

INTRODUCTION + OVERVIEW

A startup business recently released a free media app on all mobile services. After two years of growing the user population, they wanted to implement a 'Premium', paid model for monetization. TuneUp is a successful culmination of a satisfactory free model experience with the option for an upgraded, personalized experience through the Premium model. In order to create a seamless user experience for both free and premium model users, I conducted user research, guerilla testing and created both low and high fidelity designs that accomplished business goals while creating a competitive product.

METHODS + INSIGHTS

RESEARCH

I first conducted a screener survey of 35 people with the goal of finding users in the company's target consumer ages (18-24) and who were currently using other premium media platforms like YouTube Premium and Spotify Premium as well as Pandora. I narrowed down my test subjects to 5 people who had varying degrees of experience with 'freemium to premium' models: 3 had Spotify Premium, 2 had YouTube Premium, 1 had both and 1 used Apple Music instead.

USER INTERVIEWS

My interviews with these individuals were focused on the feelings of users and their decisions to buy or avoid premium models rather than monetary reasoning. For example -

Question *"You currently have Spotify Premium. How do you compare your listening experience before and after buying premium?"*

Wes: *"The amount of content I consumed...made buying premium feel like a no-brainer. I was so sick of ads interrupting my listening experience but now, with no interruptions it feels much more like my app, my music and my own thing."*

The interviews also examined how users felt about certain features that were (or were not) offered by other competitors. Interviewees were asked to order from most important to least important: Ad-free music, offline availability, playlist creation/customization, ability to play individual songs, quality of sound, and AI-developed music suggestions.

FINDINGS

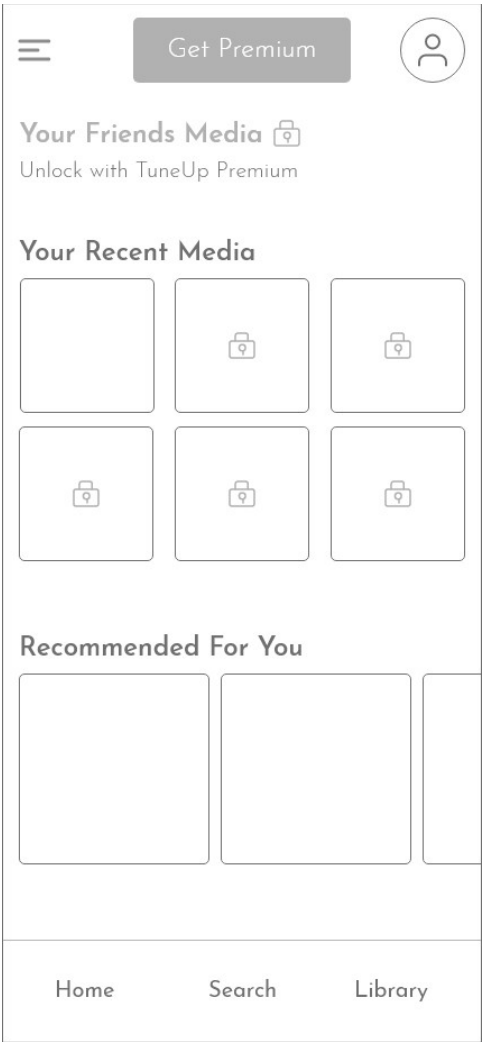
The findings suggested users wanted ad-free music that could be available offline, followed closely by the ability to create their own playlists and similar customization. Two interviewees, Valerie and Aaron, both wanted a more social experience like being able to easily create and share playlists with friends or editing AI-generated playlists from TuneUp. It was clear that users wanted a personalized experience that reflected the current design trends in competitors with refreshed features and enhanced customization.

DESIGN

LOW FIDELITY

The design uses industry standard patterns for layout and navigation which provided a comfortable environment for users and helped focus the project on the ‘freemium to premium’ experience. First iterations were very text-heavy, but reflected competitors' designs to be recognizable for users. The free model had every feature shown in Premium, though locked

behind a grayed-out icon. This design was intended to incentivise users to buy Premium and ‘unlock’ other features. However, after only a few guerilla tests it was clear that it cluttered the and confused users.



