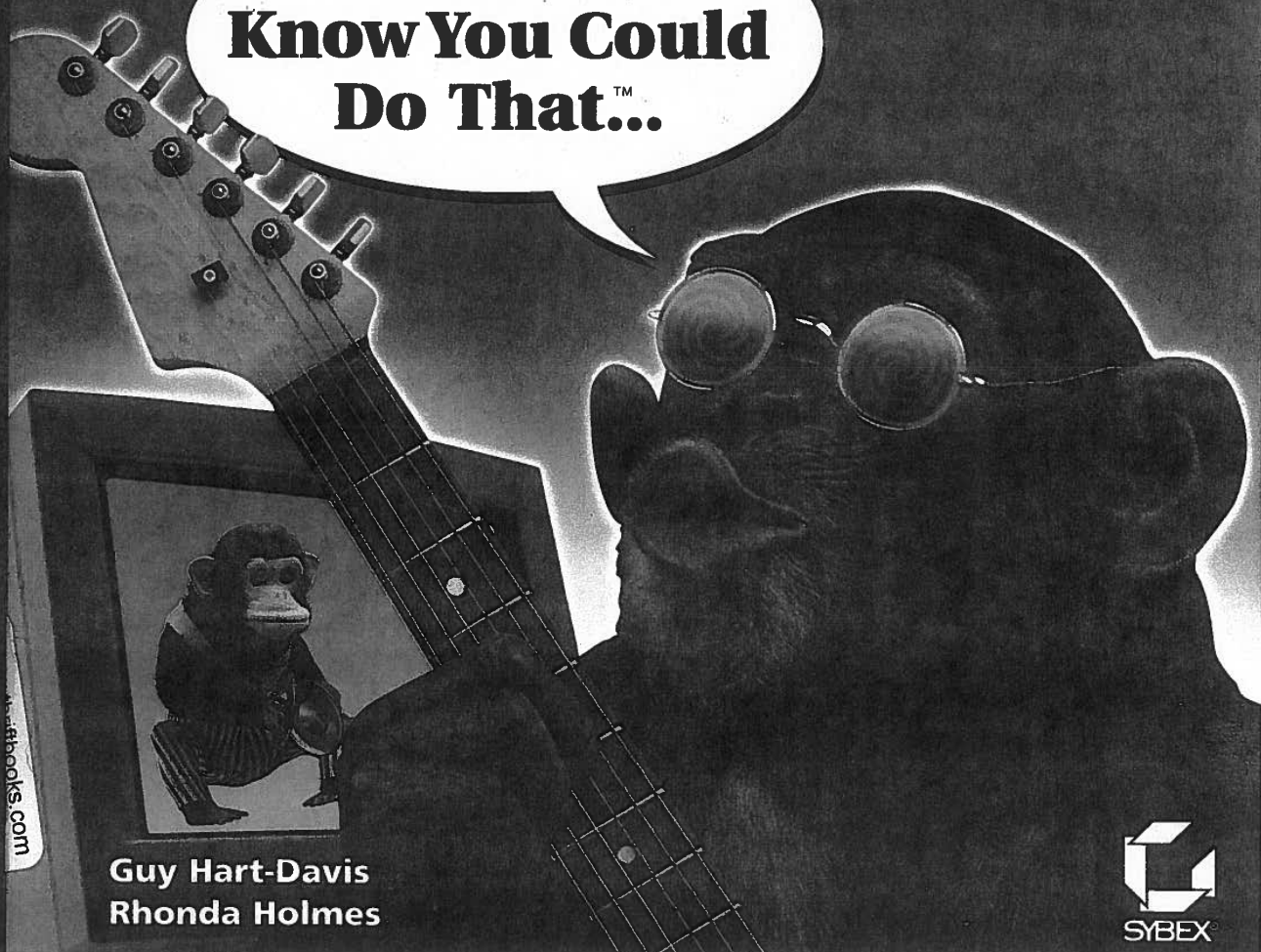


MP3!

**I Didn't
Know You Could
Do That™**



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**Guy Hart-Davis
Rhonda Holmes**





MP3!

