

Before the First Note

A short-form artist profile series | Portfolio concept, September 2026

A musician has one minute to take us inside a choice the audience usually never sees: the lyric they changed, the sound they built or the ritual that gets them onstage.

The idea

Each episode follows one artist, one creative decision and the moment that decision becomes performance. The audience gets an intimate story with a clear payoff, built around the artist's own words and a tangible object or action.

Audience and purpose

For music fans who want to understand the person behind a performance, and curious viewers discovering an artist for the first time. The goal is meaningful discovery: finish the story, visit the artist's profile and explore their work.

Pilot approach

- Subject: an emerging Austin musician, to be selected through research and outreach.
- Story angle: one creative decision with a visible before-and-after.
- Deliverables: a 60-90 second vertical profile, a 15-second teaser, three Story frames and platform-specific captions.
- Visual direction: intimate rehearsal details, natural light, clean captions and one consistent title treatment.

What this concept demonstrates

Story development, interview preparation, talent research, production coordination, editing structure and social-copy adaptation.

Concept status

Independent concept developed for this portfolio. No artist is attached, no filming or interviews have taken place and no client, partnership, campaign results or production credit is implied. All proposed scenes and copy below are illustrative.

Find the story before the shoot

Proposed editorial and production plan

Talent research brief

- Build a short list from artists' own releases, performance clips and public interviews. Record source links and dates.
- Look for a specific creative turning point, comfortable on-camera storytelling and feasible local access.
- Separate confirmed facts from questions. Confirm names, pronouns, credits, current projects and preferred links directly with the artist.
- Approach the artist or their representative with the concept, intended platforms, expected time commitment and planned review process.

Six interview questions

- What is one small choice in this song that changed how it feels?
- Can you show us the earlier version and what you changed?
- What were you trying to make the listener feel?
- Who helped shape that decision, and how should they be credited?
- What do you do just before performing that most people never see?
- What should someone notice the next time they hear this song?

Before the camera rolls

Confirm artist and location availability, releases, permitted filming areas and permission for any music or archival material. Create a shot list and schedule with time for sound checks, interview, demonstration and detail footage. Assign one point of contact for approvals and keep a version log for edits.

Proposed delivery rhythm

Pre-production: research, outreach, permissions, interview brief and shot list.

Shoot: interview first, then the demonstration and supporting footage.

Post-production: paper edit, first cut, factual/credit review, caption check and final exports.

Release: agree timing and links with the artist, publish the approved assets and review audience response.

One story. Several ways in.

Illustrative pilot: a songwriter demonstrates a changed lyric

60-second paper edit

- 00-05 | Open on the artist showing a crossed-out lyric. On-screen hook: “The line you almost heard.”
- 05-15 | Establish the artist and the question: what needed to change? Let the interview supply the answer.
- 15-35 | Show the earlier and revised versions, using cleared music or a spoken demonstration.
- 35-50 | Connect the change to the intended emotion. Use close-ups and rehearsal footage to support the explanation.
- 50-60 | Return to the finished line. End with artist credit and one clear route to hear more.

Instagram / Reel caption

One line. A completely different feeling.

Before the First Note goes inside the choices that shape a song. In this proposed pilot, an Austin songwriter shows the lyric that changed and the feeling they were trying to get right.

Which small detail makes a song stay with you?

X teaser

The line you almost heard. A proposed Before the First Note episode traces one lyric from first draft to final version, through the songwriter's own explanation.

Three Instagram Story frames

1. “The line you almost heard.” A close-up of the working lyric.
2. “What changed?” An artist explanation with readable captions.
3. “Hear the story behind the song.” Link to the approved full episode.

How I would evaluate it

Review completion and retention alongside saves, shares and artist-profile visits. Note where viewers leave, then test a clearer opening or tighter setup in a later episode. No performance results are claimed for this concept.