



Direct Music Sharing on Spotify

How can we foster more meaningful interactions with music streaming apps?

Context

Music is itself an artistic expression of emotion. It then follows that **listening to music is an emotional experience.**

Many researchers also believe that **music plays a significant role in strengthening social bonds.** In a 2013 review of the research on music, Stefan Koelsch (music psychologist at the Freie University Berlin) explains that music impacts brain circuits involved in empathy, trust, and cooperation—perhaps explaining how it has survived in every culture of the world.

Context

Today, it is the norm to see our peers walking around with earbuds shoved in, heads down, listening to their own catalogue of music. Rather than sharing music for a community experience, **music today is used as an excuse to avoid social interaction.** It is now a tool to **socially isolate** yourself.

Some see the growing headphone movement as ‘socially alienating’ and ‘destructive of relationships.’

The New York Times, 1981

Project Goals

- To create seamless, meaningful daily interactions through music sharing
- To combat the loneliness, apathy, and depression resulting from the socially isolating aspects of music listening via headphones

Why Spotify?

Streaming accounts for **over 75%** of how we listen to music today.

Spotify currently has **113 million** subscribers and 248 million active users worldwide, dominating the paid music streaming market.

Spotify reaches **nearly half** of all 16-24 year olds worldwide.

User Research

Interviewing a Spectrum of Users

1. doesn't actively make playlists or seek out new music, does look up music his friends recommend on YouTube, mostly listens to radio when driving (not a Spotify user)
2. sometimes uses Spotify, mostly listens to premade playlists
3. frequent Spotify user, curates playlists/mixtapes for friends, likes seeing what friends listen to

Guiding Questions

How do you currently share music with others?

“I text my **friends** about songs I find”

“I make a collaborative playlist with my **friends**”

“I play it for them in person”

Who would you want to share your music with?

“usually only my closest **friends**”

“**friends** who have similar taste in music as me”

How do you decide who to follow on Spotify?

“people who I’m connected with through Facebook”

“my favorite **artists**”

“a few popular playlist **curators**”

Do you listen to music that your friends recommend?

“if they send it to me while I’m **not doing anything else**”

“I try to, but sometimes I **lose track** of who sends me what”

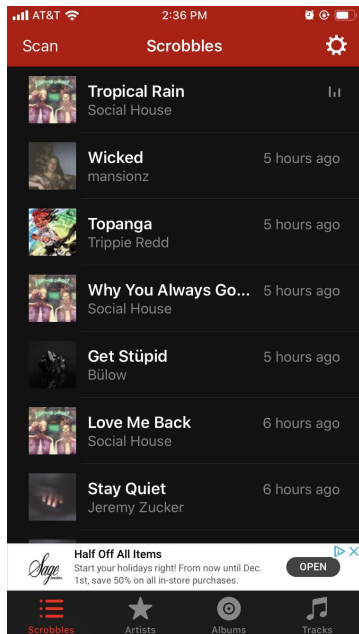
Key Insights

- There is no seamless way to share music among Spotify users.
- Who users follow and who they share music with are not always the same.
- Users will not actively leave another app/activity to follow through on listening to recommended music.
- It is easy for users to lose track of recommended music.

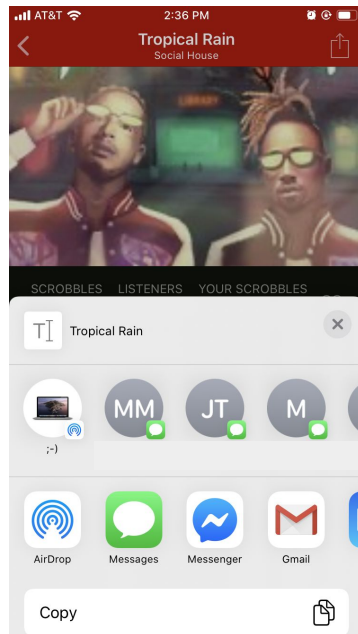
Competitive Analysis

Last.fm

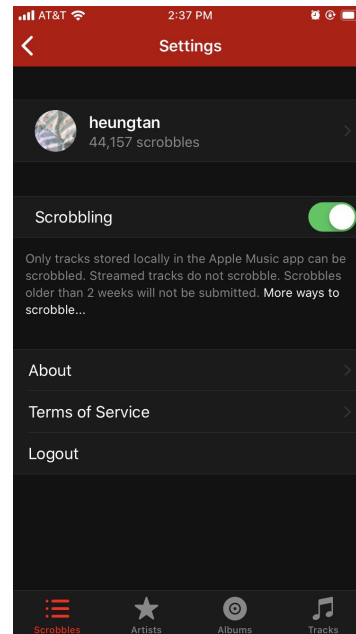
Existing mobile design



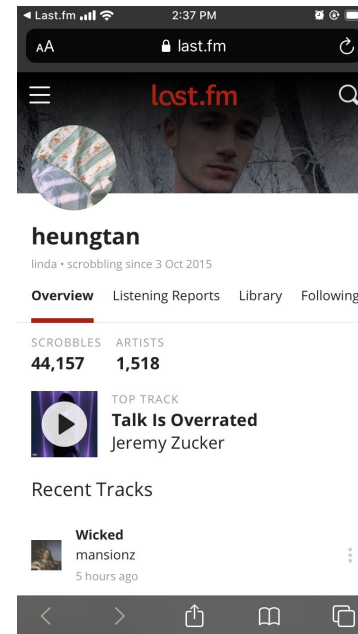
Scrobble Feed



Song Sharing



Settings



Profile Redirect

Competitive Analysis

Last.fm

Pros

- Extremely detailed & real-time scrobble (streaming) data
- User is able to learn about his/her own listening patterns
- Followers/Following feature

