

SPOTIFY AND RDIO INTEGRATION

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THE ASK

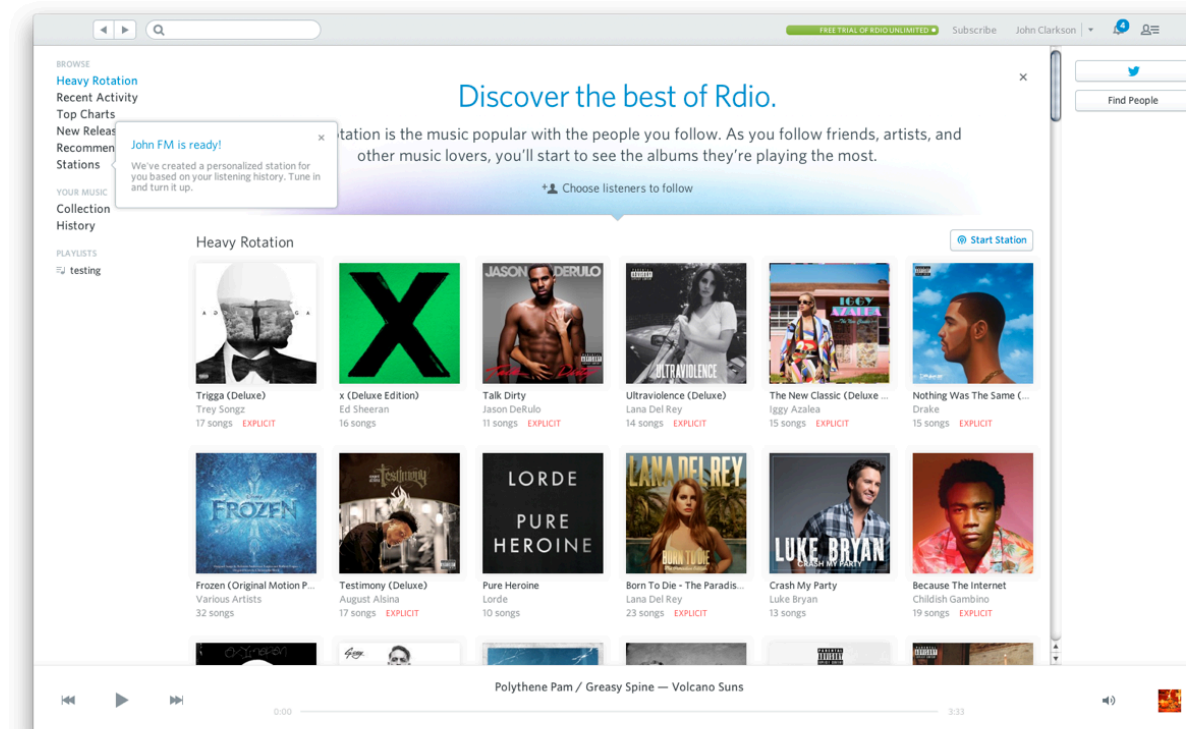
Imagine a scenario where RDIO and Spotify are acquired and need to develop a single integrated platform.

- How would you develop a unified look and feel?
- What components of Spotify/Rdio would you keep and why?
- How do you facilitate the prioritization process from a design perspective?
- As part of this exercise, please present a couple of sample designs (mockups) for an integrated product.

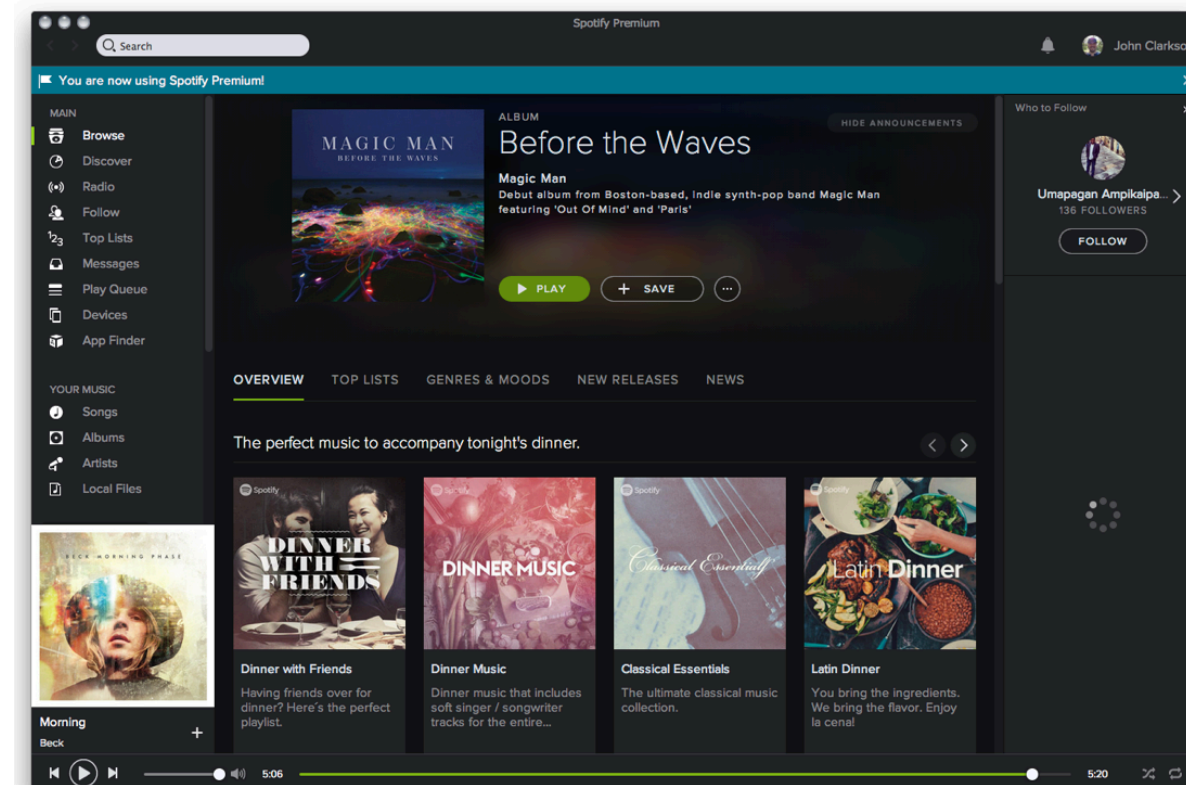
DEVELOPING A UNIFIED LOOK AND FEEL

GOOD VS. EVIL?

Desktop Rdio



Desktop Spotify



Beatles or Rolling Stones? Good versus evil, the eternal dichotomy!

