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Good and Bad Design

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The Good


∴ Product Chart (<https://www.productchart.com>)




PRODUCTCHART

INTERACTIVE PRODUCT COMPARISON CHARTS


A new way to discover products. Each chart gives you an easy to grasp overview of what is available on the market, and provides the tools to find the product that is perfect for you. Choose a category and try it out:




Smartphones




Laptops




Tablets




Monitors




Cameras



3D Printers



Solid State Drives



Flash Drives

"I haven't seen a better way to narrow down a gadget search than these charts"

GIZMODO

"An awesome way to search for your next computer"

GEEK

"The Best Way To Find The Perfect Laptop For You"

BUSINESS INSIDER

Specials:

Touch Screen Laptops

Laptops with Matte Screens

Smartphones with Removable Battery

HDR Monitors

The Similar Phone Finder

International:

Product Chart USA

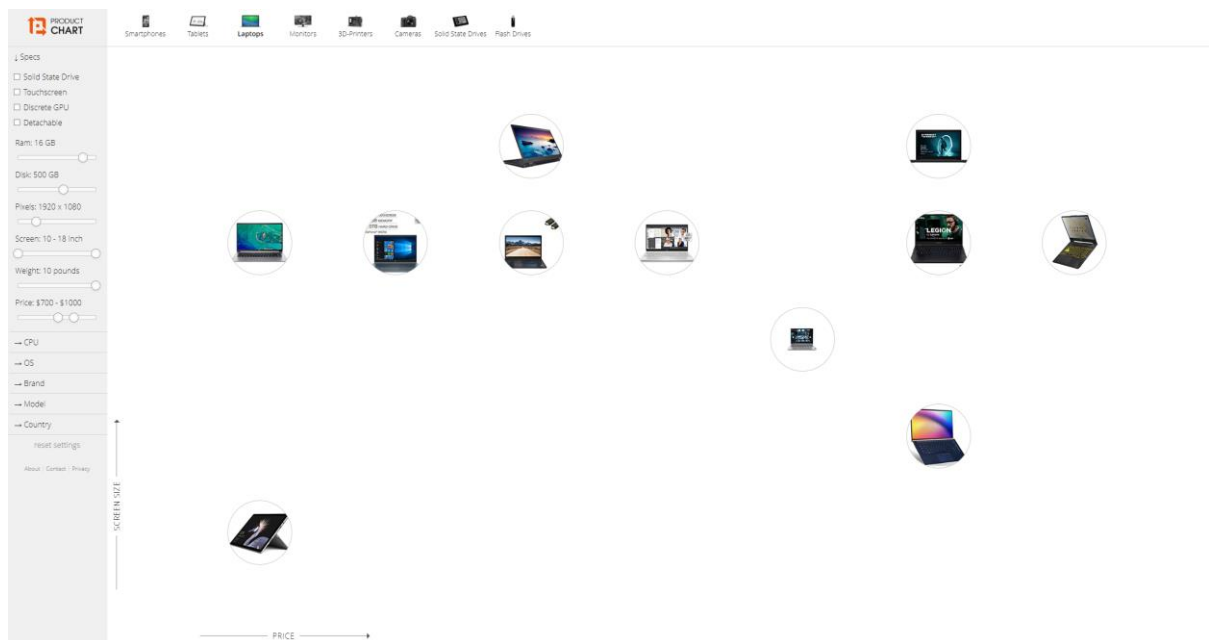
Product Chart UK

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Product chart allows users to discover products that fit certain specifications quickly and easily. For this assignment, the focus will be placed on the discovery of laptops.



Above is the interface for laptop discovery. On the left side of the page there is a menu that allows users to specify a wide variety of different characteristics they would like their laptop to have. As more restrictions are imposed, the number of potential laptops displayed in the center of the page decreases, as shown below.



As the possible choices are narrowed down, it becomes much simpler for the user to choose a laptop of their liking.

The menu is minimalistic and makes use of tasteful input options (checkboxes for items that should be included or not, text boxes to specify computer models, sliders for items that require a specific range (price) or that need to have at least / at most a given value (for instance: at least 16gb of RAM ; at most 10 pounds of weight)).

