



**SOUND
PARTICLES**



Explorer

Reference Manual

July 2023
v. 2.1

Welcome Note



Welcome to “Explorer”

Let’s be honest... there are several programs out there to manage your sound collection and to help you to find the right sound. And some of them are very good. But from our point-of-view, all of them have a significant handicap: their support of surround and immersive files.

At Sound Particles, we have a big passion for spatial audio. For us, the user should always have a better experience with spatial audio, not worst. For instance, if the user plays an Ambisonics recording, they should be able to hear it automatically decoded to their existing speaker setup, allowing them to make the right decision about the sound.

Explorer is our vision of a modern sound collection software, with features relevant for a modern sound designer.

We hope you like it!

PS – Don’t forget to send us your feedback. We love to hear the opinion of our users.

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Introduction

Thank you very much for the download of Explorer. We want to impact and enhance the experience of searching and editing sounds from your library, while making it faster for you to find the sounds you are looking for.

Explorer is an application available to every sound professional. It is the perfect tool for the management, visualization and editing of your large sound libraries. In this moment, explorer has two options – offline and cloud, offline is free, and you have access to your audio files offline, but in the cloud version, you have access to premium audio files belonging to the audio libraries of the best sound designers in the world.

The workflow behind Explorer consists in:

1. Creating your own library, import and categorize your audio files;
2. Browsing through the Explorer app, quickly search through your samples while visualizing all the information about the audio file;
3. Editing and process your audio files;
4. Exporting and edited your audio samples to your desired format or directly spot it into your favorite DAW.

Along with this manual, we go through all the features of Explorer... Enjoy!

Explorer Workflow

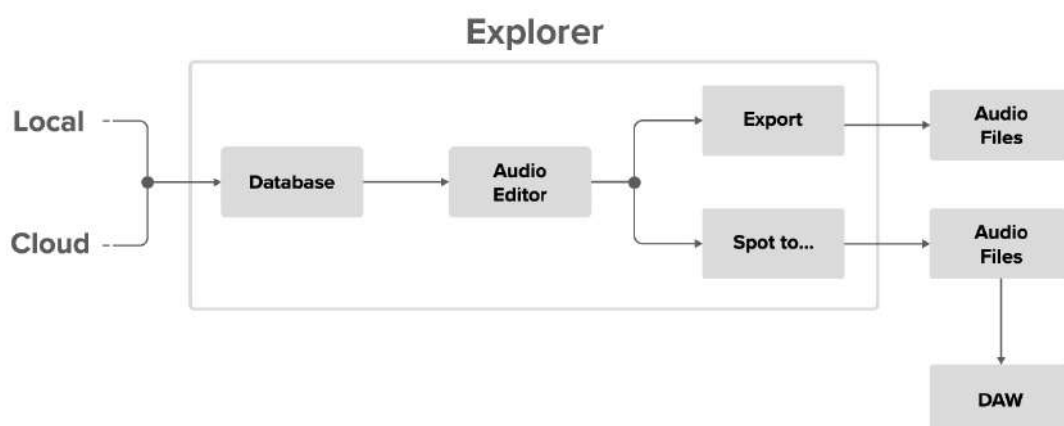


Figure 1. Explorer Workflow

Main Interface

When the user opens Explorer, the main view of the sound library is presented. Here the user will be able to load and look at the properties of each audio file.



Figure 2. Main Interface

1. Database
2. Search Window
3. Source Filter
4. Inspector
5. Audio Editor

Main Interface Header



Figure 3. Main Interface Header

- 1. Database Selection** - Select the database to be used
- 2. Search Toolbar** - Here the user can filter the search of sound files by using keywords or do a more advance search by clicking the magnifying glass on the right side of this bar.

The user will be presented with the following window where it is possible to filter by property and impose conditions on the search. Several conditions can be added and the user can switch between “Match all conditions” or “Match any condition” mode.

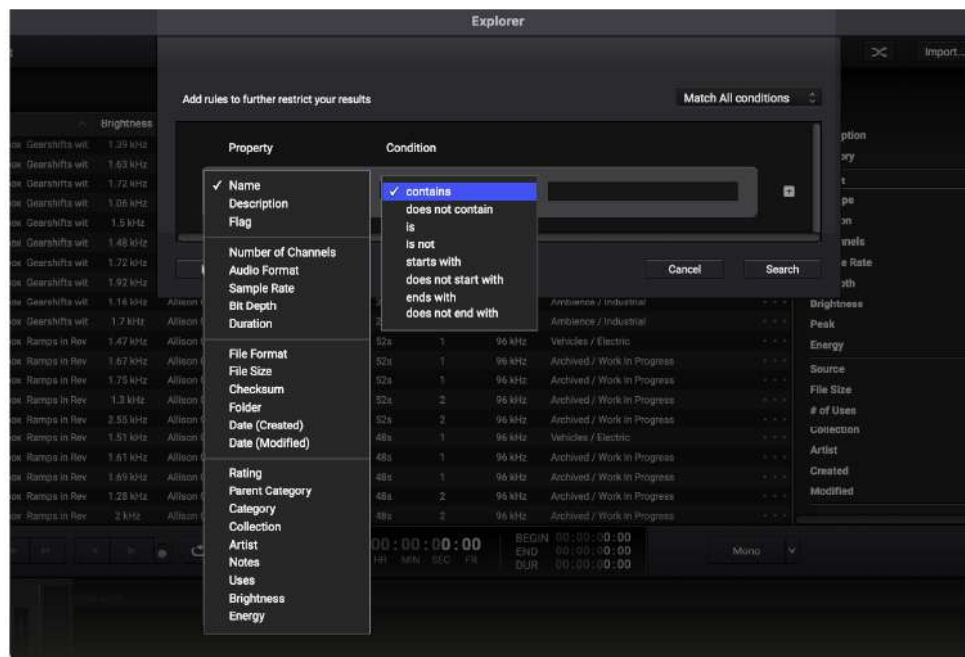


Figure 4. Search Toolbar

- 3. Source Filter** – These buttons enable you to choose the origin of the audio files, you can select sound of your own library or our cloud sounds.

- 4. Random Order** - This button will rearrange the audio files in the search window with a random order.
- 5. Import** - Use this section to import individual audio files or directly import folders with audio files.
- 6. View Selector** - Use these buttons to select what you want to see on the screen.

The first button will open/close the database on the left side of the screen.

The middle button opens/closes the editing window on the bottom of the screen.

The last button opens/closes the inspector on the right side of the screen.

I/O Manager

Clicking on **Explorer > Hardware** opens the I/O Manager where the user can change the main audio settings such as audio interface, sample rate, and buffer size in the Audio Hardware tab.

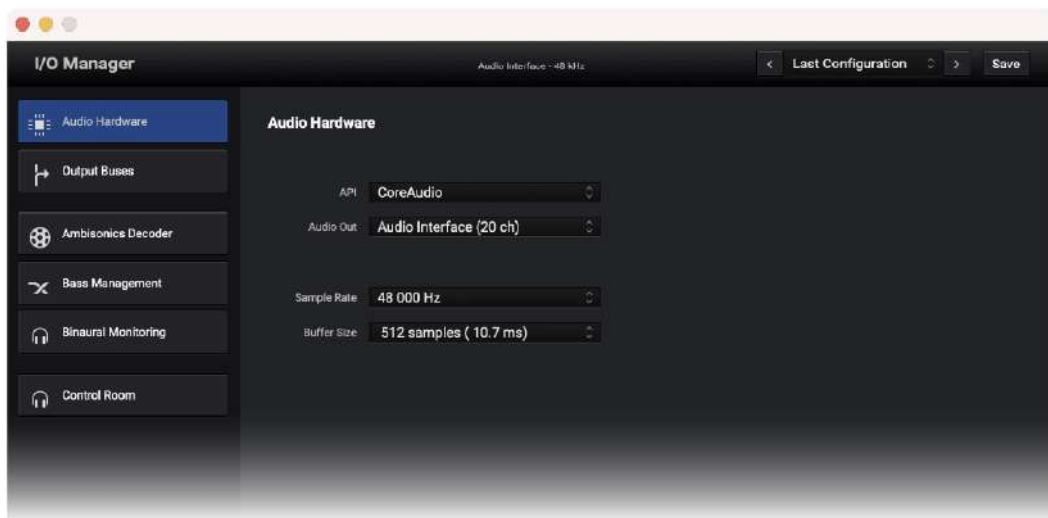


Figure 5. Audio Hardware

Output Buses

The Output Buses tab allows the user to set the number of channels to be used as well as the routing for each channel.

