

WMP11 sorting issues... and other stuff

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<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Media/microsoft.public.windowsmedia.player/2006-05/msg01384.html>

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 - *Date:* Fri, 26 May 2006 23:41:59 -0400
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First off, kudos to the WMP team... the revamped media library is a vast improvement over previous iterations... now with this being a beta, I believe no one is expecting it to be perfect, and since you guys decided to release it to the public in beta form, I guess you would like to get user-feedback so as to make the final product as good as possible.

I've now been using WMP11 for the past few days, and here are the things that bugged me most:

1) The media library does not remember which column I've chosen for sorting. This is especially annoying when viewing the contents of an album. I have many soundtrack albums which contain lots of tracks by different artists. When viewing the contents of one album, WMP 11 initially sorts by contributing artist, which is fair enough... I however prefer to have my albums sorted by track number as it makes more sense with soundtracks, so I click on the Track Number column header to have WMP 11 sort by track number. All is well, until I navigate to a different album where WMP 11 reverts back to sorting by artist. Even when I go back to the album on which I originally sorted by track number, it still shows it sorted by artist. Needless to say, having to click on the column header each time I open an album gets frustrating very quickly, and it's the reason why I rolled back to WMP 9 after trying WMP 10 for a few days... at least with WMP 9, the default sort is by track number (although clicking on a header for sorting is a bit of a hit or miss with WMP 9 too)... surely it can't be too difficult to fix this... I mean... after all WMP 11 is remembering the width of the columns for each view properly... why can't it remember on which column it should sort as well?

2) The new mini-player skin, though it looks exceptionally slick with Vista, looks totally out of place in XP, but the real bugger is that the Quick Access Panel menu is no longer available. In WMP 9 and 10 when in mini-player mode, there is a small button called "Quick Access Panel" which

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pretty much gives you quick access to the Media Library without having to restore the player and browse through the library. Now unless I'm missing something really obvious, this button is no longer there in WMP 11 which is a bit of a pain if I feel like changing the album or playlist I'm listening to while the player is in mini-mode.

3) Something which has bothered me since WMP 9 is the way the window which appears when you hover over the Windows logo in mini-player mode behaves. This little window fades in to show track and album information which is cool... what is not so cool is that clicking on this window shows the Video and Visualization window, but the player does not seem to be aware of this, as when you then click on the "Show/Hide Video and Visualization window" button, the window is still there and you have to click again to actually toggle it off. From a usability standpoint, it would be better if the window did nothing when clicked, or just faded out instead of switching to the visualizations. Also, it would be nice if the window did not fade out while the user is hovering the mouse over it (like how Outlook's desktop alerts work). Now in WMP 11 this window is shown whenever the mouse hovers over any area of the mini-player. This is quite annoying as it covers an area of the screen and you have to wait for it to fade out. A better approach would be to have a setting to specify how transparent you want this window to be (again ala Outlook's desktop alerts), or provide a quick way to dismiss the window instead of having to wait for it to fade out.

4) Getting to the Skin Chooser, Radio, and Media Guide is far from intuitive... WMP 9 might lack the advanced media library, but pretty much everything is at your fingertips (with the notable exception of a Repeat button in the main interface).

5) When viewing photo slideshows it would be nice if there was actually a setting which allowed the user to change the transition timeout. A one value fits all approach is not the best way of doing things when you have a huge user base.

Other than the above issues / considerations, WMP 11 seems to be shaping up very nicely, and I look forward to a final release... however, if the sorting issue is not resolved with the final release, guess I'll be sticking with WMP 9 once more.