How to move forward?
Numbers might help...



- 40 million active users
- Of which, 10 million are paying
- Five star rating for the iOS mobile app (3,425 reviews, iTunes as of 7.7.2014)
- 20+ Million songs
- Bitrate up to 320kbs
- First release in 2008



- “Millions” of active users
- Paying? Unknown.
- Four star rating for the iOS mobile app (247 reviews, iTunes, as of 7.7.2014)
- 20 Million songs
- Bitrate not specified, but assumed to be 192kbs
- First release in 2011

SO...

The key metric that stands out here is Spotify's 40 million active users compared to Rdio's 'millions'.

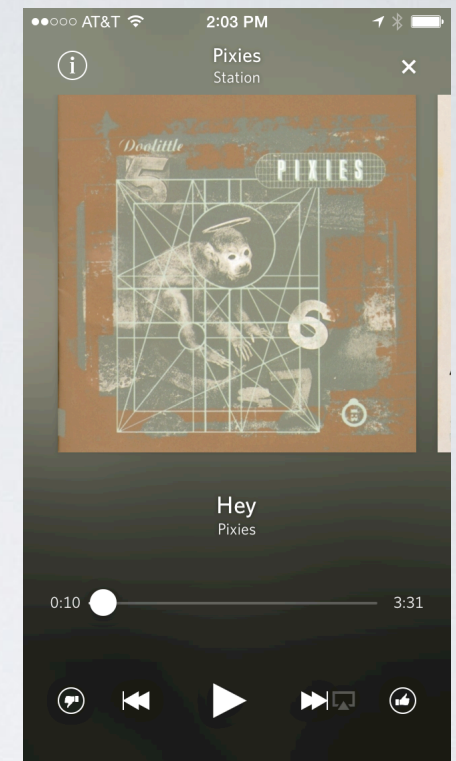
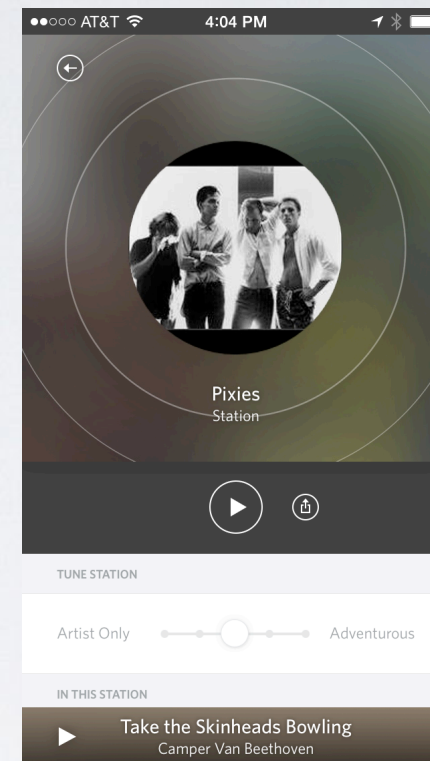
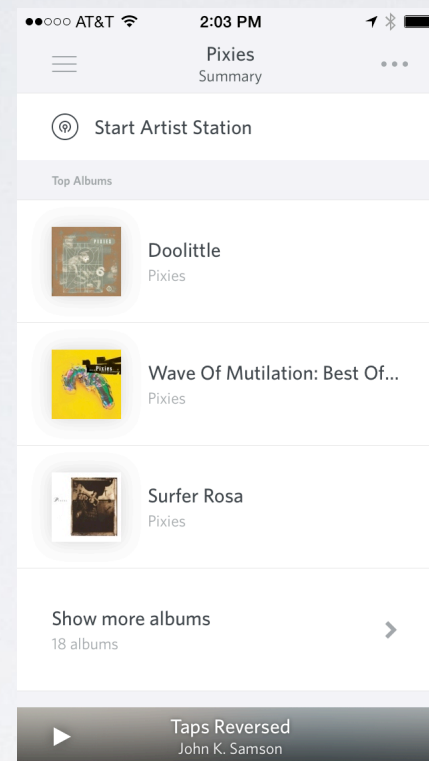
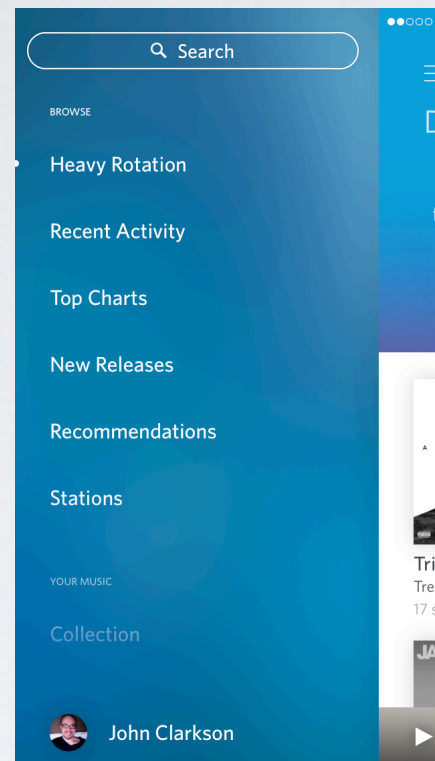
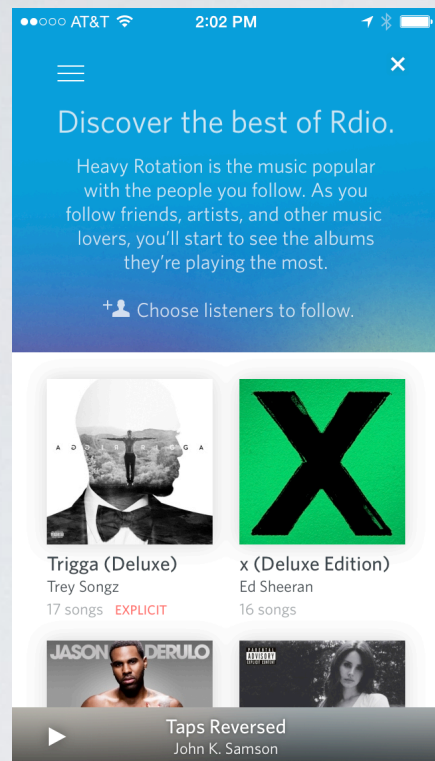
We cannot risk alienating 40 million active Spotify users.

We definitely cannot risk alienating 10 million **paying** Spotify users.

Maintaining the essence
of the Spotify brand and experience
should be a key goal
for the unified platform.

BUT...

