Alchemy Desktop v1.0.4.10
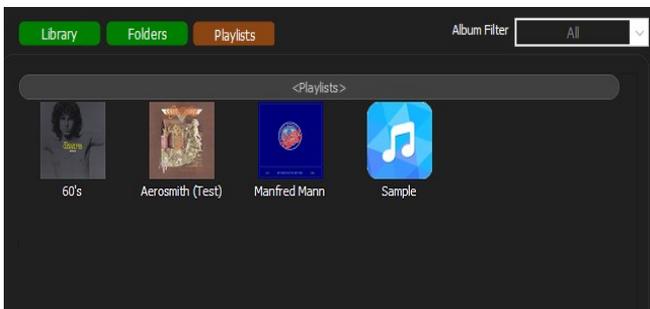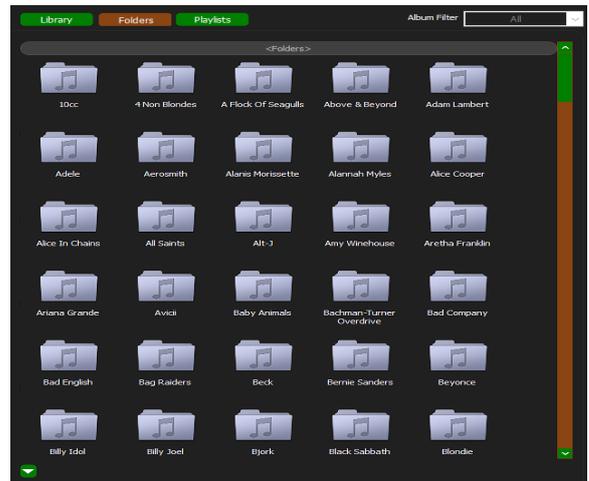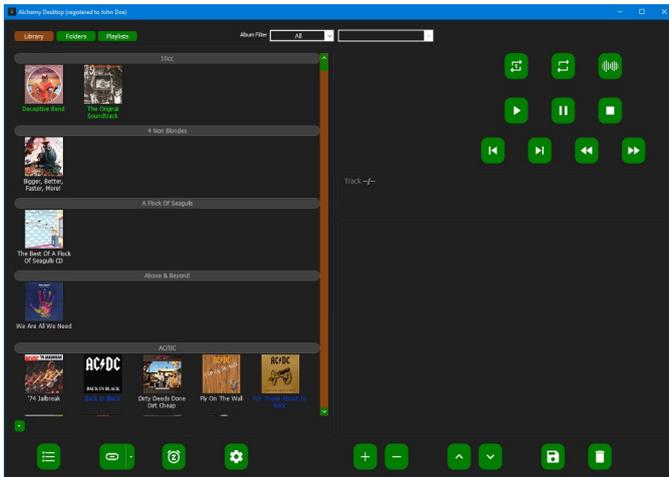
Introduction

Alchemy Desktop is a touch friendly interface to Signalyst HQPlayer, which enables you to easily browse your library by artist or folder structure.

- Albums can be grouped by artist or as a folder structure. Multiple library folder locations can be displayed simultaneously.
- Library view can be collapsed to show only artists for quick scrolling. Individiual artists can be expanded to show albums for that artist.
- Expandable track selection window for adding individual tracks to playlist.
- Right click on folder in Folder view to add entire subtree to playlist.
- Search for artist by typing partial name. Album view or Folder view will jump to the searched item.
- Albums in library view are color coded by sample rate. Filter library based on file tag values.
- Share your music library between users or other computers on the network.
- Auto-select HQPlayer filters based on sample rate, genre or customized for individual albums or playlists. Playlists can have separate filters to deal with mixed rate families.
- Playlists can be built on-the-fly. Tracks can be mixed from any album in the library and saved into a playlist.
- Add or remove tracks from an Active Playlist or re-order tracks. Resave playlists in track order.
- Tracks can be played from drive cache using an optimized rewrite-data copy process for improved audio quality.
- Alchemy automatically manages drive cache contents to maximize the number of tracks that can be loaded into the available space. Highlights tracks in playlist that do not fit into available space.
- Reply Gain can take control HQPlayer volume to provided a consistent volume level across albums and auto-adjust volume to prevent clipping. Reply gain can be manually trimmed from drop-down menu.
- Volume function when replay gain is disabled to directly control HQPlayer volume level.
- Multimedia keyboard keys will control transport for Play, Pause, Stop, etc and volume functions.
- Provides a touch friendly tablet interface using remote desktop software. One finger accelarated scroll functions for quickly navigating albums and playlists.
- Choose from 7 color schemes for user interface. Customise existing color schemes or create new themes.
- Fully adjustable main window that is saved between sessions.
- Remote connect and control HQPlayer running on Linux, Mac or Windows. Supports IPv6 connections.
- Shuffle play the current album view contents in random order. Each album only plays once
- Automatically stop playback and optionally shutdown or sleep PC after specified time.
- Play directly from cd-rom.
- Up to 8 zones can be created which can connect to a remote or local HQPlayer and load a custom configuration xml. Zone specific libraries and filter maps can be configured.
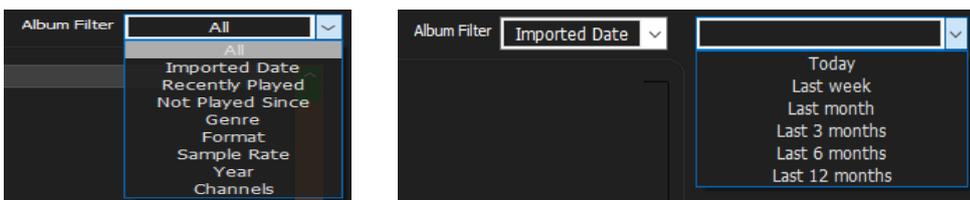
Main Interface

Below is the main interface for Alchemy Desktop:

Note: The library needs to be configured first to point to the media files. Click on to enter Settings. Refer to the Settings section below for further information.

