Merge

Don’t just listen to music; listen to people

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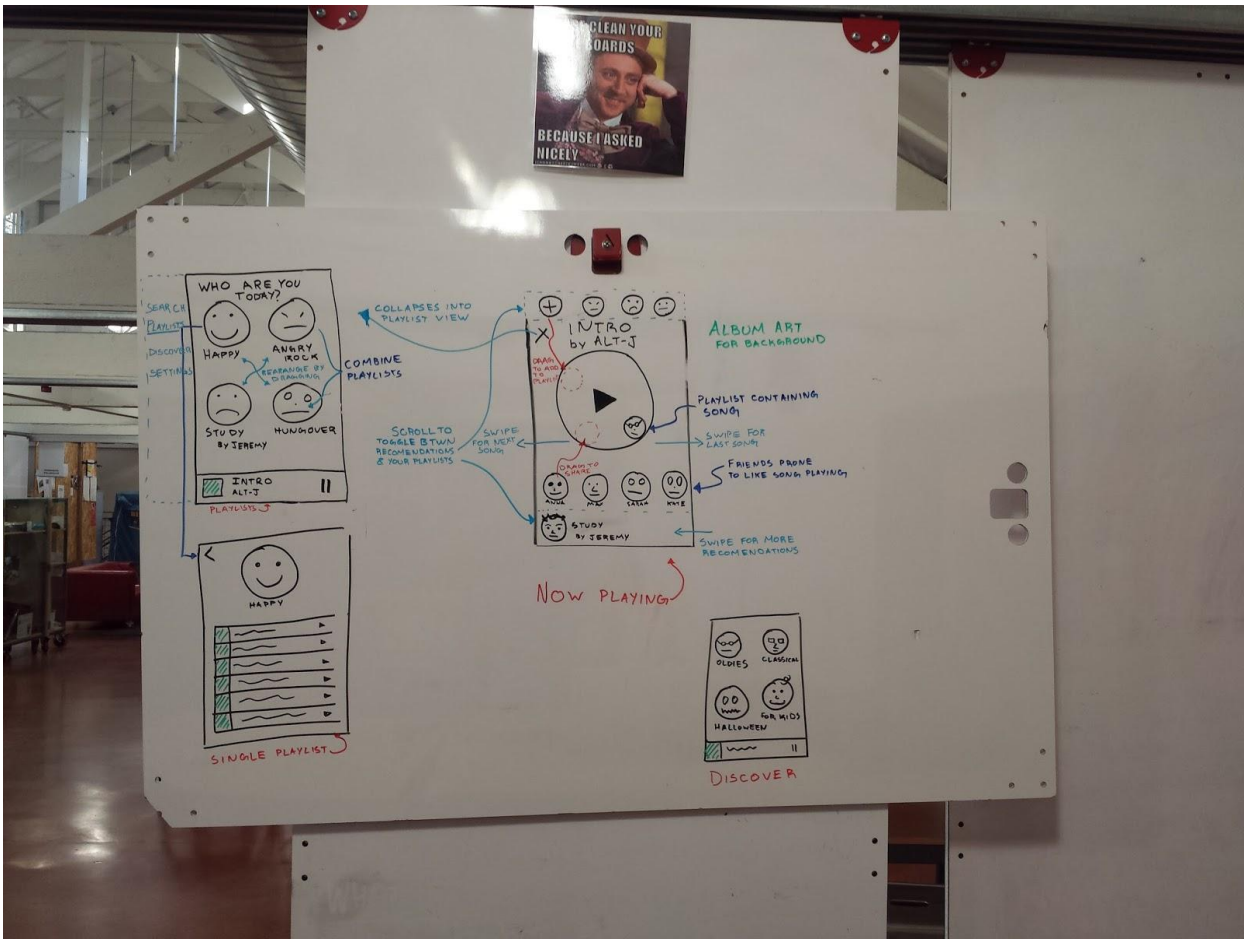
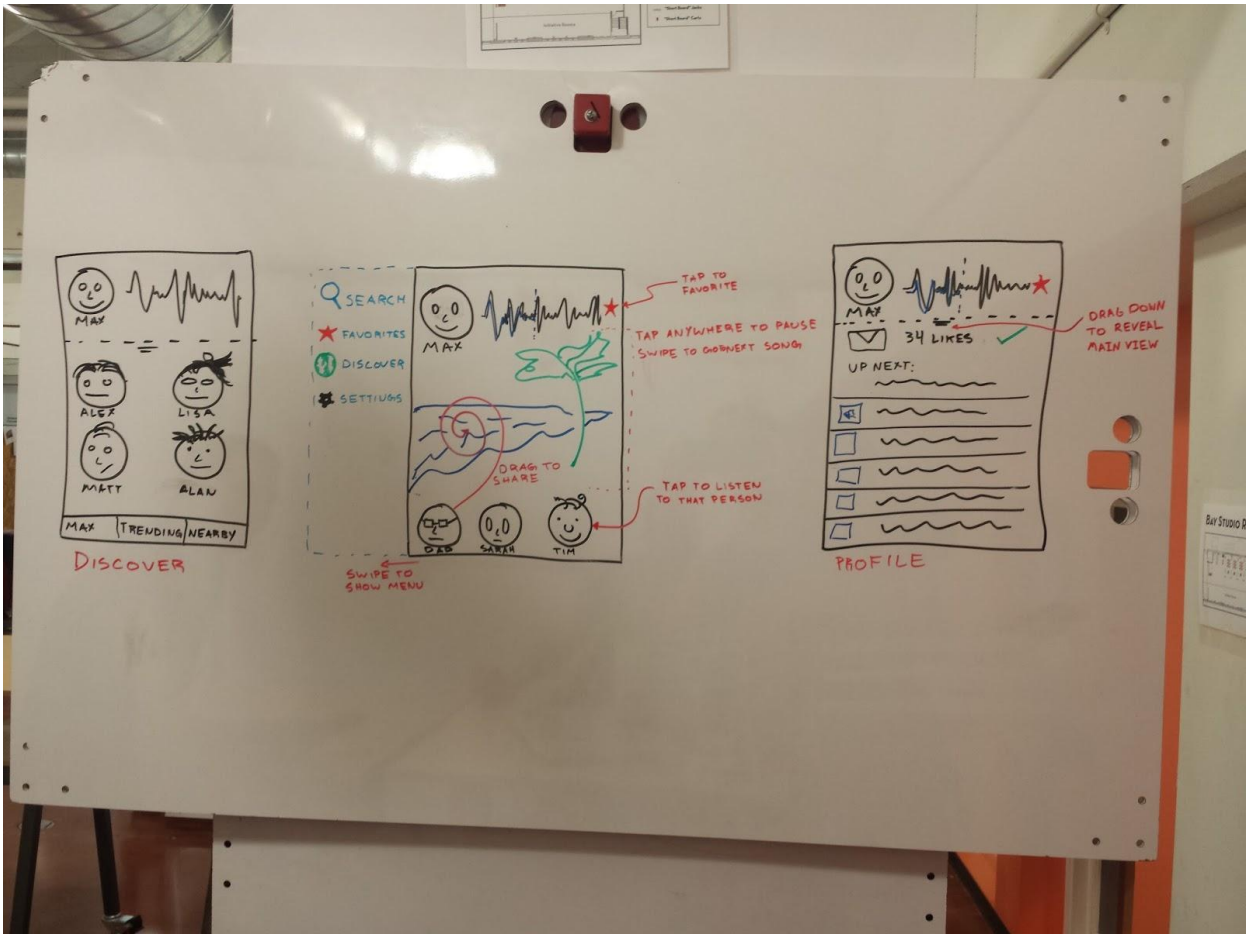
The advent of digital music has brought with it plenty of tools for discovering new music. From online music blogs to crowd sourced recommendation services, modern music lovers has no shortage of resources for seeking out new tunes and old favorites to listen to wherever they are. However, current music discovery tools do not address two significant aspects of the music discovery process; music is a incredibly social form of art that connects users, and users often associate certain songs, artists, and genres with specific places, activities, or friends. The social element of music discovery is so inherent to the process of music discovery that some users only listen to new songs or artists on the suggestion of a trusted friend. Currently, the only tools that users have to facilitate this social music discovery require users to actively participate in this process. Merge seeks to remedy this by automating the process of music discovery and selection based on music preferences of peers as well as environmental factors and listening history.