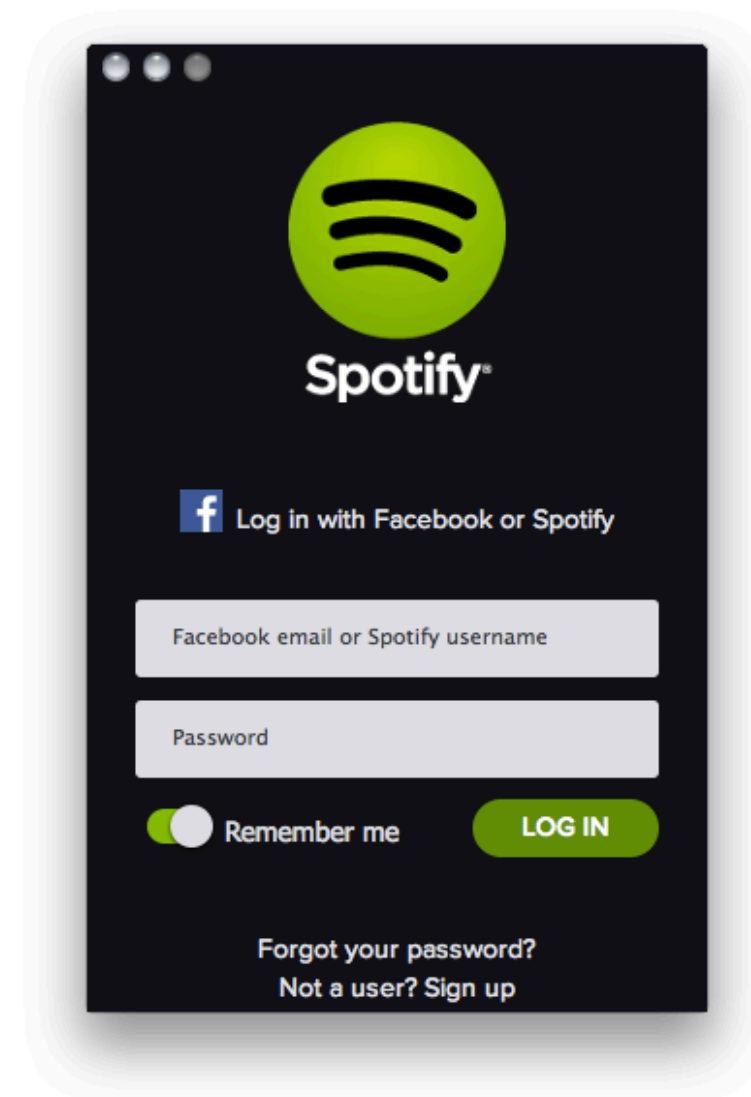
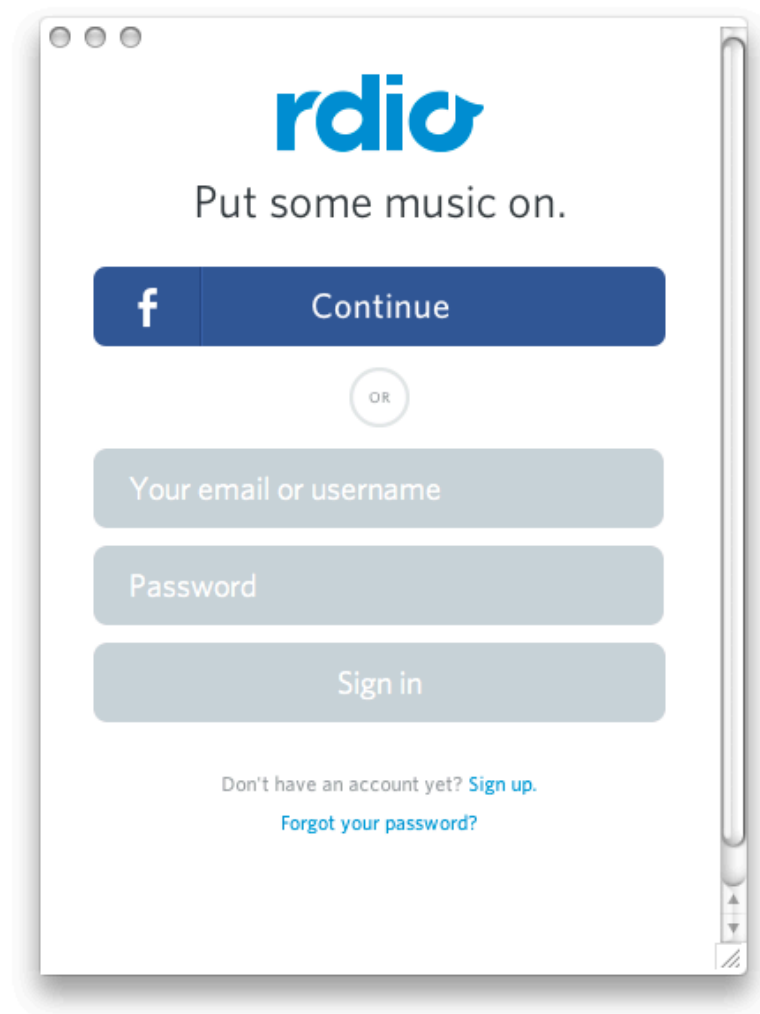
(sigh)