However, the same cannot be said for the laptop display itself. Initially, it might be a bit overwhelming to see so many choices. Perhaps it would more sensible to display only the most popular options when there are just too many potential laptops to choose from, while allowing the user to see all the suggested options if they choose to do so. This approach would be much easier on the eyes, and would most likely further facilitate the user's choice. With that being said, since the number of shown products decreases quite a lot just by specifying a couple of parameters, this is not a critical oversight by any means.

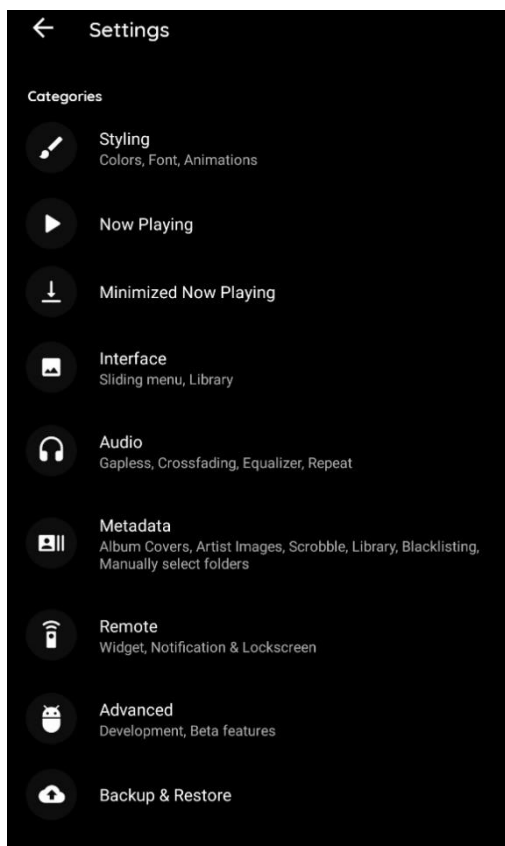
All in all, the interface succeeds in achieving its goal, which is to help users choose the right product for them in an efficient and intuitive manner. The easy to use and well constructed menu allows for a precise yet uncomplicated specification of several components, while the product display readily shows the user all the available options given their specifications.

The Bad

∴ BlackPlayer EX's Settings Menu

(<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.kodarkoop.erativet.blackplayerex>)

BlackPlayer EX is a music player available for Android devices. We will be focusing on the app's settings menu, which is a great example of just how frustrating and confusing a menu can get.