UI

Low-Fidelity Premium Homepage

Low-Fidelity Free Homepage

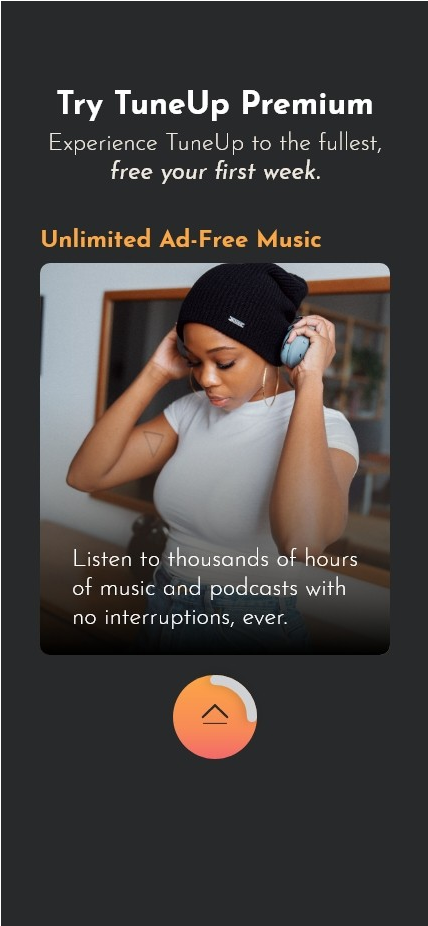
Hi-FIDELITY MOCKUPS + USER TESTING

HIGH FIDELITY DESIGN

UI design elements revolve around the freemium to premium experience; creating an easy, accessible user flow from the free model to premium was most important. Using a strong black background supplemented with a popping orange gave the design a bold and modern look while mirroring Spotify's similarly dark color palette. It also helps the art of playlists, albums and artists to pop off the screen. As users transition from the free model to premium, they will notice more orange accented buttons and features, indicating new material, personalized features and more.

FREEMIUM TO PREMIUM

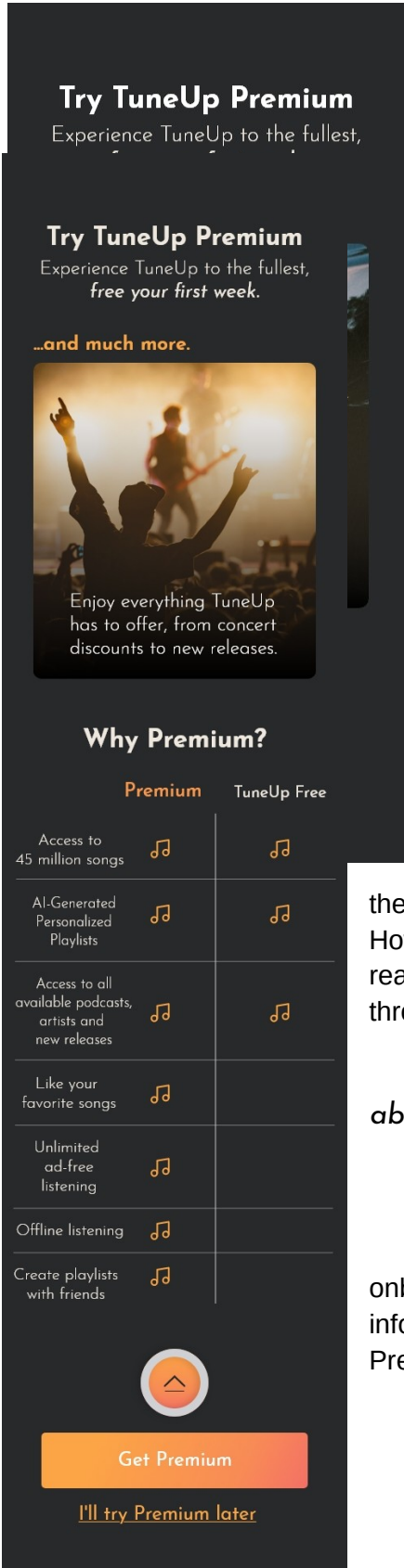
Creating a digital space where users could feel satisfied with the free model but enriched with premium was a delicate balance of UI design and the user flow. For example, during the onboarding phase users are first introduced to TuneUp Premium:



As users click through Premium are introduced. However, during the user testing phase, only one individual read through the information on the cards. Others sped through the pages, with one tester saying:

"If the information I should be able to find the same elsewhere."

To avoid redesigning the screen was added with accessible while selling onboarding was complete:



	Premium	TuneUp Free
Access to 45 million songs		
AI-Generated Personalized Playlists		
Access to all available podcasts, artists and new releases		
Like your favorite songs		
Unlimited ad-free listening		
Offline listening		
Create playlists with friends		

these screens, important features of However, during the user testing read through the information on the through the pages, with one tester

about Premium is that important, information on these cards

onboarding flow altogether, a final information that was easily Premium one more time before

TESTING

Without real-time listening capabilities, testing a user's experience on a media app was challenging. To overcome this, testing was focused on the emotional experience of users, which was relevant to all interviewees who had experience with other listening services. For example, where did they feel 'uncomfortable' during a task? Did the pop-up ad for premium distract or confuse them?

