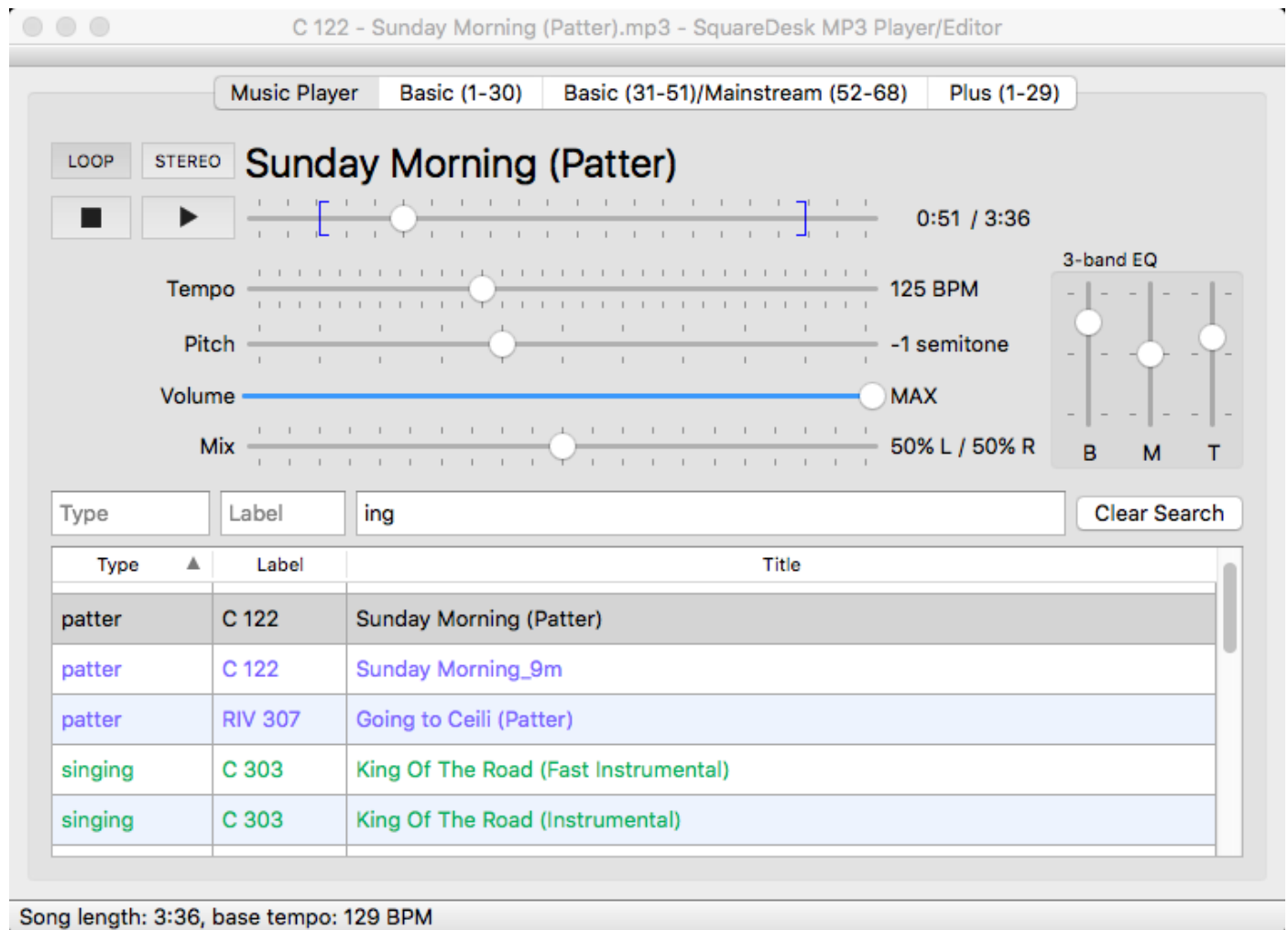


Quick Introduction to SquareDeskPlayer 0.5.0

Mike Pogue, 2016/10/30



Overview:



SquareDeskPlayer is the first version of SquareDesk, a fully-featured music player and lyrics editor, designed for square dance callers and round dance cuers. SquareDeskPlayer contains a powerful MP3 player with independent pitch and speed controls, a quick-search facility, and a 3-band equalizer. It will eventually be merged with a separate MP3 Lyrics Editor I have written, which will provide singing call lyrics (and round dance cues) editing, karaoke-like dynamic highlighting, and more. Once I reach the V1.0 milestone, the code will be released as Open Source under a suitable license, so that others can develop new features as well. If you would like access to the source code before then, please let me know!

I'm looking for general comments, specific comments, suggestions, and especially bug reports. Any feedback you can provide would be helpful!