Click on album in Library View to select album tracks, browse folder in Folders View or load Active Playlist in Playlists View.
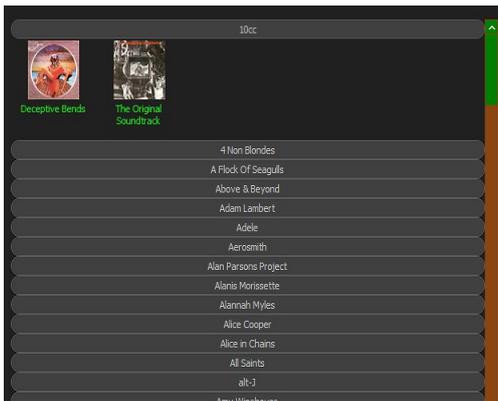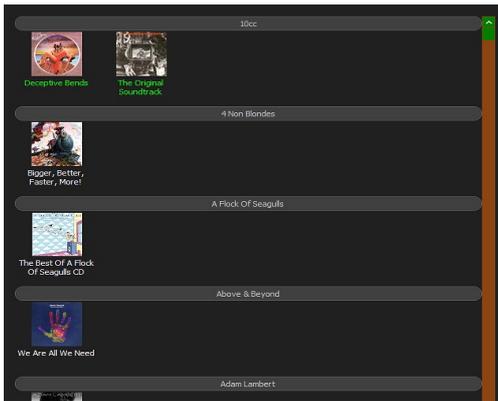
Right click on album in Library View to load album directly into Active Playlist (overwrites existing playlist if stopped), or in Folders View to load all sub-folders into Active Playlist.

Library View can also be filtered based on file tag values, for example: Only the albums that match the selection criteria will be displayed in Library View. Note that Channels will only show under Album Filter if multi-channel albums are detected in the library.

Right-click on **Library** to jump directly to Setup Library window.

The Library View on the top left can be toggled as expanded or collapsed with the ⊟ button as shown below:
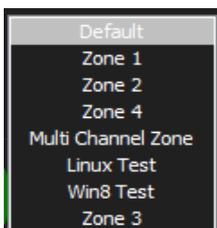

Clicking on an Artist header will toggle the expanded/collapsed state for that Artist.

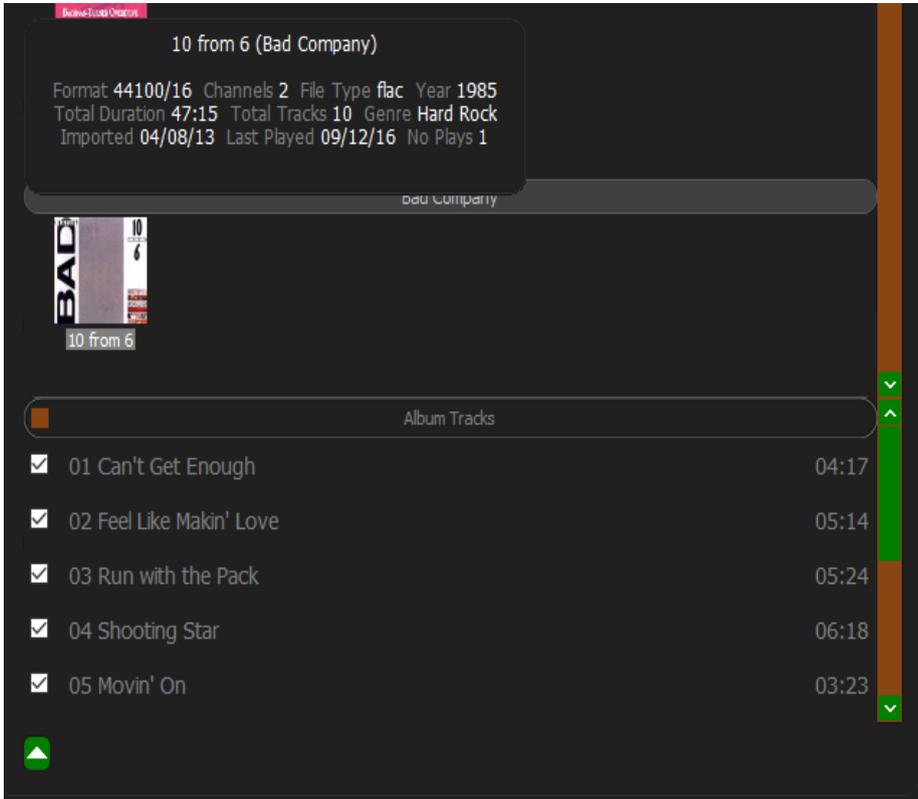The 🔗 button loads or connects to HQPlayer. This shows the disconnected or unloaded state.

When HQPlayer is connected and loaded, the button will show ⊖ Tracks cannot be loaded into an Active Playlist until HQPlayer is in the connected state.

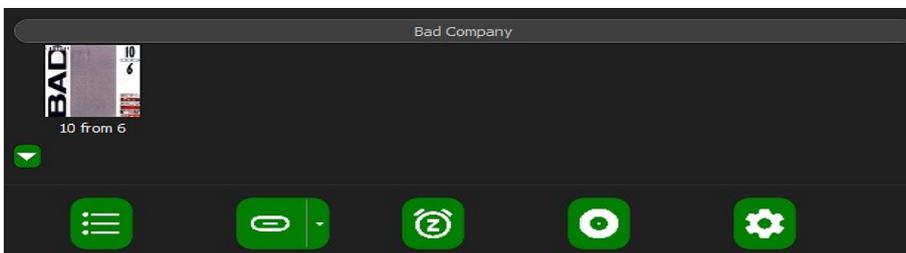When more than one zone has been created the link button will change to ⊖▾

Clicking on the arrow on the right will present the list of available zones. Selecting a zone from the list will change the active zone and load the zone specific library (if specified). Any zone specific HQPlayer configuration will also be loaded.

