



SERAPH A3 SERAPH A3 MWX

User Guide



The SERAPH A3 conforms the following standards:
EN 55022: 1998 + A1: 2000 + A2: 2003; class A
EN 55024: 1998 + A1: 2000 + A2: 2003; class A

In order for an installation of this product maintain compliance with the limits of a class A device, shielded audio cables must be used, not longer than 50 cm. Attention: This is a device of the class A and can cause interference to radio or television reception within the residential area. The user is encouraged to try to correct the interference by suitable measures.

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Hardware Design by MARIAN

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Technical changes are reserved.

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Welcome

The MARIAN team proudly presents to you the SERAPH A3, thanking you for your confidence. A new abundance of functions while at the same time maintaining an intuitive handling - these high expectations we try to meet in this product. In the SERAPH A3 you can see newest technologies merging with long proven experience and development skills into a powerful DAW (Digital Audio Workstation).

What is there to discover?

Of course, poured in hardware, the new processing unit, with much affection called the "BEAST". This newly-developed DSP mixer is nothing less than a full-fledged digital mixer with up to 64 channels, 7 mix sums and 256 EQs! Easily you create sub-mixes, that are perfect for either headphone mixes or sending feeds to reverb units thanks to the pre/post switches. For each of the full-parametric EQs, modeled in accordance to analogue prototypes, you can freely decide on which sub-mix it is to be effective. EQ on the main, but not on the headphone mix, or vice versa? With the mixer of the SERAPH A3 this is not a problem any more.

The special features of this system cannot only be found in a "BEASTly power", but also in its flexibility. This workhorse tows a separate routing matrix allowing to send any signal to any output or back to the input again. This includes even the playback signals of a user-software and the sums of the DSP mixer, which can thus be easily re-recorded on the same computer system or manipulated with the on-board EQs.

In a way this manual in your hand is kind of like a trainers whip to tame the fullness of the functions of the BEAST and to make them fit to your daily tasks in the studio. The chapters called "Let's start" offer a quick introduction by explaining a simple playback and recording process. But you can also get in-depth information in the chapters "SERAPH A3 in detail", explaining all functions in detail and their relationship to each other. Finally, at the end of this manual, you can find a small glossary that will help you to explain unfamiliar terms.

And now we hope you'll enjoy trying out and getting to know your SERAPH A3. We are confident that this sound system in domesticated form will be a partner in the realization of all your music projects for years to come.

Your MARIAN Your Team

Before you start ...

Features

- ✓ Your SERAPH A3 is equipped with many useful functions. Here is a small list of the features and options:
- ✓ PCIe card with 3 ADAT I/O
- ✓ 2 MIDI I/O (MWX version only)
- ✓ WordClock I/O (MWX version only)
- ✓ The BEAST
 - 64 channel mixer, hardware-based, latency-free, 52bit
 - 256 high-precision analog-feel EQs (in each channel: 1x low shelf, 2x peak, 1x high shelf)
 - flexible and extensive mix, monitor, and routing functions
- ✓ S/MUX compatible for 96kHz operation
- ✓ MARIAN SyncBus compatible
- ✓ MARIAN TDM SyncBus compatible
- ✓ Synchronization as clock master (Internal clock to SyncBus/TDM SyncBus, to ADAT outputs or WordClock output)
- ✓ Synchronization as clock slave (processing an external clock at the SyncBus, the ADAT inputs or at the WordClock input)
- ✓ Fail-safe firmware update technology (automatic recovery of the firmware in case of errors)
- ✓ Advanced multi-client drivers for Windows™ 2000/XP/2003 Server/Vista and Windows™ 7 each in 32-bit version
- ✓ Driver support: MME, ASIO 2.0, GSIF 2.0, WDM Audio, DirectSound and MME and classic (Windows™ XP)

Installation

Scope of Supply

After carefully opening the package of the SERAPH A3, please be sure to check if the following components are to be found complete and undamaged:

- ✓ 1 x SERAPH A3 PCIe card
- ✓ 1 x MIDI/WordClock Extender with connector cable (MWX version only)
- ✓ 1 x cable for MIDI Input/output (MWX version only)
- ✓ 1 x CD-ROM with driver software and manual
- ✓ 1 x CD-ROM with software bundle
- ✓ Quick Start

System requirements

For the successful and correct operation of the SERAPH A3 your computer needs to meet the following minimum requirements:

- ✓ Intel Pentium or AMD processor with a clock frequency of 2 GHz and 1024 MB Ram
- ✓ Windows™ 2000/XP/2003 Server/Vista or Windows™ 7 each in 32-bit version
- ✓ DirectX 9c
- ✓ A free PCI slot
- ✓ A free slot for the MIDI/WordClock Extender (MWX version only)

Please note that the system requirements may be higher depending on the operating system and audio application used.

Hardware and software installation

In the brochure labeled "Quick Start" you will find all the installation steps as a graphical guide. If you still have any questions or in case that problems appear during the installation, please contact our support service. You will find all the different ways to contact the support services in the appendix of this manual.

Driver and firmware updates

In some cases, there is a driver update available for the SERAPH A3 in the download section of the MARIAN homepage. It may include:

- ✓ Functional improvements of the driver and/or the user interface (s)
- ✓ Adjustments to new operating systems and/or their new components (updates and service packs)
- ✓ Compatibility upgrades to audio applications and third-party applications

When performing a driver update please follow the instructions provided in the "readme.htm" file, which is part of the packed folder of the new driver files¹.

Important:

In the course of a driver update it may become necessary for the firmware of the SERAPH A3 to be updated. Whether a firmware update is necessary or not, can only be determined after an installation/update was performed. The firmware upgrade will then be executed automatically and must finish with a reboot of the PC system. The Fail-safe firmware update technology MARIAN protects the SERAPH A3 against errors, which could occur due to the interruption of the update process, such as a power failure. If normally this would result in a total malfunction of a system, the fail-safe technology ensures that at the next initialization of the SERAPH A3 a core firmware is loaded. Thus the sound card may again be detected correctly by a Windows™ system.

Please note:

Following a successful firmware update and after the restart of the system, Microsoft Windows™ 2000/XP/2003 Server/Vista/7 will find a new hardware, because the hardware ID of the SERAPH A3 may have changed due to the former update. As the driver files are already installed, you must simply choose "Install software automatically (recommended)" when the Windows™ hardware wizard appears.

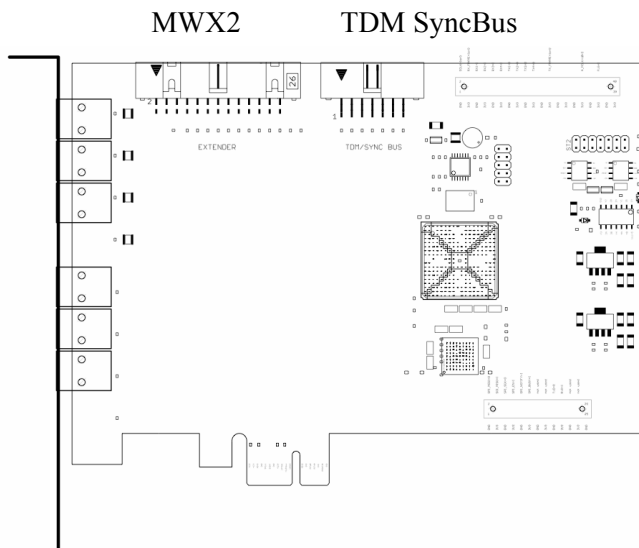
¹ Even if the Windows™ Explorer is capable of displaying compressed files – for installing the driver (update) a full decompression is required!