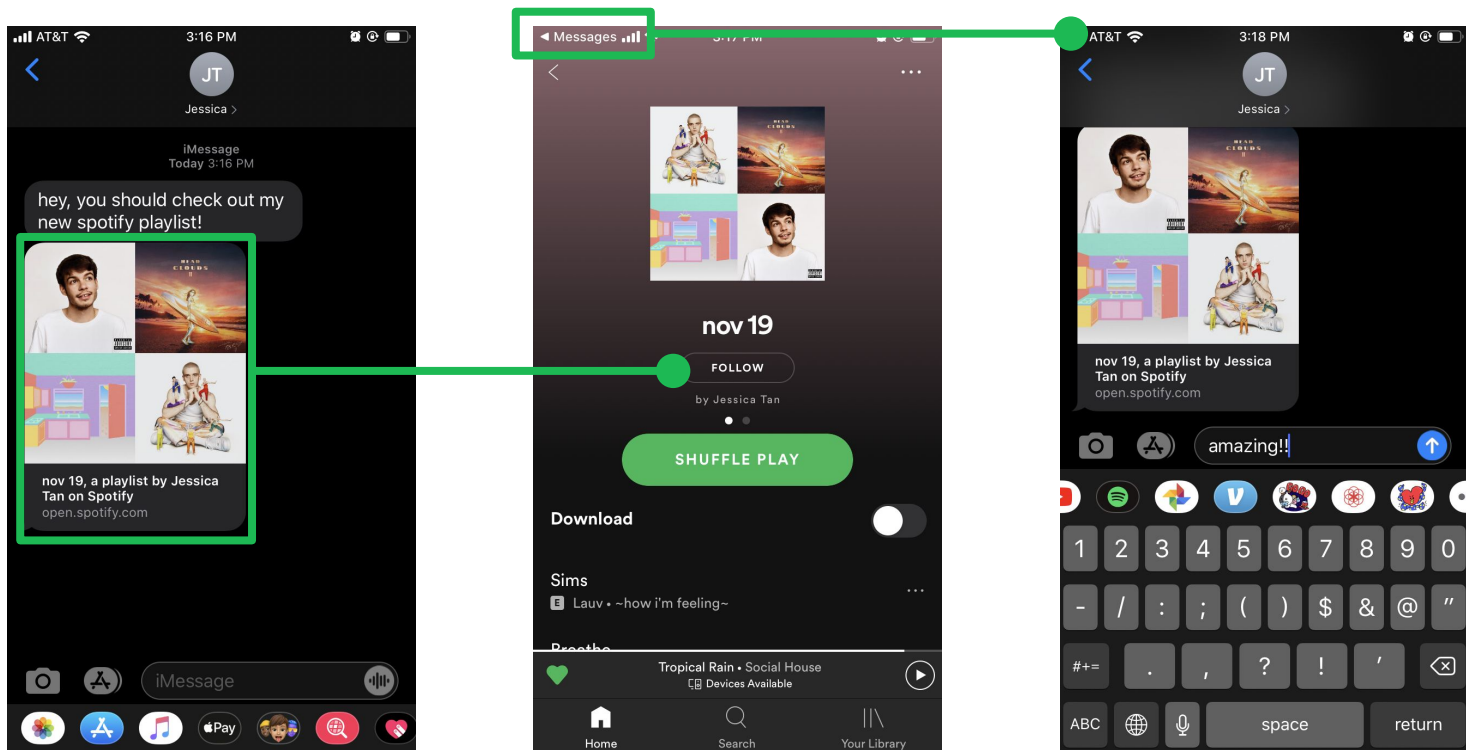
Cons

- Not mobile friendly (in-app buttons redirect to the mobile webpage)
- Most users do not feel the need for such detailed data
- No actual in-app interaction between Following/Followers

Competitive Analysis

Messages app

Existing mobile design



Competitive Analysis

Messages app

Pros

- Existing integration with Spotify
- Easy access and sharing with contacts
- Playlists and tracks are shareable via links

Cons

- Sender must copy link from Spotify manually, then exit the app to send it
- Receiver must exit the messages app to listen
- Tracks/playlists must be followed/saved or lost forever in Messages history

Defining the Problem

The Problem

Sender

Users want to be able to easily share music with their friends from within the app.

Current sharing capabilities require the user to exit Spotify and to enter an external application, disrupting the listening experience.

Receiver

Users want to be able to easily discover new music through their friends' recommendations.