Selecting an album in the Library View will list the tracks for that album along with the track duration and album summary information below. Note that on the left of the track number, all tracks are selected by default. This will add all tracks for that album to the Active Playlist at once. These can be individually de-selected or de-select all from the top check mark to indivdually add tracks to the Active Playlist.
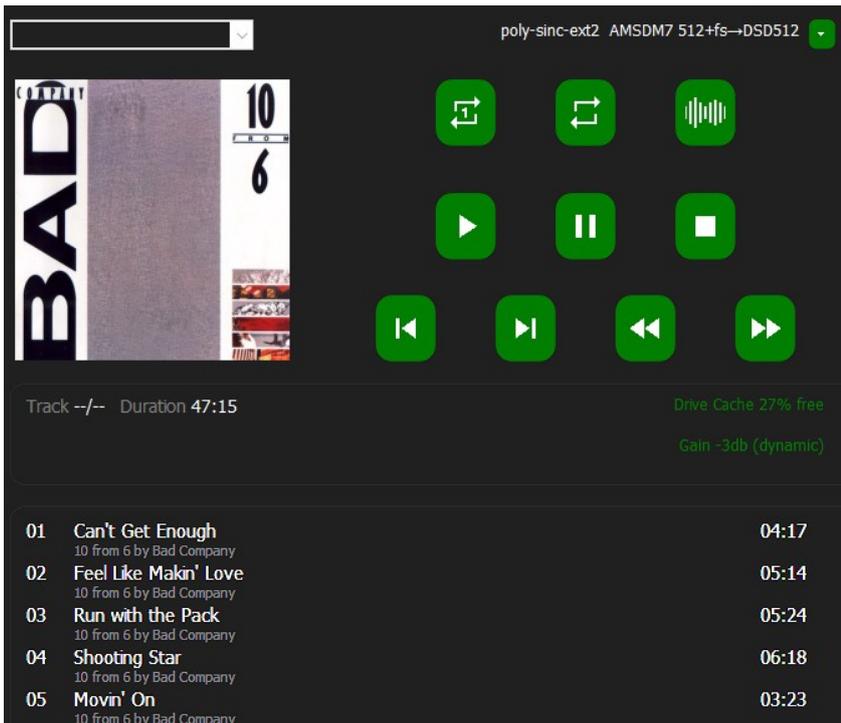

The tracks view can be toggled on and off using the arrow toggle button to the left of the album summary.

CD playback can be initiated with the button. This option will only appear if a drive is present and enabled in Settings. The CD Button will inject the CD automatically and read the track information which is loaded into the playlist. The drive will be locked during playback. To release the disc, click The drive specified in Settings should match the drive configured in HQPlayer. This function requires HQPlayer 3.15.1 or newer.

 button will add the tracks selected as shown above to the Active Playlist view:
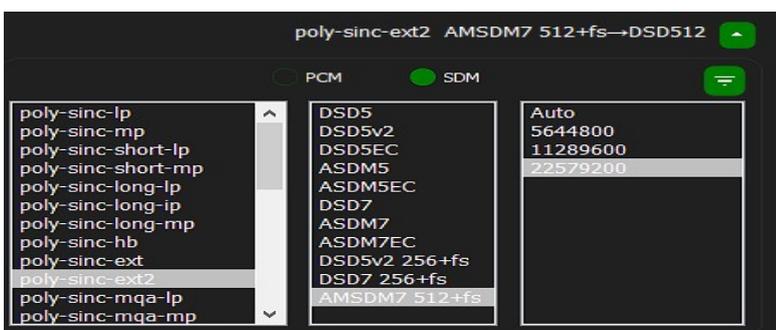

This will load the tracks into HQPlayer. If the Drive Cache function is enabled, the tracks will be copied at this point to the Drive Cache during the load process. Tracks that dont fit into drive cache will be shown in an alternate color. These will play from the original source location instead of drive cache.

Right click on a track during playback to immediately jump to that track in the Active Playlist (corresponds to a long press on a Tablet interface). Selecting a track when stopped will start playback at that point when the button is pressed.

Right click on the Play button will enable auto-play. As soon as tracks have finished loading, playback will start.
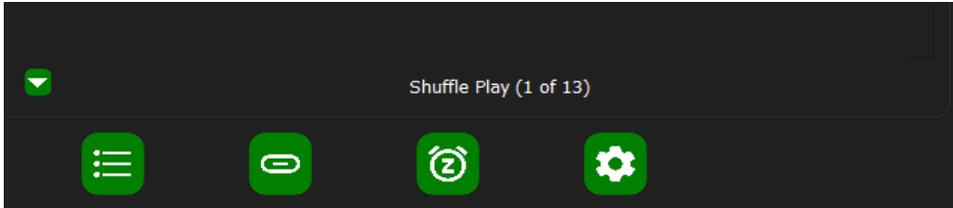
The Filter functions will be available at this point for manual selection or can be auto-selected using the Filter Map function. The list is constructed from what is available in HQPlayer, so it will accomodate any future filter types. Use the drop-down button to show the filter selections.

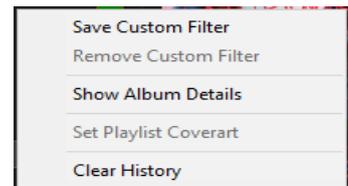 Will jump directly to the Filter Maps window.

Individual albums in Library View or an entire folder and all subfolders in Folders View can be loaded at once into the Active Playlist with a right click or long press on a tablet. This will replace the existing playlist contents when playback is stopped.

Right click on to start Shuffle Play, which will play all albums currently displayed in Library View in random order. Each album will only play once and playback will stop once all albums have been played. Pressing during Shuffle Play will skip to the next album in the sequence. Pressing will cancel Shuffle Play and stop playback.
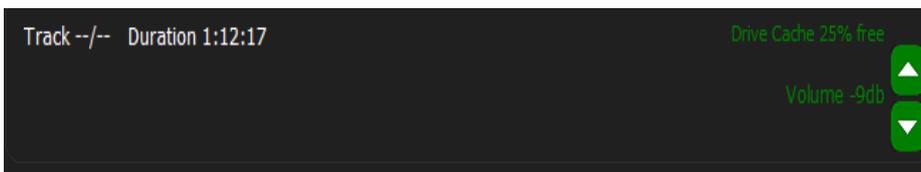

Right click on the Active Playlist cover art image to save individual filter settings unique to that Album or Playlist.

This is also the menu from Playlists View, where you can save a custom cover art image for the playlist.

Clear History will reset the last played information for the album.

When Replay Gain is disabled, the manual Volume function is available to directly control HQPlayer volume level. The up / down buttons are auto-repeat and will repeat when pressed with the left mouse button. Volume functions can also be controlled via the multimedia keyboard buttons for volume up/down and mute.

Right click on Volume or Gain label will display an options menu.

Dynamic Replay Gain option will automatically reduce the gain by 1db at a time when clipping is detected. The gain history is stored per-track to prevent any further clipping.

Adjust Replay gain can reduce gain for the album by a set amount up to -12db where there are issues with clipping. This information is stored with the album for future playback.

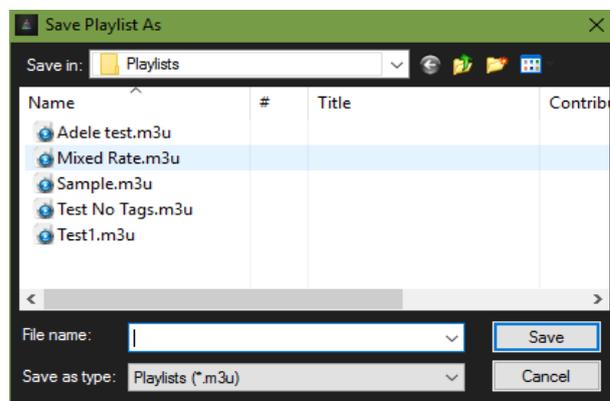Reset Replay Gain clears the gain settings for the loaded album.