I Didn't Know You Could Do That...™

Guy Hart-Davis
Rhonda Holmes



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Windows Players



In this part, we'll look at the two most popular and versatile MP3 players for Windows: Winamp and Sonique. Each provides a terrific set of features for playing MP3 files, including playlists for organizing your music, graphical equalizers for adjusting its sound, and skins for changing the looks of the players.

Winamp is shareware. At this writing, you get a 14-day trial period, after which you're requested to register Winamp. Registration costs \$10 per computer for personal use and \$25 per computer for commercial use. Winamp currently does not become disabled after the trial period.

Sonique is currently described as a "freeware beta." You're requested to register (for free), after which you get free updates of Sonique, but at this writing you can stay unregistered and get the free updates anyway. That said, Sonique does bug you periodically to register until you capitulate and do so.

9 Get and Install Winamp

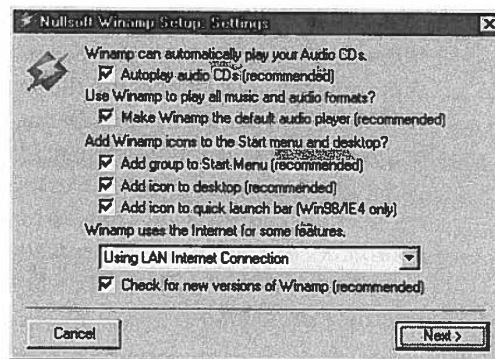


To get you started, we've included version 2.24 of Winamp on the CD in the back of the book. But because Nullsoft updates Winamp frequently, check at www.winamp.com to see if a later version is available.

To install Winamp, double-click the Winamp distribution file. This is an executable file, so double-clicking it runs it. You'll see the Nullsoft Winamp Setup: Install Files dialog box.

If you don't like the directory that Winamp has chosen to install itself into, select a different directory. You can either type the directory's name into the text box or click the Browse button and use the resulting dialog box to navigate to (and, if necessary, create) the folder you want to use. If you want to install support for Microsoft's Windows Media Audio format, make sure the Install Support for Microsoft WMA check box is selected.

Click the Next button when you're ready to proceed. Winamp will go ahead and install itself in the specified directory. You'll then see the Nullsoft Winamp Setup: Settings dialog box shown here:



Here's what the items in this dialog box do. (If you've got a later version of Winamp, there may be additional features.)

Autoplay Audio CDs check box Selecting this check box causes Winamp to spring to life when you insert an audio CD into your computer's CD drive. If you don't like autoplay, clear this check box. Note that this setting does not change the Auto Insert Notification setting on your PC. If Auto Insert Notification is off (in the CD drive's Properties dialog box), Winamp will not automatically play CDs even if you select the Autoplay Audio CDs option.

Make Winamp the Default Audio Player check box Selecting this check box makes Winamp the default audio player for all files in formats that Winamp considers to be audio. This list of formats includes MP3 (of course) and most audio file formats. If you prefer to play some forms of audio through a different player, you can deselect them later. Alternatively, you can specify Winamp as the default audio player for specific formats after installation.

Add Group to Start Menu check box Selecting this check box adds a Winamp group to the Start menu. Unless you prefer to have a Winamp icon on the Desktop or the Quick Launch bar and nowhere else, keep this check box selected.

Add Icon to Desktop check box Selecting this check box adds a Winamp icon to the desktop. Having the icon there is often handy.





Add Icon to Quick Launch Bar check box This option is available only if your computer is running Windows 98 or Internet Explorer 4. Because the Quick Launch bar is always accessible, it's usually the quickest way to get to Winamp.

Winamp Uses the Internet for Some Features drop-down list This drop-down list lets you choose the way that Winamp will use the Internet. If the computer you're using doesn't have an Internet connection, or you don't want to use Winamp's Internet features, choose No Internet Connection Available. If your computer has a modem connection, choose Using Dial-Up Modem Internet Connection. If your computer connects to the Internet through a network (for example, a company's local area network or a home network), choose Using LAN Internet Connection.

Check for New Versions of Winamp check box Selecting this check box causes Winamp to automatically visit the Winamp Web site to see if a later version of Winamp is available. If your computer is connected to the Internet, you may find this feature handy.

Click the Next button to proceed with the installation. Winamp will install the icons and groups you chose and will display the Nullsoft Winamp Setup: User Information dialog box. Enter information here if you want to—there's no obligation. If you want to have Winamp announcements mailed to you, select the Please Send Me Winamp Announcements check box. You may find it easier to visit the Winamp Web site periodically at your convenience to scan for new information rather than having it pushed out to you.