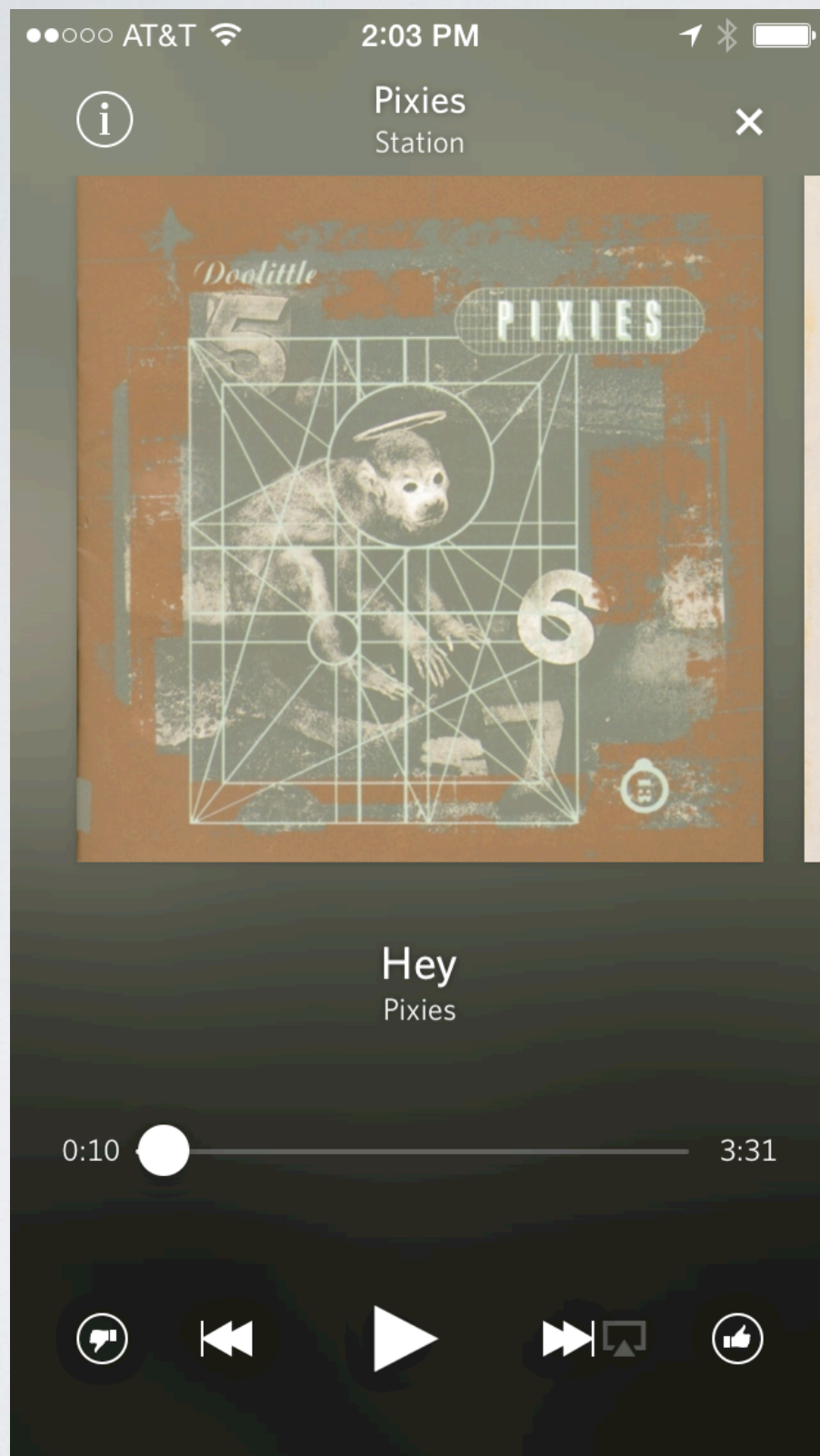
Rdio is rated higher for their UX.
Random sampling of web comparisons have Rdio recommended 2:1
over Spotify largely on the basis of Rdio's design and experience.

And I would have to agree.

Rdio's experience, across the board,
is cleaner, lighter, and more current.



Even Rdio's labels and copy are clearer.
Waaay clearer.



THE SUM TOTAL

My recommendation would be to build upon the existing Spotify UI and visual as a starting foundation for the merged platform, and begin to fold in the polish and simplicity of Rdio, as well as its more popular and unique features.

FACILITATION AND PRIORITIZATION

- Popular features unique to Rdio get entered into plan of record for merged client. 'Popular' as defined by usage metrics and user sentiment.
- Tap into a pool of Spotify and Rdio users for testing of merged client experience. Testing and the resulting dialog should be continuous at all phases (visual concepts, functional prototypes, beta clients, etc). This pool of users would have direct access to the product and UX teams.
- Smaller, mechanism-level tweaks to the unified, Spotify-based interface. For instance, on the play screen, Spotify has a "Save to Music" and "More Options" above the controller. In the Rdio interface, these options are displayed upon long press of the album cover, keeping the interface cleaner, but also making those options harder to discover and access. I'd recommend keeping the "More Options" button (a small circle with ellipses) from the Spotify interface for continuity, and removing the "Save to Music". Which, curiously, is currently repeated in the "More Options" menu. Also, reference the sign-in experience of the desktop clients a few slides previous.

COMPONENTS TO CARRY FORWARD

Obviously there is a large overlap of functionality between the two platforms. Some key components stand out as differentiators, important for future growth, or simply as 'cool to have':