Individual tracks can be removed from the Active Playlist with the [—] button.
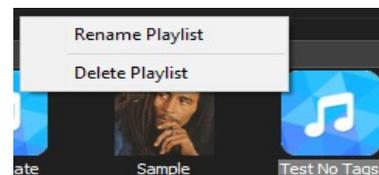
This will remove the highlighted track and renumber the remaining tracks. This can be done while a track is currently playing. If the currently playing track is removed, the next track will commence.

[^] [˅] Will move the selected track up or down in the Active Playlist. This can only be done when playback is stopped. These can also be used to re-order an existing playlist. Re-save the playlist in this case to change the sequence.
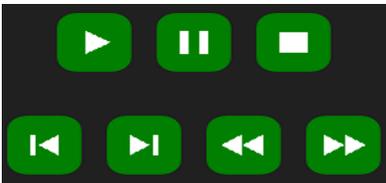
[💾] Save the Active Playlist to a named playlist that appears in the Playlists View.

The entry created in Playlists View can be renamed or deleted by right-click on the playlist icon.

[🗑] Clears the Active Playlist, removes any contents from the Drive Cache (if enabled) and stops playback. The tracks will also be removed from HQPlayer. Cancels Shuffle Play. Will stop playback and eject the disc in CD Play mode.

Standard transport controls, available once tracks are loaded into the Active Playlist and copied to Drive Cache (if enabled). The skip forward / back buttons are auto-repeat and will repeat when pressed with the left mouse button. These can also be controlled via the multimedia keys on the keyboard.
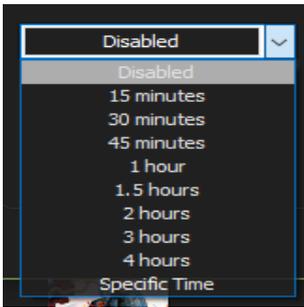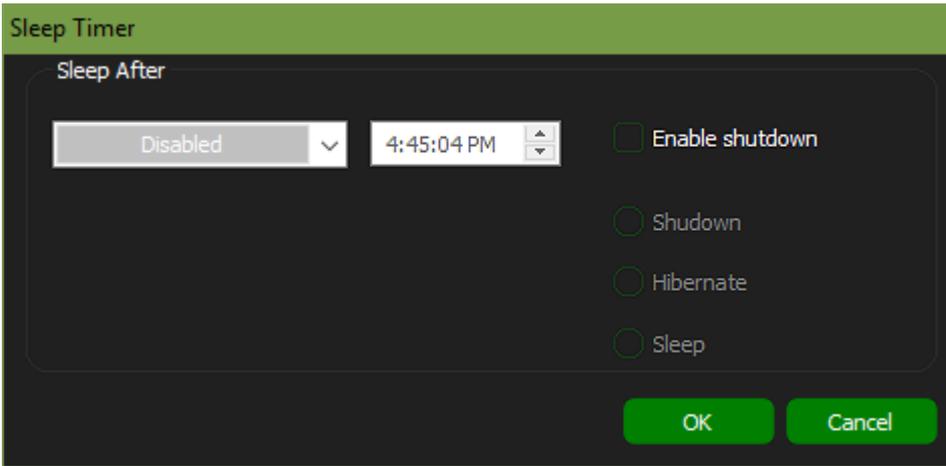
Right click on Pause or Stop will pause or stop after the current track finishes. Pressing Stop during Shuffle Play will skip to the next album in the random sequence. Right click on Play to toggle auto-play. When enabled, this will start playback as soon as any tracks are loaded into the Active Playlist.

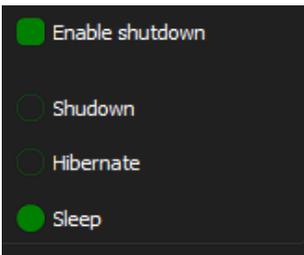[🔂] [🔁] Toggle the repeat current track/repeat all tracks function.

[⩝] Toggle the Invert phase function. The Invert phase state is remembered for the zone between sessions.

Displays the Sleep Timer options window. The Sleep Timer will stop playback after a specified duration and clear the Active Playlist. This can optionally shutdown or put the PC into a power save state.
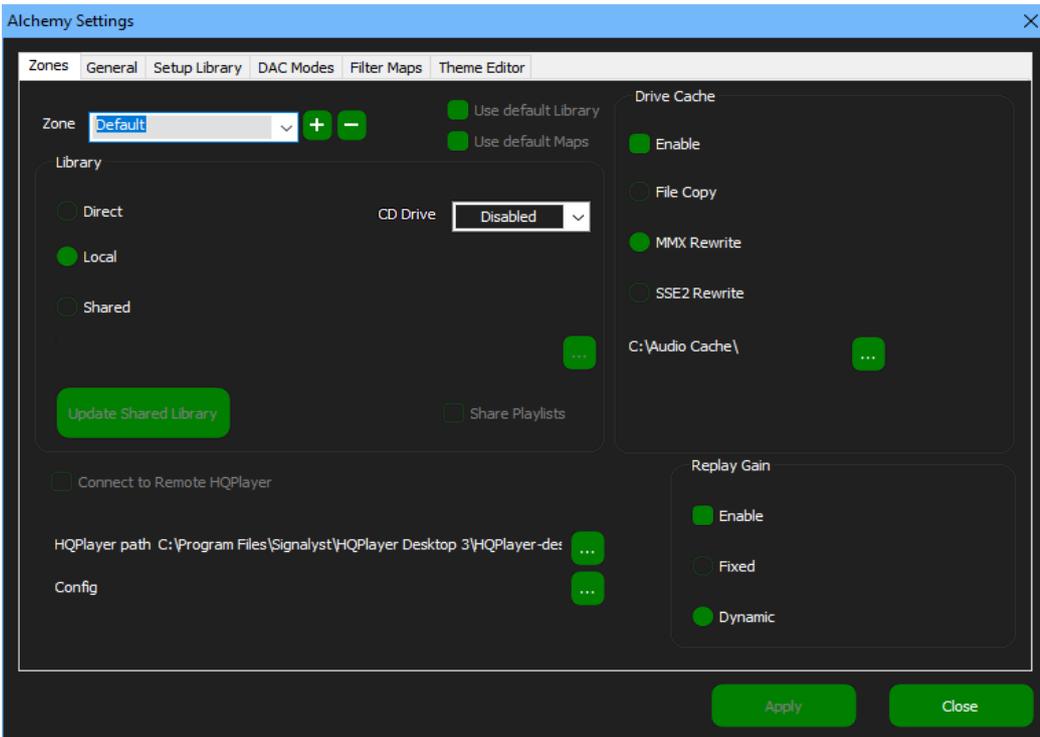
Sleep Timer

Sleep After

| Disabled ⌄ | 4:45:04 PM ⌄ | ☐ Enable shutdown |

○ Shudown

○ Hibernate

○ Sleep

OK   Cancel

Define sleep time delay or sleep at a specific time.

