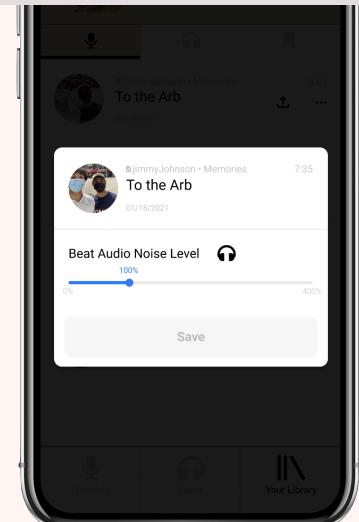
Gradient Background



Pop Culture Images



Horizontal Scroll



0 to 400 Real Quick

## Colors

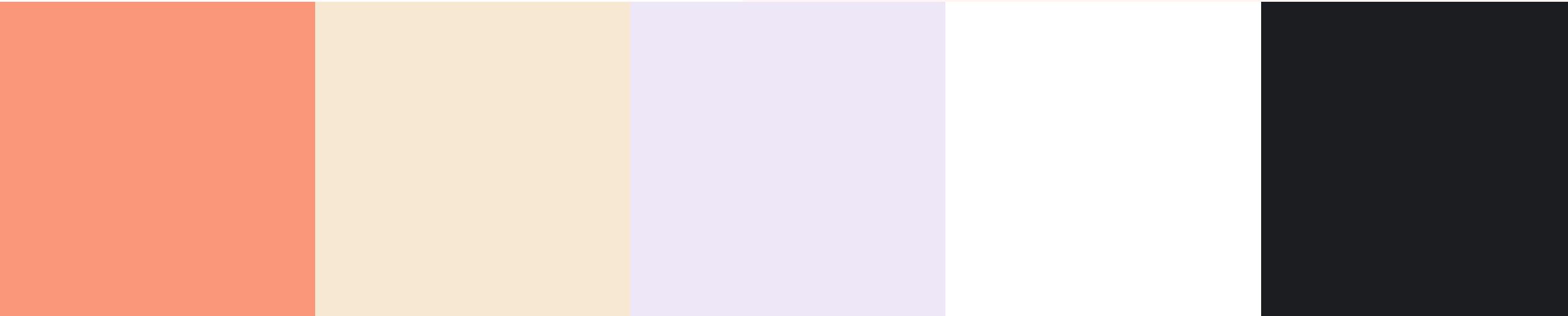
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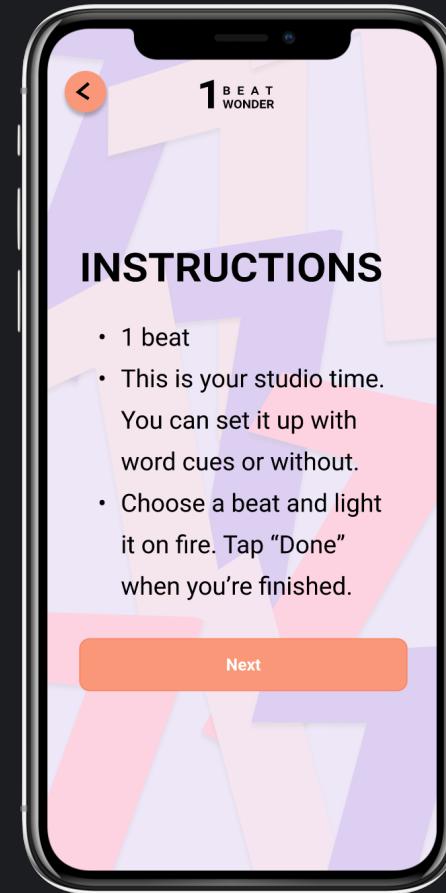
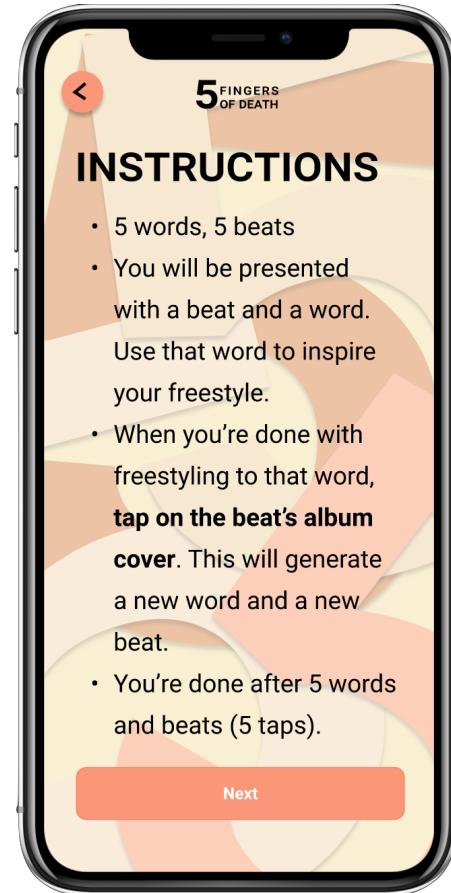