Proposed Solutions

Direct Messaging

Dependence on third party apps

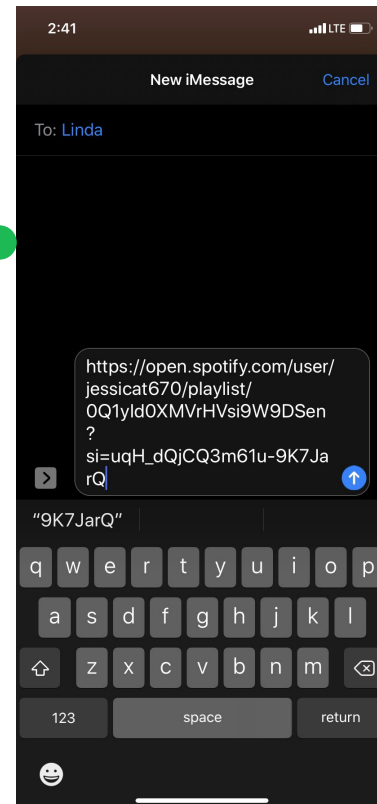
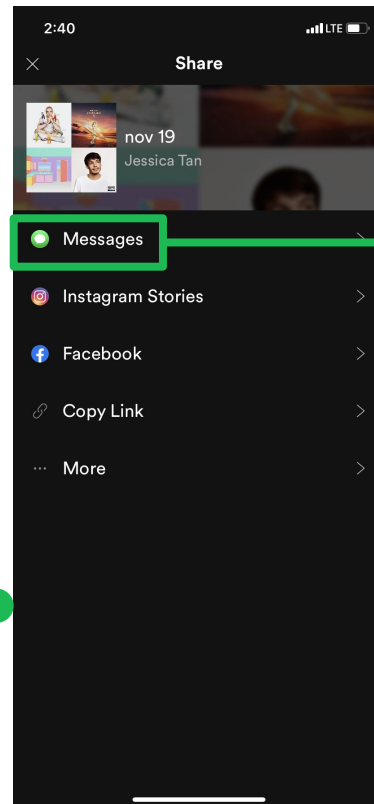
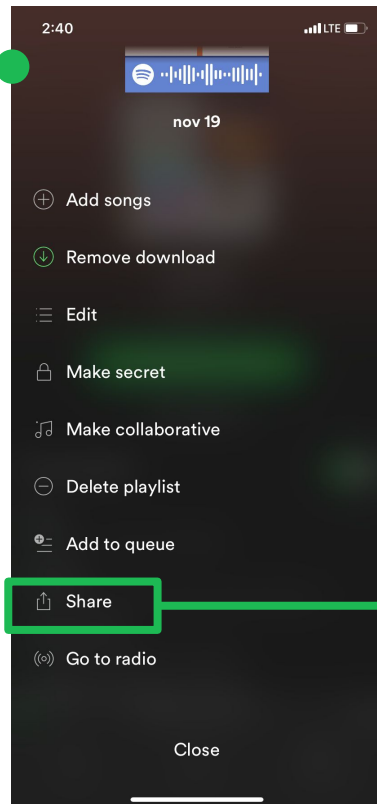
Spotify does not allow users to send tracks or playlists to other users within the app. Spotify used to have an option where you can privately share songs and playlists with your friends through Spotify, but removed it due to low engagement with users. Now, users can only share music through third party messaging apps. This process is tedious and requires many clicks to reach the end goal.

Lack of a gathering point for shared music

When users receive recommendations from friends from other apps, they must leave that app to listen to the song. Tracks are only stored if they manually saved. Playlists are only stored if they are followed. Additionally, recommendations are likely coming from many contacts across multiple different apps, with no central gathering point for shared music.

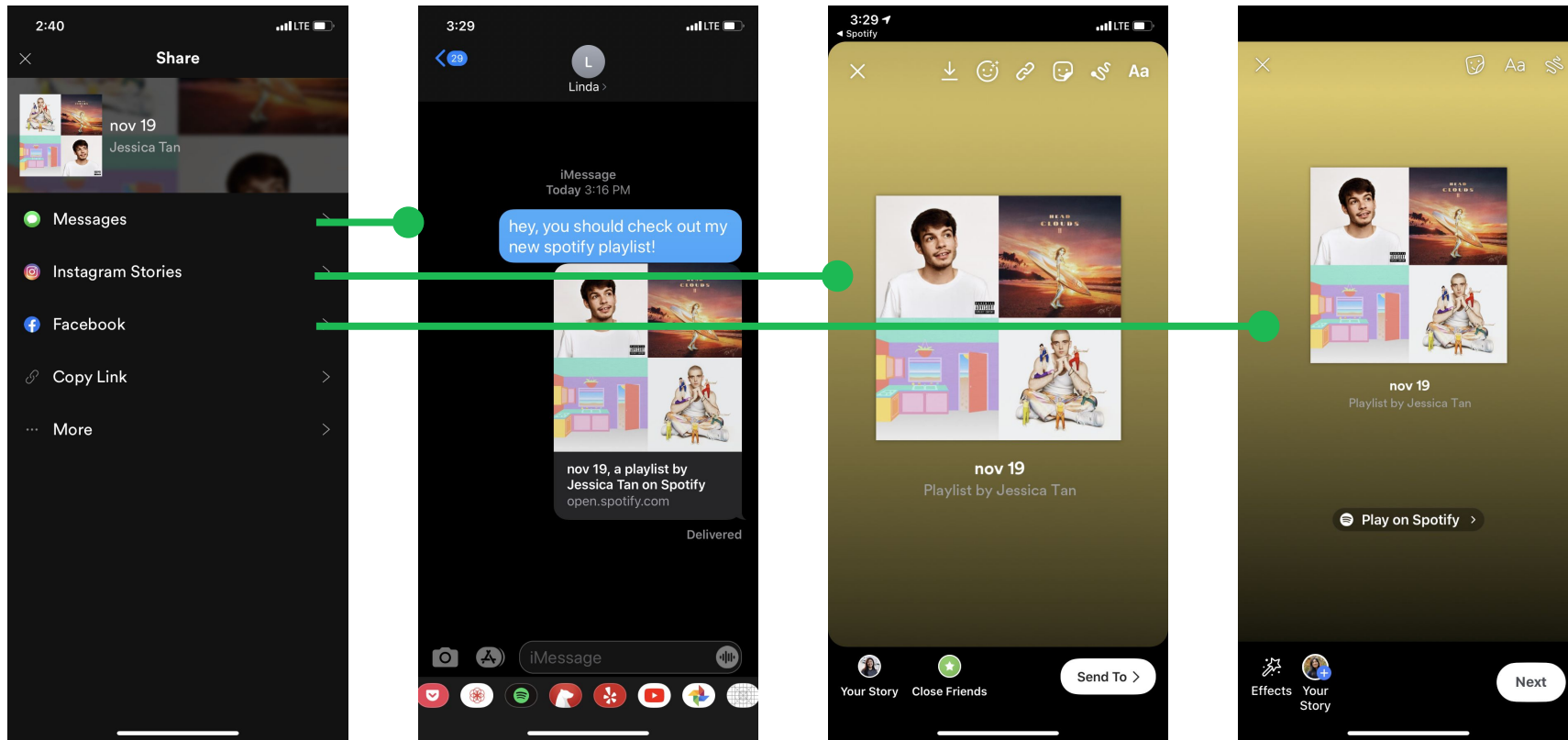
Direct Messaging

Existing mobile design



Direct Messaging

Existing mobile design



Direct Messaging

How can i send private messages to a friend?