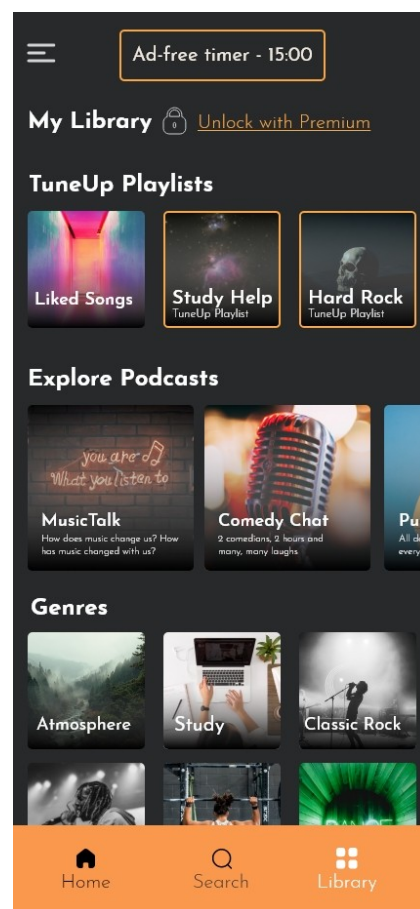
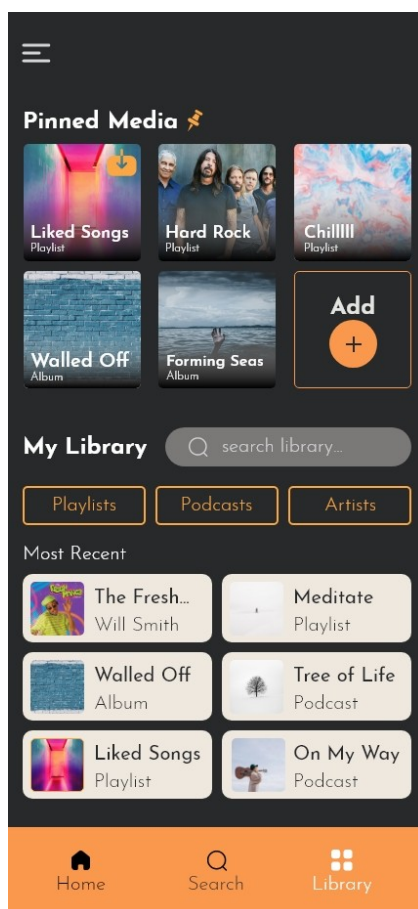
Some other tasks users were asked to complete included:

- (While in the free model) **Please open the Oldies but Groovies playlist - you are in the mood for Will Smith and enjoy his music. What do you do?**

- (User 'likes' the song and a drop-down notification reminds the user of the limited number of 'likes' they have for the day)
- **Having seen that message, how do you feel about your experience liking music?**

The feedback during this task was predominantly positive. Users felt empowered with their ability to interact with the app while competitors like Spotify and Pandora work more like simple radios with their free models rather than media experiences. The goal emerging from the research was to empower free model users rather than telling users what they were missing without premium. To do this, TuneUp would need to enrich the user experience in the free model while showing the value that premium could add.

For example, see the Library page.

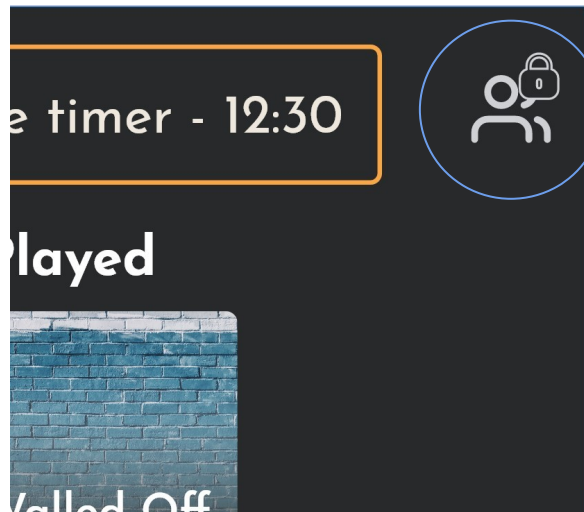


Free

REFLECTION + CONCLUSION

REFLECTION

Without too many requirements regarding what features were available, I had free reign to implement features on a media app that I wish other applications offered. Creating engaging UI that supported such features was a challenge. I made numerous adjustments to icons, text and media elements to *show* and not *tell* the user's experience. For example, in early iterations of the free model I kept Premium elements 'locked' behind an icon and text.



In final iterations, I eliminated this element altogether; it wasn't important to the users and was distracting.

Furthermore, creating an easy-to-navigate user flow from freemium to premium created a unique challenge. Without real-time listening capabilities to have 30 second ads between songs, using other tools like pop-ups and restricted features was the solution. After testing, users were asked off the record if they would be attracted to buying Premium and why. All said yes with 4 saying the positive experience and amount of consumable content in the free model would likely incentivize them to purchase TuneUp Premium.

PERSONAL THOUGHTS + CONCLUSION

I enjoyed working toward established business goals - in this case, focusing on pulling users from a free model to a premium one. It was challenging to test, especially without the ability to listen to music, which helped me focus on the intangibles of a user's experience. My design choices leaned heavily into ease of use and empowering the users of both the free and premium models. Thank you to everyone who offered their time, support and insight to helping me develop TuneUp!