Connections

SERAPH A3

ADAT Inputs

ADAT Outputs

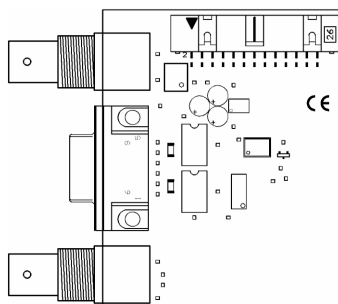


MWX2 (optional)

Wordclock Input

Connector MIDI breakout cable

Wordclock Output



ADAT

Connect ADAT compatible digital devices here. The outputs of the SERAPH A3 can be recognized by the bright caps and red-glowing LED. For S/MUX compatible devices the operation mode must be changed accordingly in the settings window of the SERAPH A3.

TDM SyncBus

If other MARIAN sound systems with TDM SyncBus option are installed they may be connected using a TDM SyncBus cable². Other MARIAN sound systems with SyncBus option only, may be connected via an adapter cable. Both cables can be ordered in the MARIAN webshop.

MWX2

Use the supplied ribbon cable to connect the optional MWX.

WordClock

This connector is used to integrate the SERAPH A3 into a WordClock/SuperClock network. If the SERAPH A3 is the last card in a chain of devices, then the WordClock termination has to be activated in the settings of the SERAPH A3 manager.

MIDI

Using the included MIDI breakout cable 2 MIDI Inputs and 2 MIDI Outputs may be used.

² Audio signals may only be exchanged between MARIAN TDM SyncBus compatible systems. Clock- and start/stop synchronization is possible between all MARIAN systems.

Let's start I: Basics

In this chapter you will learn

- ✓ The fundamentals of Digital Signal Processing,
- ✓ To avoid problems/errors when connecting digital devices
- ✓ To make the correct settings for the connection of 3 MARIAN ADCON³

Introduction

The SERAPH A3 sound system is a purely digital system. For connecting other devices this brings along some specialties. Basic rules (an output is connected to an input, and vice versa) certainly do need not be explained here again. For digital audio signals, however, the clock plays an important role. Following you will thus find some background notes and an example setup for the correct wiring to external equipment.⁴

The SERAPH A3 in connection with digital devices

Background

Between analog and digital audio signals, there is an essential difference: Analog audio signals are continuous. Thus, for each possible moment, these signals can be measured, and at each point of time it is possible to receive a specific measurement value. Digital audio signals however consist of many individual values (samples), followed by each other with intervals of a specific rate (sample rate). In this case it is not possible to obtain a measurement at any time, but only as often as given by the sampling rate. Example: If the sample rate provides a value only every second, it is not going to be possible to measure in between, e.g. at the time of half a second.

What is a clock?

There has to be something that governs at which moment a digital value may be send or received, because this is essential for the accurate communication of digital devices. Precisely this is the task of the clock. It is a pulse or rate generator. The rate, that the clock has, defines the sample rate.

Let's illustrate this with an example:

Imagine an orchestra with a conductor in front. The maestro raises and lowers the baton - he indicates the beat. The musicians now play fast or slow depending on his guide⁵.

Thus the conductor is the clock and the speed with which the orchestra plays, that is the sample rate.

What happens when an orchestra plays without the conductor? – Total Chaos! Every musician could, depending on the personal mood play at a different speed - depending on musical stile the result would sound more or less useful ...

The same problem exists for audio devices if they are connected without a proper configuration of the digital clock⁶. Just like in the orchestra situation it must be defined who is the Maestro (the master) and who are the performers (the slaves). Thus we can conclude the following rules:

³ The MARIAN ADCON is a ADAT full duplex converter

⁴ In the chapter "The SERAPH A3 in detail III: system settings" you will find the clock setting of the manager of the SERAPH A3 explained in detail. Additionally we recommend a look in the appendix for in depth understanding.

⁵ All conductors amongst the readers may excuse this crude simplification in favor for the appealing simplicity of the example.

⁶ Note: The clock is not depending on the transport of audio signals. That means a digital audio cable may be used exclusively for synchronization purposes, without transporting audio signals.