lutscho / Casual Listener / 2018-01-06 01:46 PM

Hello,

my plan is, to invite a friend to a common playlist. But i can't find an option to invite him. I can just make the playlist as a common playlist. I guess for all people that follow me. But it's only for us two.

Where is this option and how can i send private messages? I can't find the inbox.



I can't find it. There is only Facebook, FB Messenger, Twitter, Telegram, Skype and Tumblr but no option for a private message.

+ Like

1



Hey,

Those are your only options for sharing on the desktop client. However, you could choose to copy the Spotify song link and then paste it into a messenger of your choice.

There is more sharing options on mobile devices.



It sounds like you want to make a Collaborative playlist, here are the steps to do so:

Desktop:

1. In the left panel, right-click a playlist.
2. Select **Collaborative Playlist**.
3. Share it with your friend!

Mobile:

1. Tap **Your Library** in the menu at the bottom of the screen.
2. Tap **Playlists** and select one.
3. Tap Options in the top-right corner.
4. Tap **Make Collaborative**.
5. Share it with your friend!

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Current sharing features (third party apps + collaborative playlists) do not replace the need for private messaging capabilities.

Direct Messaging

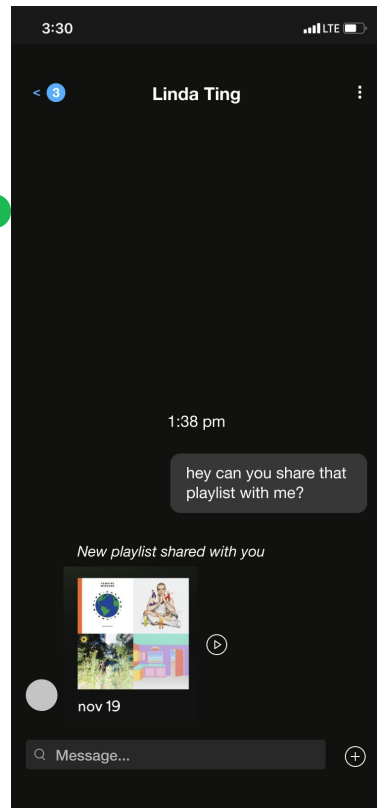
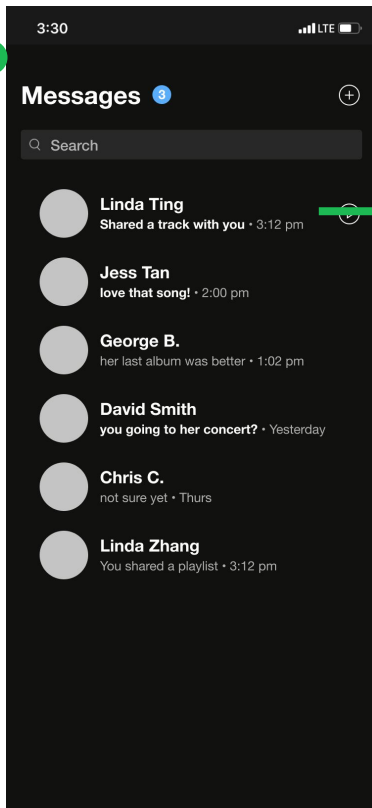
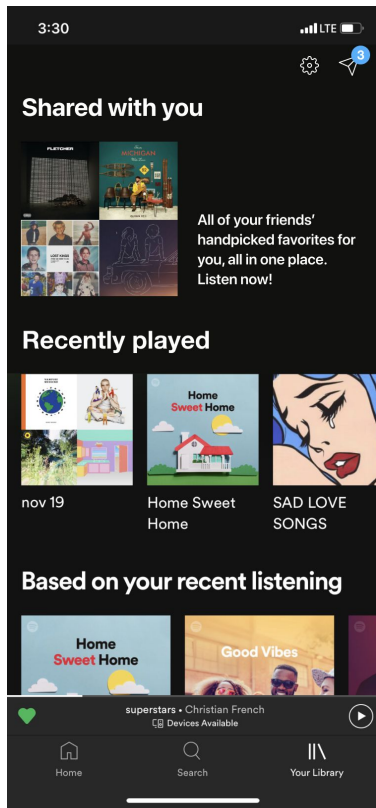
Why did private messaging on Spotify fail the first time around?

Users reported that it took many clicks to reach the feature, since it was hidden within the menus. This navigational burden deterred users from private sharing. Additionally, it was not accessible on mobile, which is now a major platform for content sharing.