Disabled ⌄
Disabled
15 minutes
30 minutes
45 minutes
1 hour
1.5 hours
2 hours
3 hours
4 hours
Specific Time

Choose an optional PC Shutdown mode to shutdown, hibernate or sleep after the Sleep Timer period.

🟩 Enable shutdown

○ Shudown

○ Hibernate

🟢 Sleep

When the Sleep Timer is active the will change color. Setting a sleep timeout time in the past will automatically disable this function.
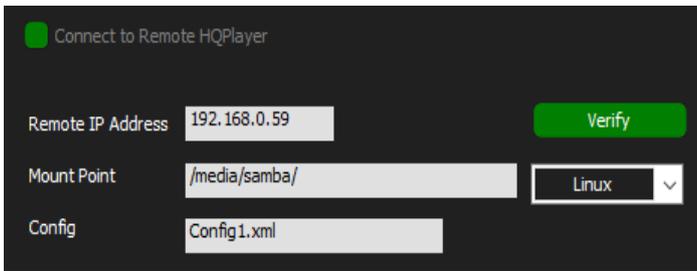
Settings

Shown below is the Zones settings tab:

To add a new Zone, enter the zone name and click ➕ Select the Use default Library or Use default Maps options for the zone. When checked, these will "tie" the library or filter maps configuration to the Default zone. When unchecked, the zone configration will have a private library or filter maps local to the zone.

To remove a Zone, select the zone name in the list and click ➖ This does not delete the zone configuration from disk, but will hide it from the zones list. Re-adding the same zone name will restore the previous configuration.

 Specify the type of library for the Zone. Direct will connect directly to HQPlayers internal library and is read-only. Changes can only be made through HQPlayer. Local and Shared mode will utilize the native library management to show an enhanced Library View with color coding based on source file type and sample rate. Enables tracking of last played, format and sample rate data. This enables easy identification when there are multiple copies of the same album with different sample rates. Shared mode also enables the ability to save a copy of the library to synchronise with other users or PCs on the same network.
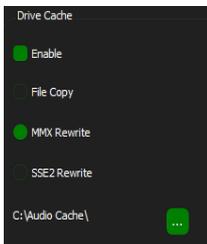
 In Shared mode, this button will synchronize the shared copy of the library with any local changes. Other copies of Alchemy Desktop that point to the same shared library will automatically download the changes on start-up.

 Playlists can also be optionally synchronized to the shared library by selecting the Share Playlists option.

Remote connect and control to HQPlayer running on any Linux, Mac or Windows PC. Specify the destination IP Address or hostname. IPv6 addresses can be specified. Press the Verify button to confirm the host is available. HQPlayer should be running on the destination.
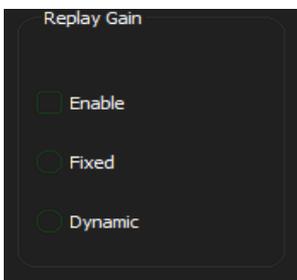
If HQPlayer v3.14 or newer is installed, the remote details will automatically be detected. For older versions, manually specify the platform. The Mount Point details will automatically be partially entered for that platform type. The default for Linux is /media and Mac is /Volumes. The media library should be mounted as a <sharename> directory under this mount point. This ensures that the path to the media files lines up correctly to a Windows UNC path of \\<servername>\<sharename>. Append /<sharname> directory to the supplied mount point value. The remote connect is compatible with Windows mounted drive letters for the media path, as long as the drive letter is mapped to \\<servername>\<sharename>. A config xml can be specified to load a different HQPlayer configuration. When left blank, the default settings.xml will be loaded (requires HQPlayer 3.19.0 or newer).

Enable the Drive Cache function. Tracks loaded into the Active Playlist will be copied to Drive Cache first using one of the three copy methods before being sent to HQPlayer. Tracks that cannot fit into Drive Cache will be highlighted in Active Playlist View. The copy method MMX Rewrite or SSE2 Rewrite may improve audio quality on some systems. It utilizes a special alignment and copy method to ensure optimal RAM access.