The rules of the digital audio world

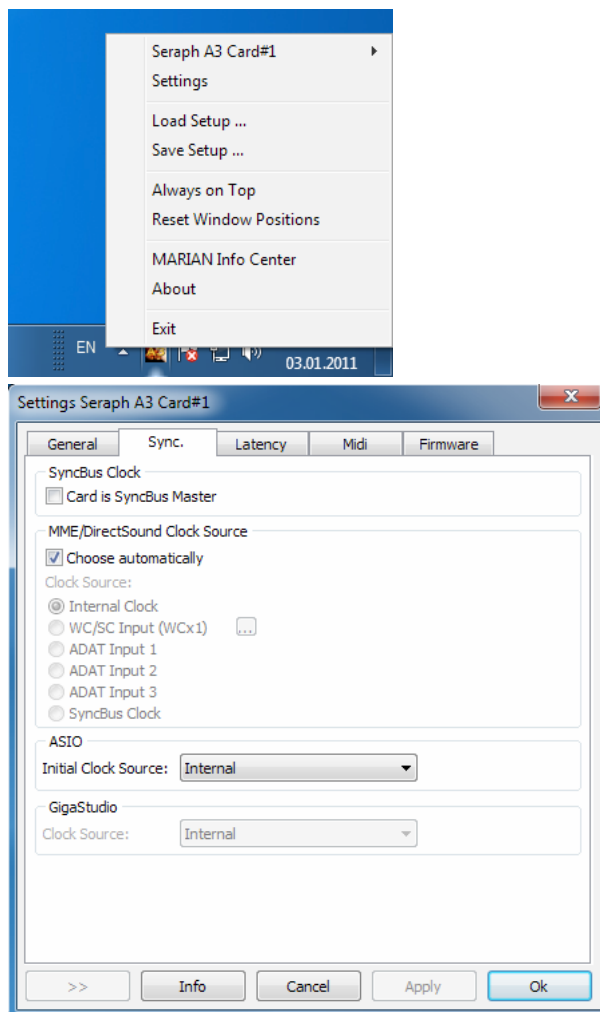
If two or more digital audio devices are connected, the following three simple rules apply:

- ✓ All devices must be synchronized with each other. (By the clock!)
- ✓ There can be only one! And only one device that sets the clock (the master). All other devices must synchronize to the clock of the master and are therefore "slaves"
- ✓ Digital audio connections already include a clock signal (S/PDIF, ADAT or AES/EBU). Alternatively, the synchronization may be accomplished by a WordClock or super clock network. Within a compound of various digital audio devices though, the clock must be the same at every point of the network.

Example: The SERAPH A3 with 3 MARIAN ADCON

The MARIAN ADCON is a full duplex ADAT converter. It converts an ADAT signal into 8 discrete analog signals and vice versa. In conjunction with the SERAPH A3, the device is synchronized via the ADAT input. Please proceed as follows:

1. Connect each ADAT pair of the SERAPH A3 with one ADCON. (ADAT In 1 of the SERAPH A3 with the ADAT out of the first ADCON and ADAT Out 1 at SERAPH A3 with ADAT in of the first ADCON. And so on.
2. Set each ADCON to "AD/DA" mode
3. In the Windows™ task bar, click on the icon of the SERAPH A3 and select <Settings>.
4. In <Synchronisation> <DirectSound/MME Clockquelle> select "Internal". (for his „choose automatically“ must be unticked.)



