Part 2 - Competitive Audit Report

1. Competitive audit goal(s)

This audit was conducted to see how other musicians and companies have approached a similar design concept with success, and where they have failed. I wasn't even sure how to start designing this, so this audit was very much needed for inspiration, as well as to brainstorm ways that I could divert from the pre established norm for the app and artist I will be designing.

2. Who are your key competitors? (Description)

The key competitors I have featured in this audit are the webpages for Magdalena Bay, Glass Animals, Yaeji, and the radio brand The Poolsuite. All were chosen for their approach to a similar design style lovingly named 'Webcore' which takes inspiration from how the internet was designed in the late 90s and 2000s. This style has been a niche for many years, but has become trendy again with the rapidly spreading corporate design of the internet in the west. People like the self-curated blogs of the past, fun graphics, and bright colors, and I wanted to create an app for a faux artist in a similar vein.

3. What are the type and quality of competitors' products? (Description)

As an important note to the above question, the competitors all mostly sell a service or an experience over a product. The webpages act as a venue to buy songs, tickets, or merch, but users would mainly be using their sites to learn more about the artist. All sites chosen were picked for their interpretation of the "art for art's sake" concept, being heavily curated and appealing to their specific audience. After all, to remain trendy, these artists need to remain unique and forward-thinking in their ideas. Some similar artists or companies in this genre of art can include the Ena project from Joel G, MeowWolf, or even movies like Everything Everywhere All At Once. All examples are not only modern art, but a product that appeals to a specific typically young user-base. My project will be tapping into these trends.

4. How do competitors position themselves in the market? (Description)

Similar to complaints made by interviews that I had with people before this part of the project, all artists position themselves to offer content beyond just the normal offerings, from blogs to games. They want their users to keep on coming back, and provide ways for fans to interact with their favorite group or site. Because of this, all websites position themselves to be an experience, not just a website. This is done through interactive elements, background music, and encouraging the user to explore without direction from the website. A good analogy would be the difference between a theme park like Six Flags to Disney World. One mainly provides rides, while the other provides the whole experience of feeling like you've been transported to another world. This would be the internet equivalent, encouraging users to become enveloped in the musician's world.

5. How do competitors talk about themselves? (Description)

1. **Magdalena Bay:** MB is an American duo whose music is inspired by artists like Grimes and Charlie XCX in the experimental pop/prog rock genre. Their fans have multiplied through their use of social media, such as 'Killshot' that became famous on TikTok. MB wants their fans to have a "prismatic experience, one that is built on a desire to simply believe in something beyond the finitude of our lives." [source: https://luminellerecs.com/artists/magdalena-bay/]
2. **Glass Animals:** GA is a group that combines synth pop, indie, R&B, and hip-hop all together into their own style of music. The group is led by Dave Bayley, inspired as a kid by Missy Elliott, Busta Rhymes, Eminem, and the Neptunes. Glass Animals' work is largely inspired by the stories of the people they have met during their travels, and experimenting around with music. This speaks to most of their fans.
3. **Yaeji:** Yaeji is a Korean-American producer, songwriter, and DJ whose music is largely in the genres of hip-hop, house, and pop. Yaeji's biggest inspiration was when she was studying in college and listened to the college radio station, which exposed her to underground electronic music. Yaeji's fans lay mostly in the club music and left-field pop genres, from her work in New York City.
4. **The Poolsuite:** The Poolsuite was created by Marty Bell, who liked to listen to summer poolside tunes on cold days, and the idea came to him: "why not pair his playlists with retro 80s beach clips on VHS to give people anywhere a virtual one-way ticket back to the summer of 1986?" [source: https://www.worklife.vc/blog/founder-of-poolside-fm-knows-how-to-make-shit-go-viral] From there, he invested time and money, on his way to create the now viral radio station and brand. His audience is largely a younger audience. More about his projects can be found at the link above.

6. Competitors' strengths (List)

- Strong brand identity- each competitor has a unique style and voice that sets them apart from the rest.
- Most sites listed encourages users to explore the website, making every user journey unique to the individual.
- All websites are not only portfolios for the artist, but a method for the fans to immerse themselves in the world of their favorite artist.
- While users can buy products or services, it is not essential to enjoy the site, nor is it heavily advertised.
- Two of the four sites include background music, which adds another dimension to the site.
- Use of blogs and informal language makes the artists' sites feel more friendly.
- Defined style to appeal to a specific fan base
- Use of interactive elements and games.

7. Competitors' weaknesses (List)

- Lack of ability to interact with artist, through a blog or livestream.
- If there is a way to interact with artist, it is through external sites or apps, which may be behind a paywall and not all users may be aware of.
- Lack of "News" content on most sites, where artists discuss their thoughts, update fans, and recommend other music that they enjoy.
- Most sites do not pass accessibility tests, which would limit some users from using and enjoying such websites.
- Lack of translation services beyond Google Translate.

8. Gaps (List)

- Firstly, as noted in the table, no musicians in this style of art and music use apps as their platform, instead choosing a website.
- Because of the lack of apps, it could be argued that there is a lack of mobility for their platforms.
- As all content is online, some aspects of the website, like imitating a computer screen, are not as effective on a mobile device.
- All websites require Wifi/4G, which could make it inconvenient or even impossible for users without access to a strong internet connection to interact with the websites.

9. Opportunities (List)

- App would be accessible offline by downloading and updating content when user is in a suitable wifi/4G zone.
- Creator would actively create content similar to a blog where they would send updates about tours, merch drops, and what they are listening to or watching.
- Users can create their own profile where they can interact with other fans through the blogs, livestreams, and other interactive content.
- App would build on other sites by having adaptive music as the user navigates the app.
- App would have in-app translation services. Users could apply to translate in other languages.
- Accessibility would be far greater concern in app.