## Hot

### 5 Fingers of Death

This form of freestyle is hectic, as the beat and cue word changes five separate times.

To match this hectic mood, I chose a theme with hot colors for the activity. Also, I added the number 5 in the background for visual emphasis.



## Cold

### One Beat Wonder

This practice is more calm and focused; that is, because a rapper is investing their energy and focus into one beat; thus, other cues like words should enter softly so as to not distract them. To match this calm mood, I chose a theme with cool colors for the activity.





**Prat**  
The Full-Time DJ

## Use Case

Prat wants to share a beat that he just produced.

● = pain point

### Break the News

- 1 • Post the file on Soundcloud
- 2 • Send the Soundcloud link to group chats with his friends
- 3 • Reach out to rappers

### Social Media

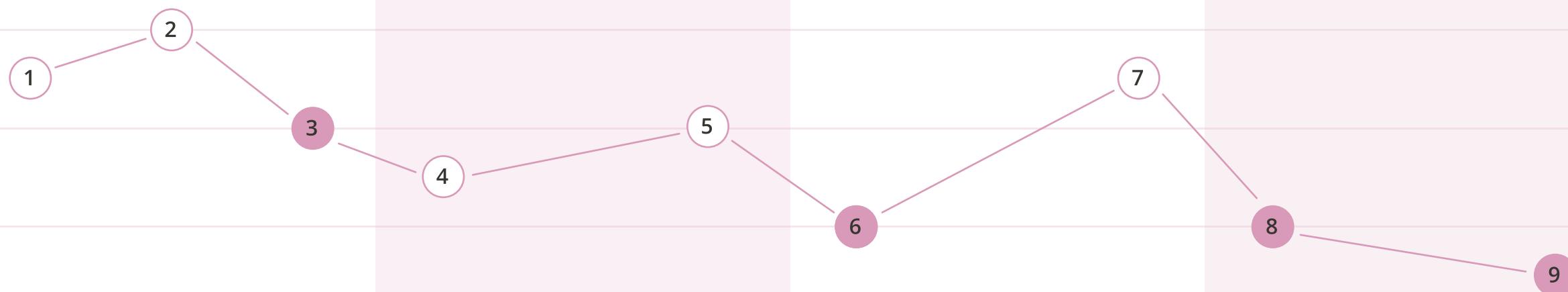
- 4 • Make IG and FB accounts
- 5 • Post the news on social media

### Networking

- 6 • Look for venues to play at
- 7 • Self-promote during the DJ set

### More Marketing

- 8 • Ask popular hip hop accounts to share his beat
- 9 • Post a link to his beat under popular IG and Twit. threads