5. For ASIO Audio applications: open the ASIO audio application and select for the "ASIO SERAPH A3" driver the clock source "Internal"

Let's start II: Play

In this chapter you will learn how to

- ✓ Playback a signal with the SERAPH A3,
- ✓ Edit a signal with the functions of the mixer
- ✓ Create mixes of multiple signals for headphones or effect units

Introduction

In a recording studio there are a lot of cables going from the tape machine to the console in order to play back previously recorded signals. In the same way you can think of your audio software (the sequencer, etc.) being connected by many (virtual) wires to the SERAPH A3. With each of these cables, in Windows™ operating systems called "device", two audio signals are transported. In total there are 16 devices available, which transport each two signals to the SERAPH A3 using a specific driver interface. The "driver interface" is like the type of audio cable used for the transmission of the signals. For media players Windows™ Direct Sound is the most often used interface, while multi-channel music programs (sequencer etc.) make use of the ASIO interface. The following is an explanation how to use each for playback with the SERAPH A3.

Using a media playback program⁷

Windows™ XP

1. Within Windows, select <Start> <Control Panel> <Sounds&Audio Devices>
2. In the tab <Audio> for „Sound Playback - Default device" select "SERAPH A3 1-2"
3. In the lower part of the window activate "Use only default devices"

Windows™ Vista/7

1. Within Windows™ select <Start> <Control Panel> <Hardware and Sound> <Sound>
2. In the tab <Playback> select the device "SERAPH A3 1-2"
3. In the lower part of the window activate "Set Default"

Using an ASIO (multi-channel) music software⁸

1. Start the ASIO audio application
2. Open the audio settings of the software
3. Select the "ASIO SERAPH A3" driver
4. Near the selection for the ASIO driver the ASIO application often offers a button named "configuration" or "Settings". Click it to open the ASIO Device Setup.
5. By default all devices of the SERAPH A3 are activated in the "ASIO Device Setup" and can be used by the software. However you may also disable devices here, in order to use them in a different audio application.
6. For certain audio applications it is necessary to assign the devices to "busses" or similar in order to actually playback signals using these devices. For questions on this, please consult the manual of the application.

⁷ Preliminary note: If an ASIO audio application using the SERAPH A3 is already active, you must first ensure, that devices are available for usage. It may be, that the ASIO application already uses all available devices and that thus the playback via a media program is not possible. Deactivate all devices in the ASIO application, which you wish to use for the media playback. A step-by-step procedure of how to do this you will find in the following section "Using and ASIO music software". ASIO applications are always using the devices of the SERAPH A3 exclusively.

⁸ Preliminary note: If an ASIO audio application or media playback is already using devices of the SERAPH A3, they are not available any longer and it may thus be, that when starting an ASIO application an error message will occur. It will state, that the "ASIO SERAPH A3 driver could not be started" or similar. ASIO applications are always using the devices of the SERAPH A3 exclusively.

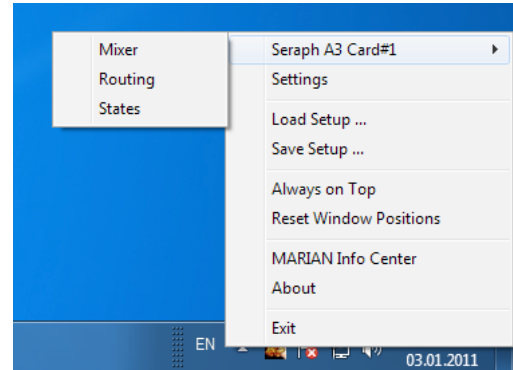
Playback with the SERAPH A3


Now that the software sends one or more signals to the SERAPH A3, we must ensure that they will be audible there. There are 2 ways to do this.

Option 1:

The signal can be made audible directly on a specific output.

1. Click on the SERAPH A3 manager in the task bar and select "Mixer".




2. For a stereo signal, connect two channels with the link button  at the bottom of the 1. channel strip.
3. Choose "DAW Out 1" from the list at the top of the channel strip for the left channel and "DAW Out 2" for the right channel



4. Navigate via the mixer or again through the manager icon in the taskbar to the "routing".



5. In the section named "OUTPUT" choose the desired output for playback. For a stereo signal connect two channels with the link button  at the bottom of the first of the two channel strips.
6. From the device selection list choose "DAW Out 1" for the left channel and "DAW Out 2" for the right channel.



