

Parker Odrich, Gio Jacuzzi, Peter Washington
Studio: Creation
Team Name: Rubato
Problem Domain: Music
Assignment #2

Initial POV

We met Angelica. We were amazed to realize that she was shy about her music taste while being comfortable with illegally downloading music. It would be game changing to make her less anxious about her musical tastes and expressing them.

Additional Needfinding

We interviewed three additional people for this assignment: Manek Mathur (a DJ), Aaron Roe (another DJ), and Paton Moody (a music blogger).

Paton is a music blogger who works at Red Light Management, a music management company. Paton revealed that as a blogger “introducing people to music is a rush, especially when you help them find a new favorite song or artist. That’s what I like most about it.” He observed that people get embarrassed or even offended when you show them a song you really like and they don’t necessarily like it.



Paton Moody, music blogger

Aaron Roe is another DJ who specializes in house and house derivatives. He's completely open to sharing, although he admitted the process is sometimes not easy. His biggest grievance with DJing is that the song selection process can be quite difficult because it is not always clear what songs the audience wants to listen to. He also noted that "it would help if the DJing process were more visual".



Aaron Roe, DJ

Manek Mathur is a DJ who regularly performs in NYC. He focuses on producing electronic, house, and EDM. As a DJ, Manek expressed that he is open to sharing playlists but is not open to sharing his personal music preferences and mashups. Manek said he likes to keep his sets and collections unique, as "it's more of an identity thing". He also noted that learning to DJ is quite difficult and requires "constant repetition".



Manek Mathur, DJ

Revised POVs and Corresponding HMWs

Manek

We met Manek. We were amazed to realize that despite the fact that he is a DJ and curates a ton of his music and shares it, there are some pieces that he likes to keep private, linking it to his “identity”. It would be game-changing if we can remove the stigma from publically curating his music while allowing him to feel like his “musical identity” is preserved, or even improved.

Below is a sample of the types of HMWs we came up with for Manek:

- How might we remove the stigma from publically curating his music while allowing him to feel like his “musical identity” is preserved, or even improved?
- How might we make it easier for DJs to create an environment where they can connect with their audiences?
- How might we make it easier for Manek to create a musical identity bigger and more popular than the one he has now?

Aaron

We met Aaron. We were amazed to realize that he finds current state-of-the-art DJing software, such as Traktor, to be *too complicated to use* while still lacking certain important features. It would be game-changing if we could make DJing software more powerful while still being as simple to use as possible.

Below is a sample of the types of HMWs we came up with for Aaron:

- How might we help them choose songs that will please the most people in the social setting?
- How might we allow music curation to create a better work environment?
- How might we make it easier for DJs who are burdened by too much hardware to produce music?

Paton

We met Paton. We were amazed to realize that choosing the music to listen to with his friends can become logistically awkward or frustrating when in the car or at parties. It would be game-changing to develop a way to streamline music playlisting among friends.

Below is a sample of the types of HMWs we came up with for Paton:

- How might we preserve a log of all the songs played in a social setting?
- How might we make social music choice less autocratic and more communal?
- How might we take the stigma out of Paton publically creating a music collection?

Top-3 HMWs

1. From Paton's POV: How might we make social music curation less autocratic and more community-driven?
2. From Aaron's POV: How might we make it easier for DJs who are burdened by too much hardware to produce music?
3. From Angelica's POV: How might we enable people to curate music that better expresses how they feel?

Experience Prototype 1: Communal Playlist Creation

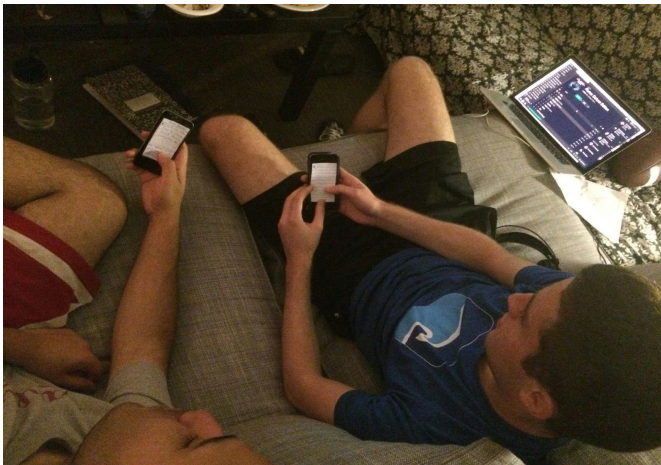
a) Assumption: People will enjoy hearing music that other people want to listen to as long as they're contributing to the curation of the playlist.

b) This prototype was drawn on paper as a mock app where each screen is on a different piece of paper. The paper cutouts are placed on a real smartphone to simulate the process of using the app. We also used a computer to play music.



Prototype of the communal playlist creation app

c) We tested the prototype on a small group of people at a real social event (named Max, Raul, and Fletcher). We asked the three people to use the interface shown above to queue songs. We let the users switch screens and explain what they were doing out loud. We then changed the song according to the queue created by the group.



Testing of the communal playlist app

d) The good: People found our initial interface to be easy to use and really enjoyed having the ability to change the songs using their own phones without having to pass the phone around.

The negative: People wanted additional features, such as the ability for the host to play, fast forward, rewind, control the volume, and invite people to the real-time playlist creation session. The users also wanted a way to upvote and downvote songs.