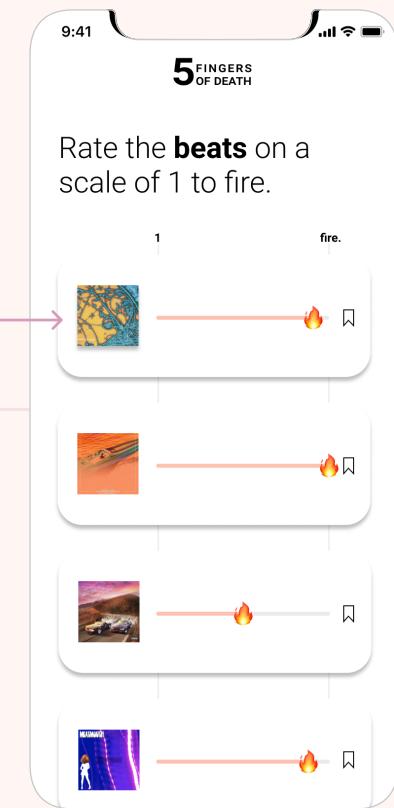
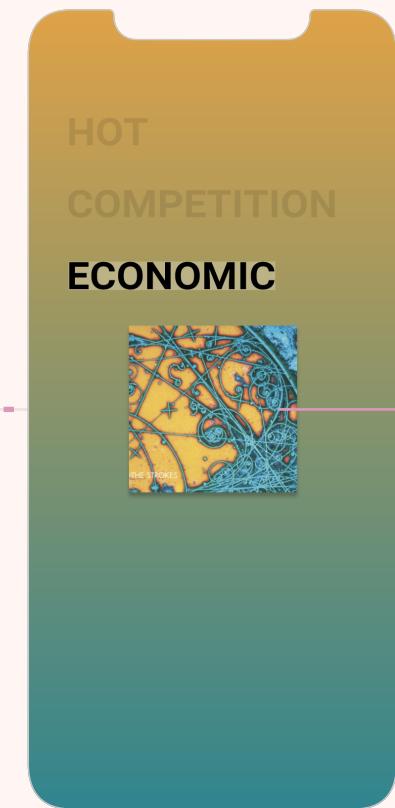
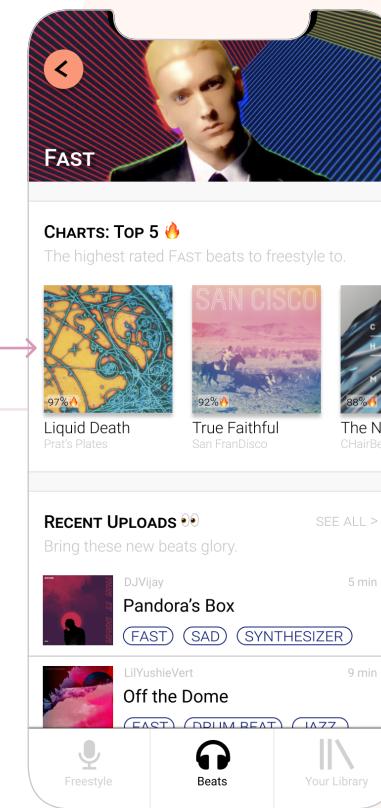
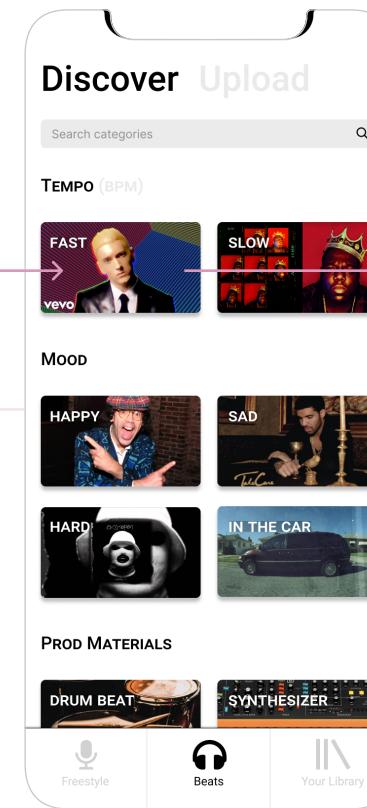
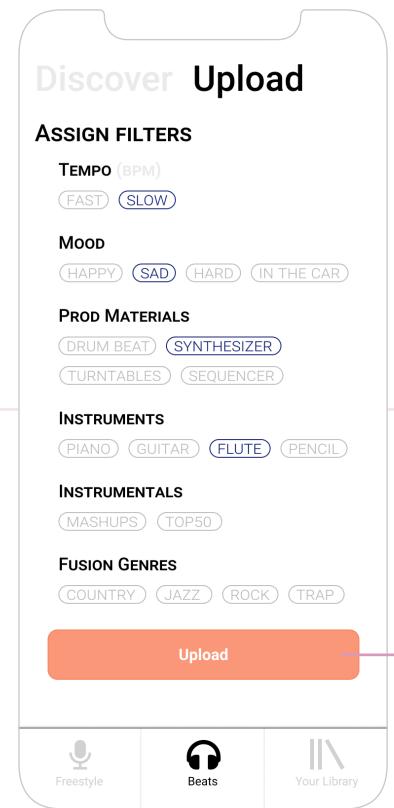




Prat  
The Full-Time DJ

## Use Case

Prat wants to share a beat that he just produced.





**Raffy**  
The College Rapper

## Use Case

Raffy wants to freestyle.

