Knowledge Base

Multichannel playback with U86 XT under Windows

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We get often asked about the independant output channels of U86 XT, especially about the options of multichannel playback from various different applications. Our current drivers support a number of different options for multichannel playback, providing the highest level of compatibility with all different types of audio applications. This might be important for you to check compatibility with existing applications you already have or if you want to develop your own audio application.

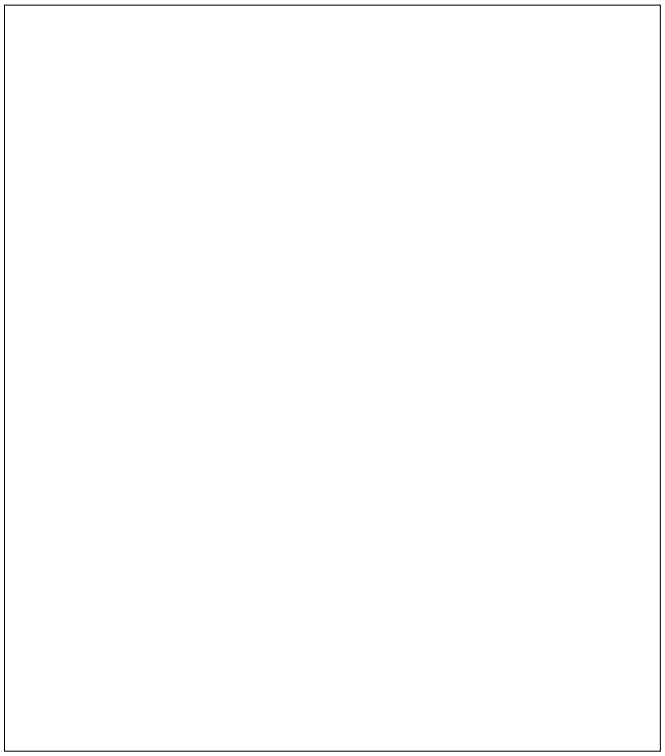
ASIO device

U86 XT provides a professional ASIO drivers, following the common standard from Steinberg. The ASIO device is called *ESI U86 XT* and appears in all ASIO compatible applications for selection, both 32-bit and 64-bit. Nearly all common DAWs are ASIO compatible, incl. Bitwig Studio, Cubase and many others. Also many DJ applications that support multiple output channels work with ASIO. Please refer to the documentation of your audio software to check if it supports ASIO and how the device is selected and channels are assigned.

Note for software developers only: if you want to develop your own ASIO compatible application, check the ASIO SDK from Steinberg .

separate playback devices

In the Windows *Control Panel* under *Hardware and Sound* > *Sound*, you can select the default playback device that is used by all audio applications that do not have their own preferences. It looks like the following dialog):



As you can see, there are several entries listed named *U86 Ch 01&02* , *U86 Ch 03&04* and *U86 Ch 05&06* . Each of these MME and DirectSound compatible wave devices are assigned to one physical stereo output pair of U86 XT. Signals played via *U86 Ch 01&02* will be sent out through the line output 1 and 2, signals played via *U86 Ch 03&04* will be sent out through the line output 3 and 4, and so on.

These devices can also be selected directly inside many audio applications. This makes it possible for example to have one application using *U86 Ch 03&04* and send out a signal through outputs 3 and 4, while another application simultaneously could use *U86 Ch 01&02* and send out a totally different signal through outputs 1 and 2.

Also, you can set here the default device for playback, which will be used for Windows system sounds and by any application that does not have its own individual selection by clicking on the device entry and then *Set Default*.

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Note for software developers only: if you want to develop your own application using these playback devices, you can use the standard Windows Multimedia API (often called MME API) or the DirectSound API which is well documented by Microsoft on their site and with the documents provided by the different programming environments such as Visual Studio.

multichannel speaker device

U86 XT also provides a multichannel speaker device that is generally used usually by more modern applications for multichannel playback. Also programs like DVD player software use this device for multiple output channels simultaneously. Selectable under *Sound* in the Windows *Control Panel* , the *Speakers* device of the *U86 Audio driver* , can be additionally configured to define the number of output channels. Select it and click *Configure* at the bottom of the window to get the following *Speaker Setup* dialog:



In this dialog you can choose between *Stereo* (= 2 output channels), *Quadraphonic* (= 4 output channels) and *5.1 Surround* (= 6 output channels). Select one of them to define how many channels you want to be able to playback simultaneously (*5.1 Surround* is suggested).

Note for software developers only: if you want to develop your own application using the multichannel speaker device, the MME API and DirectSound API documentations from Microsoft also apply. Multichannel playback can be achieved by utilizing the *WaveFormatExtensible* structure as it supports more than 2 channels.

output routing and signal cloning

Obviously the multiple outputs of U86 XT are intended mainly to send out **different** signals individually at the same time. However, there might be special applications where it is helpful to send out **the same** signal through all output channels. For this, we provide a function called *DirectWIRE Output Channels* which you can control via the DirectWIRE menu in the control panel of U86 XT. With this, you can define the signal source channel from your software for each physical output channel of the hardware. In this article , the function is explained in detail.

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