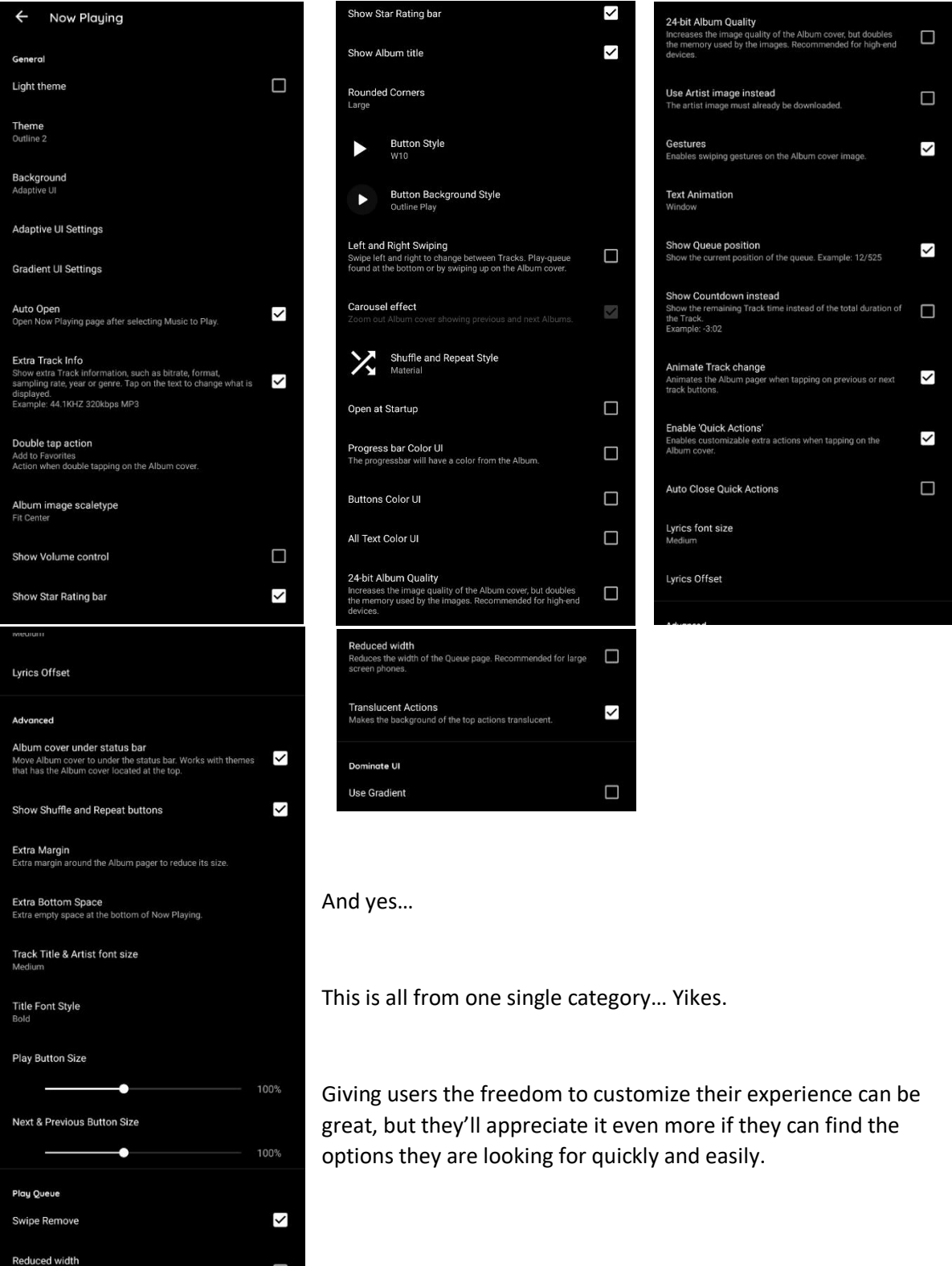


The options themselves are organised into different categories, which on paper is by no means a bad idea.

Unfortunately, the line between some of these options seems somewhat blurry at best, since you will find options inside categories that don't really seem like they belong there.

Moreover, the lack of any search function whatsoever makes it an absolute nightmare to find what you're looking for, even if you're in the right category.

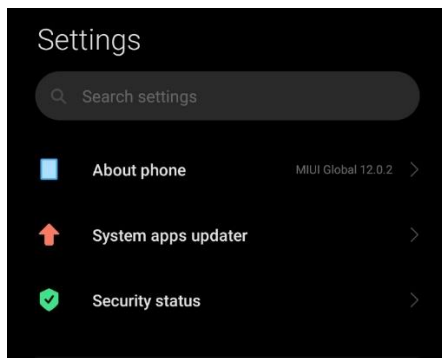
Here is what you can find inside the ‘Now Playing’ category (just to showcase a part of the madness):



And yes...

This is all from one single category... Yikes.

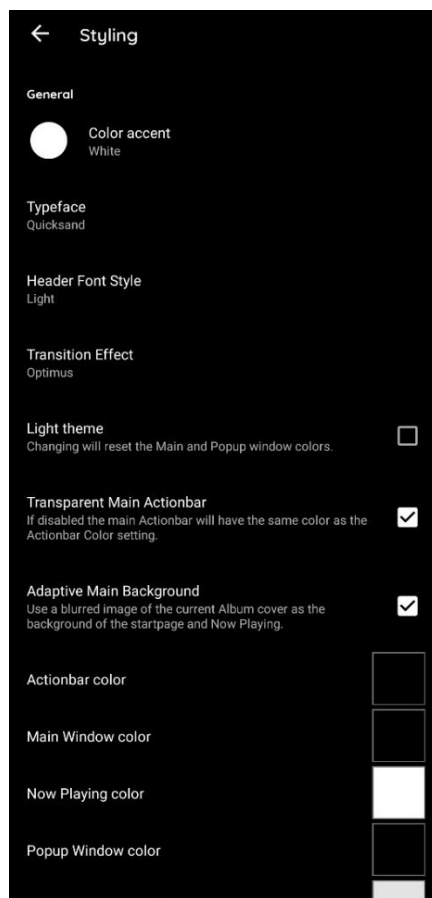
Giving users the freedom to customize their experience can be great, but they'll appreciate it even more if they can find the options they are looking for quickly and easily.