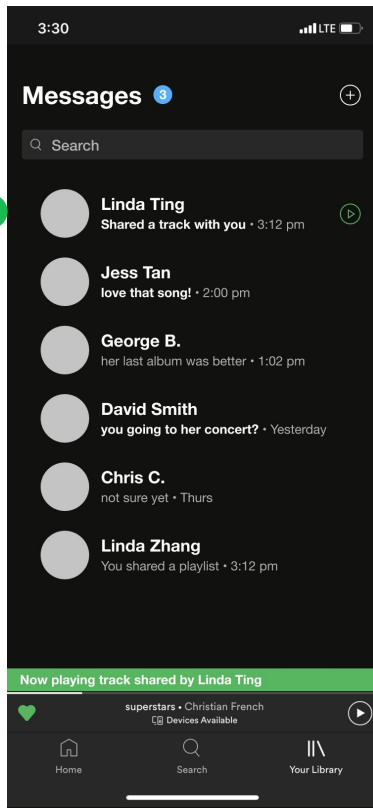
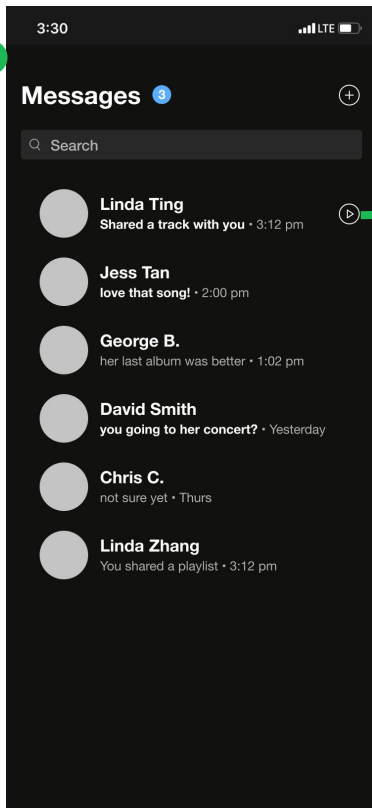
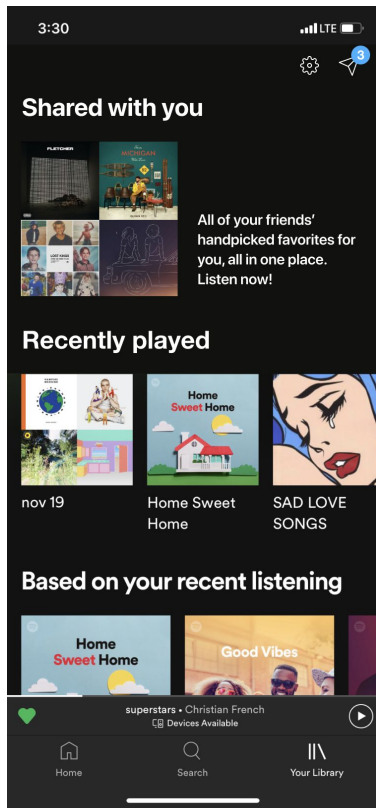
What can we do to design a new feature for private messaging with high user engagement?

1. Make the messages inbox easily accessible from the home page.
2. Use familiar UX design patterns and cues to integrate within-app sharing within the listening flow.
3. Provide more options and comprehensive functionality for sharing within the app.

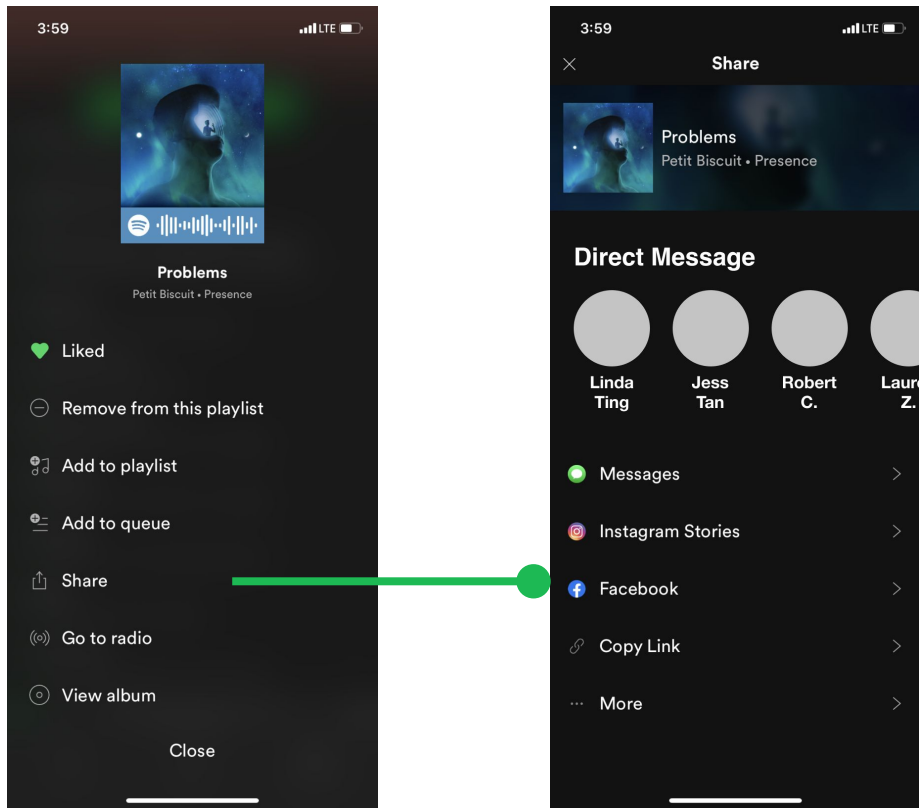
Direct Messaging



Direct Messaging



Direct Messaging



Friends

The Profile

The user profile itself is extremely difficult to find and inconvenient to navigate to. Users have reported being unaware of the profile feature.