If you fill in the user information, click the Next button to send it. Winamp will connect to the Internet using the connection you specified in the previous dialog box and will send the information to Nullsoft. If you don't fill in the user information, click the Later button.

You'll then see the Nullsoft Winamp Setup: Winamp Successfully Installed dialog box. Click the Run Winamp button to run Winamp.

10

Use the Winamp Interface

In this section, we'll examine the Winamp interface. If you're feeling impatient and have some MP3 files already, click the Open button, select a track or three, and listen to some tunes while you're playing with the interface.

Exploring the Winamp Windows

The illustration on the following page shows Winamp's basic look. As you can see, it consists of four windows: the main window, the Playlist Editor window, the Graphical Equalizer window, and the Browser window. Here's a brief overview of each window:

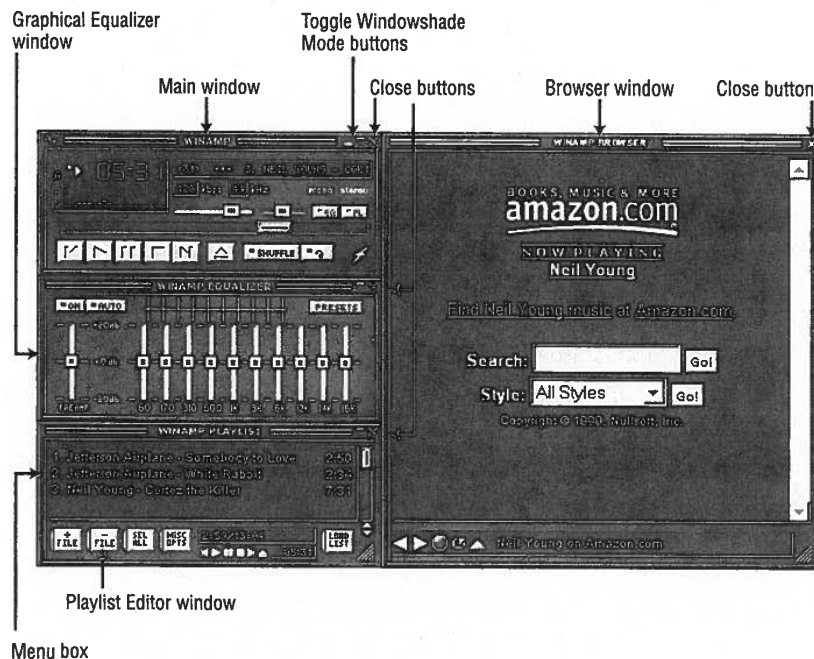


Main window This window displays information about the track that's currently playing and provides CD-player style controls. The main window also provides quick access to the Playlist Editor window and the Graphical Equalizer window.

Playlist Editor window This window contains the current playlist, buttons for creating and manipulating playlists, and a minimal set of play controls (so that you can dispense with the main window if you want).

Graphical Equalizer window This window provides a software graphical equalizer that you can use to tweak the sound that Winamp produces.

Browser window This window provides a quick way of inputting information into your main Browser window for searching Amazon.com for music by the current artist. Whether you find the Browser window useful depends on your interests. We tend to find it annoying and recommend turning it off straightaway.



Arranging the Winamp Windows

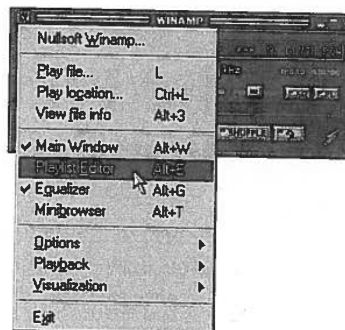
Here's what you need to know about arranging the Winamp windows on screen. You can do the following:

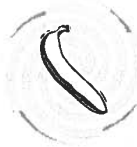
- ◆ Close any of the Winamp windows by clicking its close button—the **X** button in its upper-right corner. Clicking the close button on the main window closes Winamp.
- ◆ Rearrange the Winamp windows any way you want by clicking the title bar of a window and dragging it to where you want it to appear.
- ◆ Move each Winamp window independently. Be aware that when you move the edge of one of the satellite windows so that it touches any edge of the main window, the satellite window sticks to the main window. When you then move the main window, any windows stuck to it will move along with it.