Prerequisites:

Mac OS X 10.7 (untested)	Lion (initial release: July 2011)
Mac OS X 10.8 (untested)	Mountain Lion (initial release: July 2012)
Mac OS X 10.9 (untested)	Mavericks (initial release: October 2013)
Mac OS X 10.10 (untested)	Yosemite (initial release: October 2014)
Mac OS X 10.11 (tested)	El Capitan (initial release: September 2015)
Mac OS X 10.12.1 (tested)	Sierra (initial release: October 2016)

Getting started (Mac OS X):

- 1) Install SquareDeskPlayer by double-clicking on the DMG file, and dragging the SquareDeskPlayer icon to the Applications icon. If you ever need to uninstall, just drag SquareDeskPlayer from your Applications folder to the Trash.
- 2) Although you can open individual MP3 files using  -O, it's a lot easier to choose music from the list in the bottom pane. Type  -, (Command-comma), and set a Music Directory path for your music (SquareDeskPlayer will remember your choice here). In that Music Directory, create subdirectories for each type of music. It would also be a good idea to create a subdirectory called "playlists", to hold the new CSV/M3U playlist files.

You can use any folder names you prefer, but the names "patter", "singing", "singing_called", and "xtras" are special, and will be colored in the music selection pane. Beat Per Minute (BPM) detection is turned off for songs in the "xtras" folder, and Loop defaults to ON for songs in the "patter" folder.

- 3) Music filenames should look like this: "RR 123 – Lovin' You.mp3", where RR123 is the label and record number, and "Lovin' You" is the name of the song. If you follow this naming convention, and most of the record labels are using this convention (or something close to it), the music selection pane will let you sort by individual fields.
- 4) Type something into the Label, Type, or Title fields to search your music titles for matches. Anything containing the string you type in will remain in the music selection pane. Note that the search fields work together – you'll only see songs where there is a match for all of the fields that are not blank. Click Clear Search to go back to showing all your music.
- 5) Clicking on "Type", "Label", or "Title" in the header row in the song table will sort by that column.
- 6) Double-click on a music file to load it. When loaded, the title of the song (without the Label part) will appear above the time bar. Note that double-clicking will not start playback immediately (unless you want it to, see the Autostart Playback feature below).
- 7) You can then play/pause the music, and change tempo and pitch and volume independently. There's also a 3-band Equalizer (EQ) to balance the bass, midrange, and treble of your music. The Mix slider (aka "Balance") is designed for balancing music/cues in round dances, where music is on the L channel, and cues are on the R channel.
- 8) Hold down the Control key and click on a song, then select "Reveal in Finder" to open the folder containing that song.
- 9) Most functions are also found in the pull-down menus at the top. In addition, there are

keyboard shortcuts for most common operations (see the Keyboard Shortcuts section below).

10) There are two new Experimental features that are disabled by default:

1. **Timers tab:** provides simple count-up and count-down timers.
2. **Pitch/Tempo columns in the song view.** SquareDeskPlayer now keeps track of the Pitch and Tempo settings for each song within a session. Enable this feature to be able to see these settings. Note: if you Quit SquareDeskPlayer, these settings will be lost, unless you have numbered the songs and saved them as a playlist (see the Playlist item below).

11) Simple Playlists are now supported:

1. A Playlist is an ordered list of songs, with saved Pitch and Tempo settings for each.
2. You can put Playlists anywhere you like on your hard drive, but remember that they contain the full pathname to your songs. If you move the songs themselves, your current playlists will not find them.
3. To add an item to a Playlist, add a number to a song in the “#” column. You'll need to click on the blank area, and then click again a few seconds later (it works just like you change a filename in the Finder). Songs will be written to the Playlist in “#” order.
4. You could put the same number on more than one song, but when that Playlist loads again, the order might not be the same. It's more predictable to give each song in the Playlist a unique number.
5. Click on the >>| button to go to the next song in the song list. Click on the |<< button to go to the previous song in the song list.
6. Select Playlists > Clear Playlist to clear all the Playlist numbers. The Tempo and Pitch you've selected in the current session are not affected.
7. Hint: You could setup a playlist for each Club you call for.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions):

Q1. What does the LOOP button do?

A1. If LOOP is on, the playback head will automatically jump from the 90% point back to the 10% point. Patter records default to turning LOOP on, so you don't have to worry about running out of patter music. You should make sure it's OFF for singing calls.

Q2. What does the STEREO/MONO button do?

A2. For those callers with stereo speaker setups, you'll want to stick to Stereo mode. If you have only one speaker, you probably want audio from both L and R channels to play on that speaker. To do this, choose MONO mode, or select Force Mono from the menu.

Q3. What is 3-band EQ?

A3. SquareDeskPlayer provides 3 bands of equalization: B (Bass), M (Midrange), and T (Treble). Adjust these to your taste.

Q4. What does the Autostart Playback menu item do?

A4. If you enable this feature, double clicking on a song will load it AND it will start playing immediately. SquareDeskPlayer will remember your preference for this feature.

Q5. What's coming in the future?

A5. A Lyrics editor/player for singing calls will be merged into a future version of SquareDeskPlayer (right now, the Lyrics Editor is a separate application). I'd also like to get a simple Tip Timer in there. I'll probably add some simple playlist features.