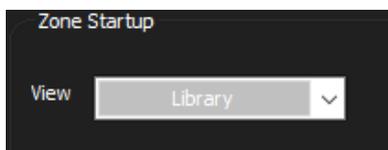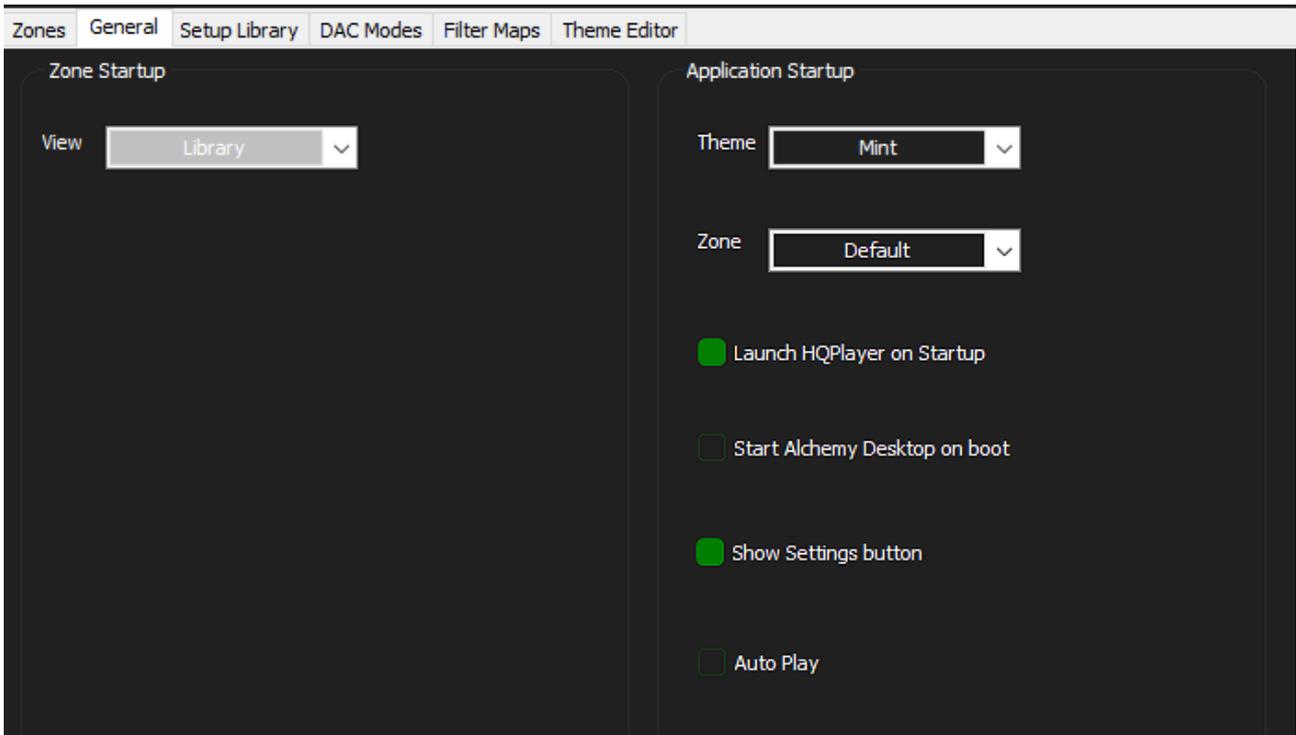Click the path button (...) to specify the Drive Cache drive letter and Path.

Note that the contents in this location is mangaged by the Active Playlist and will be deleted when the playlist is cleared, so do not specify any location that contains files you wish to keep!

Enable the Replay Gain function. This will take control of HQPlayer volume and set the level based on the lowest replay gain tag value in the playlist. This ensures consistent volume levels between albums. Dynamic will monitor for any audio clipping and adjust the volume down 1db at a time to prevent any further clipping for the remainder of the playing track. The level is reset on the next track to the base replay gain value. Per-track gain history is saved to prevent any further clipping.

**Warning – do not enable this function if the HQPlayer volume is the only means of volume control in your system. Reply gain assumes you have an external pre-amp or DAC volume control and will set the HQPlayer volume to near maximum (up to the max level set in HQPlayer settings). Disabling Replay Gain will enable the manual volume control on the main interface to directly control HQPlayer volume.

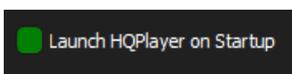The General Settings tab is shown below:

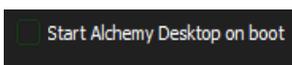 Set default View to display when switching to a Zone.

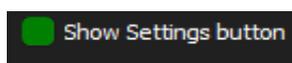 Select the color theme for the Alchemy Desktop interface.
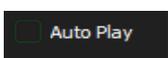
 Set the default startup Zone.

 Set to launch HQPlayer when starting Alchemy Desktop.
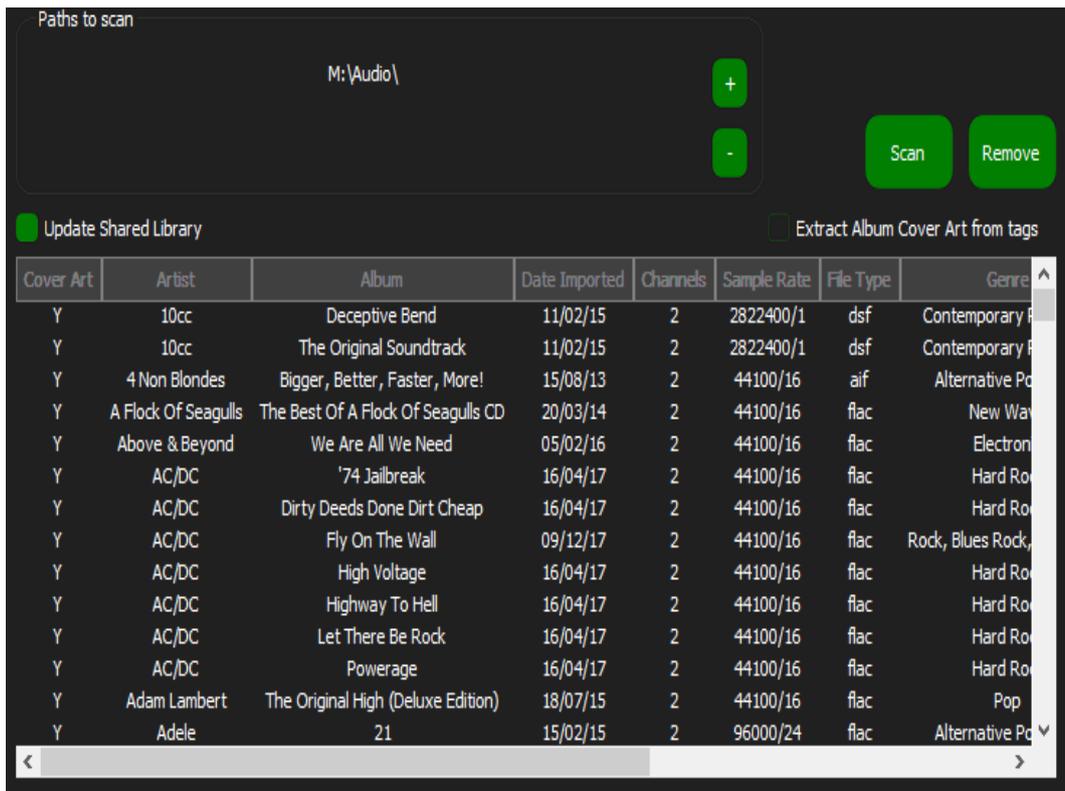
 Set to run Alchemy Desktop on boot.

 Disabling this option effectivly "locks" the settings by hiding from the main window. To re-enable the settings, open the "About" window from the top-left system menu, hold down Ctrl+Shift on keyboard and left click in the "About" window.

 Start Playback as soon as tracks are added to the Active Playlist.

The Alchemy Desktop window will automatically position itself in front of HQPlayer.