- ◆ Minimize all displayed Winamp windows by clicking the Minimize button on the main window.
- ◆ Reduce any of the windows, except the Browser window, to a window-shade strip by clicking its Toggle Windowshade Mode button. In Windowshade mode (shown below), Winamp takes up very little space and provides only key information and controls. You can keep Winamp on top of other applications (as described next) and keep it out of the way by positioning it in another application's title bar.



- ◆ Keep Winamp on top of all other running applications so that it's always at hand. Press Ctrl+A to toggle the Always on Top feature for all Winamp windows except the Playlist Editor. Press Ctrl+Alt+A to toggle the Always on Top feature for the Playlist Editor.
- ◆ Toggle the display of the Winamp windows with keyboard shortcuts: Press Alt+W to toggle the main Winamp window; press Alt+E to toggle the Playlist Editor window; and press Alt+G to toggle the Graphical Equalizer window. Alternatively, click the menu box in the upper-left corner of the main window and select the entry for the window from the menu to toggle it on and off.





NOTE When you've hidden all the Winamp windows, make sure that the Winamp item is selected in the taskbar when you try to restore a Winamp window by using the keyboard shortcut. If another application is selected, you can press these keyboard shortcuts all you want, but Winamp won't react. You may find it easier to right-click the Winamp item in the taskbar, select the Winamp Menu item from the context menu, and choose the window you want to restore from the submenu that appears.

- ◆ Display Winamp at double size by pressing Ctrl+D to make it easier to see what you're doing. When you need to reclaim your screen real estate, press Ctrl+D again to restore Winamp to its usual discreet size.

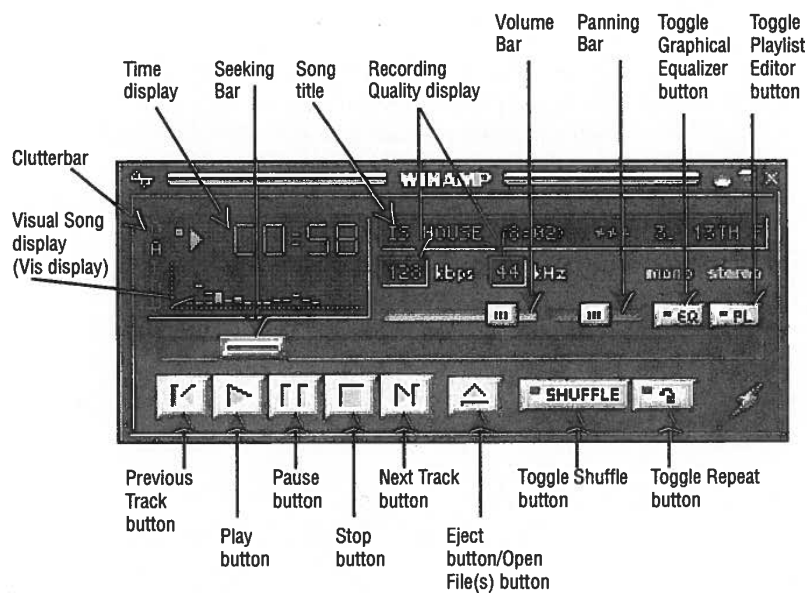
To exit Winamp, click the control menu on the main window and choose Exit from the menu. Alternatively, click the close button (the × button) on the main window.

11

Play Tracks and SHOUTcast Streams with the Winamp Main Window

The main window is easy enough to operate with the mouse, but it has many keyboard access features that you'll want to know as well. The illustration on the next page shows the components of the main window.

To open one or more tracks, click the Open File(s) button to display the Open File(s) dialog box. Navigate to the track or tracks you want and select them. To select a contiguous list of tracks, click the first track, then hold down Shift and click the last track. To select multiple individual tracks or to add them to a Shift+click-selected list, hold down Ctrl and click on each track in succession. Click the Open button to open the files in Winamp. Winamp will add them to the current playlist.