Option 2:





The signal may be mixed to other signals (of other applications) in the mixer of the SERAPH A3 and then made audible as part of a mix sum on a specific output

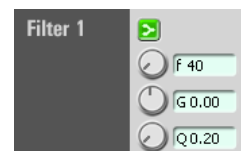
1. Click on the SERAPH A3 manager in the task bar and select "Mixer"
2. For a stereo signal connect two channels with the link button at the bottom of the 1. channel strip.
3. Choose "DAW Out 1" from the list at the top of the channel strip for the left channel and "DAW Out 2" for the right channel. Turn the pan control for channel 1 to the far left and for channel 2 to the far right.
4. The signal appears on the master sum of the mixer.
5. Navigate via the mixer or again through the manager icon in the taskbar to the "routing".
6. In the section named "OUTPUT" select the desired output for playback. For a stereo signal connect two channels with the link button at the bottom of the 1. channel strip.
7. From the device selection list choose "Master L" for the left channel and "Master R" for the right channel

As soon as the playback signal is in the Mixer of the SERAPH A3 you can use e.g. high quality EQs to manipulate the sound. The calculation of these EQs is done by the BEAST in the SERAPH A3 and therefore does not use any resources of your computer (except for some electrical power).

Editing the Sound of Signals

This is how you do it:

1. Choose the desired EQ, and activate it by clicking on one of the icons. Available are:
 - a. 1x Low Shelf for processing the lower frequency band 
 - b. 2x peak for discreet interventions to specific frequencies/frequency ranges mostly in the middle spectrum 
 - c. 1x High Shelf for processing the upper frequency band 
2. With the control next to the display that shows an "f", set the desired frequency or bandwidth on which or from where on the equalizer should become active⁹
3. With the control next to the display that shows a "G", set the desired boost or cut of that frequency or frequency band¹⁰
4. With the control next to the display that shows a "Q", set the desired slope of the EQ. For a peak EQ, it determines how wide the modified frequency band will be (low values result in a broad band). For a shelf EQ it determines on how many octaves a reduction or increase is to become active (low values result in a large number of octaves - that means, a more gradual manipulation)
5. If the signal is to be made audibly directly on a specific output, you need to activate the "EQ" button for this output. If the signal is part of a mix sum (e.g. the master output), the EQ button in the "master" section of this channel in the mixer must be activated. 

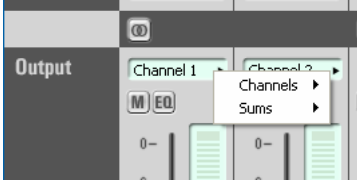


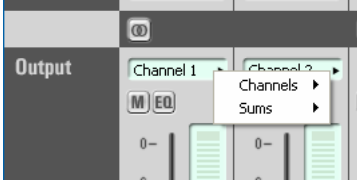
⁹ You may also use the numerical input field to enter values via the computer keyboard. See chapter: "Operation of mixer and routing".



¹⁰ For the low shelf EQ the frequencies below the chosen value are being edited, for the high shelf, the frequencies above will be manipulated.

Setting up a separate headphone mix for a musician

Suppose you are preparing a recording session and want the musicians to be able to listen to themselves - but independent in all sound and volume aspects from the main mix that you hear in the studio. This is how you do it:

1. In the output section of the routing combine the 2 outputs to which the headphones or the headphone amplifier are connected using the link button at the lower end of the first of the two channel strips.
2. Choose "AUX 1" as source for the first output and "AUX 2" for the second output.