Shown below is the Setup Library settings tab:

Add or Remove folders from the Library. Multiple folder locations can be scanned for contents or displayed in Album view as a native folder structure. This applies to Folder, Local and Shared library modes. This is the only setting required if only using Folder view. Scan does not need to be run for this view.

Scan the listed folders to add Albums to library. This is only applies to Local or Shared library modes. Any new albums found will highlighted at the top of the list. Albums with missing tags will show as a different color. An option will appear to auto-fill missing album and artist tags from path and filename information. The Remove button removes the highlighted entries from the library. Double click on Artist, Album or Genre fields to modify scanned values. Note that this does not alter any tags in the media files, but changes the saved library fields.
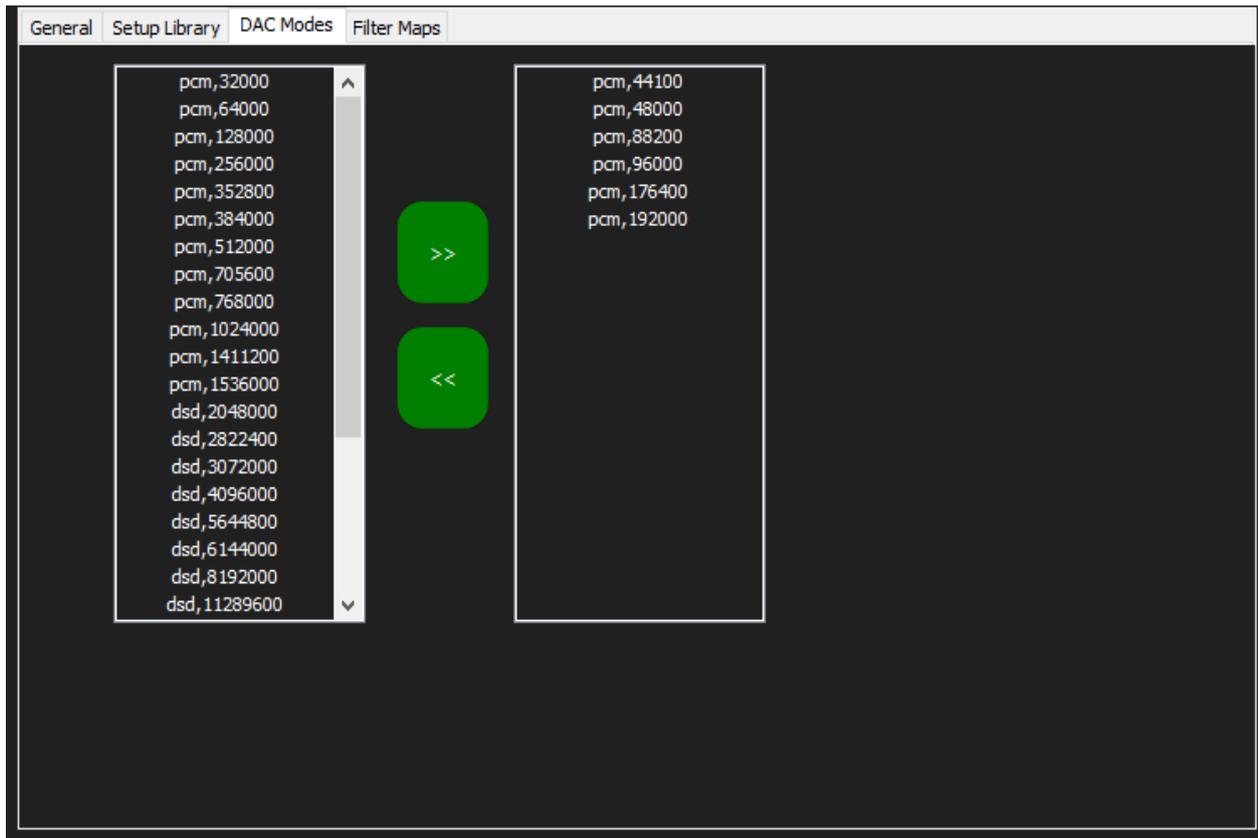
Default is selected when Shared Library mode is enabled for Zone. Uncheck to *not* automatically update the shared library once scan is completed.

Check this option before scan to extract any cover art from embedded tags during scan and save in album folder as Folder.jpg. This will allow HQPlayer to show the cover art.

**Note on library versions – if running from a library created with a previous version of Alchemy Desktop older than v1.03.00, a one time conversion is necessary to enable the Album View filters, last played and imported date functions. When upgrading Alchemy Desktop from a previous version, the [Scan] button will change to [Convert] Press to run the library conversion.
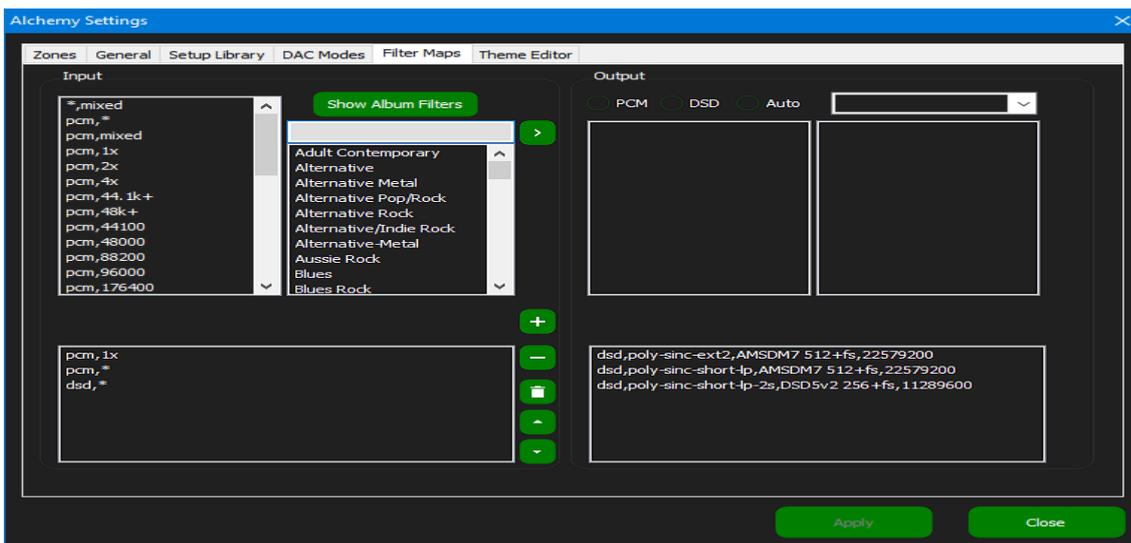
Alchemy Desktop will still function with an unconverted library, but some new features will be unavailable.

