

Deep-Sky Planner Mobile Edition : A Review

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Cost around £11.00 from Google Play Store or Apple iTunes store

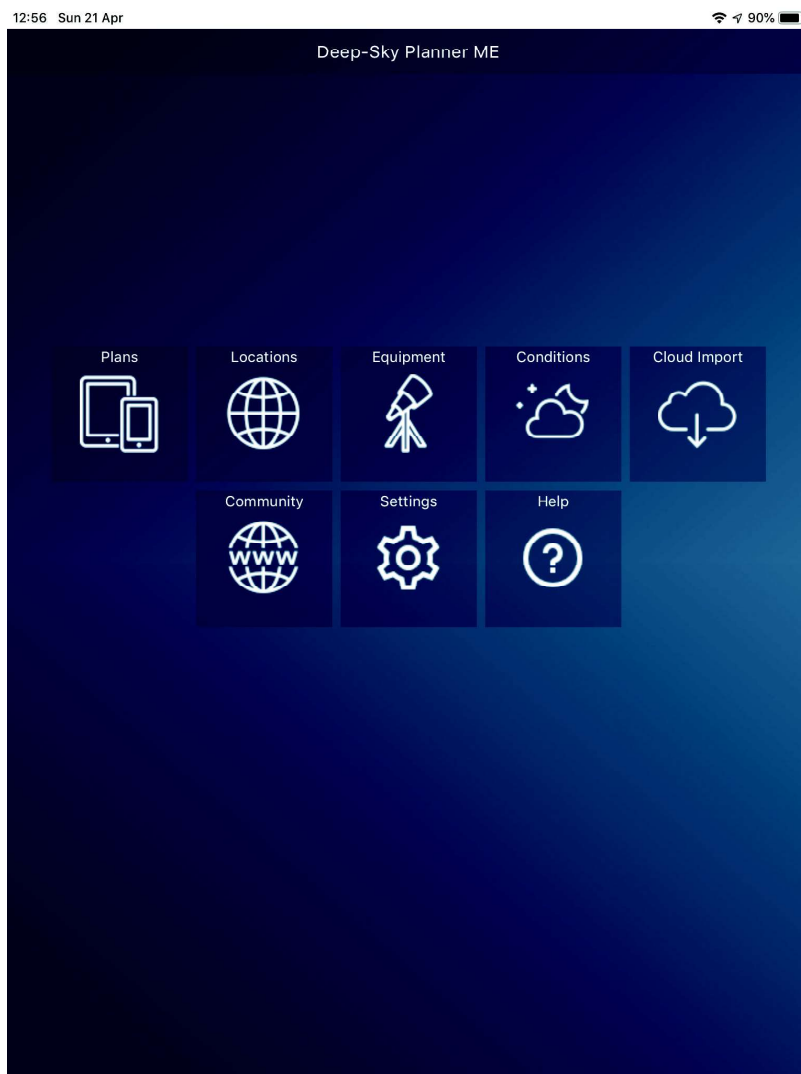
<http://knightware.biz/dspme/index.htm>

One of the things that has been missing from mobile devices is a fully fledged planner for deep sky observing. There have been some simple versions like *Observer Pro* on iOS and *SkySafari* now includes some simple planning functionality in version 6. A few years ago we had a review of the Windows software *Deep-Sky Planner 7* (DSP). Well that product has undergone a number of updates since then but the latest is a version of the program called *Deep Sky Planner Mobile* edition that runs on both iOS and Android devices. Recently released (March 2019) this is not (yet) a full version of DSP but basically what could be called a viewer for plans generated from the Windows version.

These plans can be uploaded either via a cloud service (OneDrive, DropBox and Google cloud currently supported) or downloaded from the DSP community pages on the web. You can upload your equipment, observer and location settings from Windows, although you can also choose the location settings in DSPME as well. This can be done by either selecting from a long list or adding a new location. You can set your favourite observing location. Observer settings can only currently be uploaded.

The look and feel of the program varies depending on what device you are using it on although all functionality is available on all devices. It does work on small phone screens as well as tablets but I think the main use of it would be on large phone screen and tablets.

Fig 1 shows the first screen you are presented with when starting the program. The function of most of the icons should be self explanatory. The help screens are pretty good and cover most of the functionality of the program. The



community button takes you to the DSP website where you can download pre-existing plans and equipment lists.