The default configuration includes most common surround formats, but the user can also create new setups by clicking the + button or remove them by clicking the – button. These buses are automatically created when the user selects an audio with a format that doesn't have an output bus assigned yet. For example, add a custom audio format and assign outputs however you need on your studio.

The user can also enable Bass Management, Binaural Monitoring, and Ambisonics Decoder by clicking on the respective checkbox at the bottom of the Output Buses tab.

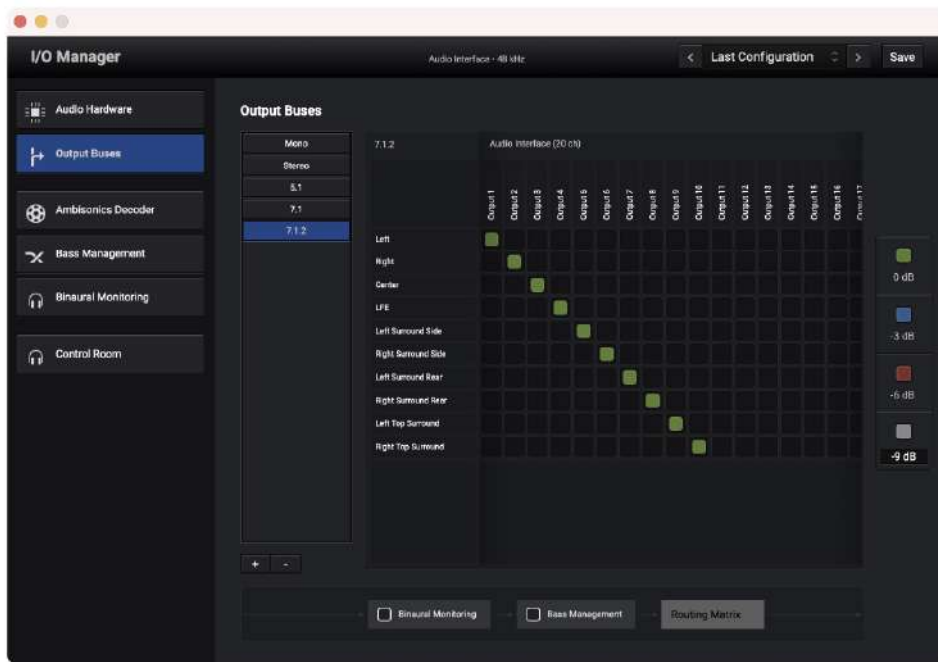


Figure 6. Output Buses

Ambisonics Decoder

The Ambisonics Decoder section should be used to define the output format of the decoder used to read ambisonics files inside Explorer.

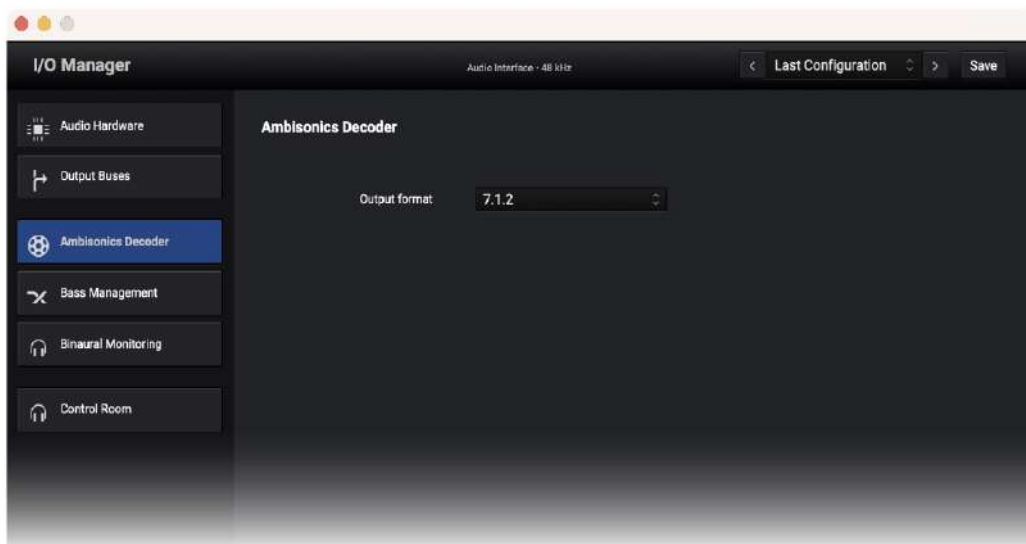


Figure 7. Ambisonics Decoder

Bass Management

Bass management is a new advanced tool that we implemented to provide more low-frequency controls to our users.

At the top, a diagram is displayed with the signal flow of the bass management. Every time a parameter is changed, the respective block will turn blue to help the user knowing where is affecting the signal in the signal flow.

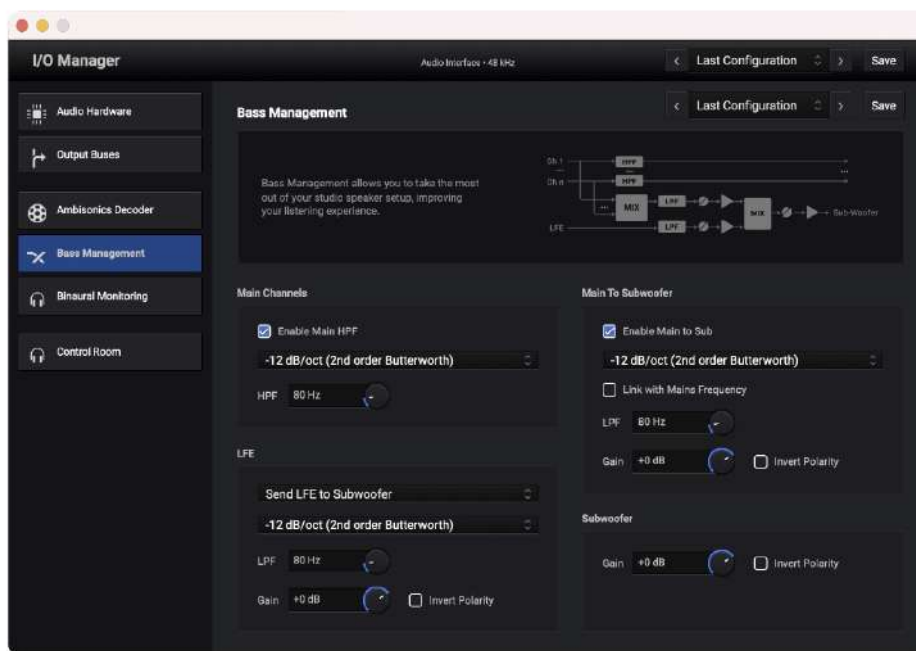


Figure 8. Bass Management

In the Main section, the user can apply one of the High Pass Filters listed below up to 500 Hz to the signal going to the speakers.

In the Main to Subwoofer section, the user can route the mains signal to the subwoofer and apply a Low Pass Filter up to 500 Hz. This signal is going to be mixed with the LFE signal with a controllable gain and polarity.



Figure 9. Hight Pass Filters

The LFE section allows the user to ignore the LFE channel, send the LFE channel to the Subwoofer, or send it to all main channels. This signal can also be filtered (LPF) and have the gain control and invert polarity controll when mixed with the signals from the main channels.

Lastly, the gain and polarity of the output signal going to the subwoofers can also be modified in the Subwoofer section.

Binaural Monitoring

The Binaural Monitoring tab provides the option to select a dataset from our library as well as importing a personalized dataset in order to have a customized experience while using Explorer.

