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June 16, 2023

MUSICLI - Case Study

Overview

In 2015, I designed a music licensing app called MUSICLI as part of a \$100k grant. The grant was awarded to me by People's Liberty in Cincinnati, OH. My project aimed to create an additional income stream for local musicians by creating an online platform where they could sell licenses for the commercial use of their music.

My Roles

UI/UX Designer
Brand Designer
Project Manger
CEO

Tools

Adobe Illustrator
Sketch
GitHub
TeamworkPM
MailChimp

Project Duration

01/2015 - 12/2015
1 year



Project Timeline



Problem Statement

Problem Overview

The digital revolution in the music industry impacted artists' revenue streams, as traditional sources like album sales declined. Music licensing became a more lucrative source for revenue, but access was incredibly complex; particularly for local artists who had no other support beyond their own business acumen - something most artists don't typically have.

User Pain Points:

- No access to music licensing opportunities
- Confusing U.S. Copyright and Publishing registration
- No single platform to manage all facets of their business
- No control over or knowledge of how to price a music license



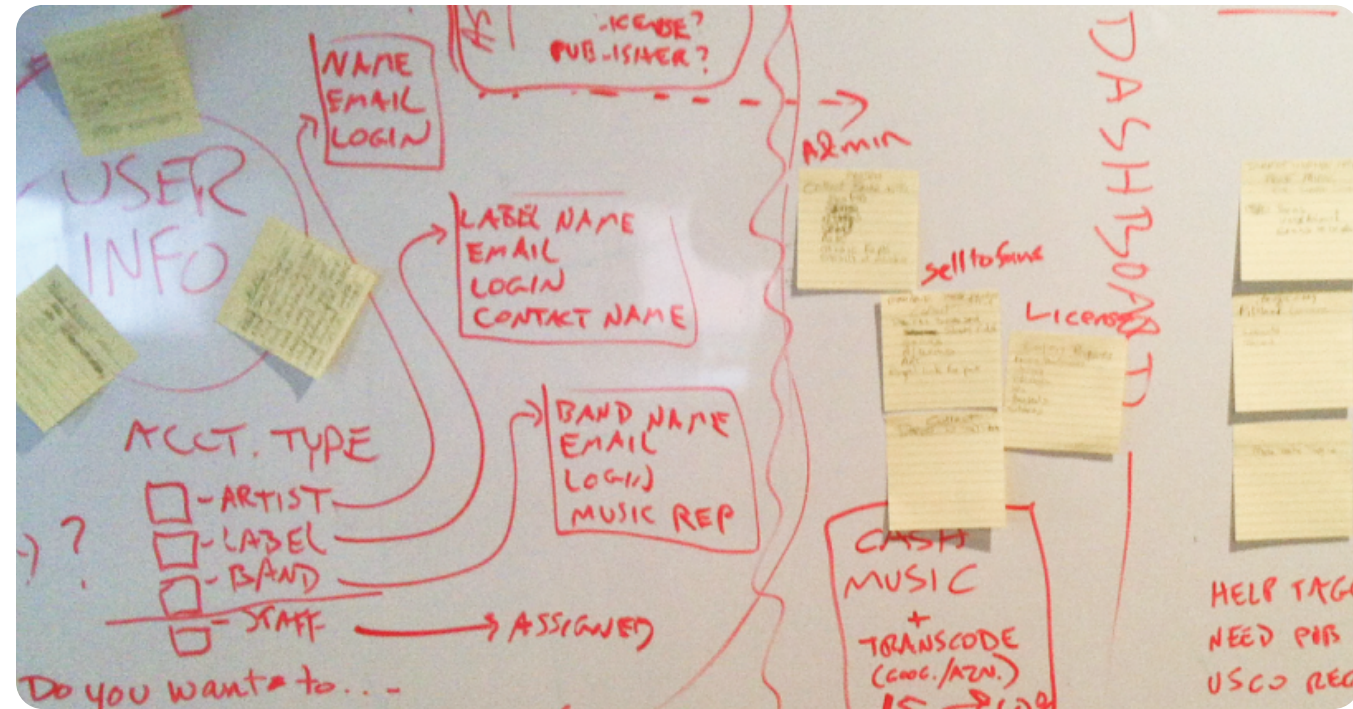
Goals

- **Develop an online platform where musicians can upload their music and set the licensing prices for their work.**
- **Create a marketplace where creative agencies could search for and directly license music from local artists.**
- **Educate musicians on music publishing, copyright, and licensing.**

Project Timeline



Research/Analysis



-70% of respondents want to earn money from licensing, yet 90% of those have never tried to use any licensing platforms. 41% have never tried using a distribution platform.