Fig 1

Fig 2 shows the populated equipment screen. The colour scheme, which includes a night vision mode, can be chosen in the settings screen. Some things can be edited in DSPME including deleting plans and objects included

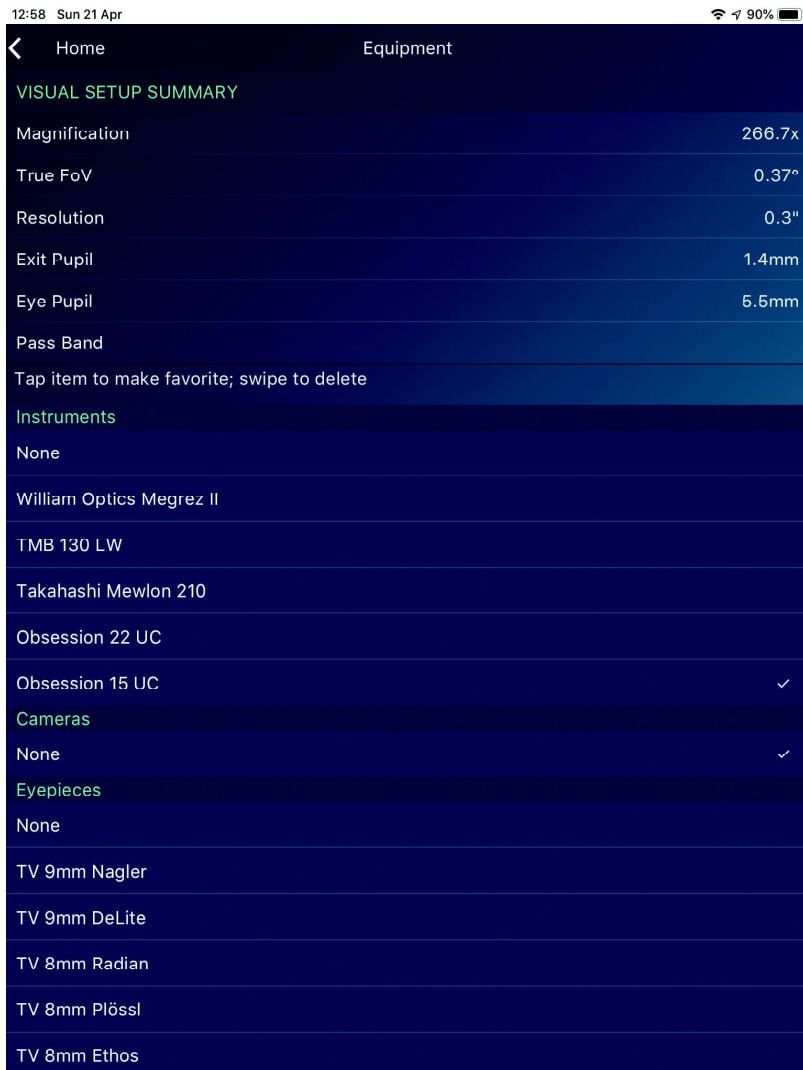


Fig 2

in plans but you cannot currently add new objects to a plan in DSPME.

I have used the program on both an iPhone7 and an iPad Mini 4 so I am assuming it works the same way on Android. To delete you can swipe left.

The main screen that people will be using after the original configuration is the Plans screen and first of all with this you are presented with a list of plans loaded on the device. These plans can be uploaded via a cloud service or as mentioned downloaded from the community pages. I used OneDrive and found it quite slow to get to the directory to load plans from but once there plans are loaded very quickly. You can select one by tapping on it and then the plan loads. This may take some time and a loading icon may or may not appear, this seems random on iOS. You are then presented with a screen like Fig 3 (see overleaf).

The highlighted object lists details and if you

have loaded an image then that appears as well. There are various options here. The info screen lists details of the plan such as the creation date etc.. The localize screen allows you to specify a date and time for the calculations as well as an option to download DSS images for all the objects in the plan. It also allows you to set the locale for the plan. It also allows you to set the location for the plan calculations. These options need to be saved using the button. As suspected the objects tab displays the objects in the plan. This underwent quite a few changes during the beta period and it needs to be clear that the objects menu icon allows you to select which object in a given plan you are interested in, a change that had confused me.

The plans option takes you back to the main plan selection window. You can scroll the information window if there is more information than can fit on a single screen.

The filter menu allows you to set filters such as magnitude, size, Alt etc. which will select the objects in conjunction with what you ask. The sort menu does something a little different as it allows you to sort the objects in the plan in various order and works in conjunction with the filter options so you can filter on say magnitudes brighter than 12 and then in visibility order.

DSPME does not have any charting functionality or the ability to export the plans in a format, say a *SkySafari* observing list, for use with a charting program so as noted at the beginning of the review it is currently purely for working with DSP plans.

This is the first release and I assume that future editions will address some of the issues, like you need the Windows version to enter equipment and observer information because without this it is not really clear what this version offers as you still need the Windows version to generate new plans and be able to import some of the vital configuration information to make it work. There are also some improvements that perhaps need to be looked at, particularly with the DSS import as you could easily fill up the limited space on a device by importing lots of images and you have no option to set a DSS cache size, or the ability to delete all images associated with a plan, only an option to delete all DSS images loaded. Perhaps something that could be thought about for a future version.

It should be noted that all sorts of deep sky objects can be in plans as well as the usual



Fig 3

suspects you can have double star lists as well as red (Carbon star) lists, although of course this is a function of the Windows version.

Double star observers need to be aware that double stars are listed by their WDS number so it may be difficult to find the object you want.