UI Sketches





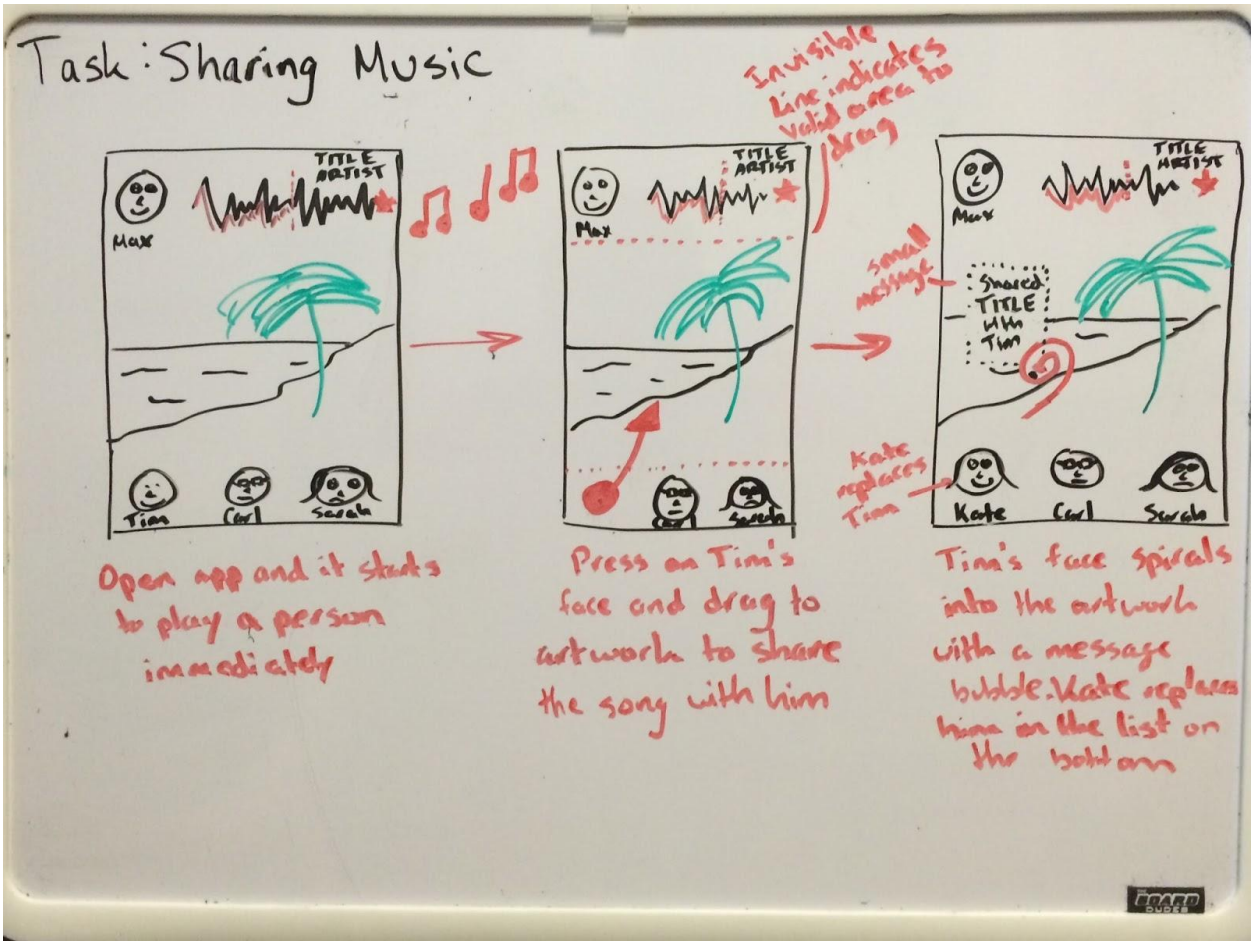
Selected Interface

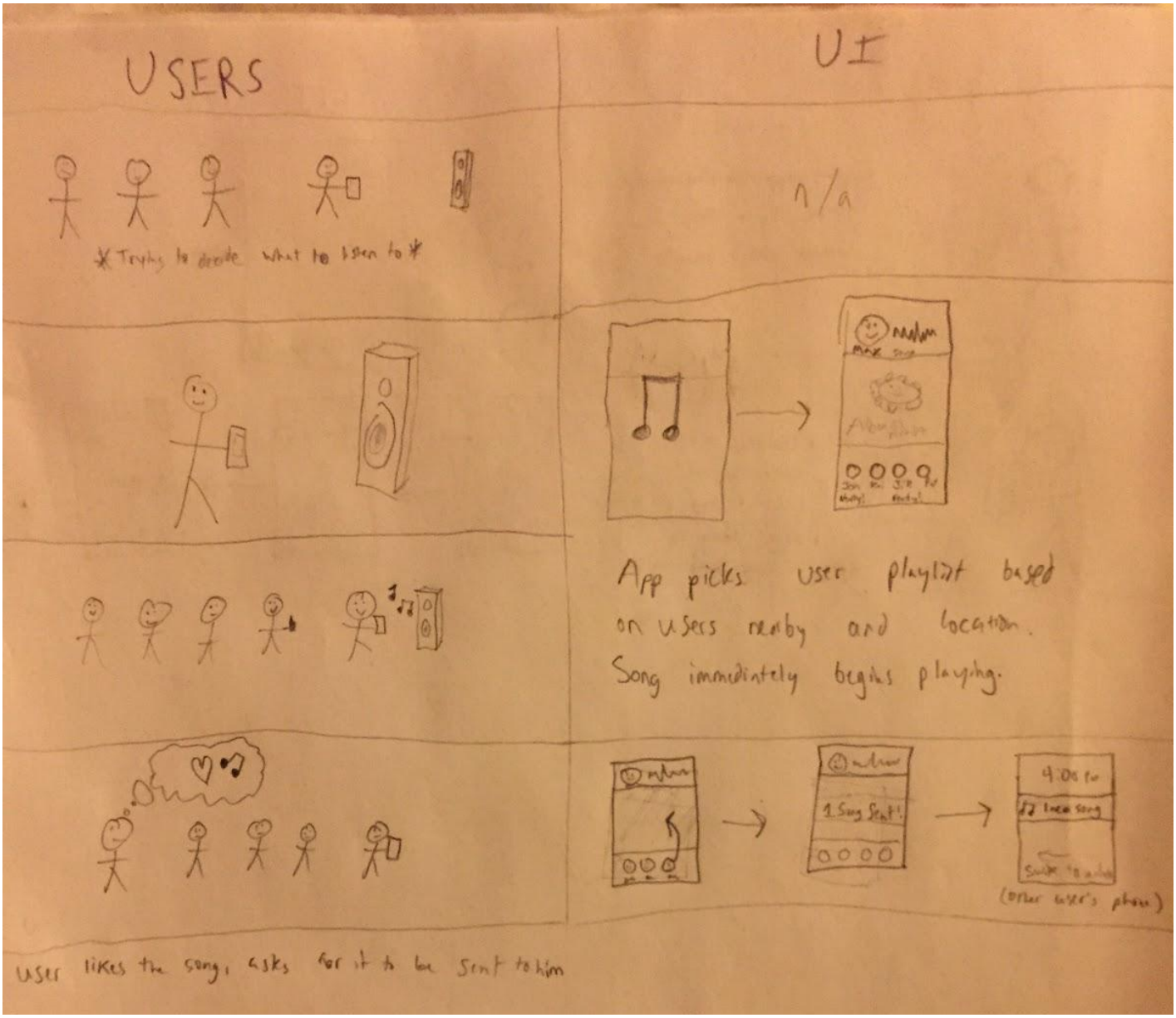
We ultimately ended up choosing the second implementation that we sketched. Our first implementation was essentially a music player that provided an easy and encouraging interface in which to share music. Although it fulfilled all of the tasks we set aside to perform, as we brainstormed features, the first implementation looked more like typical music players that are already available on mobile platforms.