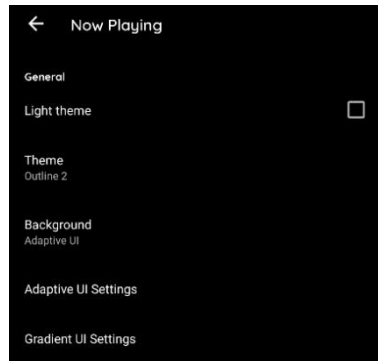
Taking Android's settings menu as an example, even though they too have an option-packed menu, they provide a search bar which allows users to quickly find what they need without even having to explore any of the categories.

BlackPlayer EX's menu would certainly benefit from having such a feature, and that alone would make it much, much easier to navigate the menu and find what one is looking for.

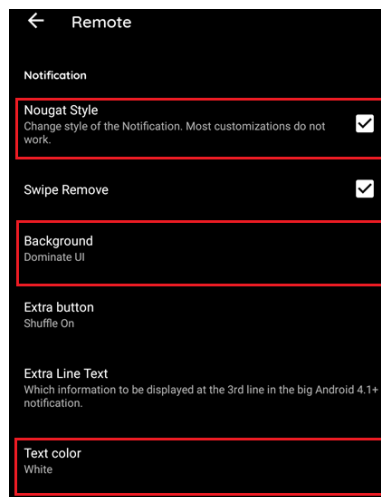
Addressing the blurred lines problem, here's an example. In the first category named 'Styling', one would expect that anything and everything to do with the aesthetical part of the app could be found here:



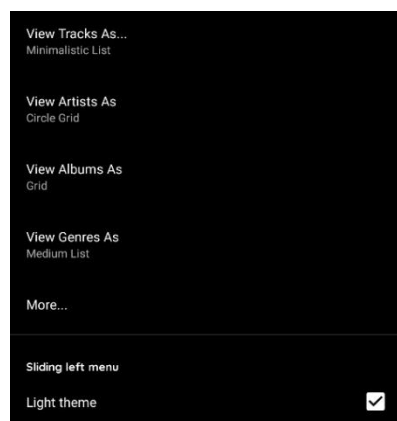
However, 'Styling' should instead be named 'General Styling' or something along those lines, because in truth when we go into the 'Now Playing' category, we can find some styling options there too...



And in the 'Remote' category...



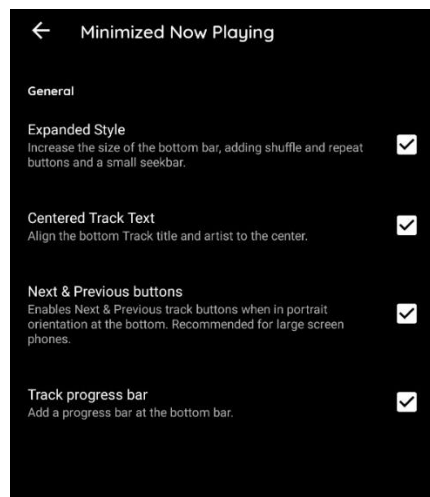
And arguably even in the 'Interface' category as seen below!



If you are going to have a category named 'Styling', you should include everything that has to do with styling inside it, and not scatter it around other categories.

Why not have another category list inside of 'Styling', and inside it have categories such as 'General style', 'Now Playing style', 'Interface style', 'Remote style', etc... And that way you could maintain the separation of the different types of styling while keeping them all inside the 'Styling' category.

Lastly, the 'Minimized Now Playing' category, compared to other categories, has a measly 4 options.



Surely it could have been easily fitted into the 'Now Playing' category, reducing the clutter in the list of categories.

The settings menu is a crucial part of any app. If you over-complicate it, make it confusing and unintuitive, users will be displeased at best and downright refuse to use your app at worst.

While some re-organizing could surely be done, BlackPlayer EX has simply too many options to make it simple for users to navigate the menu and find what they are looking for. In my view, a search function is the most critical feature they could implement at the moment, as it would spare its users plenty of headaches and provide a much more efficient service.