I'm intentionally not adding a whole lot of features. My philosophy is to keep it simple, and cover 90% of the what you want to do with 10% of the functions. I think you'll find that SquareDeskPlayer is a lot smaller, simpler, and easier-to-use than the other players out there. And, it runs natively on Mac OS X (a PC version is available now, as well).

Q5. Have you tested SquareDeskPlayer on all versions of Mac OS X?

A5. No. It seems to work fine on 10.12 (MacOS Sierra). Feedback on other versions would be appreciated!

Q6. What Playlist formats does SquareDeskPlayer use?

A6. SquareDeskPlayer supports both M3U (MP3 playlist) and CSV (Comma Separated Values) formats. Only the CSV format supports saving tempo and pitch information. Pathnames are full, absolute pathnames, so you can move around the playlists, but you can't move around your music. If you do move your music, you can use a text editor to manually edit your M3U/CSV playlists, or you can also use Open Office or Excel to edit your CSV playlists.

Q7. What's CSV?

A7. CSV is an industry standard format used for spreadsheets. It consists of a header line that describes the column names, and one row for each record. Currently, there are exactly three fields per row:

- 1) Absolute pathname to the music file (must be surrounded by double quotes)
- 2) Pitch change to apply (semitones from no change, 0 = no change; no double quotes)
- 3) Tempo change (0 = no change, <number> = BPM, <number>% = percentage of the original tempo, e.g. 105%, no double quotes)

Keyboard shortcuts:

// function	MAC	PC

// FILE MENU		
// open	Cmd-O	Ctrl-O, Alt-F-O
// save	Cmd-S	Ctrl-S, Alt-F-S
// save as	Shift-Cmd-S	Alt-F-A
// quit	Cmd-Q	Ctrl-F4, Alt-F-E
//		
// MUSIC MENU		
// play/pause	space	space, Alt-M-P
// rewind/stop	S, ESC, END, Cmd-.	S, ESC, END, Alt-M-S, Ctrl-.
//		
// rewind/play (playing)	HOME, . (while playing)	HOME, . (while playing)
// skip/back 5 sec	Cmd-RIGHT/LEFT, RIGHT/LEFT	Ctrl-RIGHT/LEFT, RIGHT/LEFT, Alt-M-A/Alt-M-B
//		
// volume up/down	Cmd-UP/DOWN, UP/DOWN	Ctrl-UP/DOWN, UP/DOWN
// mute	Cmd-M, M	Ctrl-M, M
// go faster	Cmd-+, +, =	Ctrl-+, +, =
// go slower	Cmd--, -	Ctrl--, -
// force mono		Alt-M-F
// clear search	Cmd-/	Alt-M-S
// pitch up	Cmd-U, U	Ctrl-U, U, Alt-M-U
// pitch down	Cmd-D, D	Ctrl-D, D, Alt-M-D
//		
// Load Playlist	Cmd-E	

NOTE: In many cases, the  key is optional on Mac OS X.

Bugs fixed/features added in version 0.5.0:

- Playlist feature added, M3U and CSV formats.
- Continuous Play feature added.
- Experimental feature: "Enable Timers tab" added.
- Song timer numbers don't jiggle anymore.
- Resizing columns now resizes their respective search fields.
- Pitch and Tempo are remembered within the current session. You can view the current values by turning on the Experimental feature: "Enable Pitch and Tempo columns in song list"
- Reveal in Finder feature (MacOS only) added.
- Double clicking on the Tempo slider now restores the original tempo (which might have come from a Playlist). Other sliders already do double-click correctly.
- Tempo indicator now shows BPM (if know) and percentage relative to base (e.g. "127BPM (105%)")
- Clear Search now doesn't de-select the current row in the song table
- Tab now cycles between the search fields.
- BPM detection is a bit more robust now. In cases where BPM doesn't seem reasonable, we default to percentage (e.g. "100%")
- Now works on MacOS Sierra with the latest tools from Apple.
- Should compile on Linux now.
- Clicking on Title to sort by song title no longer messes up search fields.
- Added tick marks to the EQ sliders

- Pitch, Volume, EQ, and Mix can be changed before a song is loaded now.
- “=” key is now allowed for Pitch Up (no need to hold down the SHIFT key now).
- Label and Label # fields have been combined for simplicity
- Left/right arrows now work when a song is not playing
- Right arrow no longer allows you to go off the right hand end of the song

Known bugs in version 0.5.0:

Mono mode doesn't work correctly with MIX. The Mix should be before the conversion to mono, but right now it's after. Rounds with cues on one channel will not work properly in Mono mode.

Clear Search sometimes changes the order of songs in the song list.

Moving the column line just to the right of the “#” column doesn't change the widths perfectly, due to a bug in the underlying framework. This is particularly noticeable on Windows.

Cmd-K highlights the next row, but crashes the app.

NL is allowed in search fields, which makes the text appear to go away (hit DELETE to get rid of that pesky NL).

There are still a couple more bugs in there, I'm sure.... If you find any, please report them!

For comments and bug reports, please send email to:

squaredesk@zenstarstudio.com