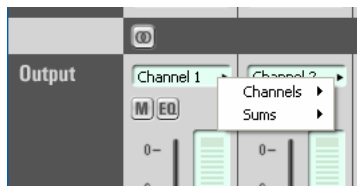



3. In the mixer channel containing the playback signal, activate the "Pre" switch near the knob "Aux 1-2".
4. Slowly turn the knob "Aux 1-2", so the signal of the channel appears at the outputs of SERAPH A3 and thus on the headphones.
5. Now you can change the monitor volume or put channels in solo mode, without affecting the headphones. If desired, you can make the EQs audible also on the headphones. To do this simply activate the EQ switch for "Aux 1"¹¹

Feeding an external effects device

Suppose you want to add an effect to a playback signal in the way as it is done with professional mixing consoles - partially and depending on the current channel volume. This is how you do it:


1. In the routing choose "AUX 3" for one of the outputs



2. Connect the input of the effects device to this output. Also connect the output of the effects device to an input of the SERAPH A3.
3. In the mixer channel strip containing the playback signal disable, if necessary, the "Pre" switch for "Aux 3".
4. Slowly turning up the "Aux 3" knob, the signal of the channel appears on the selected output of the SERAPH A3 and thus at the input of your effect unit.
5. Now for one of the mixer channels, choose the input, to which the effect unit is connected.



¹¹ There is no argument against having the same signal twice in 2 channels of the mixer. One channel is used for the master mix, the other for the headphone mix. This way you could even set up different EQs for the headphones and the main mix.

6. For a stereo signal use 2 adjacent channels and connect them via the link button at the bottom of the first channel strip. 
7. The playback signal and the proportional effects signal can now be mixed on e.g. the master sum. Note that for the channel with the effect return signal you should not turn up "Aux3", otherwise a feedback is created.¹²

In the same way you can make the musicians headphone mix from the previous example more pleasant. You could refine the input signal with e.g. a reverb effect. Leave "Aux 3" in the "Pre" mode, and open up "Aux 1-2" control for the channels in which the signal from the effects device arrives. Here, too, the "Pre" button needs to be enabled in order for the reverb to appear constantly on the headphones and not be accidentally influenced by the studio main mix.

¹² A note for special effects: activate the EQ button for the effect path only (hier: "AUX 1"). Now you can change the sound of the signal before it goes to the effect unit and without hearing this effect on the main sum.

Let's start III: Recording

In this chapter you will learn how to

- ✓ Record a signal with the SERAPH A3
- ✓ Record mixes of signals or individual signals from other software applications

Introduction

In a recording studio there are a lot of cables going from the console to the tape machine in order to play back previously recorded signals. In the same way you can think of the SERAPH A3 being connected by many (virtual) wires to the audio software (the sequencer, etc.). With each of these cables, in Windows™ operating systems called "device", two audio signals are transported. In total there are 16 devices available, which transport each two signals to the application using a specific driver interface. The "driver interface" is like the type of audio cable used for the transmission of the signals. For media players Windows™ DirectSound is the most often used interface, while multi-channel music programs (sequencer etc.) make use of the ASIO interface. The following is an explanation how to use each, for recording with the SERAPH A3.

Using a media playback program¹³

Windows™ XP

1. Within Windows, select <Start> <Control Panel> <Sounds&Audio Devices>
2. In the tab <Audio> for „Sound Recording - Default device" select "SERAPH A3 1-2"
3. In the lower part of the window activate "Use only default devices"

Windows™ Vista/7

1. Within Windows™ select <Start> <Control Panel> <Hardware and Sound> <Sound>
2. In the tab <Recording> select the device "SERAPH A3 1-2"
3. In the lower part of the window activate "Set Default"

Using an ASIO (multi-channel) music software¹⁴


1. Start the ASIO audio application
2. Open the audio settings of the software
3. Select the "ASIO SERAPH A3" driver
4. Near the selection for the ASIO driver the ASIO application often offers a button named "configuration" or "Settings". Click it to open the ASIO Device Setup.
5. By default all devices of the SERAPH A3 are activated in the "ASIO Device Setup" and can be used by the software. However you may also disable devices here, in order to use them in a different audio application.
6. For certain audio applications it is necessary to assign the devices to "busses" or similar in order to actually playback signals using these devices. For questions on this, please consult the manual of the application.