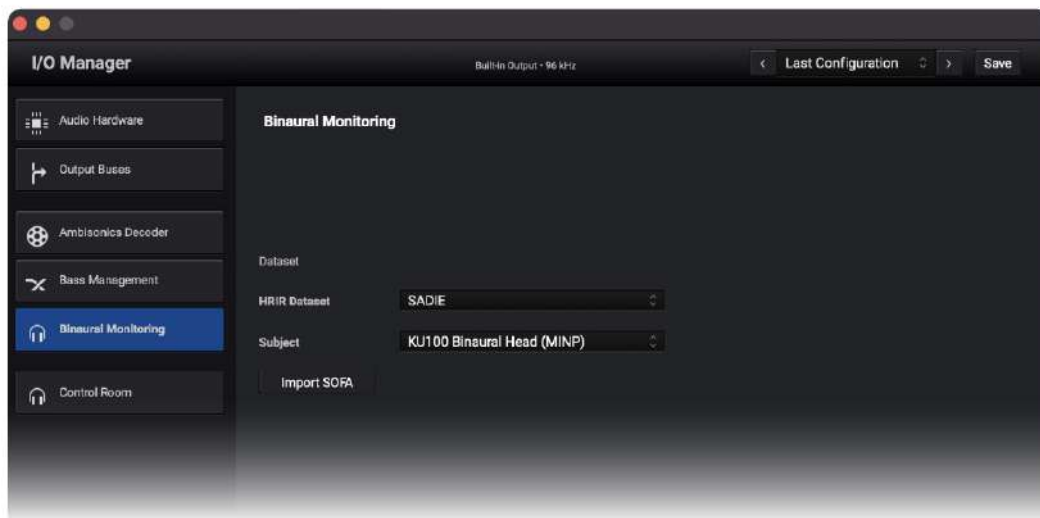


Figure 10. Binaural Monitoring

Control Room

The Control Room section displays the hardware output help the user calibrate the playback system. The user can mute and solo each individual channel of the system as well as send a test noise signal to check the output of each channel. These parameters are for calibration only, so they come back to default every time the user leaves the Control Room.

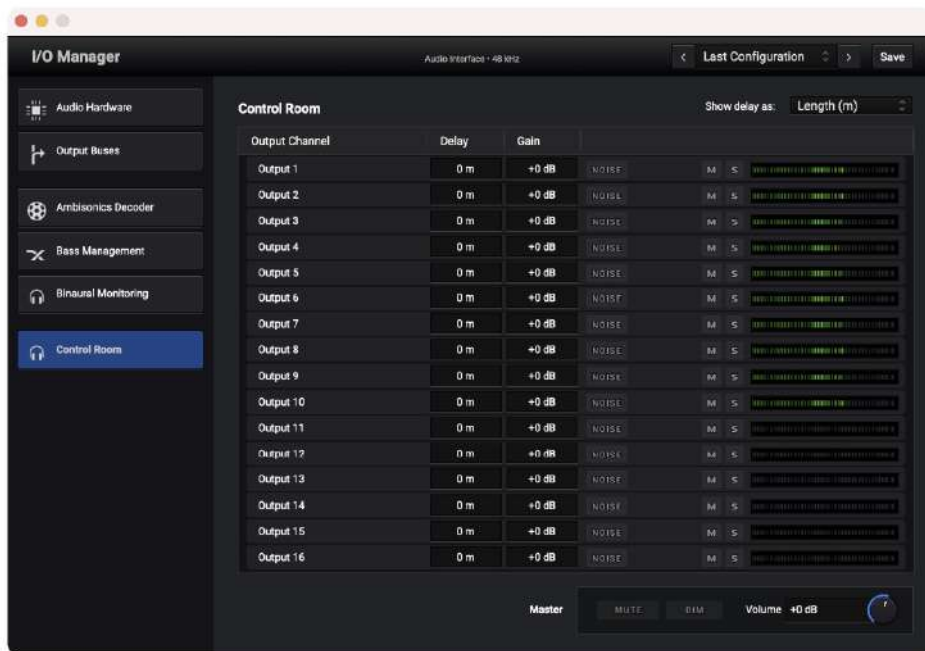


Figure 11. Control Room

Then, the user can also align the speakers by introducing a time delay and gain to each individual channel. At the top right of the Control Room, there is a pop-up menu that allows the user to change between “Show delay as Length” or “Show Delay as Time”.

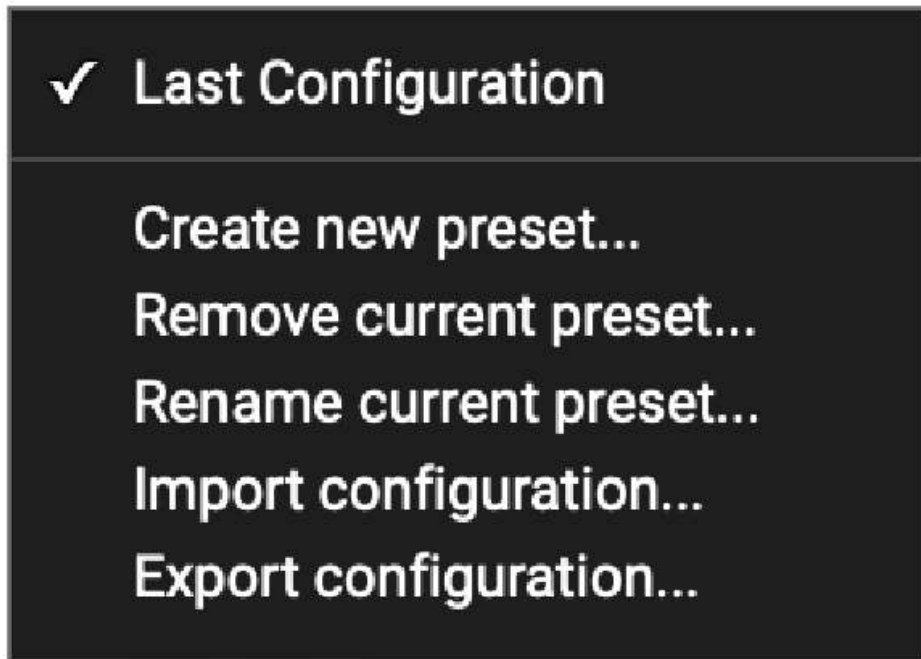


Figure 12. Configuration Options

In the top right corner of the I/O Manager, a pop-up menu provides the option to add and remove presets for the I/O Manager as well as exporting and importing presets from other machines.

Creating Your Own Library

Use the import button on the top right corner to load your libraries of sounds to the Explorer. Sounds can also be imported by dragging and dropping them directly into the explorer window.

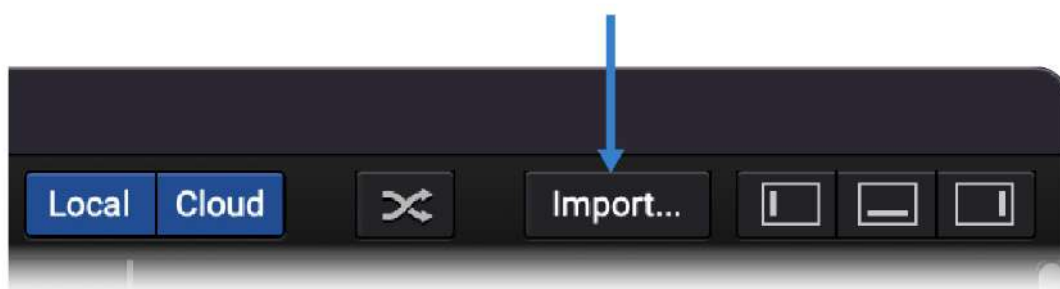


Figure 13. Import Button

Sounds can be loaded individually or through folders. Either way, the user will have access to the path of the samples in the database section on the left panel of the screen.

The Local and Cloud buttons enable you to choose the origin of Explorer sounds, you can select sound files from your own library or cloud sounds.

In the database section, you can have an overview of the library divided by:



Figure 14. Library View

- 1. Category** - Sort the library by category and subcategories (according to the Universal Category System).