### Find a Beat

- 1 • Search for a beat on Youtube
- 2 • Listen to the first seconds of a few beats to judge whether or not he likes it

### Prod. Materials

- 3 • Ask a friend to borrow their phone so that he can record himself while using Youtube

### Set the Stage

- 4 • Play the Youtube beat from the start
- 5 • Press the record button on Voice Memos

### Freestyle

- 6 • Start freestyling
- 7 • Listen to the recording after to see sound quality



1

2

3

4

5

6

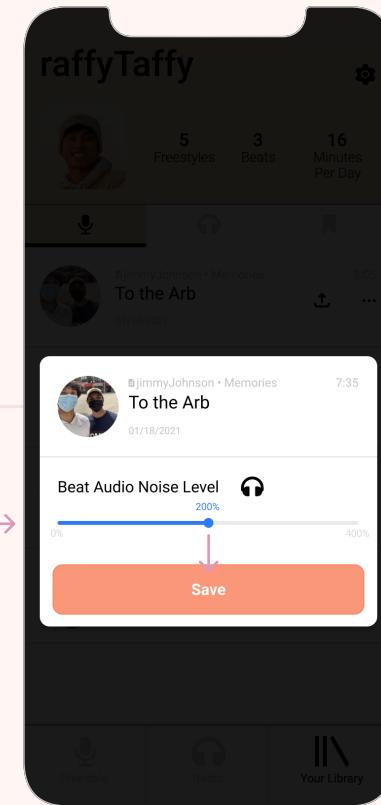
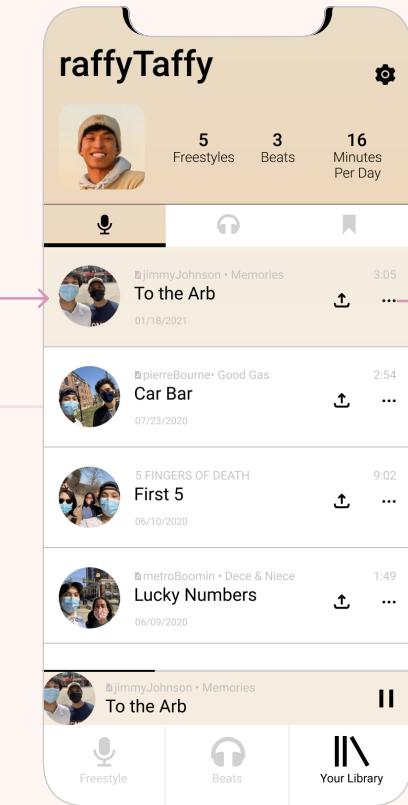
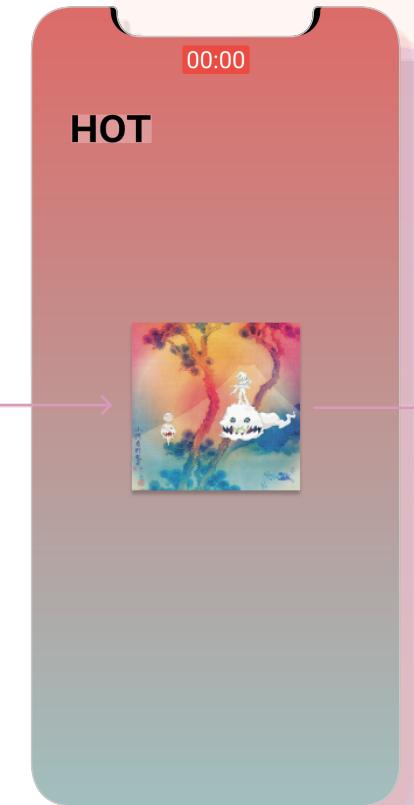
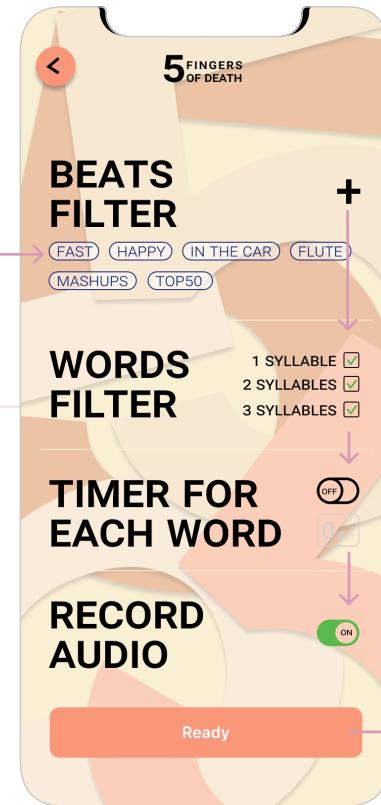
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**Raffy**  
The College Rapper

**Use Case**  
Raffy wants to freestyle.





**Raffy**

The College Rapper

## Use Case

Raffy found a beat that he likes and wants to produce a song with it.