Most of the buttons and displays in the main window are easy to recognize because they look like those on a CD player or a cassette player. You click the Play button to play the current track, the Stop button to stop play, and so on. But there are a couple of mouse techniques you should know for the main window:

- ◆ Click the time in the Time display to toggle it between time elapsed and time remaining on the track.
- ◆ Click the Visual Song display (the Vis display) to switch between visualization modes.
- ◆ Click the letters in the Clutterbar at the left side of the Time display window to perform common maneuvers. O displays the Options menu; I displays the File Info dialog box; A toggles the Always on Top feature; D toggles the double-size feature; and V displays the Visualization menu, which contains options for the visualization feature below the Time display.
- ◆ Right-click the Song Title to display a context menu for moving around the current track and current playlist. (More on these in a moment.)

- ◆ Click the lightning-flash logo in the lower-right corner to display the Nullsoft Winamp – About dialog box.

As well as listening to music you've downloaded, you can play music straight off the Web with Winamp—either MP3 files from a server or a SHOUTcast server stream. SHOUTcast is streaming software created by Nullsoft (the makers of Winamp) that allows you to broadcast music over the Web. We'll discuss SHOUTcast in detail in 73. *Build a SHOUTcast Server and Get on the Air.*

To play music straight off the Web, follow these steps:

1. Press Ctrl+L, or choose Play Location from the main menu, to display the Open Location dialog box, as shown here:



2. Enter the URL of a file or of a SHOUTcast stream. (8. *Use MP3Spy to Find SHOUTcast Servers* discusses how to find SHOUTcast streams.)
3. Click the Open button. Winamp will start playing the file or the stream.

You can also add Web tracks or SHOUTcast streams to the Playlist Editor as follows:

1. Display the Playlist Editor if it's not already displayed.
2. Click and hold down the + File button to display the menu of buttons, then choose the + URL button to display the Open Location dialog box.
3. Enter the URL of a file or of a SHOUTcast stream.
4. Click the Open button. Winamp will add the file or stream to the playlist. You can then play the file or stream by using the Winamp controls as usual.



NOTE You won't always need to use this technique to play music directly off the Web because sites such as, MP3.com include links that automatically start your MP3 player or browser plug-in playing the track.

12 Create and Use Winamp Playlists

Like most MP3 players, Winamp lets you build playlists—lists of tracks in the order in which you want to play them.

To work with playlists, you use the Playlist Editor. To display the Playlist Editor, click the Toggle Playlist Editor button in the main window or press Alt+E. The illustration next shows the Playlist Editor with a playlist loaded in it.



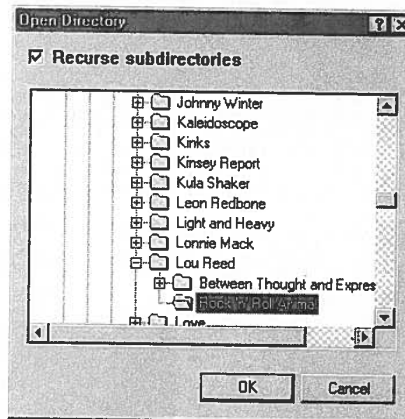
NOTE Because you can control play by using the controls in the Playlist Editor, you may want to close the main window to save space on screen. To toggle the main window on and off, press Alt+W.



Creating a Playlist

To create a playlist, add tracks to it and arrange them in the order you want. You can add tracks to the playlist in several ways:

- ◆ Drag tracks from an Explorer window to the Playlist Editor.
- ◆ Click the + File button in the Playlist Editor to display the Add File(s) to Playlist dialog box, select the tracks, and click the Open button.
- ◆ To add a whole directory to the playlist, click the + File and hold it down, then choose the + Dir button from the button menu that appears. Winamp will display the Open Directory dialog box shown here:



Navigate to and select the directory you want to add. If you want to add all the subdirectories under the directory you're selecting, make sure the Recurse Subdirectories check box is selected. Then click the OK button.

NOTE To play a track more than once in a playlist, add two or more instances of it to the playlist.

Arranging and Sorting a Playlist

You can then rearrange or remove the tracks as follows:

- ◆ To remove a track from the playlist, select it and press the Delete key or click the – File button.
- ◆ To rearrange the tracks in the playlist easily, select tracks with the mouse and drag them to where you want it or them to appear.
- ◆ To sort the playlist, click and hold down the Misc Opts button and choose Sort List from the menu that appears, as shown below. You can sort a list by title, by filename, or by path and filename. You can also reverse the current order of the playlist—which can be good for variety—or randomize the playlist to produce something unexpected. There's nothing quite like the mind-jarring juxtaposition of Bach and Nine Inch Nails.