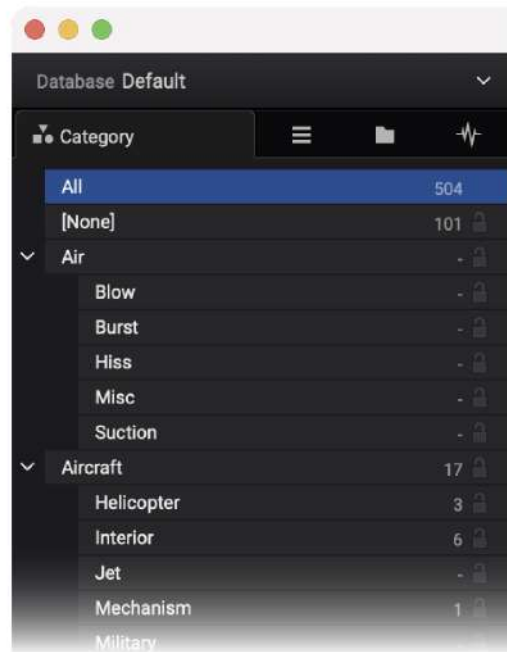


Figure 15. Category System View

2. Custom playlists - Create a playlist and view all the sounds inside each one.

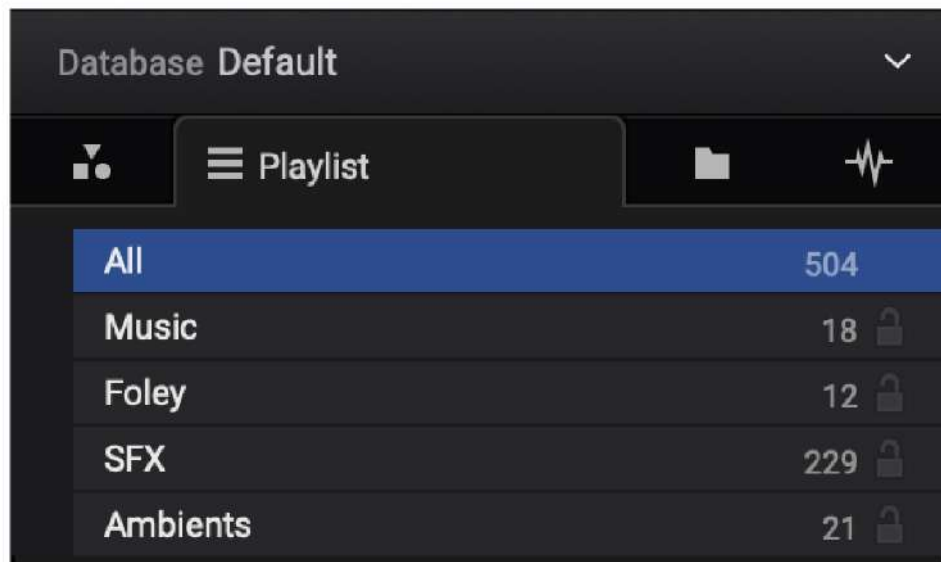


Figure 16. Playlist View

3. Folder path - Use the folder section to view audio files grouped by path.

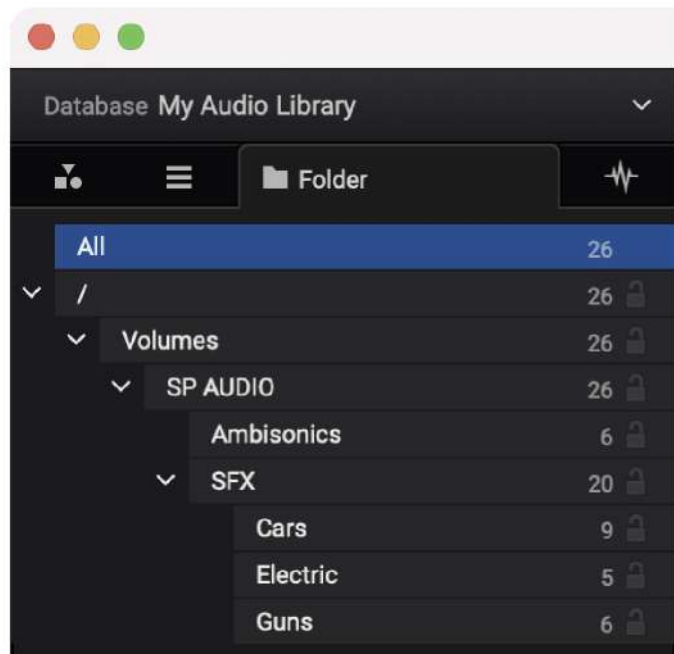


Figure 17. Folder View

4. Audio properties - The Audio view separates the library sounds by file format, sample rate, and audio format. There is also a tab with all the flagged audios.

Click the locker icon to keep the filter even when the keywords are changed in the search bar.

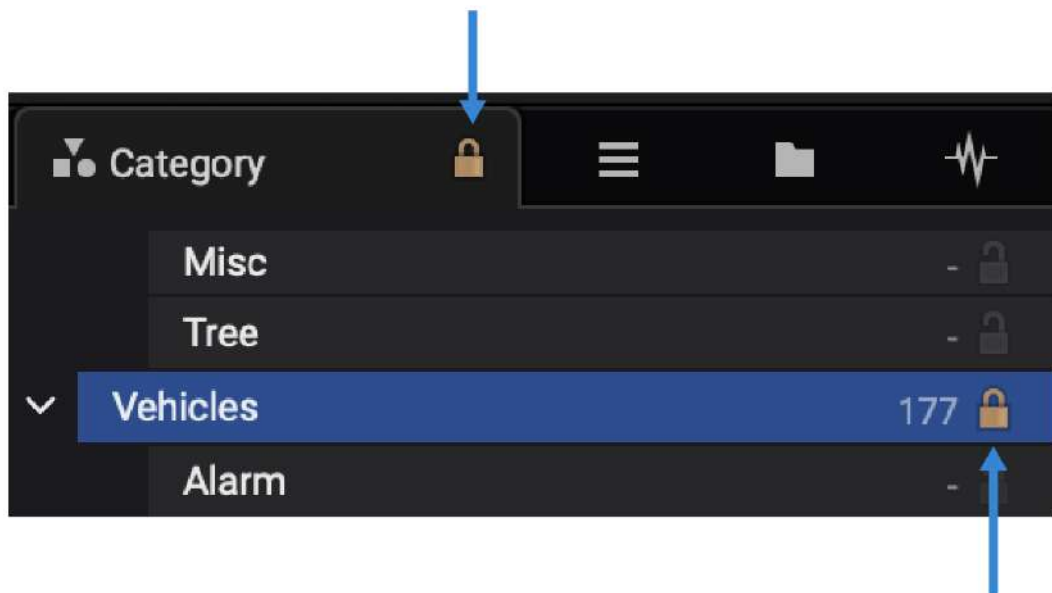


Figure 19. Lock Filter

It is possible to rename the selected database at the top of the panel as well as create new databases. In this section, the local files can also be rechecked to delete the files that no longer exist.

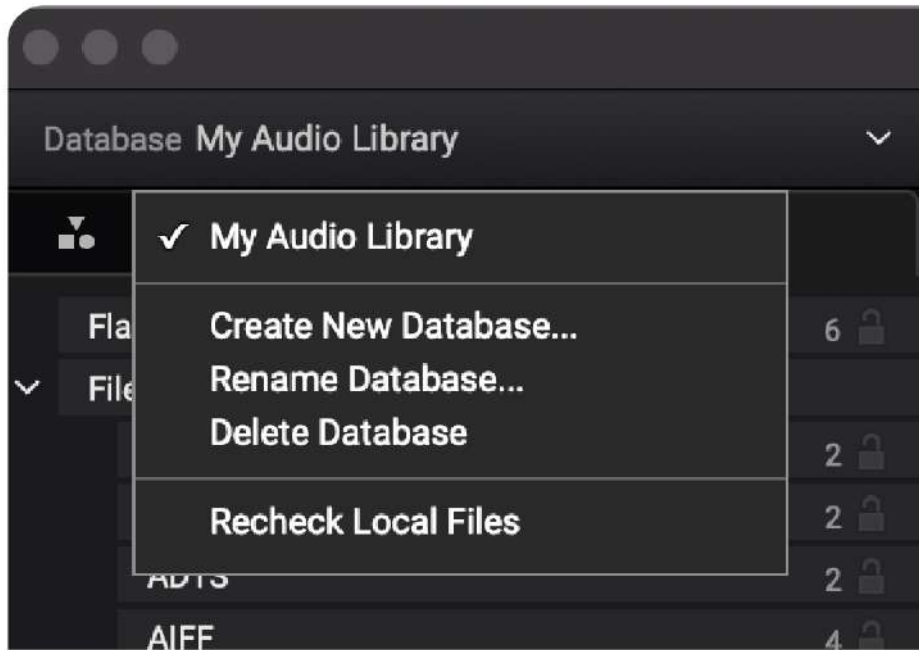


Figure 20. Database Options

Browsing through the Explorer Window

The search window allows the user to navigate through the library with the view of the waveform to facilitate the search. The Explorer workspace is the main playground of Explorer. Here the users have access to all sound files that are on their own library, and the ability to organize the different audio properties in order to better manage the collection.

The Explorer workspace consists of several audio-related fields (columns). These columns can be freely rearranged so that the user can only view the information that is the most pertinent, as well as sort the same fields in the order that suits them best.

The Explorer workspace header shows the name of each column. Then, the lines below represent each audio file content for the respective field.

