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## Interview with Michelle Liu

By [Alexandra Yu](#) | Feb 7, 2021

Michelle Liu, a first-year in information systems at Carnegie Mellon, garnered a million users within the first 24 hours of the launch of her web application, [Receiptify](#). The application produces receipts of your most listened-to songs for the past month, past six months, or past year, and it is an aesthetic way to keep track of your music listening habits.

I spoke with Michelle a bit about her process and inspiration for Receiptify and her other projects.

### How did Receiptify take shape? How long did it take and what was the overall process like?

ML: "I'd had the idea for Receiptify for a while after seeing this Instagram page called @albumreceipts, where albums are formatted in a receipt-like format, and thought it would be really cool if people could make their own, while also gaining some insights into their unique Spotify listening histories. For a club application, I had to complete a 'creative challenge,' where I had to code or design a web application, so I thought it was the perfect opportunity to make an idea into an actual website. I started at around 8 am the morning before it was due and finished it at around 10 pm, with a few food and TikTok breaks in between. It was a bit difficult initially, as the Spotify API was a little confusing to navigate at first, but after I figured out how to authenticate users and pull listening history, the rest flowed pretty smoothly!"

### When and why did you start creating apps? What's your favorite part of the process?

ML: "I'd been coding for a while through high school classes and had made a few static HTML/CSS websites, but when the pandemic hit I was looking for something to do in my spare time and decided to take some online web app development courses where I really learned a lot of practical skills for creating apps! I think my favorite part of the process is being able to be creative and bring my ideas into real life through code."

### Do you have a particular creative process across your work or does it vary from project to project?

ML: "When I get an idea, I usually begin by taking out my notebook and just jotting down any feature ideas that come to mind, then I start creating preliminary sketches of what I want the app to look like. After I've fleshed out the idea, I begin researching the tech stack I'll need to develop it and then get to work coding!"

### How did you react when you found out a million people were using your Receiptify plug-in in the first 24 hours?

ML: "I was really surprised! I'd tweeted the link out to my 20 or so Twitter followers the night I finished making it, not thinking anything would come of it, but I woke up to thousands of retweets and a bunch of people on my feed posting their receipts. It was definitely really cool to see and I've met a lot of awesome people through this experience."

### I noticed you have over 100 Spotify playlists. What do you look for when creating playlists? What are you currently listening to?

ML: "I don't really look for anything in particular — I have monthly playlists where I just add whatever music I'm vibing with at the time, as well as some other random playlists that fit whatever mood I'm in. I'm currently really obsessed with Arlo Parks' new record, *Collapsed in Sunbeams*, and I've also been listening to a lot of Mac Miller and Kate Bush recently. Olivia Rodrigo's new song 'drivers license' has been on repeat too!"

### Are there any apps you love that you think are underrated/not talked about enough?

ML: "I'm not sure if it's still considered 'underrated' since it's been getting a lot of attention very recently, but Notion has been a huge lifesaver for me for the past year! It's really useful for planning out my day and keeping track of my to-do's, but I think its note-taking utilities are really useful and under-utilized."

### What artists, app developers, or other creators are you inspired by?

ML: "I'm really fascinated by interactive and computational art, so I find Golan Levin and Lingdong Huang's projects super fascinating. I also think Google Creative Labs has some really interesting and inspiring projects!"

### Are you working on any new projects we should keep an eye out for?

ML: "I am currently working on an Apple Music version of Receiptify! It's not fully functional yet and doesn't work on mobile devices as of now, but there is a beta version of it out now. I also had an idea for another Spotify project, but it's definitely still very much in progress. Besides my own personal projects, I'm also working on a few cool things with the TEDxCMU Innovation Team that will be out soon, which is really exciting!"