-63% of interested musicians do not have a standardized electronic press kit. (Although 19% use a page on their site as an EPK, many festivals and venues require a standardized EPK like Cloud Press Kit or SonicBids for bookings)

-65% of interested musicians already have an account on Bandcamp; the platform's direct-to-fan sales service requires the same high quality audio files needed for licensing.

Competitive and comparative analysis: I evaluated existing platforms such as Bandcamp, DistroKid, and Musicbed. These platforms facilitated either direct-to-consumer sales, licensing, or distribution for artists. While Musicbed offered music licensing, their terms were unfavorable to artists. Bandcamp offered a direct direct-to-consumer sales platform. DistroKid, a new company, focused on music distribution. Each of these platforms offered certain benefits to artists, but none of them provided a comprehensive solution. This validated the frustration expressed by musicians regarding the lack of a single platform that addressed all their needs. This analysis defined MUSICLI's competitive advantage in the market.

User interviews (Qualitative Research): Through user interviews with local musicians, I discovered their pain points: no access to music licensing opportunities, confusion with copyright and publishing registration, the absence of a single platform for managing their business, and a lack of control over pricing for music licenses. These insights informed my design decisions and helped prioritize the features to launch initially, while identifying areas that could be addressed in future updates.

Surveys (Quantitative Research): I used Mailchimp to create surveys which were sent out to local musicians asking about their experience with music licensing, marketing their music, and with physical and digital sales. I also conducted a similar survey to creative agencies in the Cincinnati area who I thought might like to source local music for their projects.



Project Timeline



Personas

Persona Overview

I created two personas that each represented MUSICLI's primary users; musicians looking to license their work, and creative agencies seeking music for clients.