Name	Duration	#Channels	Audio Format	File Format	Sample Rate	Bit Depth	Brightness	Energy	Peak	Description	Category	Rating
ES Portico Boat Start 10. SFX	1.15	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	212 Hz	7.4 dB	1.4 dB	Portico Boat, Start, Drive, Fast Speed, Off, Motor Perceptio	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Duckings Gate Hoisting	2.25	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	219 Hz	11.4 dB	-2 dB		Boats / Fishing	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Medium 3 SE	1.58	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	212 Hz	-12.2 dB	-1.6 dB	Portico Boat, Drive, Medium Speed, Motor Perspective	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Run 1 SFX Pt	1.87	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	118 Hz	-13.8 dB	-3.2 dB	Transportation, Watercraft, Portico Boat, Run, Off, Fina	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Fast 18 SFX	1.22	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	220 Hz	-14.1 dB	-1.4 dB	Portico Boat, Start, Drive, Fast Speed, Off, Motor Perceptio	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Yacht Drive Bridge SFX Prod	2.06	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	186 Hz	-14.4 dB	-1.4 dB	Yacht, Drive, Bridge, Interior, Boat	Boats / Yacht	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Run 2 SFX Pt	2.48	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	330 Hz	-15.1 dB	-2.7 dB	Transportation, Watercraft, Portico Boat, Run, Stop, Fast	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Boat Outboard 2 SFX Prod	3.14	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	878 Hz	-15.8 dB	-3.5 dB	Transportation, Watercraft, Boat, Outboard Motor, Start	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Fast 16 SFX	1.39	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	219 Hz	-16.1 dB	-4.4 dB	Portico Boat, Start, Drive, Fast Speed, Off, Motor Perceptio	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Fast 5 SFX Pt	470	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	232 Hz	-16.1 dB	-1.8 dB	Portico Boat, Drive, Fast Speed, Motor Perspective	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Drive 4 SFX P	91	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	247 Hz	-16.3 dB	-1.5 dB	Portico Boat, Drive, Increase Speed, Portico Prospecity	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Boat Drive Slow 5 SFX Prod	2.08	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	139 Hz	-16.3 dB	-1.4 dB	Boat, Drive, Slow, No, Water, Zeno, Waves, Splash	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Drive 13 SFX	2.03	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	344 Hz	-16.4 dB	-4.3 dB	Portico Boat, Drive, Fast Speed, Near Motor Perspective	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Boat Horn 3 SFX Producer	14	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	740 Hz	-16.8 dB	-7.8 dB	Boat Horn	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Steam Whistle 4 SFX Prod	36	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	729 Hz	-17.0 dB	-4.2 dB	Steam, Whistle, Blow	Boats / Steam	☆☆☆☆
ES Steam Whistle 4 SFX Prod	14	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	758 Hz	-17.0 dB	-4.2 dB	Steam, Whistle, Blow	Boats / Steam	☆☆☆☆
ES Boat Start Drive Slow SFX P	2.08	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	245 Hz	-18.0 dB	-1.8 dB	Boat, Start, Drive, Slow, Speed, Turn, Shut, Off, Open, Water	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Medium 1 SFX	54	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	211 Hz	-18.2 dB	-1.8 dB	Portico Boat, Motor Fast To Start	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Steam Whistle 7 SFX Prod	61	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	858 Hz	-18.2 dB	-4.9 dB	Steam, Whistle, Blow	Boats / Steam	☆☆☆☆
ES Boat Slow Speed 2 SFX Pt	1.44	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	476 Hz	-18.4 dB	-4.5 dB	Transportation, Watercraft, Boat, Slow, Speed, Photo, Mar	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Steam Engine Tractor 41 SF	29	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	2.08 kHz	-18.4 dB	-4.5 dB	Steam, Engine, Tractor, Steam, Boat	Boats / Steam	☆☆☆☆
ES Speed Boat Drive 5 SFX Prod	186	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	255 Hz	-18.7 dB	-4.5 dB	Transportation, Watercraft, Speed, Boat, Drive, Off, Distanc	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Whistle Steam 3 SFX Prod	14	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	714 Hz	-18.9 dB	-5.0 dB	Transportation, Train, Whistle, Vintage, Steam, Single	Boats / Steam	☆☆☆☆
ES Portico Boat Medium 2 SFX	46	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	151 Hz	-19.0 dB	-6.8 dB	Portico Boat, Motor Fast To Start	Boats / Microboat	☆☆☆☆
ES Steam Engine Tractor 2 SFX	186	2	Stereo	WAV	48 kHz	24	255 Hz	-19.0 dB	-6.8 dB	Steam, Engine, Tractor, Steam, Boat	Boats / Steam	☆☆☆☆

Figure 21. Table Header

At the top right corner of the search window, the letters A, B, C allow the user to have three different filters for different search setups.

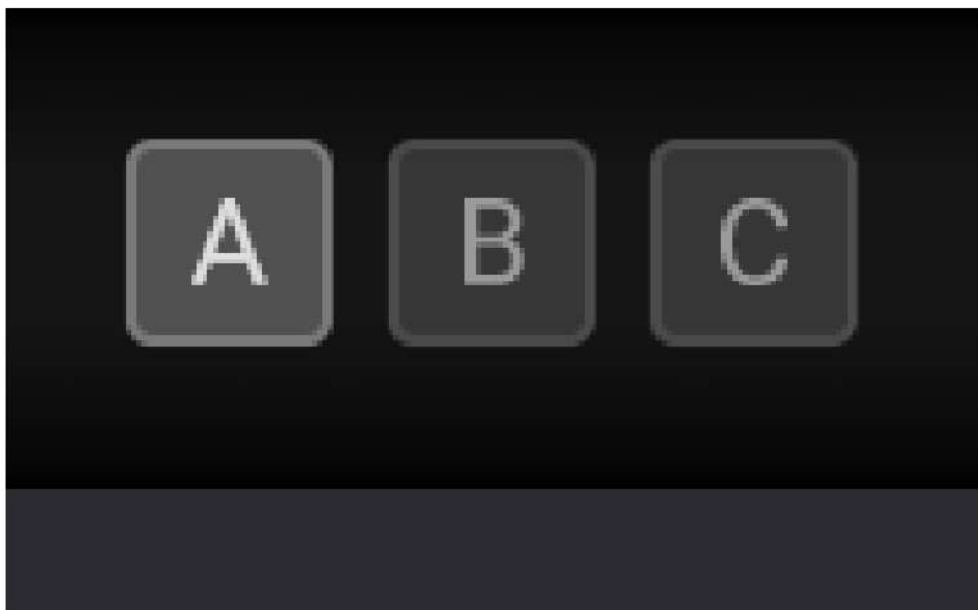


Figure 22. Search Filters

By default, the Explorer shows the flag, name, duration, number of channels, sample rate, description, category, and rating. These filters can be used to sort the audio files. Furthermore, when the user right-clicks on the top bar, the following list is presented to add more fields.

Clicking on the flag icon will make the selected audio stand out from the rest for easiness of identifying the favorite sounds. It is also possible for the user to rate the audio files and arrange them by rating. To undo the rating, simply click with the right mouse button on top of this section for the respective audio and select “clear”.

There are other useful fields that make Explorer stand out from the other sound collection apps, like brightness and energy. The brightness uses the centroid value, a parameter that represents the center of spectral mass, which is related to the perception of brightness. The energy field is an average RMS value of the entire file. Those fields can be very useful to organize the sounds from low to high or from quiet to loud.

Right-clicking an audio file will open the following window with the option to add/remove the file from a playlist, directly change the category, remove it from the database, show the file in Finder/Windows explorer, export the audio file and also change the audio table font size.