### Songwriting

- 1 • Spends time in the studio to write lyrics for the track
- 2 • Records a low quality track to share for feedback

### Stalking

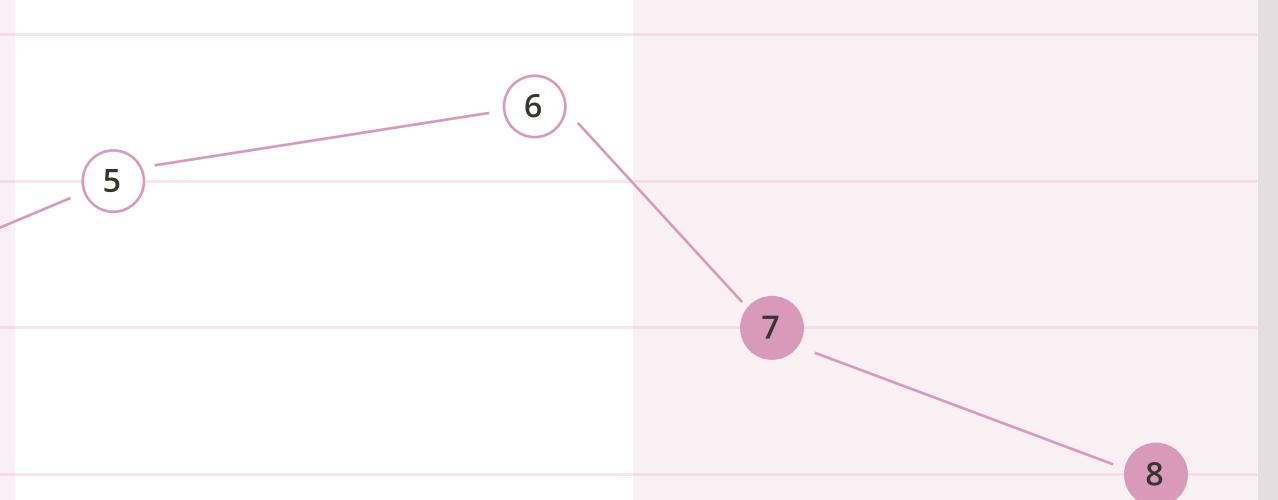
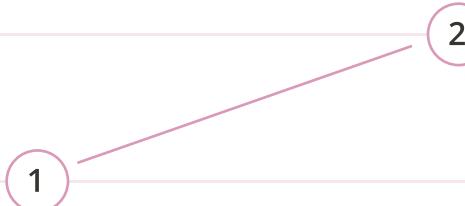
- 3 • Realizes that the beat isn't royalty free, so he has to find the DJ for permission
- 4 • Finds the name of the DJ online, but no contact info.

### Reaching Out

- 5 • Searches for the DJ on social media
- 6 • Writes a direct message with his track to send to the DJ