Spotify Keepers

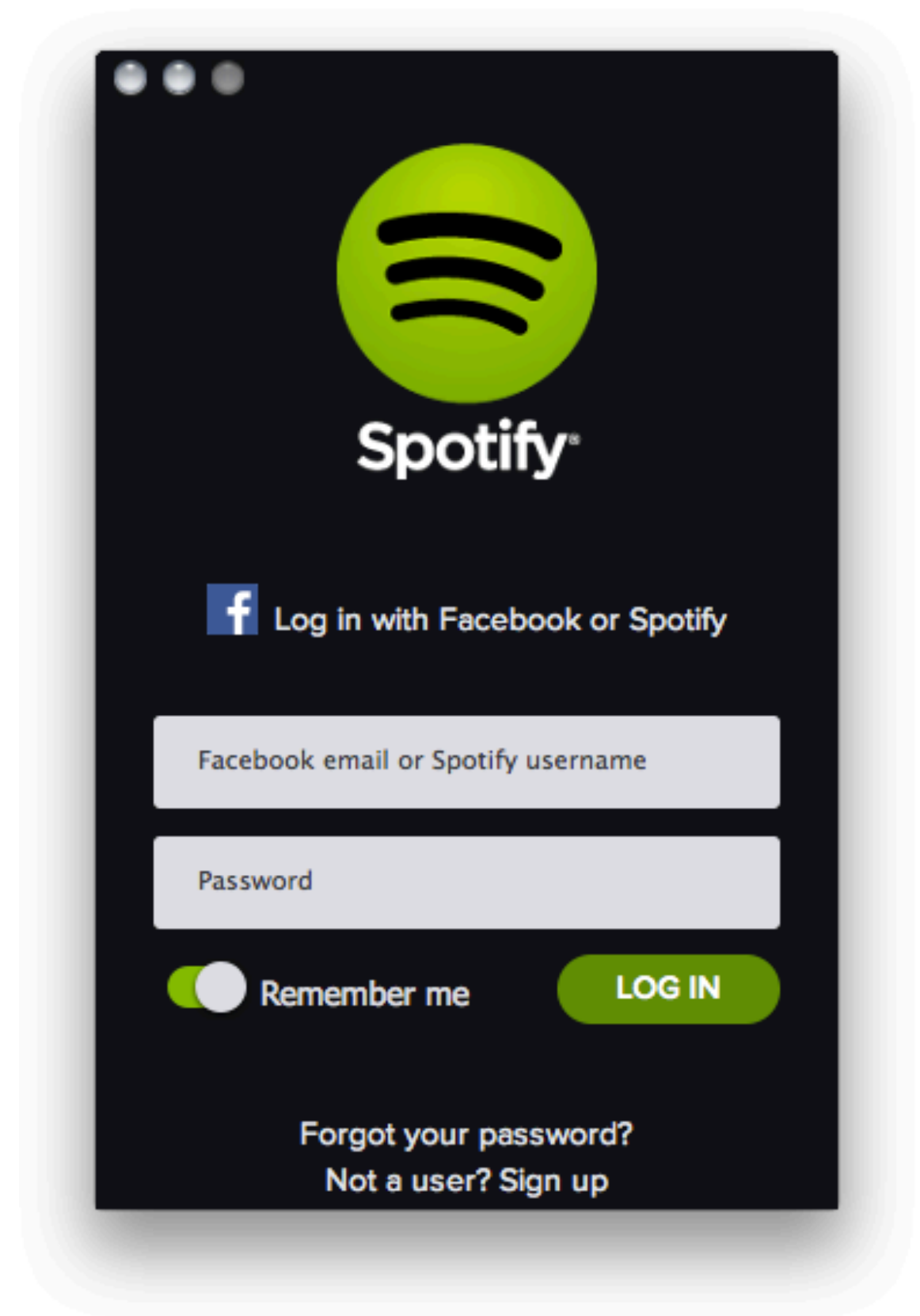
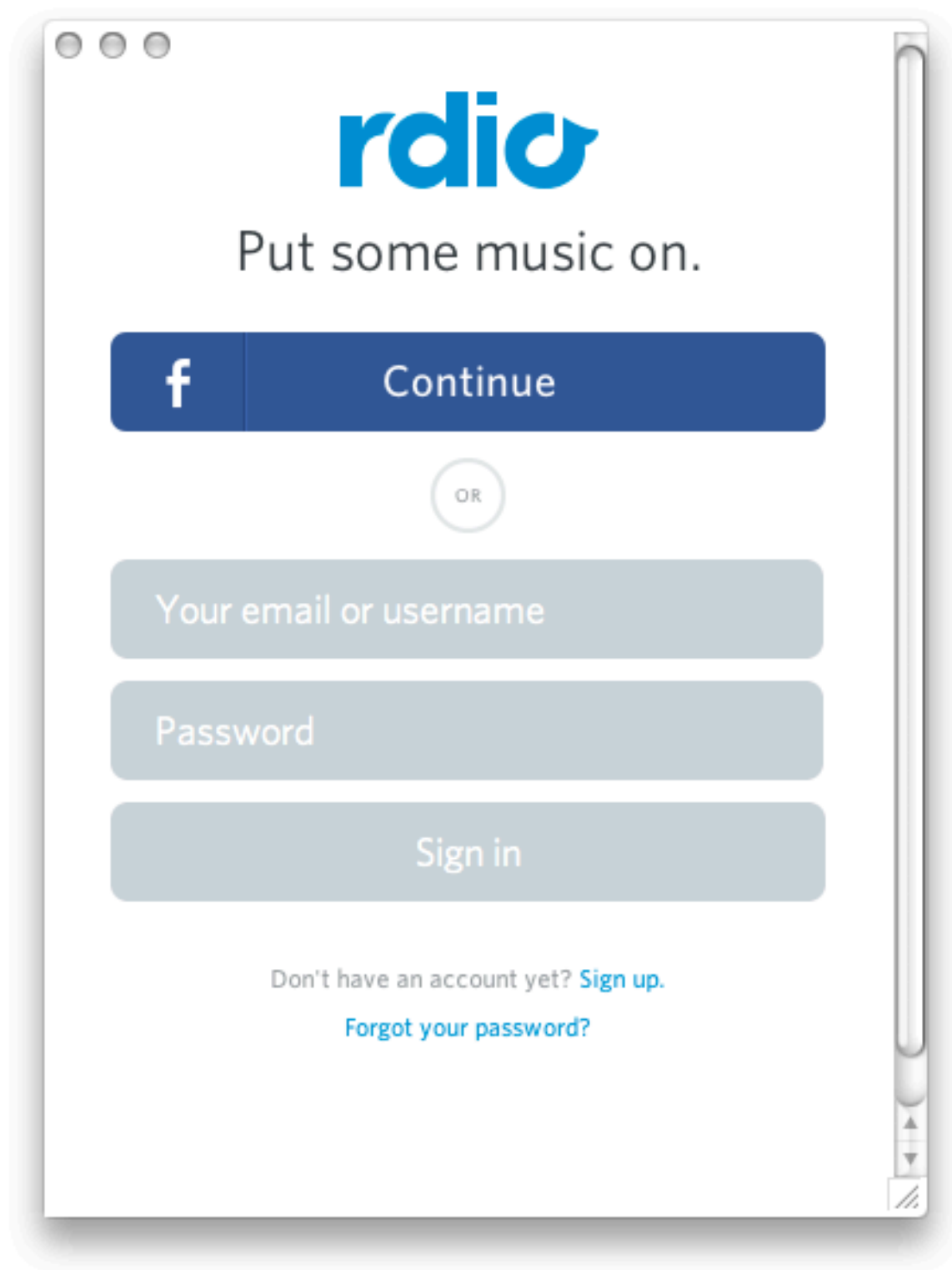
- Messages: for no other reason than while reading the reviews online, people always mentioned Messages as a cool feature. I question the utility of a chat function within a music streaming client, but I can also see chat strengthening sharing, discovery and the emotional connection of the user with the brand.