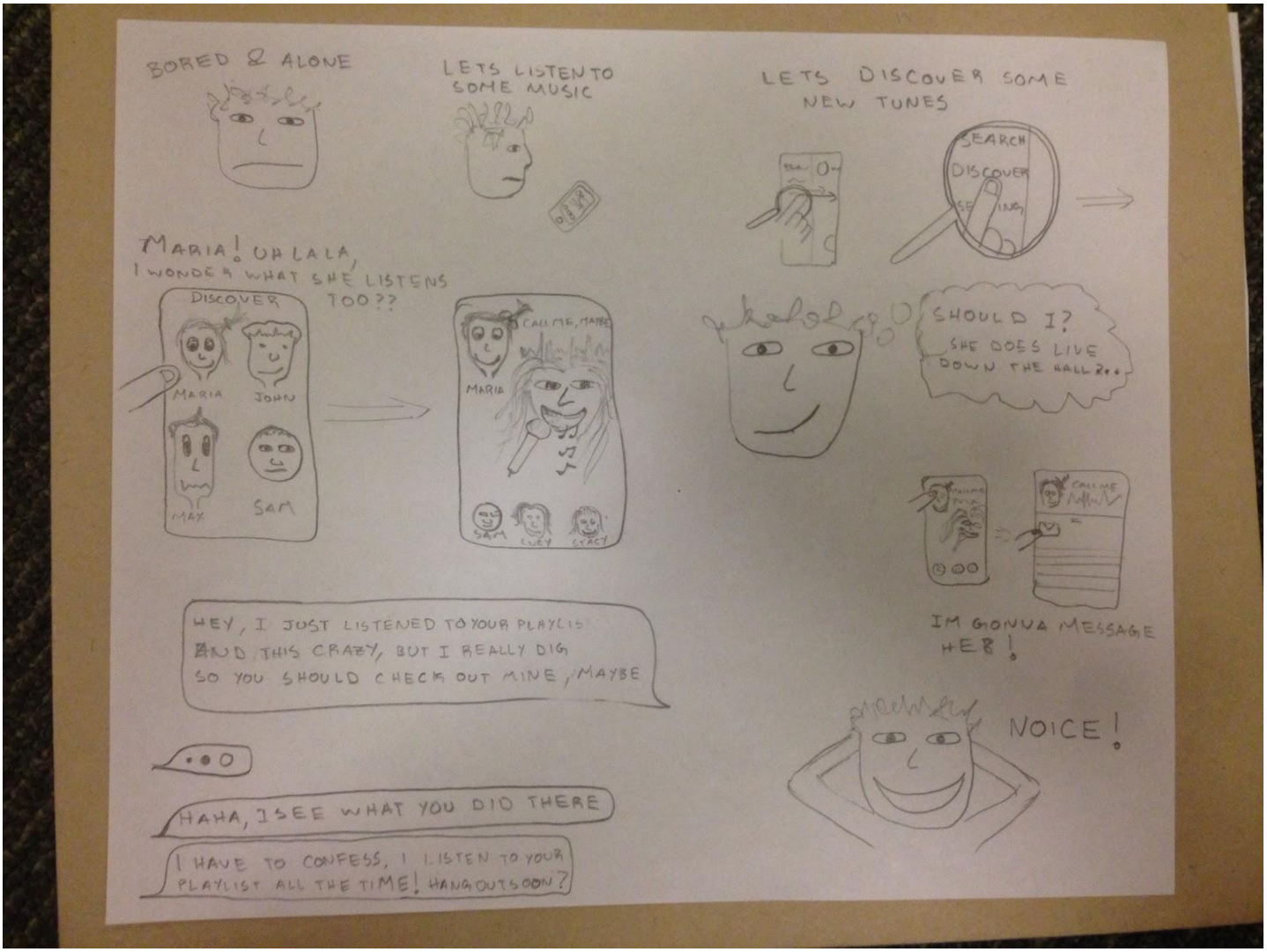
Our second UI sketches, an implementation we call Merge, performs all of our tasks in a new and more innovative way. Instead of listening to music in the traditional manner organized by static playlists, the implementation we chose encourages the user to listen to people. Merge takes the likes and listening history of people, and creates music streams on the fly that sum up the person. Instead of listening to a static playlist, you can listen to your friends and others. This concept facilitates the discovery of new music.

When the user opens Merge, the app takes into account time, location, and activity and launches you directly into listening to a person that it thinks matches the users context. The album artwork is shown as the background, to submerge the user in the music. On the bottom of the screen, Merge presents three other people that it thinks would be interesting in hearing the current song. To share the song with any of the people, simply drag them to the middle of the album art. If the user wants to make a connection with the person whom they are listening to, they can easily message them.