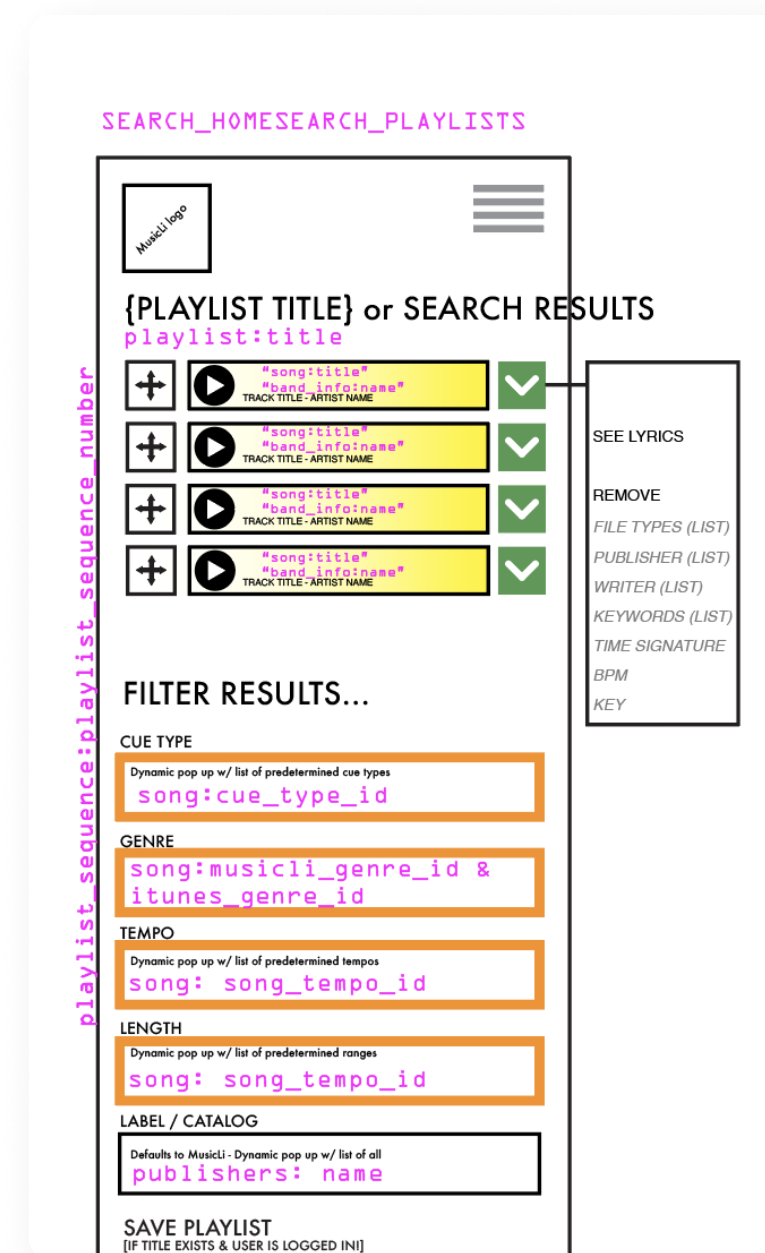
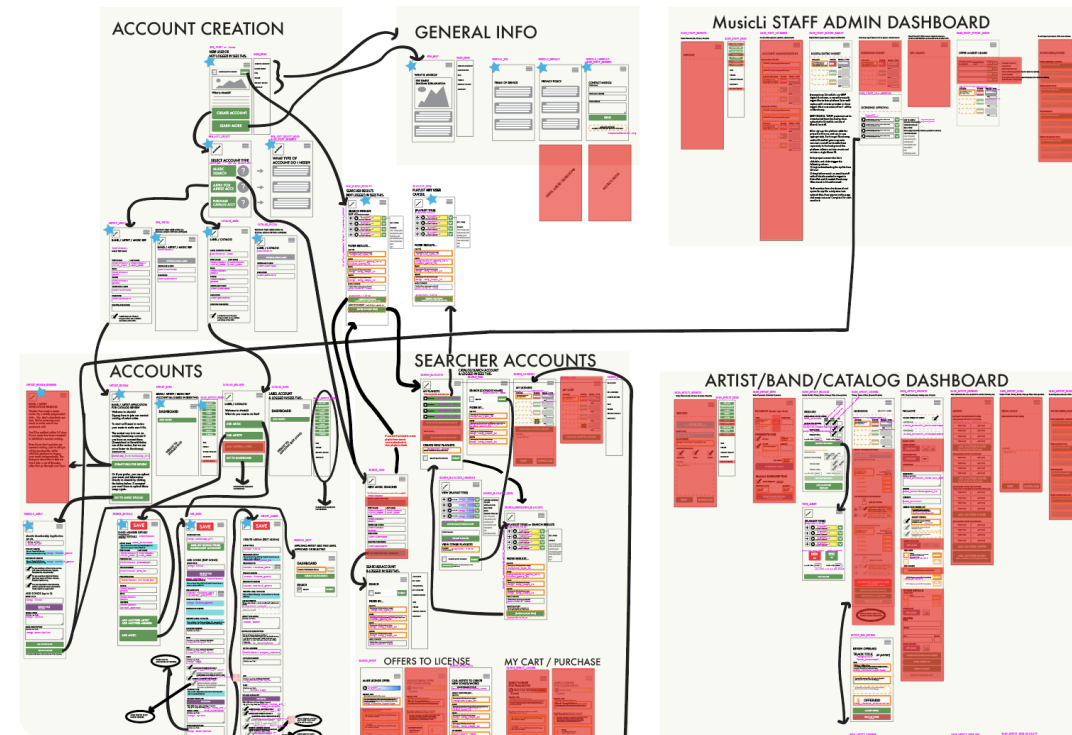
 <p>Rueben Musician</p> <p>"I just want to focus on writing and performing my music."</p>	Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none">I want to attract more fans.I want to perform locally and regionally.I want to publish my music and protect it.	Motivations <ul style="list-style-type: none">I need to express my emotions through creativity.I want to be recognized for my talent.I want to be paid for my music.	 <p>Marta Creative Agency Owner</p> <p>"I would love to use local music for my projects, but it's much easier to just use stock music resources."</p>	Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none">I want to differentiate my agency from others.I'd like to expand my service offerings.I want to increase my profits so I can sustain my business.	Motivations <ul style="list-style-type: none">I'm always looking for innovative and fresh ideas for my clients.I want to satisfy my clients with exceptional results.I love bringing my client's ideas to life through creativity.
Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none">I need marketing and promotional support.I need financial support and other ways to earn money from my music.I need to network with other local artists.	Frustrations <ul style="list-style-type: none">People don't pay for music.Even if I wanted to license my music, I wouldn't know where to start.Music publishing and copyright are very confusing.	Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none">I need to constantly attract and retain new clients.I need talented, creative, and capable employees.I need tools and technology that are easy to use.Creative assets that are within my budget.	Frustrations <ul style="list-style-type: none">There is so much competition in this industry, it's tough to stand out.I get frustrated when I can't get the assets I need quickly for a project.Finding talent.		

