Mani Nilchiani

Creative Technologist & Product Lead · From first idea to shipped product

Brooklyn, NY
mani.io · github.com/maniart
mani.nilchiani@gmail.com
Open to part-time, remote contract work

SUMMARY

Creative technologist and product lead with 15 years of experience taking products from first idea to shipped app. At IDEO I led interdisciplinary teams through discovery, prototyping and delivery for clients including Ford and Northwell Health. Since going independent, I have shipped production iOS, Android and Apple Watch features for Subaru of America and built interactive music apps for A Vinyl Bar in Shibuya.

I work best as a strategic partner to early-stage teams: shaping what to build, leading designers and engineers with empathy, and building the hard parts myself. I build AI-powered products and work agentically day to day, so my time goes into what to build and how it should feel. I am also a performing musician and the founder of Cosmic Picnic, a voice-based meditation app.

EXPERIENCE

Independent Product & Creative Technology Lead · Building 417 — 2023 to present
New York / Remote · Strategic and hands-on partner to startups and brands, from concept through production

- **Subaru of America** (2024 to 2025): On the mobile team, modernized the iOS and Android app stacks and shipped vehicle navigation and remote-control features, plus a new Apple Watch app. React Native, TypeScript.
- **A Vinyl Bar in Shibuya** (2025 to 2026): Designed and built playful interactive music apps, native and web, that let anyone express themselves through music regardless of experience. Integrated third-party and self-hosted models for music generation, style transfer, stem separation and effects. Key contributor to SongWorlds, RoilerBoom and Usersound.
- **Mississippi Records**: Creative direction and visual systems.

Founder · Cosmic Picnic — 2026 to present
New York · cosmicpicnic.app

- Solo founder designing and building end to end with an agentic workflow: an iOS app for active meditation through voice, where guided humming and toning drive real-time harmony, haptics and visuals.
- Sound companions include crystal singing bowl, setâr, and soundscapes generated from NASA space data. Private TestFlight beta opens November 2026.

Software Design Lead · IDEO — 2019 to 2023
New York

- Led interdisciplinary teams of designers and engineers from discovery through prototyping and delivery across healthcare, mobility, education and finance.
- Facilitated co-design workshops and feedback sessions with end users and client executives.
- Built high-fidelity prototypes for research, validation and stakeholder buy-in.
- Designed internal tools for collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Partnered with IDEO.org on sound-based interaction, storytelling and music for public-sector projects.

LEADERSHIP & DESIGN

Creative direction · Product strategy · Human-centered design · Design research · Co-design & workshop facilitation · Team leadership · UX/UI · Rapid prototyping · AI product design · Agentic design workflows · Figma · Adobe CC

ENGINEERING

TypeScript · React · React Native · Node.js · Generative AI & LLM integration · Self-hosted model deployment · Agentic development (Claude Code, MCP) · Web Audio API · Three.js · WebXR · PostgreSQL · MongoDB · AWS · Firebase · Serverless · CI/CD · TDD · Native app distribution

SOUND & CREATIVE TECH

Sound design · Audio synthesis · Spatial audio · Ableton Live · Logic Pro · Unity (C#) · openFrameworks · Processing

EDUCATION

MFA, Design & Technology
Parsons School of Design, 2013

BFA, Print Media
Tehran University of Art, 2009

LANGUAGES

English (fluent) · Farsi (native) · Spanish (advanced) · French (intermediate) · Arabic (basic)

EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED

Adjunct Faculty · Parsons School of Design, MFA Design & Technology — 2025 to present
New York · Also Part-Time Faculty, 2018 to 2019

- Teach Major Studio and Thesis Studio; mentor graduate thesis projects spanning sound sculpture, mental health, elder care and AI-native archives.
- Previously taught a graduate course on JavaScript, UX architecture and deployment pipelines.

Co-founder & CTO · Disco Tehran — 2018 to 2022
New York

- Co-founded and scaled a cultural platform combining live music, digital experiences and community gatherings, featured three times in The New York Times.
- Designed and built bespoke systems for livestreaming, online cinema, ticketing and publishing.
- Co-produced large-scale music and film events in the US, UK and Mexico, and performed live.

Technical Lead · Architizer — 2017 to 2018

- Led the frontend stack migration through an RFC process; introduced React best practices and trained the team.

Technology Resident · Pioneer Works — 2018

- Co-created and exhibited a VR installation on privacy and speculative futures (Unity, Oculus Rift, volumetric capture).

Frontend Engineer · Yieldmo — 2015 to 2017

- Built A/B testing and analytics tools with user-centric interfaces; modernized internal tools from Angular.js and Backbone.

Frontend Engineer · The Daily Beast — 2013 to 2015

- Developed modular UI components and helped shift the site to a modern React-based infrastructure.

SELECTED PROJECTS

Tan Haw · Composer and performer
Setâr, guitar, fretless guitar. Persian classical music in genre-bending sonic territory.

Film scoring
Best Music & Sound Design, *My Family Trees*, LA Feedback Film Festival, 2020

Open source & tools
Diffy.js, a dependency-free motion detection library for creative coding · BETTERFEED, a Chrome extension that calms the Instagram feed

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

MoMA PS1 · Symphony Space · BRIC · Barbès · Public Records · Trestle Gallery · Baby's Alright (NYC)

Cinco Pies · ATEA · Jardines Pedregal (Mexico City)

PRESS

The New York Times
2019, 2022 (twice), on Disco Tehran

It's Nice That
2022, on Disco Tehran

Vice Noisey
2019

TEACHING

Parsons School of Design
Adjunct Faculty, MFA Design & Technology

New Centre for Research & Practice
Lecturer, JavaScript for procedural art

Code Nation
Volunteer Instructor, web development for high school students