Friends vs. Following

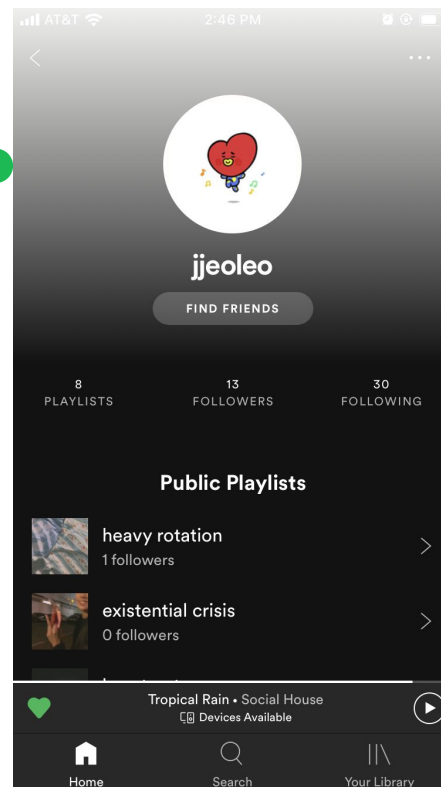
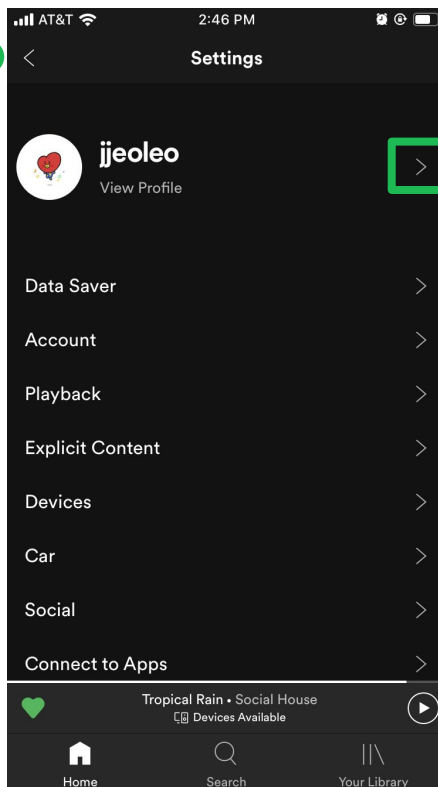
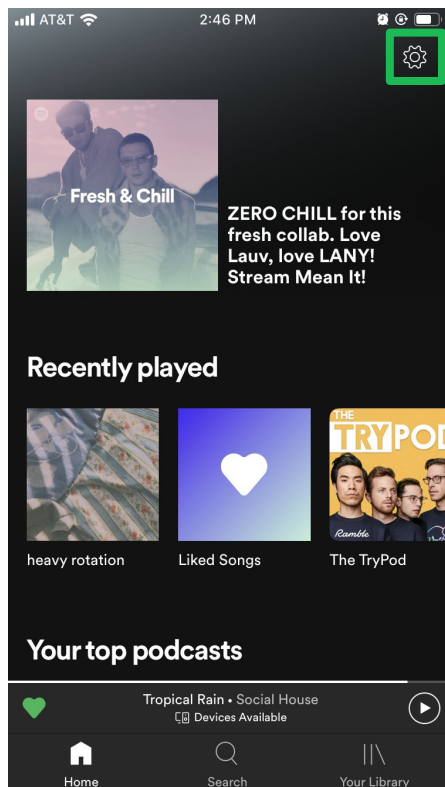
The current profile model lumps together musical artists and your real-life friends into a single “Following” list. Since artist profiles and user profiles are inherently unique in their purposes and functionality, it is important to make this distinction clear to the lay user.

Finding Friends

Adding friends on Spotify is difficult because the only option currently available is to import from one’s Facebook friends. Searching by username is nearly impossible due to the convolution of search results by artists, playlists, *and* user profiles.