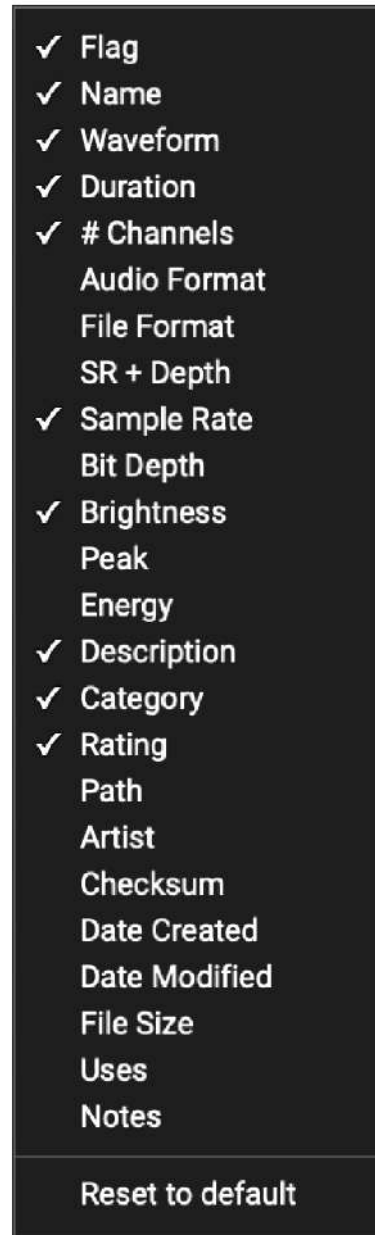


Figure 23. Sound Fields

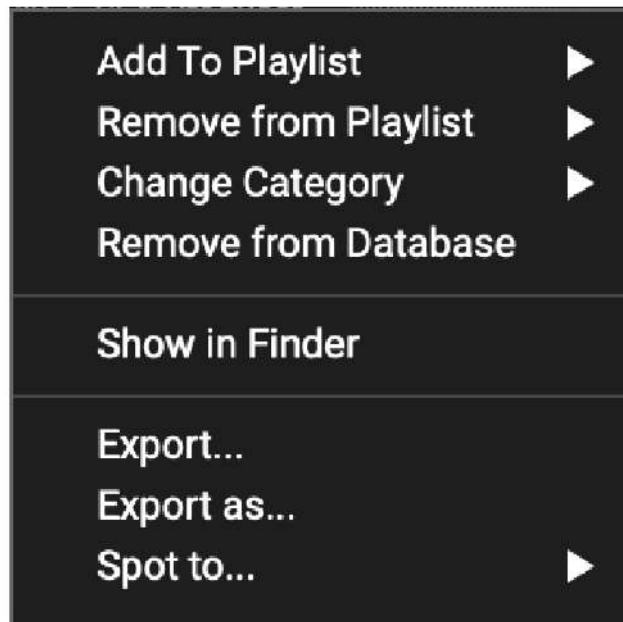


Figure 24. File Options

The inspector window on the right side of the screen shows all the information regarding the selected audio file. In this section, the category of the audio file can also be changed by clicking the respective field and selecting the desired subcategory from the pop-up menu. The format order and normalization can also be changed for multichannel formats and ambisonics files. For audio files with a number of channels that can suit common formats, the user also has the option to choose how this file is going to be read by Explorer in the “Interpret as” option.

At the bottom of this section, the user can also tick a checkbox to show the metadata of the file as well as add audio samples notes.

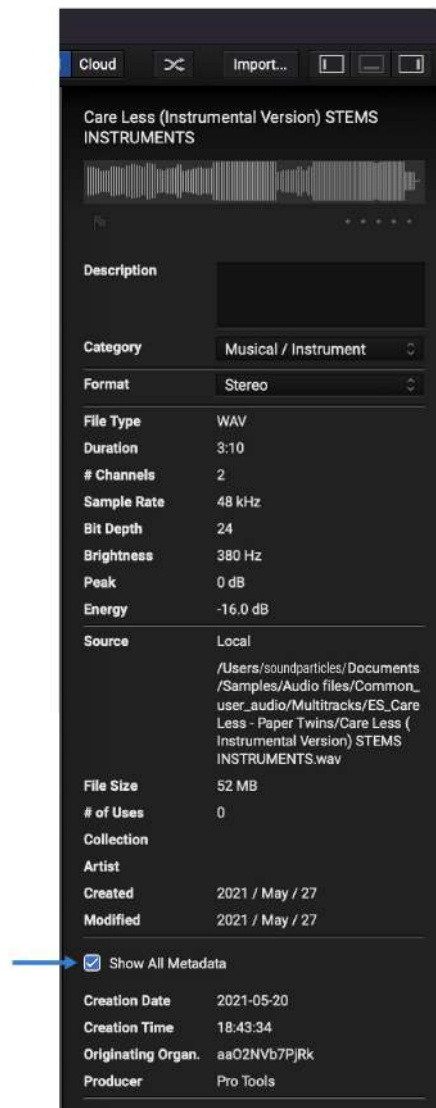


Figure 25. Metadata

Editing Samples

Explorer also allows the user to edit audio files inside the application. Open the editor window by clicking the center item on the view selector.

The time selection of the clip to be exported can be changed by dragging the borders of the loop marked with the orange region. Drag the edge of the region through the timeline to the desired location. At the bottom of the timeline there is a zoom navigator which can be used to zoom in and out as well as navigate through the entire length of the audio file.

ProTip: To zoom horizontally use Scroll and to zoom vertically zoom use Option + Scroll.



Figure 26. Zoom

On the left side of the zoom navigator there is an information icon that will show/hide the information of the output file.



Figure 27. Zoom Navigator

When the cursor is placed at the border of the selected region, a fade item with horizontal arrows will appear and can be dragged as well. Once the loop has a fade, a white dot with vertical arrows will show up and can be moved to change the fade slope and form. Right-clicking on the fade will also allow the user to choose different fader curves.

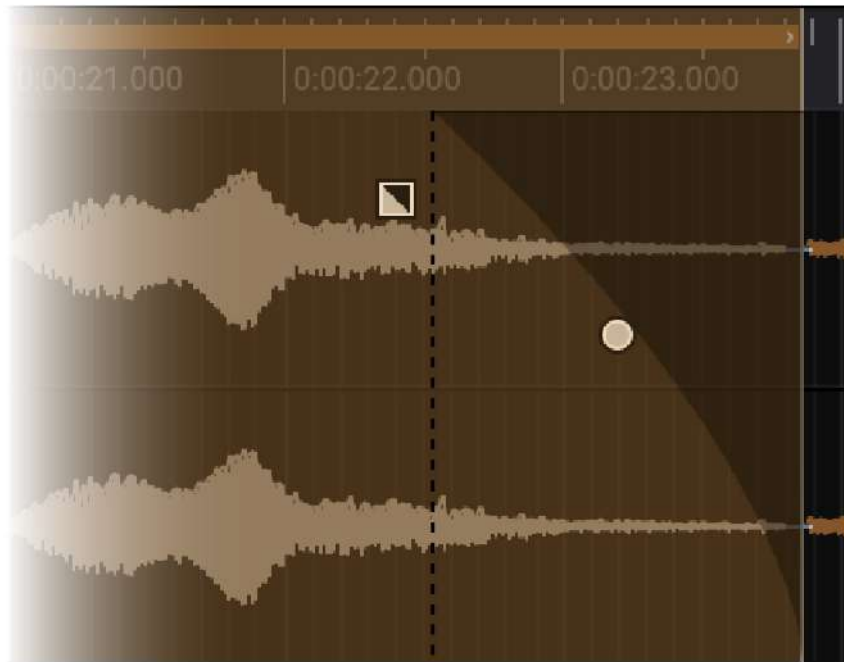


Figure 28. Cursors

The player section has the following features:



Figure 29. Player

1. Back to the start
2. Fast backwards
3. Fast forward
4. Skip to the end
5. Reverse Play (right-click to switch between Play / Pause and Play / Stop modes. The icon will switch to the pause or stop icon while the audio is being played)
6. Play (right-click to switch between Play / Pause and Play / Stop modes. The icon will switch to the pause or stop icon while the audio is being played)

7. Auto play (the audio file will play every time the user selects a new file in the search window)
8. Loop (the cursor will return to the start position once it reaches the end of the file)
9. FFT (the timeline will display the FFT spectrogram instead of the waveform)

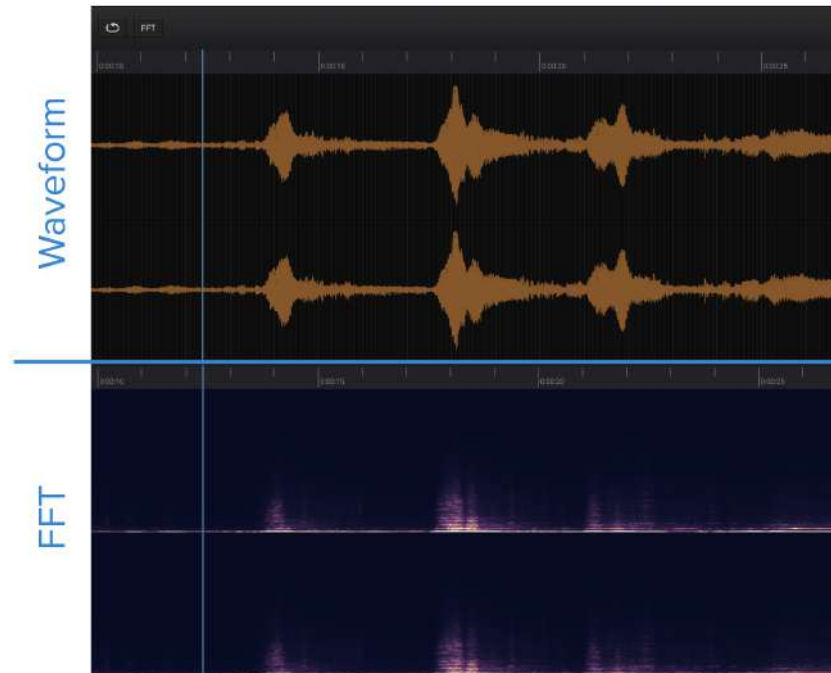


Figure 30. Waveform and FFT

In the center of the editor window, a time display can be found. Here the user can see the position of the cursor (left section), as well as the Beginning, End, and Duration of the loop selection (right section).