Shown below is the DAC Modes settings tab:

Specify the modes and sample rates supported by your DAC. This enables the use of the 'Max Rate' setting in Filter maps and controls what is listed as an available sample rate or mode on the main window.

Shown below is the Filter Maps settings tab:

Build the source format query from the left section (specifying a genre is optional and additonal genres can be entered into the list) and specify the corresponding Output format from the right section. Specify each parameter from the Output section, then press the + button to add. Double-click on an existing entry in the bottom left list to recall. The output parameters can then be modified. Click + to update in the list.

The list of available genres will be loaded from the library, or if no library is present, a default list is shown.

The selection bar will select each matching entry together. It is recommended to list from most specific Input format first, through to most genreral (with pcm,* or dsd,* as a catch-all for any formats that dont correspond to specific filters). The *,mixed and pcm,mixed are special case for Playlists that contain tracks that have mixed rate families, eg: 44.1k and 48k based PCM rates. The former is for mixed DSD and PCM tracks in the same playlist and the second form is PCM only. This will allow selection of one of the poly-* filters that is compatible with all rates. Without this selection, playback may stop in the middle of a playlist when the source sample rate changes.

Auto and Auto Rate options on the Output utilize HQPlayer internal 'Auto' settings and the 'Max Rate' setting utilizes the Alchemy DAC Modes to determine the maximum supported mode for your DAC. A specific output rate can also be set for an individual filter map entry. The list of output rates available is determined by the allowed rates in DAC Modes.
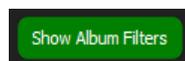
 Resets both the Input and Output selection in progress.
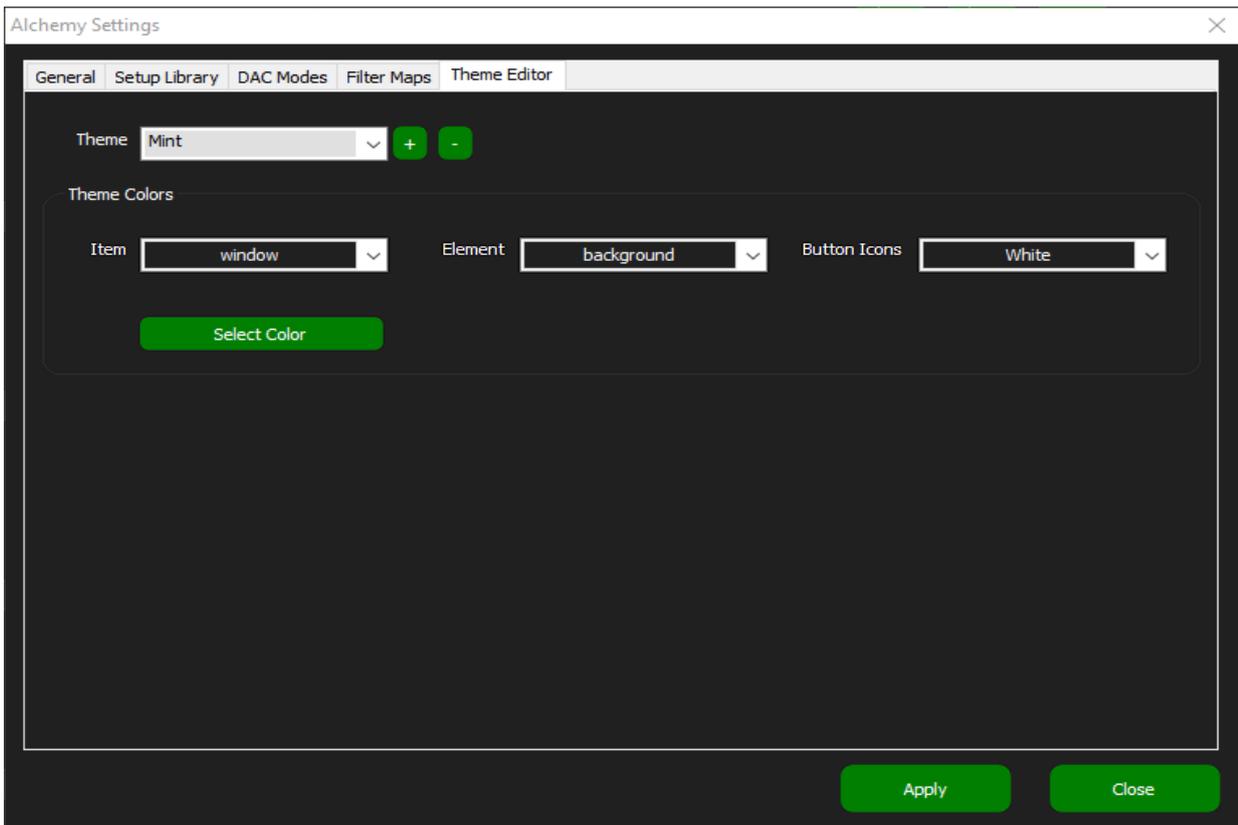
 Removes the highlighted entry.

  Re-orders the highlighted entry in list.

 Searches the library for Album or Playlist specific filters. Allows editing or removing existing album or playlist filters.
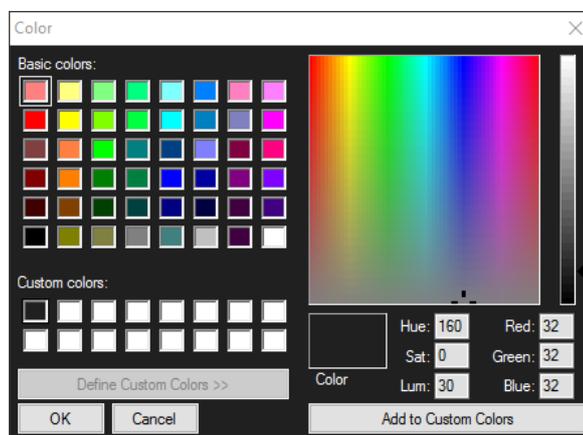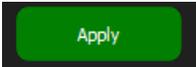
Show below is the Theme Editor settings tab:

Select an existing Theme name or type the name of a new theme, then press [+] to create a new blank theme. Define all Item and Element colors to complete the theme.

The existing color for the selected Item and Element will appear in the first Custom Colors box. This will be used as the default color selection in the Define Custom Colors selection:

Once all settings are entered, the [Apply] button will save the changes.