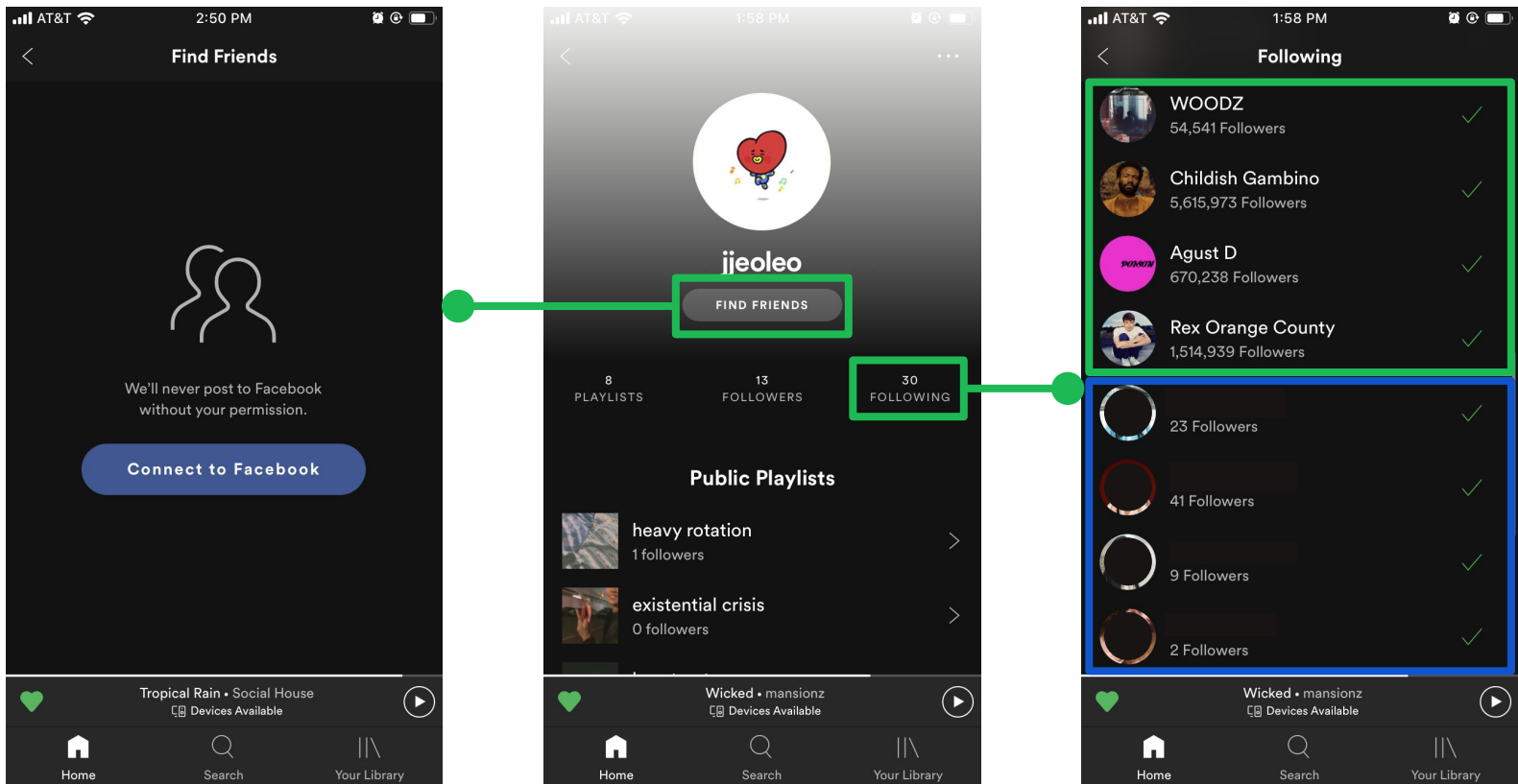
Friends

Existing mobile design

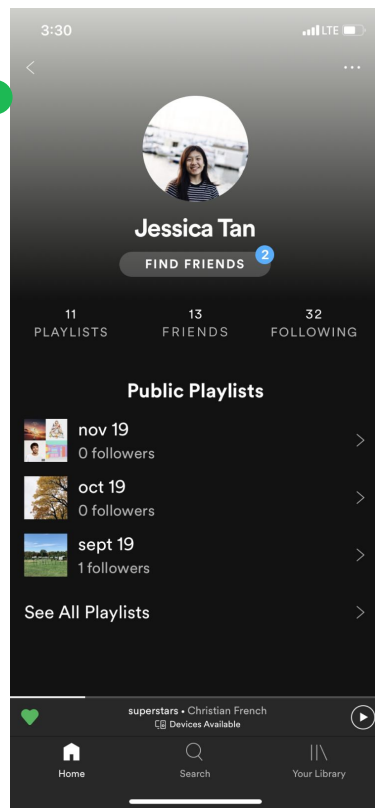
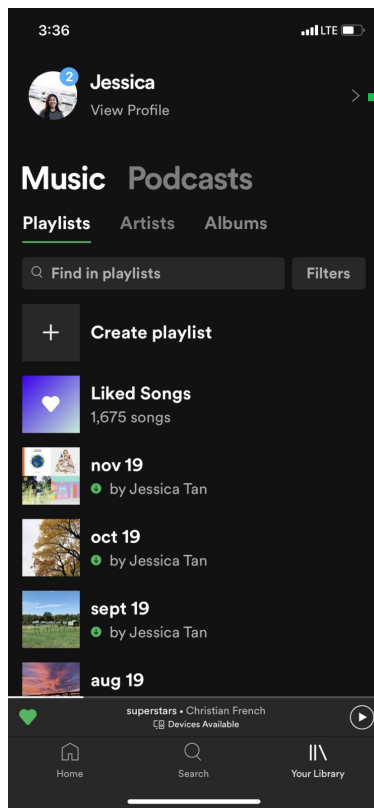
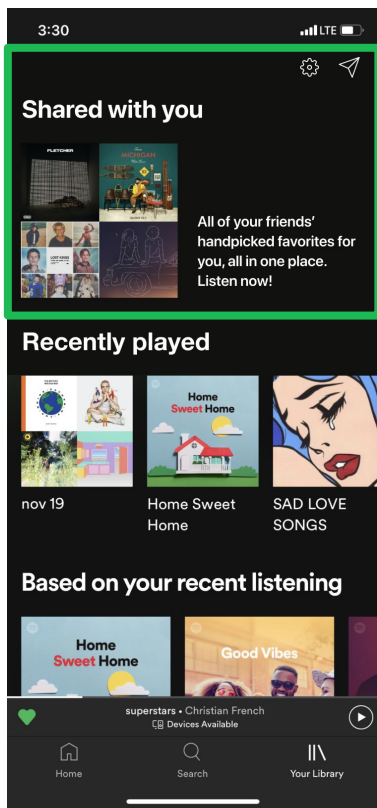


