Cue Player Premium

Cue Player Premium is a program to play theater sound cues. I needed to stop years of wrestling with cassette players and reel-to-reel decks to get cues on time - especially when actors skip pages or transpose scenes! I thought it would be good to use the computer to help.

If you can get your cues into .wav, .ogg, wma or .mp3 files, and there are many programs to do this, plus the CDs of sound cues available, you can build a file of cues and their sounds with Cue Player Premium. The program will present the normal sequence of cues and allow you to play them simply with a mouse click or button push. You can also add music from the computer's CD player for pre and/or post performance sound.

What's been added over the free CuePlayer is this:
- A 5 band graphic equalizer can be set for <u>each</u> cue.
- A reverb setting is also available for each cue
- The fade out duration is settable by cue
- Auto Advance is settable by cue
- Setting Auto Advance on a CD player based cue will move to the next track on the CD.
- Cue file names can be added via drag and drop in the Cue Editor.
- An Auto Play button, settable by cue, that sets the cue to immediately start playing when the cue is selected, such as after an Auto Advance or a Fade timeout of the previous cue.
- A cue can be one of two classes: *normal* or *background*. A background cue will continue to play after a normal cue has been selected. This allows two sounds to play at once (think rainstorm with occasional thunder) Since a fade-in time and a fade-out time for both cues can be set, cross-fading is possible.
- The ability to play .ogg or .wma compressed files
- The Master (Windows) volume control can be controlled independently of the cues.
- A Pan control has been added to make it easier to slide cues from side to side.
- The playing of a cue can be triggered by either Enter or Space (your choice) as well as mouse click.
- The sound card or output device can be selected when the user has more than one installed.

What's been added over CuePlayerPro is this:
- The cue text font is selectable.
- Power (on/off) signals to an external controller can happen at cue start or stop. The web site has details and links to power control suppliers.
- Cue text color and cue background color are settable by cue.
- An Auto Fade can be selected to fade the cue a settable number of seconds before its end.
- Beyond stereo, if a 5.1 sound card is available, speaker selection is possible by cue.
- There are now three classes of cue. The *normal* and *background* cues work as before, and a new class – *independent* has been added. As its name would indicate, an independent cue can play anytime and several can play at once. The down side is that Equalize, Reverb, and Power are not available for these cues.
- A Function key can be assigned to play a cue. Doing so will make the cue independent and playing the cue will not reposition your location in the cue list.
- A cue can be a volume change cue for a previously playing cue.
- The Master, or sound card, volume level can be set at Cue Player start to be either what it was when you last used the program, or what is was when the last numbered cue was edited. In effect, either computer specific or cue file specific.
- The starting position of a long cue can be set before or during playback. Useful in rehearsal when the Director asks for "the last 30 seconds" of that music.
- Auto Advance can be set for either the start or end of that cue. Allows several independent cues to start at once.
- A Black background selection is available.
- Cue file relocation is supported as well as building a cue file from a directory of sounds. Useful when visiting troups bring their own sounds.

I'm hoping the program is pretty well self evident, but here is a quick summary of the buttons and menu options:

CueList frame holds the usual suspects of Add, Insert, Edit, and Delete. Add goes to the end of the current list, Insert goes above the existing selected cue. Edit allows changes to the selected cue and Delete, well, I suspect you know. Edit may also be invoked by right clicking the cue line. The window that appears has boxes where the cue description or prompt can be typed and where the associated sound file is stored. If the

sound file entry is just a number, then the cue is considered a volume cue for that numbered cue. You may select a color for the text and the background of each cue. The initial volume level can be set, as well as defining a cross-fade to another volume level to happen automatically when the cue starts to play. You can fade-in or out as you wish. Click the Loop dot, making it green; to continuously repeat the sound until the next cue is selected. Auto Play will start the cue playing as soon as the cue line is active, most likely from an Auto Advance. When Auto Advance is checked, the program will go to the next cue as soon as that cue finishes. Auto Fade will start to fade the cue at the Fade duration value before it would normally end. Otherwise, if the Fade button is clicked, the fade would occur over the Fade duration. All Fade durations are in tenths of a second. For example, a value of 20 gives a 2 second fade. There is a value in the cueplayer.ini file named "FadeDur" that is the default value. Picking an F key will set the cue to Independent and allow playing that cue whenever the key is pressed. There are buttons to test your setup and save the cue.

The big green play button will start the cue, as will double-clicking the cue list line. Pressing the Enter key or Space bar, as selected from the Options menu, will also start the selected cue line. Changing the cue line, either by single clicking another line or using the up and down arrows, will immediately stop the playing cue if it is the same class (normal/background) as the playing cue. Independent class cues will continue to play regardless of cue line change. Pause will stop the currently playing sound and Resume will start it where it left off. Rewind puts you back to the start of the cue, including resetting the initial fade timing. The Fade button will fade out the playing cue per the cue's fade time setting.. The button will pulse as long as the fade is active. Fade All and Stop All will work across anything playing. The slide controls will set the volume level and can be either linked together or moved separately to slide the sound from side to side. The green one is the Master volume. The Pan slide control will also move the sound from side to side. The Time display counts up or down (Options menu) as the cue plays. Hovering the mouse over the slider icon in the time display will open the position selection slider. Moving the mouse out will close it.

From the Files menu - A new cue file may be started or an existing one selected. New cue files can be built from existing ones of a different file structure or from a directory containing the sound files. A loaded cue file may be checked to see that all the sound files are present by clicking Quick Cue Check.

From the Options menu - The clock is now only digital but you can pick the color. You can choose to have the most recent cue list open automatically when the program starts. You can choose whether the timer display counts up from zero or down from the length of the cue. The 'Keep-alive' option activates the disk drive every minute so that it stays spinning. Still, it is recommended that if you are running from a laptop, that power control be turned off. That is, set the laptop to be constantly on. There is a choice between keyboard activation of a cue by either the Enter key or the Space bar. Master volume setting at startup can be either what it was when the program was last closed or what it was when the last cue was edited. The background color can be set to a darker one, including black, in case the screen is out where it might be an audience distraction. The font and size of the cue text can be selected. The program will enumerate the installed sound cards and allow selection of which to use for output. It may also be a good idea to set the sound scheme to 'None' within Windows to avoid extra sounds. If a power controller is being used, its description or connection should be selected. Finally, existing cue files from previous versions of Cue Player may be imported, with default values for the new features.

A caution on Independent cues – they are really independent. That is, if you start to Play one, wait a second and Play it again, you will have both sounds coming out, one behind the other. You can stack up multiple concurrent outputs. For that reason, Fade and Stop may not work if the cue is selected again after the cue is already playing.

Cue Player Premium is the result of several years of development and user feedback from the original Cue Player, but if you have a suggestion to improve its operation, just drop me a note. (the web site can be clicked to from the About window)

Enjoy,
Dave