Heuristic Evaluation of [Merge]

1. Problem

Enhance music discovery by leveraging a user's social network. More specifically, users enter into a highly-dependent social network where music discovery is driven by friends' preferences, and the user is expected to share his or her music in turn.

2. Violations Found

1. [H2-7 Flexibility and efficiency of use] [Severity 4] [Found by A, B, C]
   There is very limited functionality in the music playback bar. It is simplified into a single line which is slightly plain. There are also no buttons or controls for common actions such as pause/play, skip, or fast forward. This makes it tedious because the user will always have to listen to every song in its entirety. This makes it difficult for the app to become one of the user's main music listening app. I would recommend implementing some basic buttons and functionality to allow the user to have more control. Perhaps the user can move to a different time in the track by dragging the playback indicator.
2. [H2-10 Help and documentation] [Severity 1] [Found by A]
   It is unclear what the lock icon indicate and what functionality it has. It is not intuitive as to why a song would be locked. Perhaps it means it's private or it's not allowed to share? I would recommend explaining what the lock icon mean when user hovers over it.
3. [H2-10 Help and documentation] [Severity 2] [Found by A]
   At first glance, the user may not know the purpose of the app and how to use it. Some of the controls are unintuitive and different from standard which is fine but it may be difficult for new users to understand. I would recommend implementing a brief intro and tutorial or a help button to outline some of the main functions.
4. [H2-4 Consistency and standards] [Severity 2] [Found by A]
   Intuitively, there would be a home or back button to return to the previous screen. Merge uses swipe down to return which is interesting but not necessarily the first thing that comes to mind. In addition, the other screen do not use the same down swiping mechanic to return to the current song. I would recommend either standardizing the method of returning to the current song or have a more explicit method such as a home button or a menu bar.
5. [H2-4 Consistency and standards] [Severity 1] [Found by A, B]
   Search is usually implemented at the top of a screen, most notably with an icon in the top right corner. This is the standard used nowadays by both Android and Apple. Perhaps making the icon more noticeable or following the standard would make it easier for users to understand how to search.
6. [H2-7 Flexibility and efficiency of use] [Severity 4] [Found by A]
   When using the app, the user is likely to want to browse multiple recommended songs quickly to see which ones they like. Once they click into a song to listen to it, however, it is difficult to get to the next song. They would have to click the slide out menu, click inbox, and

then click another song. To streamline this process, it would be better if the user could swipe or have a next button to get to the next song.

7. [H2-3 User control and freedom] [Severity 3] [Found by A]
   The user profile is lacking in functionality. It only displays the number of followers, followees, and recently starred song. There should be functions to return to the current song and/or see friends. Perhaps adding more functions for users to quickly access the most common tasks such as listening to music and discovering users.

8. [H2-10 Help and documentation, H2-3 user control and freedom] [Severity 2] [Found by A, C]
   The user is unsure whether searching is for current friends or new friends. Also, when there are a lot of users that pop up, it may be difficult to drag a user into the center to share song. On the other hand, it may also be easy to accidentally share it to the wrong person. Perhaps target a specific "share" space for users to drag people into. Also adding help text to explain how the search works would be helpful.

9. [H2-8 Aesthetic and minimalist design] [Severity 2] [Found by A]
   The app may seem like a lot of other music browsing apps out there but Merge has some value propositions that are very unique and interesting. It would be more effective if it made its sharing and discovery features more prominent so that users would understand the primary purpose of the app. Make primary features stand out more using colors, large sizes, etc.

10. [H2-2. Match between system and the real world][Severity 2][Found by B]
    The word "Inbox" on the side bar is not very descriptive to the user. By convention the word "Inbox" is used for mail clients and may be confusing to the user when they see that wording. Something like "Recommendations" should be more helpful.

11. [H2-4. Consistency and standards] [Severity 1] [Found by B]
    Under "Inbox," the artist name and the song name are not aligned properly. It looks like the song name is centered, but the artist name is definitely not; there is a lack of alignment consistency. Make sure both the artist and song name are both center-aligned.

12. [H2-1. Visibility of system status] [Severity 2] [Found by B]
    While a song is playing, the horizontal scrubber does not do a good job of describing where in the song you happen to be in. It makes the system status less visible, since we want to inform users of the timing of a song. Add time elapsed labels on the scrubber.

13. [H2-2. Match between system and the real world] [Severity 1] [Found by B]
    While playing a particular song, it is not immediately clear what the star on the right side does. The most logical is that it serves the "favorite" function, but the user may be still confused about this UI choice. Replace the star with a heart shape, which seems to be more indicative of a "favorite," or have a 5-star rating system instead of 1 favorite option.