UI Storyboards

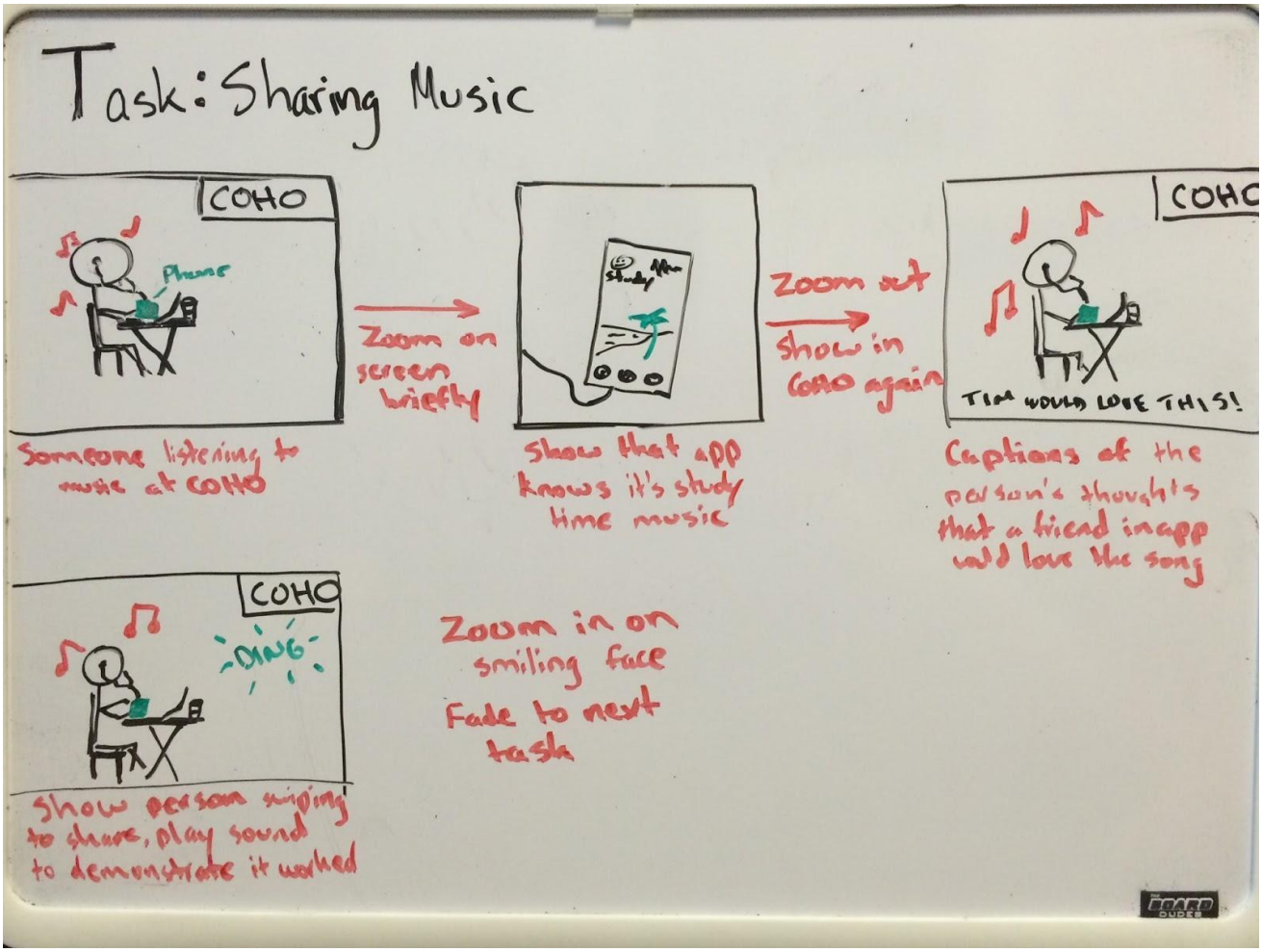

Task: Sharing Music
TITLE
ARTIST
Max
Tim
Carl
Sarah
Open app and it starts to play a person immediately
Invisible Line indicates valid area to drag
Press on Tim's face and drag to artwork to share the song with him
small message
Shared TITLE with Tim
Kate replaces Tim
Kate
Carl
Sarah
Tim's face spirals into the artwork with a message bubble. Kate replaces him on the list on the bottom


USERS
UI
n/a
* Trying to decide what to listen to *
App picks user playlist based on users nearby and location. Song immediately begins playing.
1 Song Sent!
(other user's phone)
user likes the song, asks for it to be sent to him