All these values can be directly changed by clicking the appropriate field and inserting the desired value or by simply clicking and dragging the field to be changed. The time selection will respond accordingly.



Figure 31. Timer

Using Right-click on time display, allows to define if it is a single or dual time display, the time units as well as linking several displays. When time displays are linked their units can be changed in the Time Settings menu.

The user can remove or add displays as well as move them to the left or right. The user can also save custom display presets to be loaded according to the project.

On the right side of the editor window, there is a channel selector which allows the user to select which channels are visible in the editor. Using the shortcut “Shift + Click” on an individual channel will enable only that channel and disable the others.

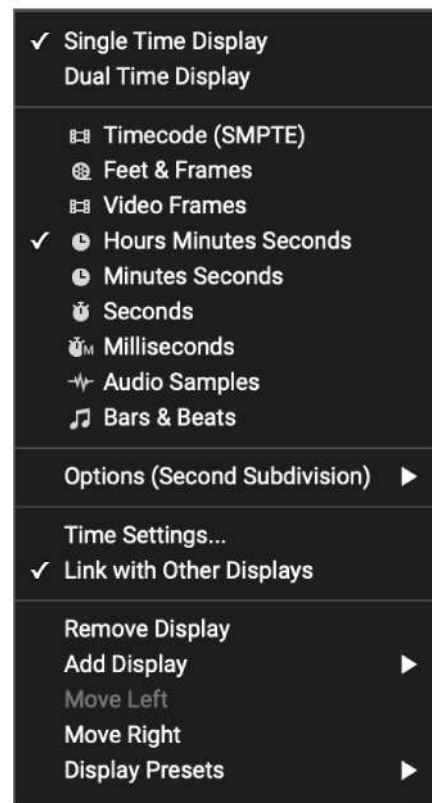


Figure 32. Time Display

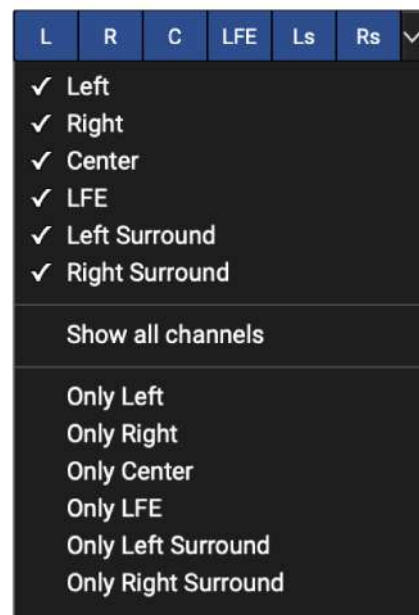


Figure 33. Channels

The audio editor is divided into 2 sections. In left side the user can use the Pitch wheel to change the pitch of the audio. Using the right mouse button on the tuning wheel, the user can select the range from +/- 2 semitones to +/- 4 octaves, after that, the fader and will control the clip gain and the waveform and VU meter will behave accordingly and FX section. In the right side it shows a pitch scale for the selected audio file, and the fader controls the output volume of the file to be exported.



Figure 35. Range Selector



Figure 34. Pitch

On the left side of the editor window the user can add some stock audio effects to the selected file. They are:

- **Invert** - Polarity inversion
- **Reverse** - Reverse the beginning and end of the file
- **Whoosh** - Applies a whoosh effect to the file
- **Normalize 0dB** - Normalizes the sound at 0dB
- **Normalize -1dB** - Normalizes the sound at -1dB
- **Left-Right to Mid-Side** - Converts an LR to an MS format
- **Mid-Side to Left-Right** - Converts an MS to an LR format
- **Convert** - Allows the user to convert the audio file to the following formats

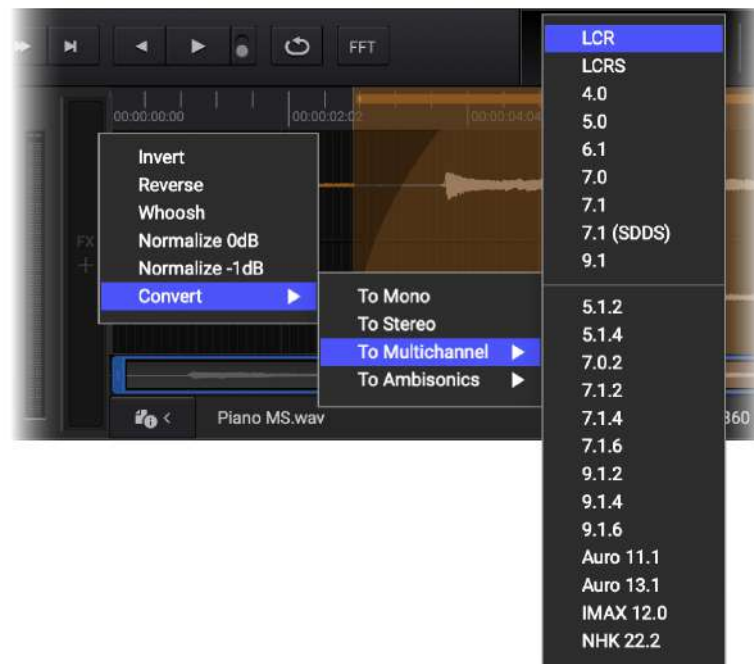


Figure 36. Metadata

In the right side it shows a decibel scale for each channel in the audio file, the fader controls the output volume of the file to be exported.

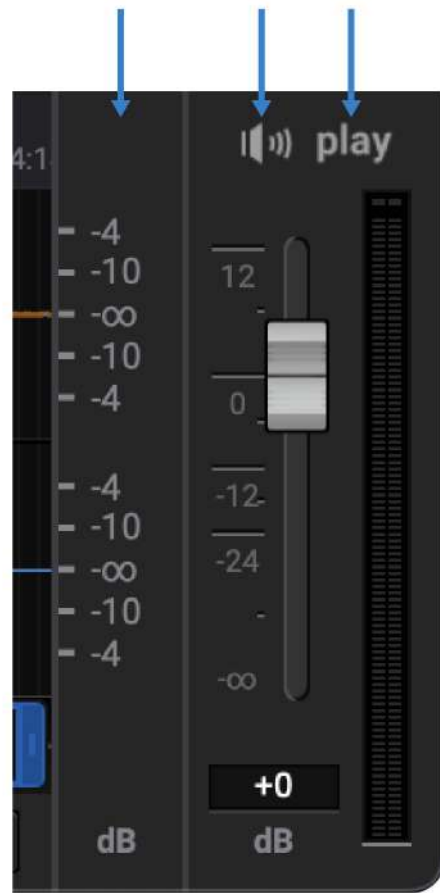


Figure 37. Pitch Options

Exporting Sounds

There are three options to export an audio file in Explorer. When looking for sounds in the search window, the user can right-click the desired file and select:

Export... where the user can save the file directly to the desired computer location and with a custom name.