Rdio Keepers

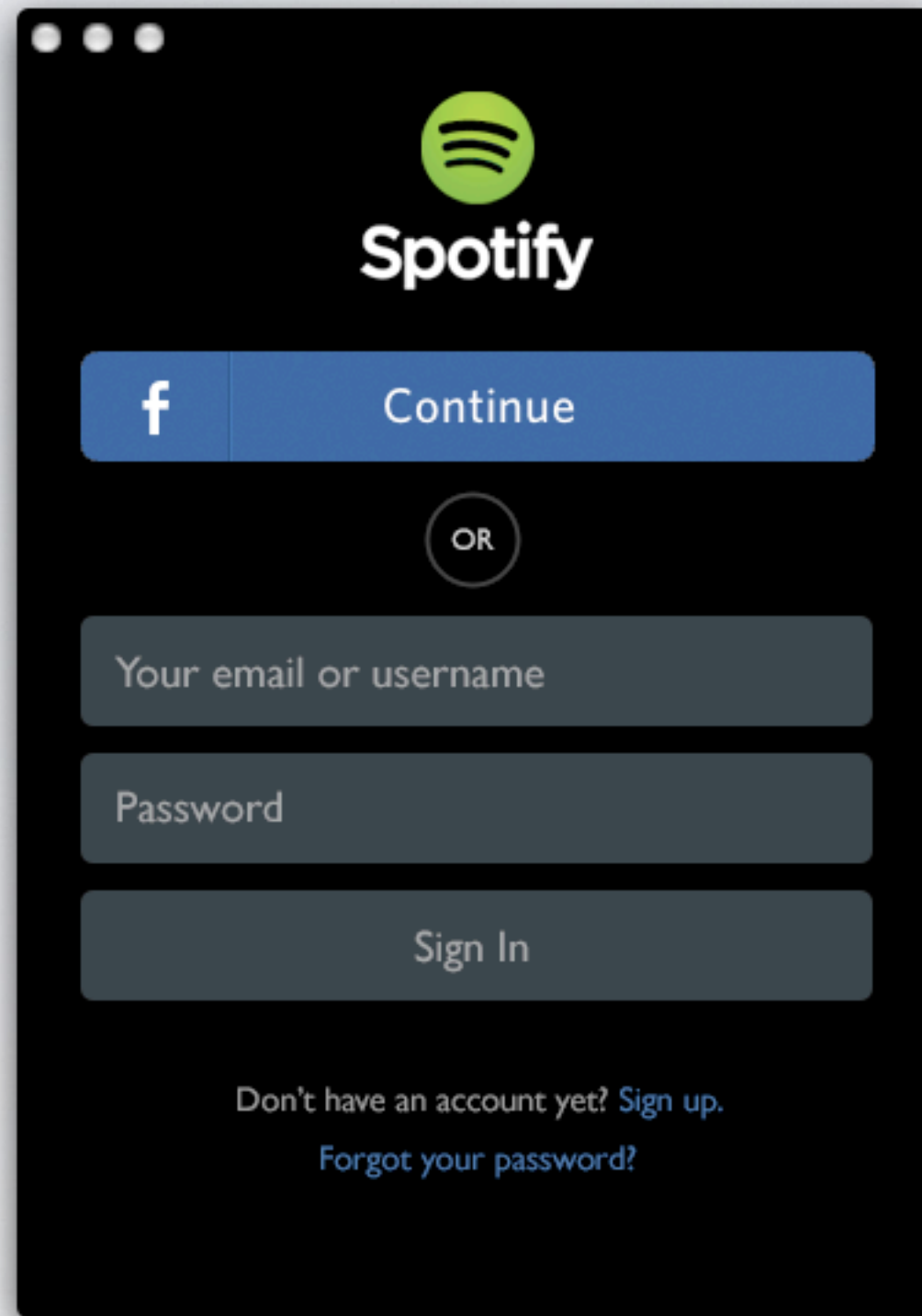
- Recommendations: much like Amazon's 'You may also like' feature, I like how the Rdio Recommendations reference the original track/album that is seeding the recommendation. It's more personal, and gives context and sets expectation for the new music. Spotify has the same concept in "Discover" but the implementation is awkward: the covers are huge and masked within circles which crop text on the cover; the suggestion is couched as a question, and there is a lot of repetition. In short, Spotify's implementation is extremely inefficient.
- Rdio's standard cover display. It strikes a good balance between information density and legibility (covers and related info).
- Playlists: I find Rdio's Playlist scheme and related sharing simpler and more powerful than Spotify's queues. The playlists give users more control and are more obvious, both cognitively (iTunes conditioned) and within the UI (they stack in the left pane on the desktop client, whereas Spotify has their playlists hidden behind album cover art of the current selection in the left pane at default size).
- Remote control: ability to control an instance of a Rdio client from another instance. Seems like it would be useful in a variety of situations. This feature was mentioned prominently in web reviews.
- Listening History: Spotify seems to flush songs from the queue once they finish playing. If a user doesn't save it to a queue or collection, the item is lost. That seems counterintuitive: a queue should be a log of what is not only coming, but what has been played. There is a separate history tab in the desktop client, but it is separated serially from the current queue.
- Rdio's simplicity: harder to quantify because it is so pervasive and a rather nebulous concept. Rdio has a more thoughtful, concentrated and accessible structure to its apps. Hackneyed, but still true: less is more.

Thusly:

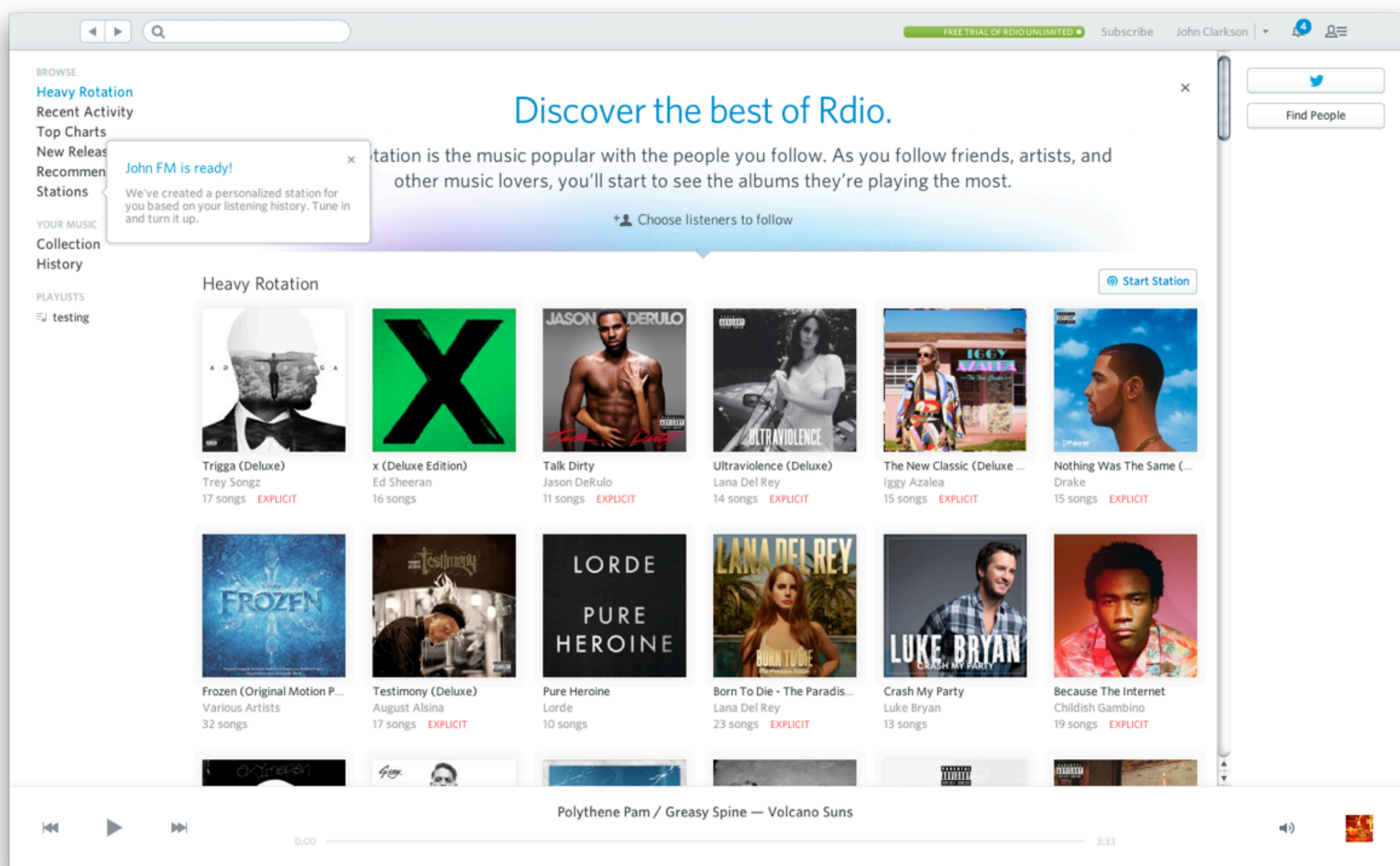
DESIGNS



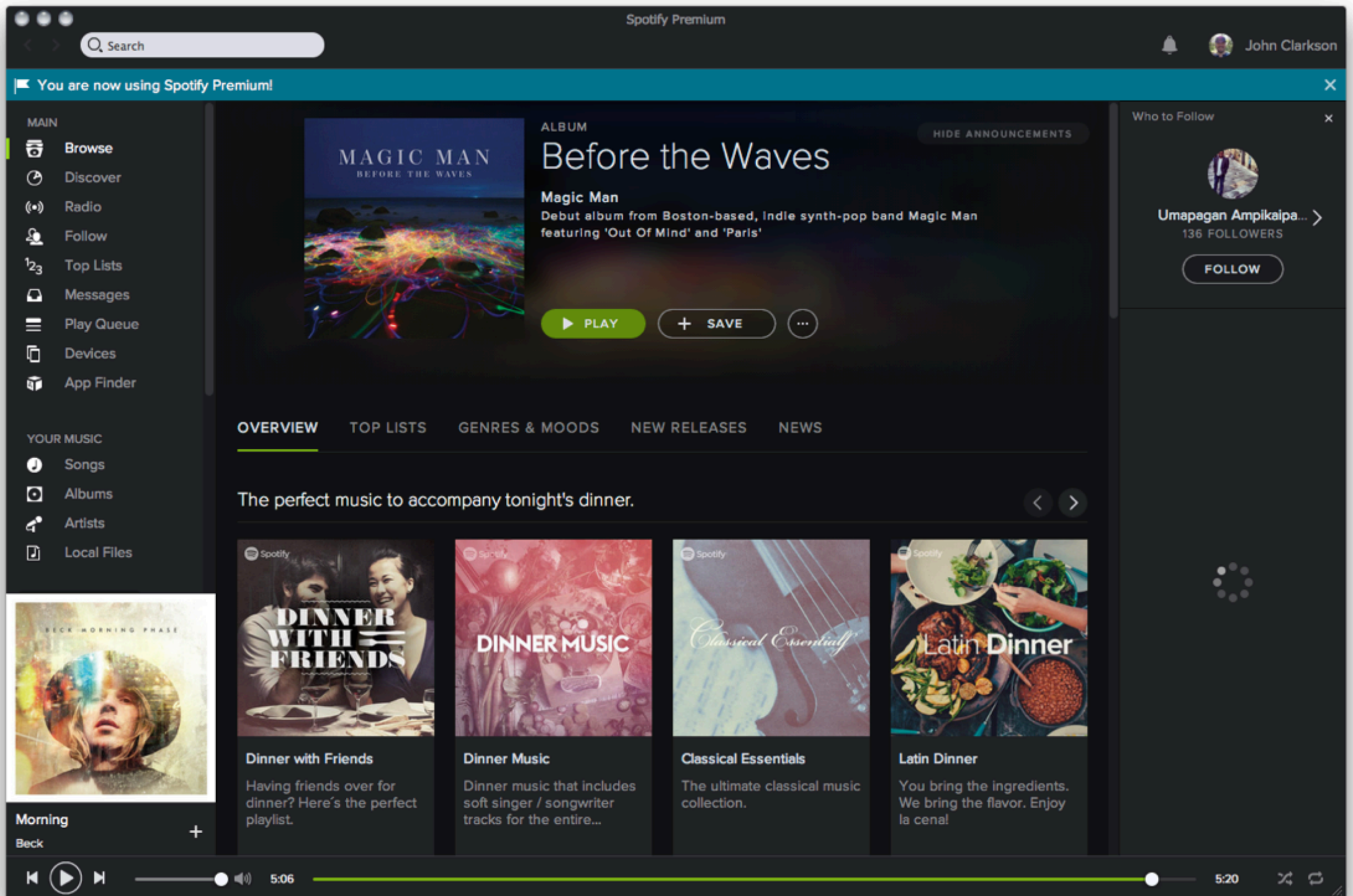
Existing Sign-In Experiences -- Desktop Client

A screenshot of the Spotify desktop client's login window. The window has a dark gray background and a title bar with three white window control buttons (minimize, maximize, close) in the top-left corner. At the top center is the Spotify logo, which consists of a green circle with three white curved lines inside, and the word "Spotify" in white below it. Below the logo is a blue button with a white Facebook 'f' icon on the left and the word "Continue" in white on the right. Underneath this button is a small white circle containing the word "OR". Below the "OR" circle are two dark gray input fields. The first field contains the placeholder text "Your email or username" in a light gray font. The second field contains the placeholder text "Password" in a light gray font. Below these fields is a dark gray button with the text "Sign In" in white. At the bottom of the window, there is a line of text: "Don't have an account yet? Sign up." where "Sign up." is a blue link. Below that is another line of text: "Forgot your password?" which is also a blue link.