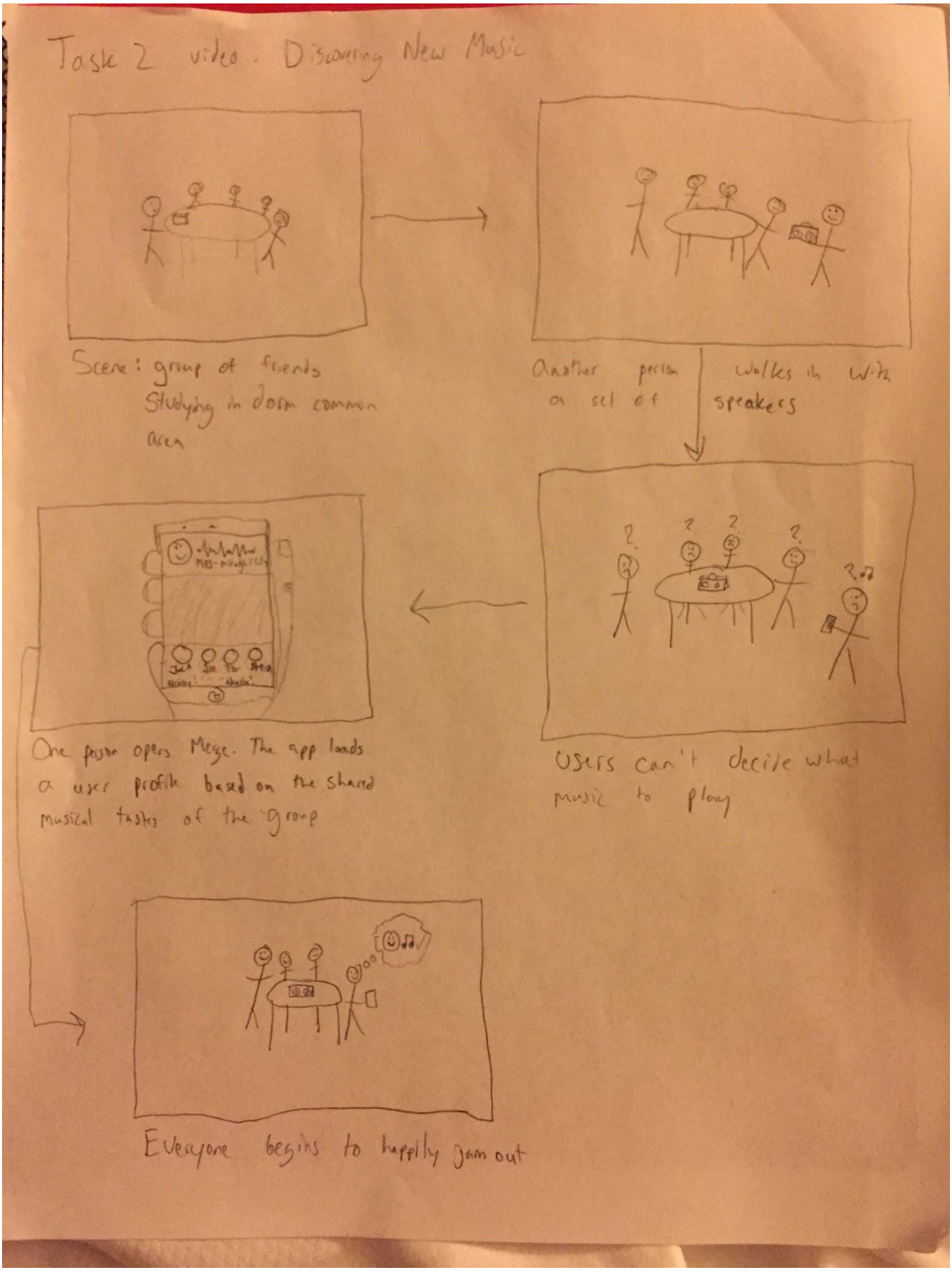

BORED & ALONE
LETS LISTEN TO SOME MUSIC
LETS DISCOVER SOME NEW TUNES
SEARCH
DISCOVER
MARIA! OH LA LA, I WONDER WHAT SHE LISTENS TOO??
DISCOVER
MARIA
JOHN
MAX
SAM
CALL ME, MAYBE
MARIA
SAM
EVEY
STACY
SHOULD I?
SHE DOES LIVE DOWN THE HALL?..
IM GONNA MESSAGE HER!
HEY, I JUST LISTENED TO YOUR PLAYLIST AND THIS CRAZY, BUT I REALLY DIG SO YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT MINE, MAYBE
NOICE!
HAHA, I SEE WHAT YOU DID THERE
I HAVE TO CONFESS, I LISTEN TO YOUR PLAYLIST ALL THE TIME! HANGOUTSOON?