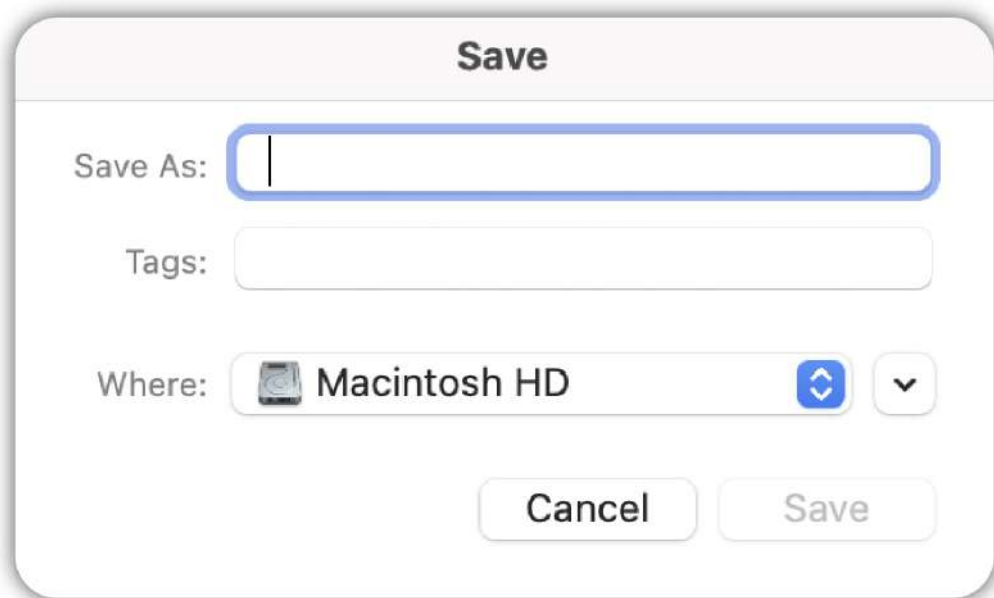


Figure 38. Save as

Export as... allows the user to select more options regarding the output file before exporting as shown in the image below.

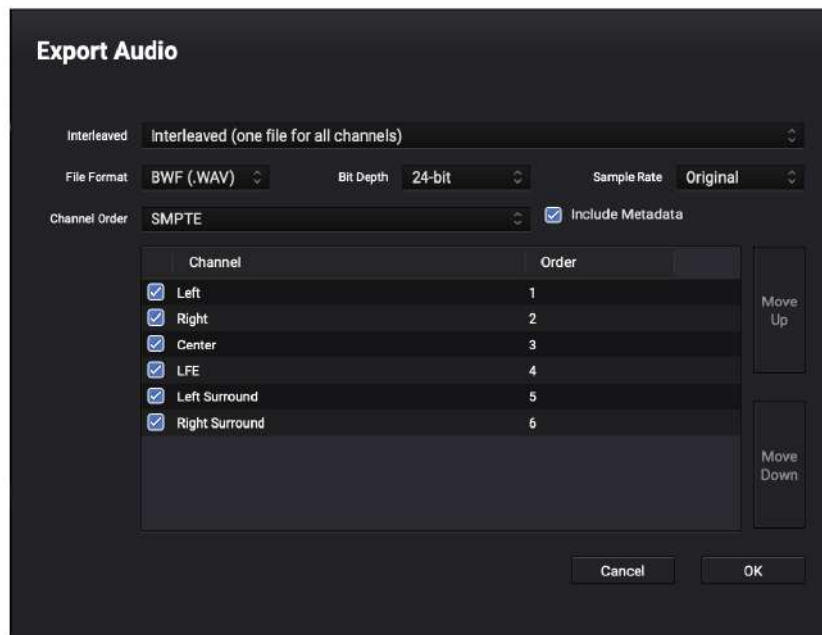


Figure 39. Export Audio

Spot to... where the user can spot the audio directly to the preferred DAW. The DAW must be open to use this function. Pressing “S” will act as a shortcut to Spot to DAW.

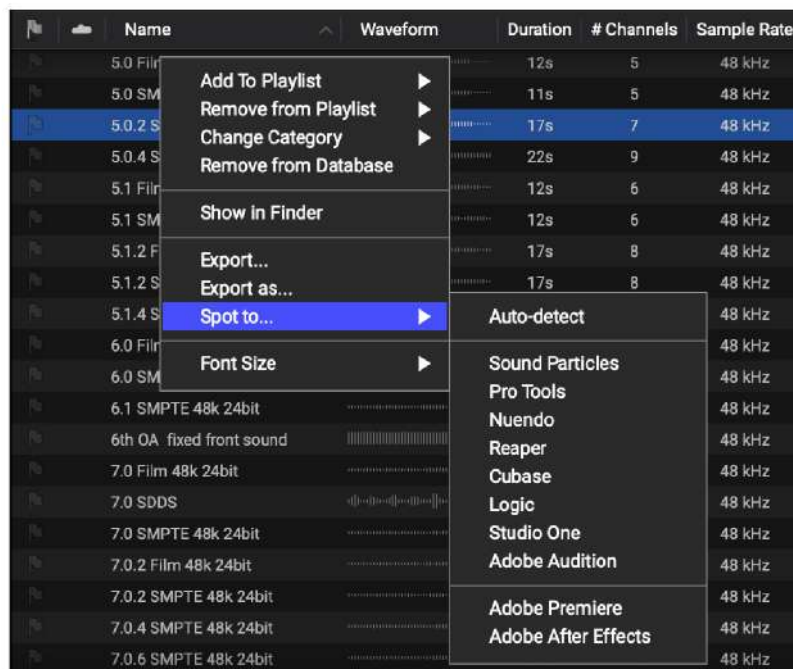


Figure 40. Spot to

Alternatively, the user can export the sound by clicking on the export menus on the bottom right panel of the editor window or right-click the clip and select one of the above options.

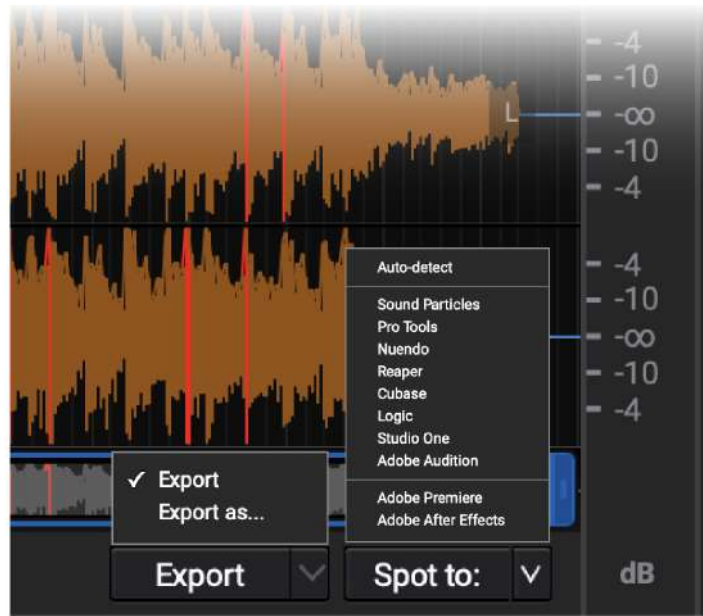


Figure 41. Export and Spot to

	Windows	Mac
Sound Particles	Yes	Yes
Pro Tools	Yes	Yes
Nuendo	Yes	Yes
Cubase	Yes	Yes
Reaper	Yes	Yes
Logic Pro	Yes	Yes
Studio One	No	Yes
Adobe Audition	No	Yes
Adobe Premiere	No	Yes
Adobe After Effects	No	Yes

Figure 42. Spot to Windows and Mac

Explorer Offline vs Cloud

	Play Cloud Files	Export Cloud Files	Splash Screen	Total Preview of Cloud Sound Files
Unsubscribed User	No	No	Yes	No
Subscribed User	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Subscribed Partner	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Figure 43. Explorer

Splash screen is an alert for new Explorer SFX Cloud service. That alert doesn't appear for the subscribed users.

For the non-subscribed users, a splash screen appears every time, right after the software starts.

Additional Notes

UNIVERSAL CATEGORY SYSTEM (UCS)

The Universal Category System is a set category list for the classification of sound effects, adopted by Explorer to uniformize the categorization of sound files by the users. For more info on UCS, please visit universalcategorysystem.com - or check out the intro video.

CHECK FOR UPDATES

If Explorer is running on a computer with internet access, it is able to detect if a newer update is available, informing the user of the existence of a new update, by showing a pop-up window when the app is initiated.

To achieve that, Explorer accesses an XML file located at <https://www.soundparticles.com>.

When installing a new version of Explorer the database file might also need to be updated. This process can affect other Sound Particles products that share the same database file. If you experience any problems make sure you contact our support team at support@soundparticles.com.

SOUND PARTICLES EXPLORER DOES NOT SEND ANY INFORMATION FROM THE USER OVER THE INTERNET.

SUPPORT

If you detect a bug, if you got a crash, if you believe something is not perfect, or even if you have ideas for future versions, don't hesitate, and email us at support@soundparticles.com. We REALLY want to hear from you. Sometimes a bug lives on for too much time, simply because we haven't detected ourselves and we didn't receive any feedback from the affected users. Besides that, your feedback is very important for us.

“Help us help you”

Credits

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Nuno Fonseca

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Graphic Designer

Marco Afonso

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