Project Timeline



Wireframe, LoFi, and Paper Prototyping

After conducting research to identify user pain points, I proceeded to wireframing. The research provided insights that helped me prioritize the features necessary for my Minimum Viable Product (MVP). In designing, I adopted a mobile-first approach. The screens highlighted in red were deemed lower priority and could be addressed later. My focus was on account creation, music ingest, and music license pricing for Reuben (musicians), as well as music searches for Marta (creative agencies). Prioritizing and establishing a clear MVP proved to be extremely valuable in keeping the project on track. As I was transitioning to the high fidelity stage, I also engaged in paper prototyping, which provided a better understanding of the user interface. It is worth noting that Sketch was still a relatively new design tool in 2015.

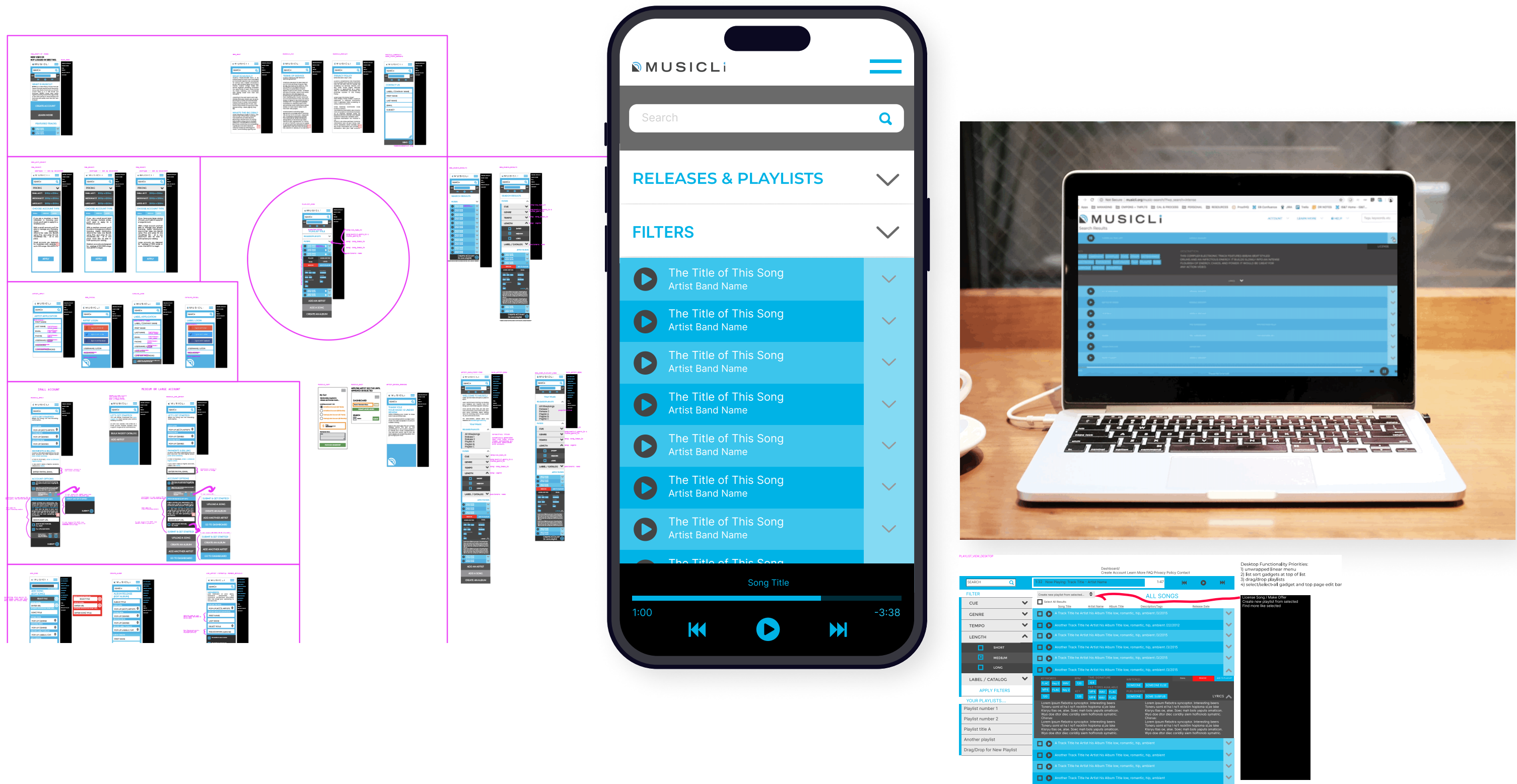


Project Timeline



HiFi Prototype

Next, I moved into the high fidelity prototyping stage. I finalized the workflows between screens, still focusing on account creation, music ingest, and license pricing for Rueben, and search and license functionality for Marta. Branding and color were added, components were refined, dev notes were added, and my Beta version was prepped for a big launch event at the 2015 MidPoint Music Festival in Cincinnati.



Project Timeline



Conclusion/Reflection

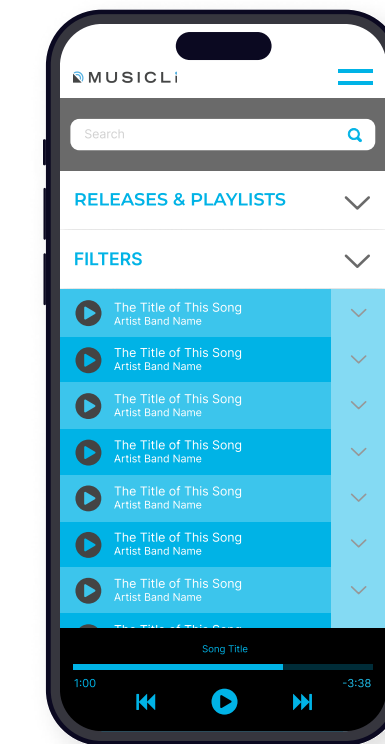
Conclusion/Reflection Result

Success metrics:

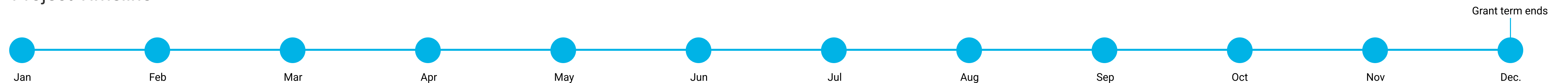
- Over \$10k in music licensing revenue generated (post launch) and went directly to local musicians.
- 100 users created accounts within the first month of MUSICLI's launch
- Project was completed within the 1 year timeline (stipulation of grant contract)

Lessons learned:

- Value of user-centered design.
- \$100k budget for a start up is actually not that much. 😂
- Designer/Developer relationship is hugely important - collaboration / communication
- Honed my project management and leadership skills.
- Failure is the best teacher.



Project Timeline



Thank you!