### The Waiting Game

- 7 • Waits a long time for a response
- 8 • The DJ never sees the DM

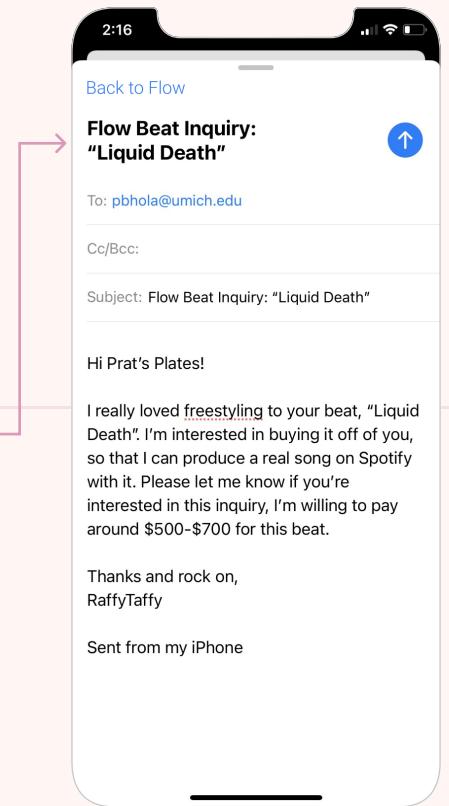
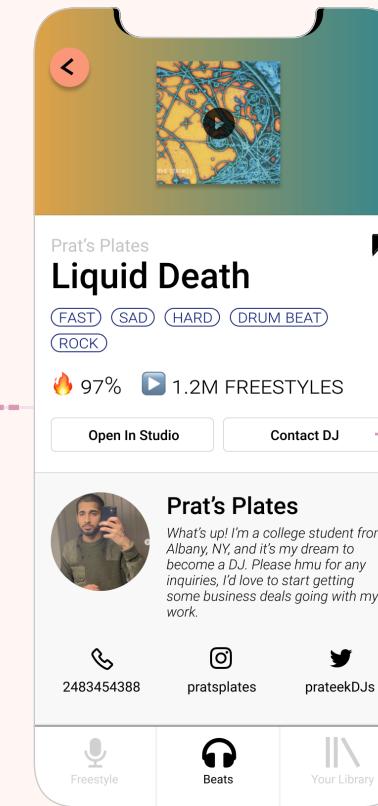
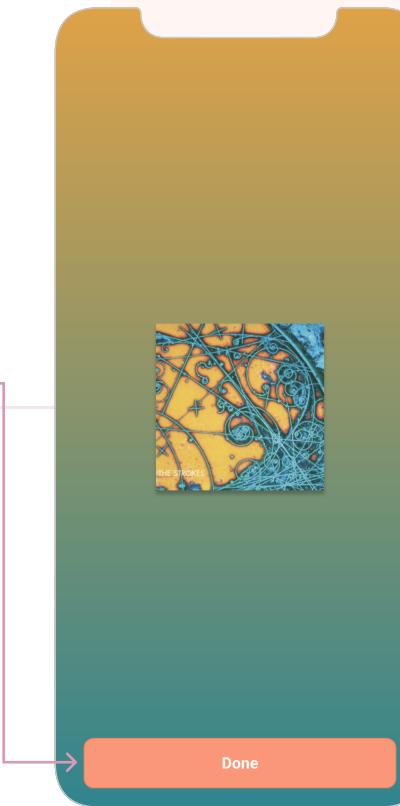
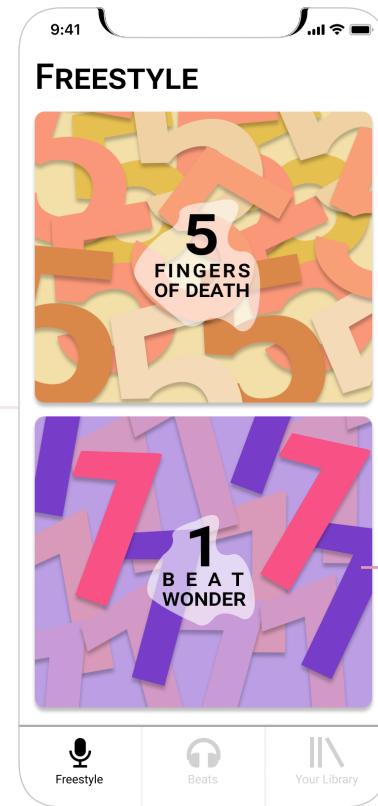




**Raffy**  
The College Rapper

## Use Case

Raffy found a beat that he likes and wants to produce a song with it.