- ◆ To select all the tracks in the playlist, click the Sel All button. To deselect all tracks, click and hold down the Sel All button and choose Sel Zero from the pop-up button menu. To invert the selection (deselecting all selected tracks and selecting all unselected tracks), click and hold down the Sel All button and choose Inv Sel from the pop-up button menu.

Saving a Playlist

To save a playlist, click and hold down the Load List button and choose Save List from the menu that appears. Winamp will display the Save Playlist dialog box. Enter a name for the playlist—**Full Metal Morning, Dance into Bed**, whatever—and specify a different location if necessary. Then click the Save button to save the list.





Opening a Saved Playlist

To open a playlist you've previously saved, click the Load List button to display the Load Playlist dialog box. Navigate to the playlist, select it, and click the Open button.

Tips for Working with Playlists

Here's how to get around the current track and playlist quickly:

- ◆ To jump to a specific time in the track that is currently playing, press Ctrl+J or right-click the Song Title display and choose Jump to Time from the context menu to display the Jump to Time dialog box. Enter the time to which to jump in the Jump to text box in Minutes:Seconds format (for example, 2:15) and click the Jump button. This is the precise way of skipping lame intros.
- ◆ To move less precisely through a track, drag the Seeking Bar to the left or right.
- ◆ To jump to another track in the current playlist, press J or right-click the Song Title display and choose Jump to File from the context menu to display the Jump to File dialog box (shown below). The Jump to File dialog box lists the tracks in alphabetical order. Double-click the track to which you want to jump.



- ◆ You can also navigate around the playlist by using the Playback submenu on the main Winamp menu (accessed by clicking the menu box in the upper-left corner of the main window). This submenu offers navigation items including Stop w/ Fadeout, Back 5 Seconds, Fwd 5 Seconds, Start of List, 10 Tracks Back, and 10 Tracks Fwd.

13

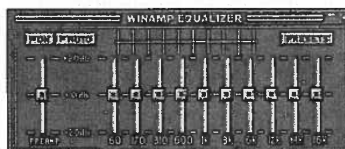
Make Music Sound Good with the Winamp Graphical Equalizer

Winamp provides a full-featured graphical equalizer for adjusting the balance of the music. The graphical equalizer lets you increase or decrease ten different frequencies in the sound spectrum to boost the parts of the music you want to hear more of and reduce those you don't.



Graphical Equalizer Basics

To display the Graphical Equalizer window (shown below), click the Toggle Graphical Equalizer button in the main window or press Alt+G. The frequencies are measured in hertz (Hz) and kilohertz (kHz)—the number of cycles per second. As you can see, the left-hand end of the graphical equalizer controls the lower frequencies—from 60Hz booms and rumbles upwards—and the right-hand end controls the higher frequencies—up to 16kHz. You can increase or decrease each frequency up to 20 decibels (dB), enough to make a huge difference in the sound. (For example, boost all the bass frequencies and crank up Hole to knock all the ice off your bedroom window on snowy winter mornings.)



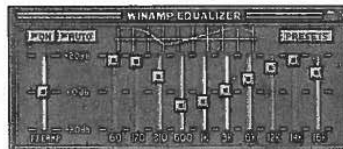
First, make sure the graphical equalizer is on. (It's off by default.) Click the On button to toggle the graphical equalizer on and off. When it's on, the On button will display a bright green light; when it's off, the light is a darker green. Guess it's lucky the Winamp guys didn't design traffic signals.

The PreAmp slider on the left side of the Graphical Equalizer window raises or lowers the preamplification of the graphical equalizer all at once. Usually you won't need to mess with the PreAmp slider because you can control the



Winamp volume output either through the main window, through the Windows Volume Control (usually in the Taskbar's tray), or through the volume control on your amplifier or speakers. If you do adjust the PreAmp level, don't set it too high because that will distort the sound.