Video Planning Storyboards

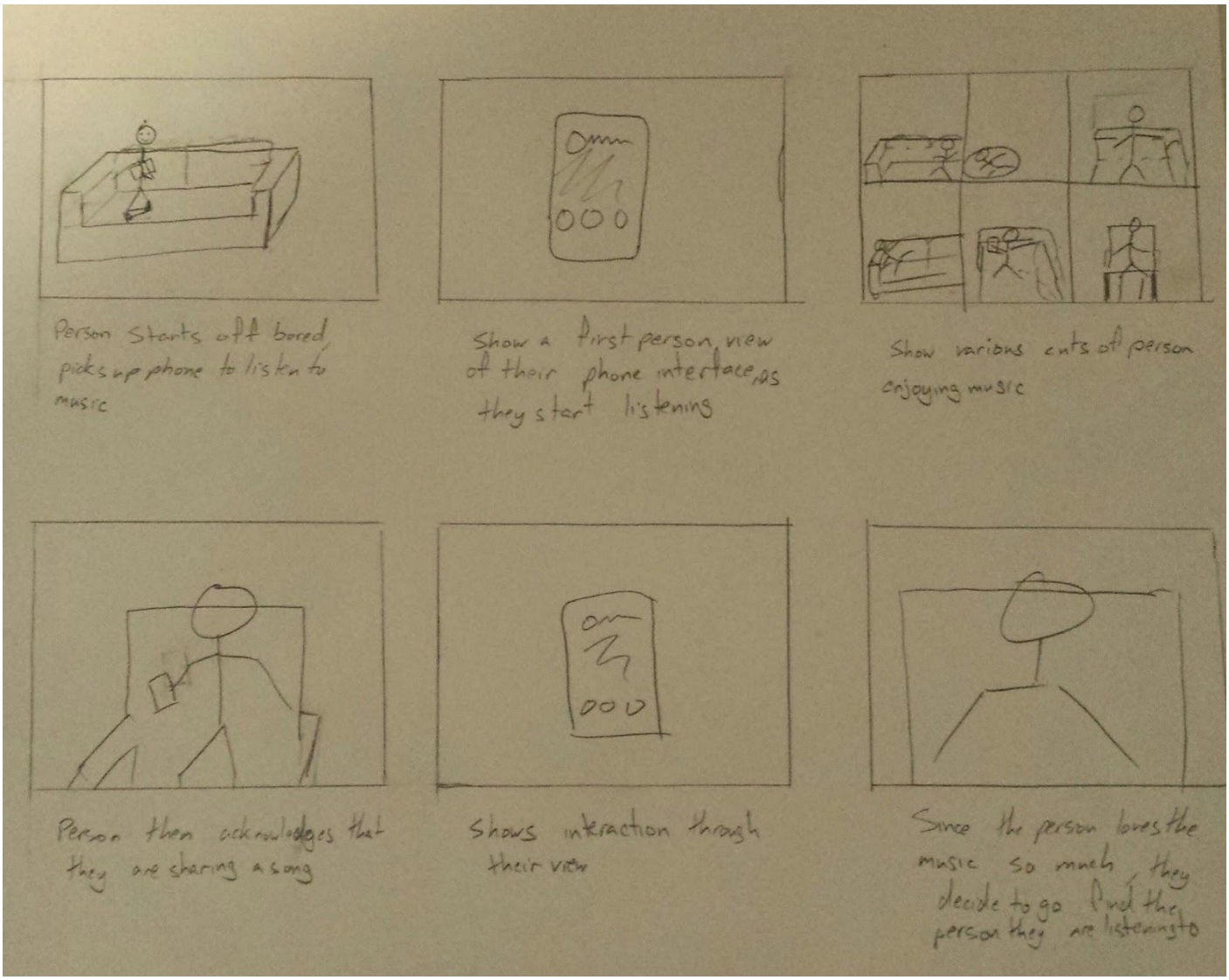
Task 1: Sharing music



Task 2: Discovering New Music



Task 3: Forming new relationships (This is the story board we actually used)



Concept Video Description:

The most difficult part of creating our concept video was deciding on a usage scenario that would succinctly demonstrate our 3 tasks. We spent approximately 3 hours on this stage; however, envisioning the variety of usage scenarios we could film was valuable to our entire design process. Music discovery can happen anywhere thanks to mobile devices. We eventually decided on our dorm room scenario and started filming. Editing the video into a short, informative clip that demonstrated our usage scenarios well was also a challenge; Stephen spent close to four hours on this process, since he had to mix all the short clips of Santi listening to music together and align the soundtrack. In the end, we struggled to convey how our app creates new relationships, especially since we weren't showcasing our UI designs.

One thing that worked well in our video was our usage situation. We chose our scenario because it was a realistic situation in which all three of our tasks could happen in a short period of time; people tend to discover and share new music when listening in their dorm rooms, and connecting with other people in the dorm over shared music taste is also very plausible. This situation was also relatively easy to film, it only took 2 hours to film the video. The variety of music we were able to include in our concept video also made the clip feel organic and exciting. The video did a great job of conveying the excitement of discovering new music.