## DESIGN HANDOFF

Empathize Define Ideate **Prototype** | Test

## Technical Difficulties

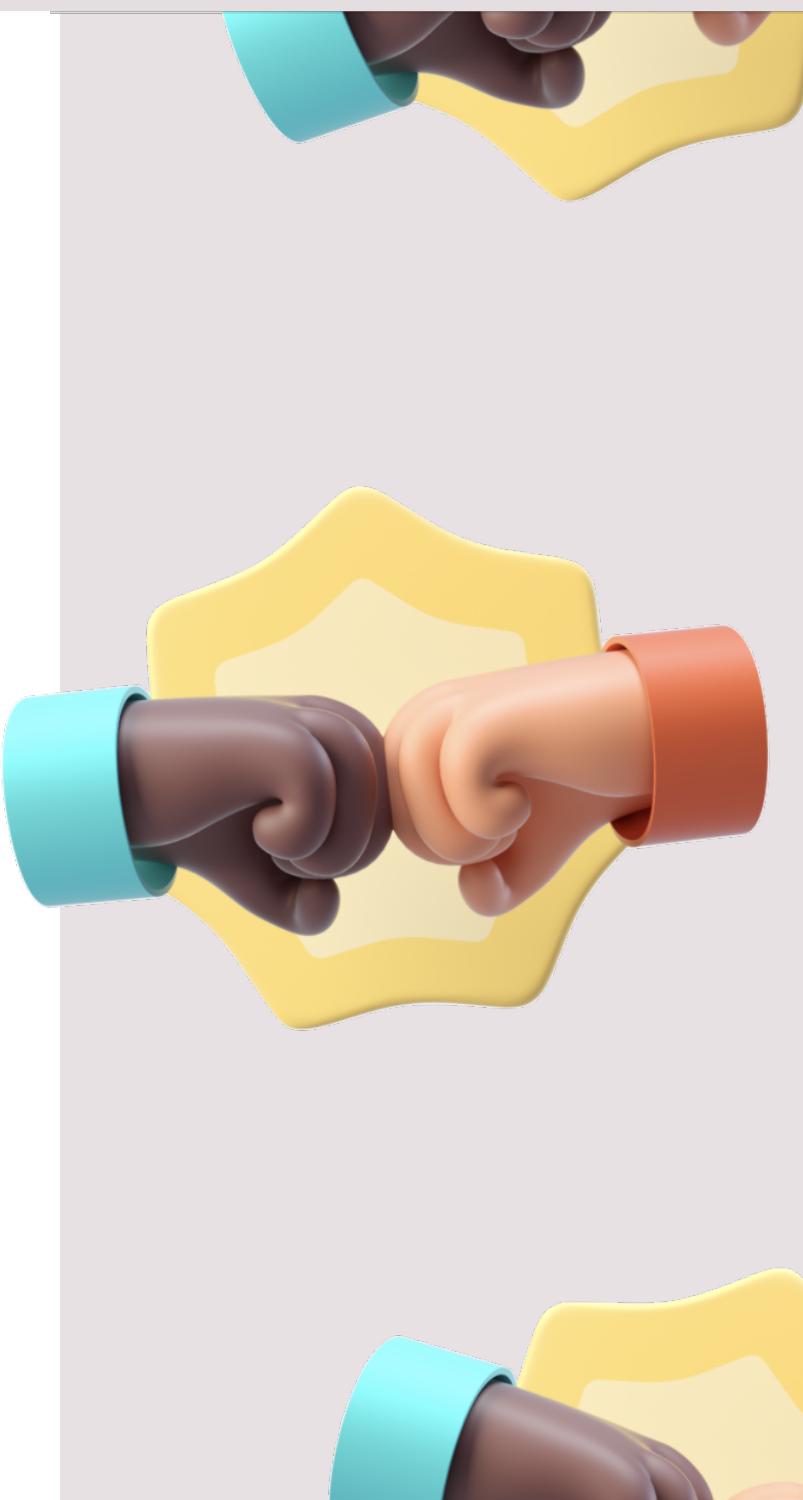
To make this platform sound, there are some back-end requirements that should be tested. Here's a handful of them.

### Freestyle

- **Cue Words:** a database for generating each of the 5 fingers of death
- **Crossfade Playback:** a setting to start beats at 0:10 during the 5 fingers of death so that there aren't any awkward pauses
- **Gradient Background:** an algorithm that sets a gradient background to a given beat based on its cover art's color scheme

### Beats

- **Copyright:** a team of moderators that screen beats for any copyright issues
- **Ratings:** a system that quantifies the "1-to-fire" scores that rappers give to each beat
- **BPM:** an algorithm that determines whether a beat is fast or slow



## EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype **Test**

### Flow's Potential



#### Shared Understanding

Flow might produce a vastly greater shared understanding between rappers and DJs. Using tags and categorizing beats could change the way that artists perceive and talk about beats in the future.



#### Breaking the Stigma

Spreading the fun of freestyle could help flip rap's bad reputation on its nose by shedding light on rap's artful characteristics. Ultimately, this would create a new sense of respect across society for the art form.



#### Advancing the Art Form

By combining the art of freestyle with technology, new styles and challenges could emerge in the same way that tiktok trends arise and board games are created.

# ICEBOX

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test

To stay true to the Slick model, a lot of really fun ideas had to be cut from the first iteration. Thus, here's a start to my icebox.

## Free Flow Studio

Enable rappers to have full control over cue words and beats separately. Like the 5 fingers of death, but with unlimited fingers.