To adjust the sound, drag the sliders up and down. Winamp takes a second or two to implement the changes, so be patient. You'll notice that the equalizer display at the top of the Graphical Equalizer window changes shape to match the slider settings, as shown below with settings you might try for playing rap in a '65 Impala. This display helps you see when you've got a setting out of whack with the others.



Keep in mind that the graphical equalizer works with (or in some cases against) your soundcard and your speakers. If your speakers are tinny and deliver too much treble, you can reduce the high frequencies on the graphical equalizer to help balance the music. And if your speakers are bass heavy, you can use the graphical equalizer to minimize the bass late at night when the folks next door start complaining—or crank it up if they tick you off.

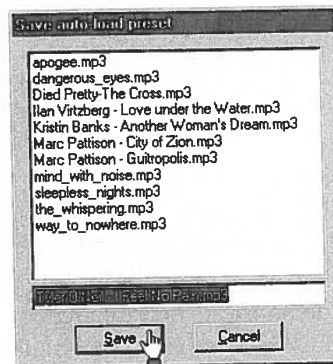


NOTE Don't expect the graphical equalizer to act as a panacea for a poor stereo system. If your audio hardware sucks, clever use of the graphical equalizer may make it suck less. But it won't make it sound like a five thousand-dollar Bang & Olufsen system.

Saving and Loading Preset Equalizations

The graphical equalizer's killer feature is its ability to save and auto-load preset equalizations. This means that you can create a custom equalization profile for any particular track and have Winamp automatically use it each time you play the track.

To create an auto-load preset equalization for a track, play the track and set the graphical equalizer sliders appropriately. Then click the Presets button to display its menu, highlight the Save menu to display its submenu, and choose Auto-Load Preset to display the Save Auto-Load Preset dialog box (shown below). The dialog box will suggest the title of the song as the name for the equalization; edit the name if necessary, and click the Save button to save the preset.



Then enable the auto-load presets by clicking the Auto button in the Graphical Equalizer window so that it displays a light-green light. (It's off by default.) From here on, Winamp will use your customized equalization whenever you play the song.



NOTE When auto-load preset equalizations are enabled and Winamp finishes playing a track with a preset equalization, it will continue to use that equalization for the following track if that track does not have its own equalization.

Winamp comes with a set of preset equalizations that you can load at will by clicking the Presets button, highlighting Load to display its submenu, and choosing Preset to display the Load EQ Preset dialog box, as shown on the following page.





Select the equalization you want from the list box. Wait a couple of seconds and see how it sounds. To apply it, click the Load button. For example, you might select the Large Hall equalization to make Winamp sound as if it's playing in a large hall. Winamp's preset equalizations are well put together and demonstrate how different a graphical equalizer can make music sound. When you look at the slider positions for some of the equalizations, you may expect minimal changes in the sound—but your ears will tell you otherwise.

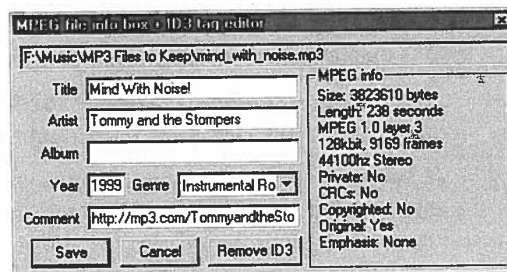
To add to the list of preset equalizations, set the sliders for the equalization, click the Presets button and choose Save > Preset to display the Save EQ Preset dialog box. Enter the name for the new preset and click the Save button.

To delete a preset, click the Presets button and choose Delete > Preset or Delete > Auto-Load Preset to display the Delete Preset dialog box or Delete Auto-Load Preset dialog box. Select the preset and click the Delete button to delete it.

14 Check and Set Track Information with Winamp

Winamp lets you quickly view and change the track information, called tag information, that each MP3 file can store.

In the Playlist Editor, right-click a track and choose File Info from the context menu to display the MPEG File Info Box + ID3 Tag Editor dialog box (shown below) with the information for the track. (From the main window, you can display this dialog box by double-clicking the track title.) Change the information as appropriate and then click the Save button to save it to the MP3 file. You can also click the Remove ID3 button to remove the tag information from the MP3 file.



15 Choose Visualizations for Winamp

Winamp's Vis display provides *visual entertainment* (read: graphics that look way cool when you're totally spaced) keyed to the frequencies of the