14. [H2-3. User control and freedom] [Severity 2] [Found by B]
    After we reach the screen that the song was playing, there is no back button functionality to get back to the previous screen. It doesn't allow the user to backtrace to the previous page if he or she chose an incorrect song by accident. Add a back button on the top left to go back to the previous screen.

15. [H2-6. Recognition rather than recall] [Severity 3] [Found by B]
Currently, you can only see 4 friends on the bottom screen when you are sharing a song. This causes a "recognition rather than recall" heuristic error because now you are forced to recall all the names of your friends you want to share the song with and individually search them up. Instead, add in a friend selection page that has all your friends listed in alphabetical order so that all the information is on one page.

16. [H2-4. Consistency and standards] [Severity 1] [Found by B]
This may be something that was overlooked in the prototype, but there is no link between your picture (while you're playing a song) and your profile. It makes sense to stay consistent and if icons of your friends lead to you to their profile, your picture should lead to yours as well. Link up your picture and your profile.

17. [H2-4. Consistency and standards] [Severity 3] [Found by B]
The side bar in general seems very empty. By platform conventions, apps usually use a side bar only when they can't fit all their options in any other format. Since you only have 3 modes (profile, inbox, now playing), you may want to experiment with how a tab bar will look.

18. [H2-6 Recognition Rather than Recall] [Severity 3] [Found by C]
There are too many operations that can be performed on the friends below the song. The fact that I can drag/scroll, tap to see profile, or hold and drag to send song presents too many operations that can be performed on the same items. Instead, remove one of those functionalities and embed it elsewhere (probably the view profile option).

19. [H2-6 Recognition Rather than Recall] [Severity 2] [Found by C]
It is unclear why Aileen is at the top of the screen. Am I Aileen? Or is she the artist? The last page made it clear that she was the recommender, but to make it obvious here as well, provide a bit more information, like "Sent from Aileen."

20. [H2-8 Aesthetic and Minimalist Design] [Severity 1] [Found by C]
It is very hard to see the names of the songs. Perhaps this is a work in progress that was not addressed in this prototype, but just wanted to make sure that it gets acknowledged. Black text on a multi-background is not read-able. Either do white letters with dark outline, or put a transparent background in the text box.

21. [H2-2 Match Between System and Real World] [Severity 2] [Found by C]
It seems that the tracks are supposed to be represented by CD cases. However, they do not have the name of the artist on them, which is a crucial piece of information when it comes to perusing music. If you stick with the CD analogy, then the artist would be on the spine of the CD. In this case, having it listed under the title of the song might be sufficient.

22. [H2-2 Match Between System and Real World] [Severity 3] [Found by C]
It seems I can only access this screen when viewing a specific song. It does not make sense that I can only "friend" people from the Playing Song screen, I feel that I should be able to associate with people independent of specific songs. Thus, it would help to have a separate friend-finding screen accessible from Home.

23. [H2-10 Help and Documentation] [Severity 3] [Found by C]
I'm confused by the difference between "Following" someone and being their "friend." What does one status give me that the other doesn't? Perhaps there are yet-to-be-implemented features that will make this distinction more clear. Otherwise, I would suggest unifying these into one type of relationship that you can have with a fellow user.

3. Summary of Violations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
[H2-1: Visibility of Status]			1			1
[H2-2: Match Sys & World]		1	2	1		4
[H2-3: User Control]			2			2
[H2-4: Consistency]	1	2	1	1		5
[H2-5: Error Prevention]						0
[H2-6: Recognition not Recall]			1	2		3
[H2-7: Efficiency of Use]				1	2	3
[H2-8: Minimalist Design]	1		1			2
[H2-9: Help Users with Errors]						0
[H2-10: Documentation]		1	2	1		4
Total Violations by Severity	**2**	**4**	**10**	**6**	**2**	**24**

4 Evaluation Statistics

severity\evaluator		evaluator A	evaluator B	evaluator C
level 0		0	0	0
level 1		3	4	1
level 2		4	3	3
level 3		1	2	3

level 4		2	1		1
total (levels 3 & 4)		3	3		4
total (all levels)		10	10		10
evaluator # **Ex. C**	**# problems** **found** **Ex. 7**		**# problems remaining &** **problem IDs** **Ex: 5 (1, 7, 11, 13, 17)**		
A	10		7		
B	10		7		
C	8		6		

Right right-click on the chart and select "Edit Data…"