## Practice

A freestyle feature where a rapper can freestyle to a metronome and control its BPM.

## Voice Autotune

Enable rappers to add autotune to their voice when they edit their audio recordings.

## Rap Battles

Facilitate some form of rap battle where two rappers can respond to each other, line by line.

## DJ Exclusivity

Open the platform to only popular DJs at first, so that the platform has validity as a beat provider.

## Soundcloud Integration

Access the ocean of audio tracks on Soundcloud to give Flow a head start for collecting beats to rap to.

## Spotify's "Car Thing"

Study Spotify's Car Thing and ideate ways that Flow could be designed strictly for the car-ride experience.

## Weekly Trends

Challenges for rappers and DJs to follow; this could be as simple as a sports-related beat on the week of the Superbowl.

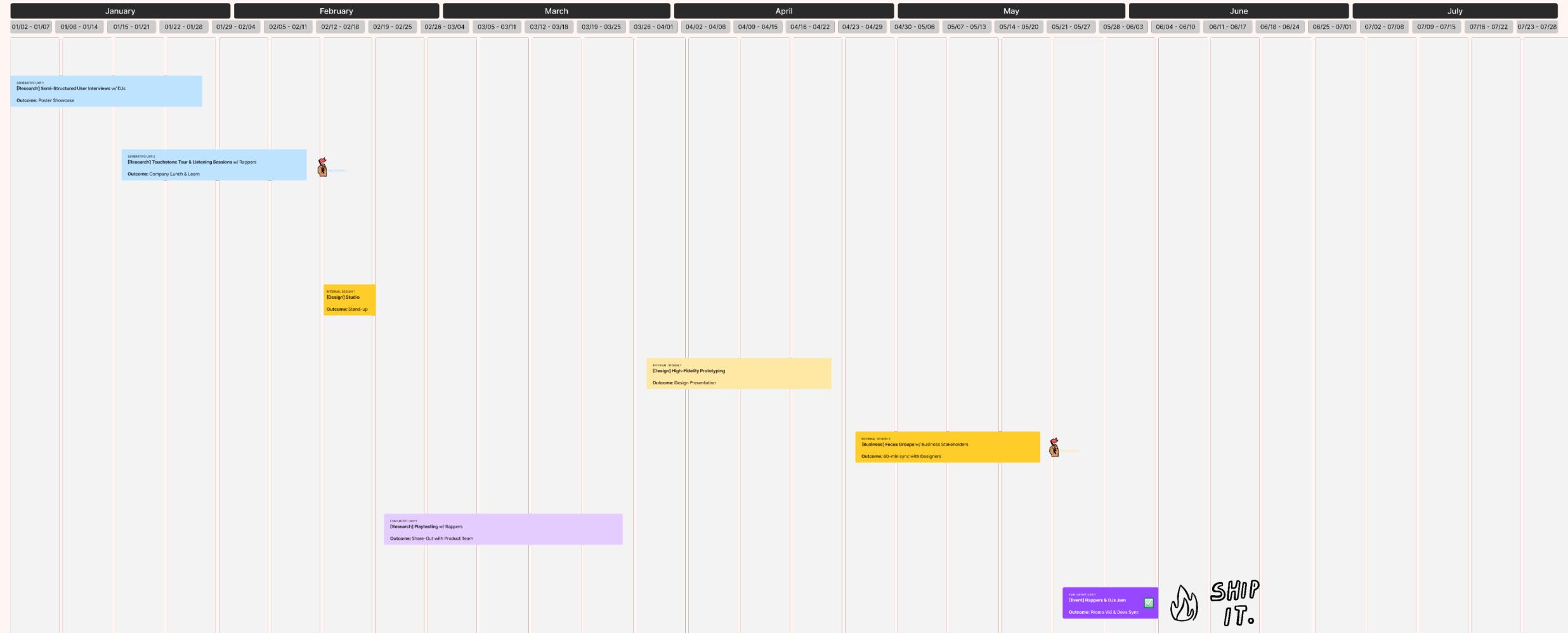
## Fire Flow

A feed of rappers sharing their freestyle recordings; gives rappers a platform to grow popular too.

## Play Testing

Implement a simple MVP version of this platform, and put it to the test with rappers that like to freestyle.

If I had a year to iterate on Flow, here's what I'd research.



# Thank you!

*I really appreciate you taking the time to read through my work :) If you're interested, scroll down to check out some more!*

CREDITS: Layouts from this presentation were designed by Pitch.