Friends

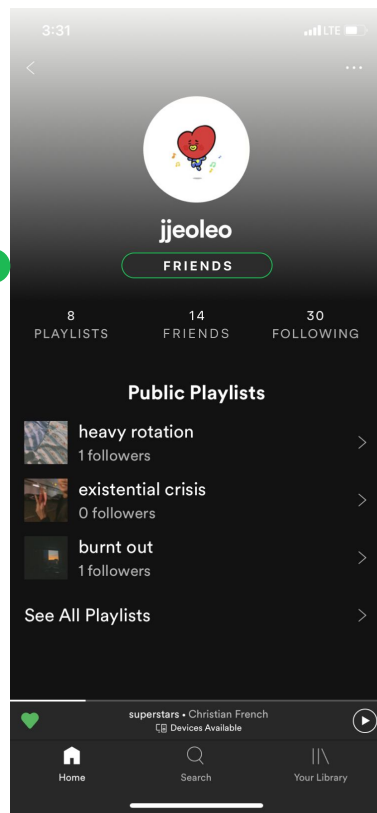
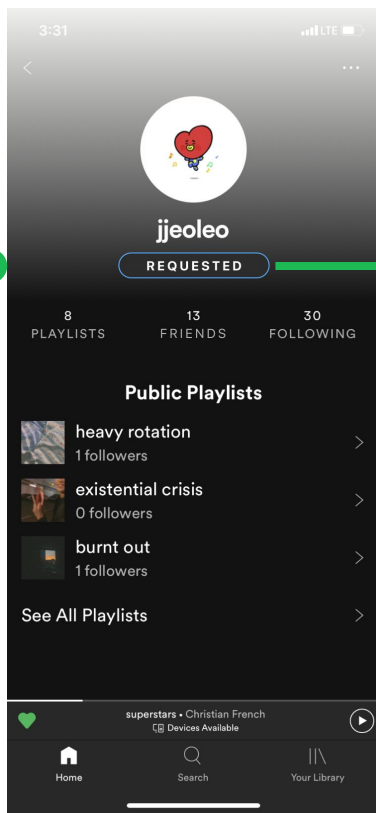
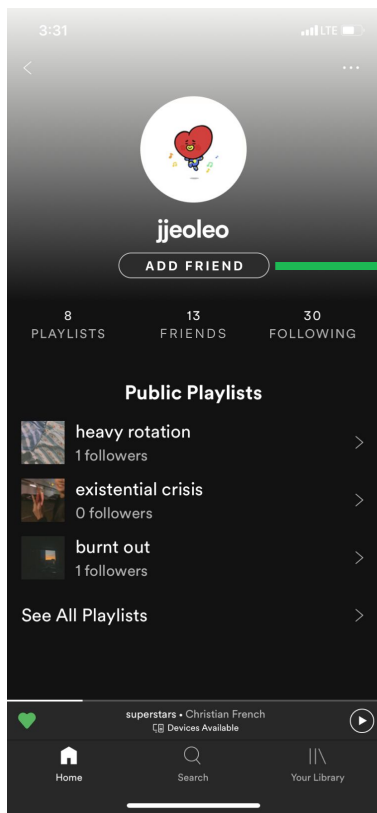
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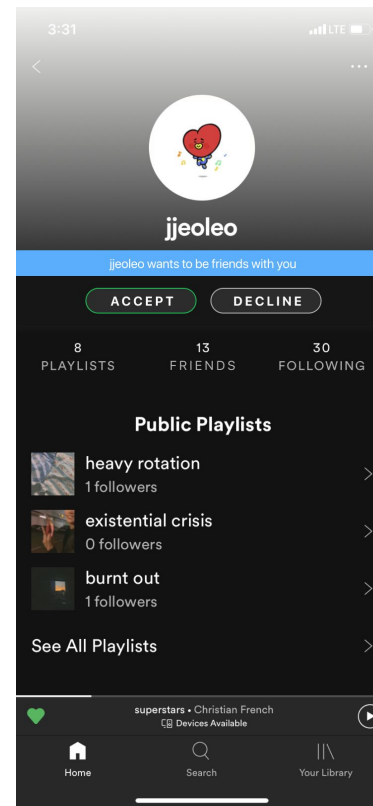
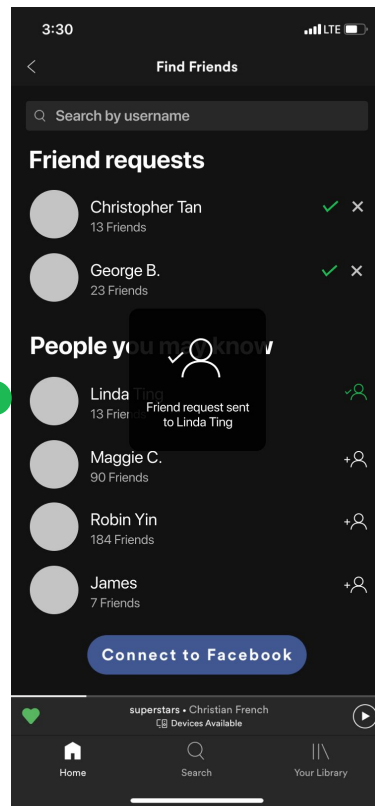
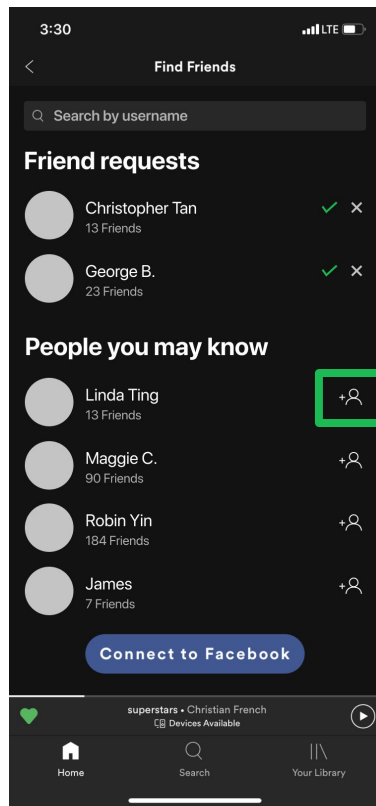
Friends



Friends



Friends



Conclusion

We seamlessly integrated two key features (friends, direct messaging) within Spotify's existing design to foster meaningful daily interactions through music sharing.