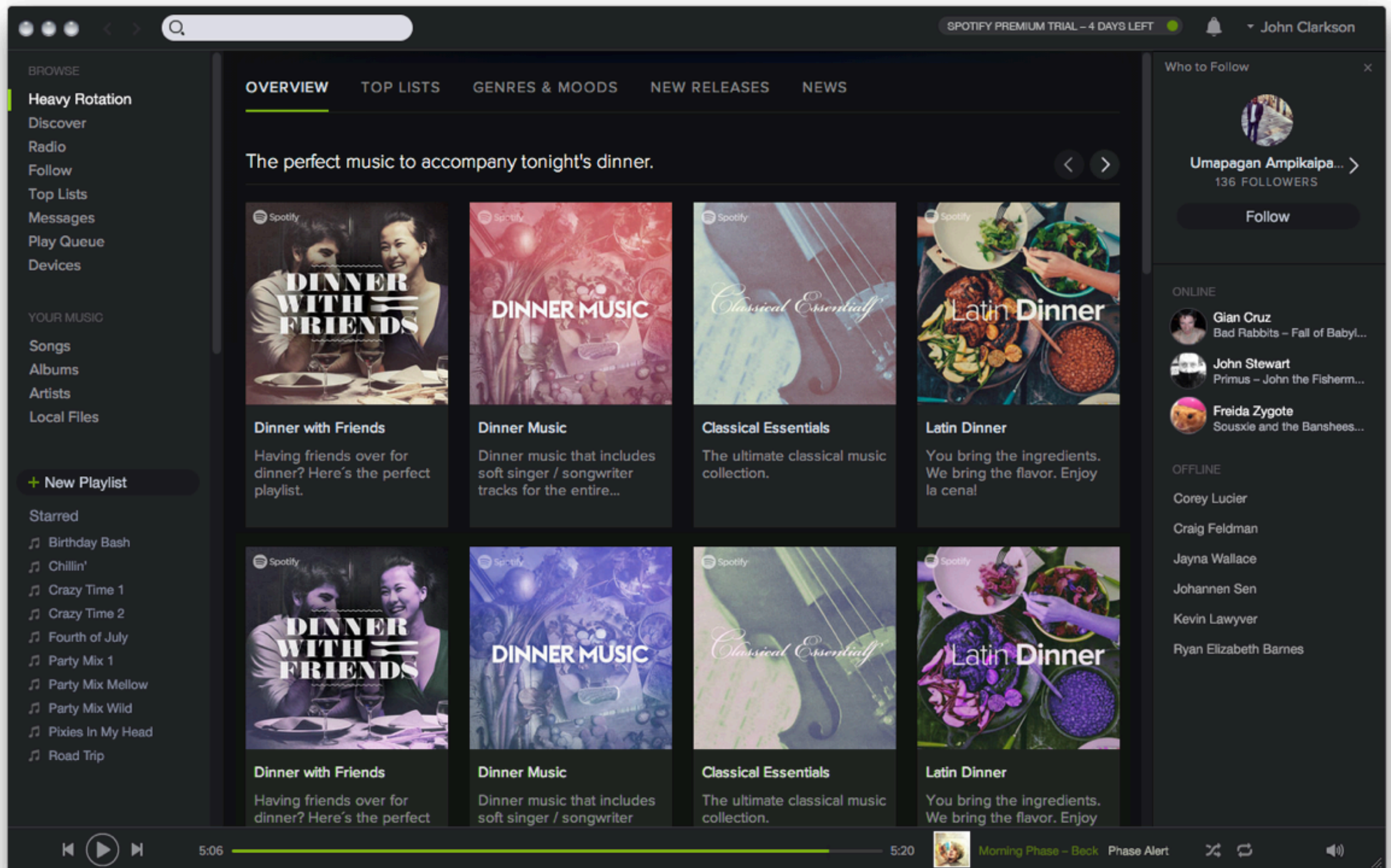
New Sign-In Experience -- Desktop Client



Existing Main Rdio – Desktop Client



Existing Main Spotify – Desktop Client



New Main Experience – Desktop Client

MINUTIAE OR SPOTIFY, WHY?!

Some things to note about Spotify (desktop app):

- Browse has an 'Overview'. Including a summation of all browse methods is redundant to the browse methods one tab away. IMO, this indicates an indecisiveness on the part of product/UX.
- Approximately 30% of the main screen is an 'Announcement', which I assume is a paid advertisement. There are more subtle and effective ways to be incorporating advertising (into the workflow of the app). Also, this is an obstacle that keeps the user from engaging with their music, which is the primary focus of the app.
- The word 'Discover' is not working for me. When I browse or search, I also 'discover' new music. This really is 'Recommendations', since the majority of the section is based on showing suggestions derived from earlier consumption.
- The icons in the left pane add visual noise and largely fail to convey, as visual shorthand, the items they accompany. For instance: the icons for "Activity" and "Follow" are the same. I have no idea what the icon for 'Discover' represents.
- Related to the previous: relying on a record as a symbol for music seems misguided. Not sure how many teens have seen a record, much less know what one is.
- By default, playlists are hidden behind the current album art. This almost seems intentional (the sizing and spacing are perfect to hide the Create Playlist button.) I don't understand why they'd do this.
- The currently playing track's thumb and info is above the playbar in the left rail. This is too separated from the playbar, and breaks the notion of a unified functional area (square, rectangle).
- Why is the track for volume exposed? Why is volume between the track controls and the time bar?
- Why is the control thumb exposed for the time bar?
- The search field is self explanatory. It has a magnifying glass in it. The word 'Search' is not necessary.
- The idea of a designated title bar is not necessary and takes up valuable real estate for very little return.

MISCELLANEOUS CONSIDERATIONS

- Advanced notice to Rdio users about impending merger. Option to download Spotify. Periodic reminders.
- Seamless transition (or as close as possible) from Rdio to Spotify. Existing data should be preserved (playlists, favorites, social graph, etc) so Rdio users start with an engaging experience.
- Special intro experience for previous Rdio users, pointing out new concepts, as well as similarities in the client experience. “Your X button is now called Y!”
- Additional incentives for Rdio converts: free premium for a month. Would get them over the learning curve and comfortable with the new experience at no risk.

SENTIMENT RESEARCH LINKS

<http://www.cultofmac.com/265655/winner-best-music-demand-streaming-service/>

<http://coolmomtech.com/2014/02/spotify-vs-rdio-streaming-music-compare/>

<http://thesweetsetup.com/apps/best-music-streaming-service/>

http://www.maximumpc.com/best_music_streaming_services_roundup2013?page=0,1

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/spotify-vs-rdio-a-complete-comparison/>

http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/03/20/between-rdio-and-spotify-im-with-team-rdio/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0

THANK YOU!