Lessons learned: We learned that people want to have even more freedom with

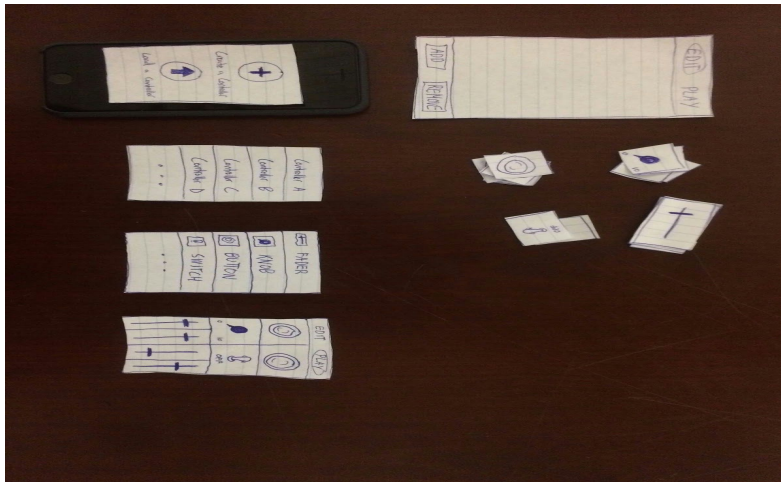
curating the community playlist than simply suggesting songs for the playlist, as they suggested many features that would make the curation process more fun and creative.

e) Our assumption was valid. The people at the party enjoyed contributing to the playlist and hearing the music of others. A new assumption we now have is that gamifying the playlist curation process will further motivate users to participate.

Experience Prototype 2: Customizable Mobile DJ Board

a) Assumption: Pre-processing the digital interface for the DJ will be worth the ease of experience during the actual performance.

b) This prototype was drawn on paper. We drew many DJ tools onto little square pieces of paper.



Prototype of the customizable mobile DJ board prototype

c) We tested the prototype by asking a DJ (Matthew) to place the little square sheets of paper (representing the DJ interface modules) onto the larger sheet, and then asked the user to describe his satisfaction with the customized DJ-interface that he created.



Testing of the customizable mobile DJ board prototype

d) The good: The user found drag-and-drop and tactile interaction to be intuitive. He thought that the customizability was great.

The negative: The biggest concern expressed by the tester was that this app would not work on a screen the size of a smartphone. A screen at least the size of a tablet would be necessary to make the app feasible.

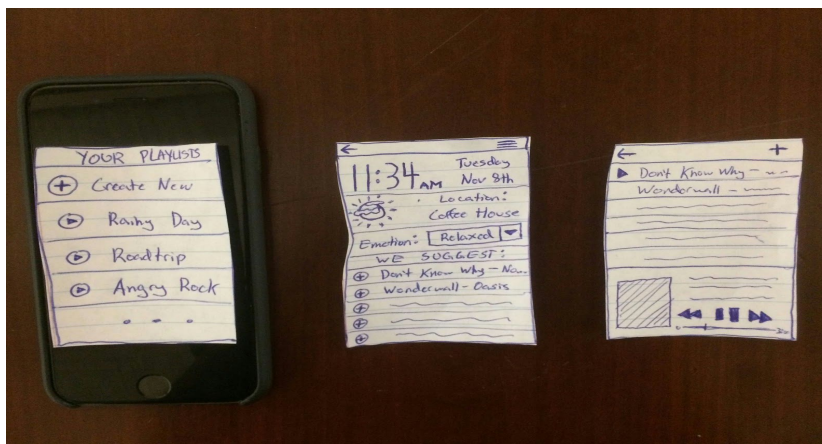
Lessons learned: Although an idea can be good, it is important to keep in mind the medium in which the idea will be implemented on.

e) While our assumption that DJs would enjoy the ability to create their custom DJ interface before a show was valid, it will not be possible to implement unless we program for a tablet, which may or may not be considered “mobile” for this class. We now assume that a DJ will need a large, flat surface in order to enjoy the process of digitally mixing music.

Experience Prototype 3: Situational Music Curator

a) Assumption: People want to listen to songs that are complementary to their current situation.

b) This prototype was drawn on sheets of paper representing screens of the app, similar to how the crowdsourced curation prototype was built. We also used a computer to play the songs that the user selected on the app.



Prototype of the mood-based music curation app

c) We tested the prototype on a music listener named Nora, who just happened to have finished running. We asked her to select her mood from a list and then asked her to go through the app prototype, allowing her to select songs that we wrote down on the fly based on the fact that she had just come from a run and was happy. We then played the songs she chose in the background and conversed with her.



Testing of the mood-based music curation app

d) The good: She liked the fact that the music recommendations were customized on the current time, location, and weather.

The negative: She felt that the suggested emotions were too simple. “Happy” and “sad” are very vague emotions. She also didn’t like that she had to select a playlist on the app. Most importantly, she thought that entering her emotion was “too cold” and off-putting.

Lessons learned: We learned that while people enjoy customized recommendations, they do not want an app that requires them to think about their current mood.

e) Our assumption was somewhat valid in that the user liked recommendations based on the current time, location, and weather. However, she didn’t like the mood aspect of the recommendation as it seemed cold/off-putting to her. A new assumption we have is that users don’t want to think too much about their current situation but would rather have ideas suggested to them, from which they can be creative with.

Conclusions

We found that our communal playlist creation prototype was the most successful in achieving a desired solution. The users really liked the first prototype, suggested potential improvements to make the app more engaging. The second prototype wouldn’t work on a device small enough to be considered “mobile” and was definitely our weakest prototype. The third prototype had potential but didn’t receive as positive of a response from our user.