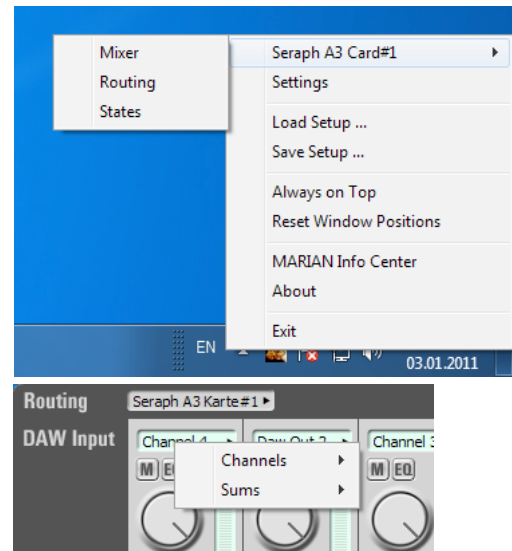
¹³ Preliminary note: If an ASIO audio application using the SERAPH A3 is already active, you must first ensure, that devices are available for usage. It may be, that the ASIO application already uses all available devices and that thus the playback via a media program is not possible. Deactivate all devices in the ASIO application, which you wish to use for the media playback. A step-by-step procedure of how to do this you will find in the following section "Using and ASIO music software". ASIO applications are always using the devices of the SERAPH A3 exclusively.

¹⁴ Preliminary note: If an ASIO audio application or media playback is already using devices of the SERAPH A3, they are not available any longer and it may thus be that when starting an ASIO application an error message will occur. It will state, that the "ASIO SERAPH A3 driver could not be started" or similar. ASIO applications are always using the devices of the SERAPH A3 exclusively.

Assignment in the SERAPH A3 routing

In order for a specific signal to appear in the audio application with the device "SERAPH A3 1-2" the proper setting has to be done in the routing of the SERAPH A3.

1. Click on the SERAPH A3 Manager in the task bar and select "Routing".
2. For "DAW In 1" and "DAW In 2" select the desired recording signals from the mixer (input signals or mix signals)
3. Connect the two channels with the link button at the bottom of the 1st channel trip. 
4. Adjust the recording level using the knob so that the red LED never lights up. This must always be done if a signal is to be recorded, which was edited with the filter functions of the mixer.



The SERAPH A3 in Detail I: Mixing & Routing

In this chapter you will learn

- ✓ To understand in detail the signal flow of the BEAST
- ✓ Operating the Mixer and the Routing via mouse/keyboard and MIDI
- ✓ all function of all controls of Mixer & Routing
- ✓ Saving setups and snapshots for Total Recall

Introduction

The SERAPH A3 is more than 'just' a sound card. It features a full-scale mixing console (mixer) and a multi-functional Patchbay (Routing) - called BEAST. The BEAST is integrated¹⁵ in the hardware of the SERAPH A3 thus avoiding any additional processing load for the host computer and guaranteeing a nearly latency-free signal processing. It is controlled by a software that was installed on your computer along with the driver. In the Windows™ taskbar you can find the symbol for the SERAPH A3. With a simple mouse click on it, a context menu is opened. Select "Mixer" and "Routing". If several SERAPH A3 are installed, all entries are displayed according to their number with "# 1", "# 2", etc.

All signals fed to the SERAPH A3 either through connected external cables or signals from a software of the computer, and any signals that are to be played back with the SERAPH A3 pass at some point the mixer and thus the routing. You can imagine this as follows:

- A big multi-core with 32 cables passes from the operating system (one or more audio applications on the computer) to the mixer of the SERAPH A3. These 32 playback signals of the multi core are called "DAW Out 1" to "DAW Out 32".
- From the routing of the SERAPH A3 to the operating system of the computer there is another multi-core with 32 cables. These 32 recording signals, we call "DAW In 1" to "DAW In 32".
- Furthermore, in the mixer all signals of all physical inputs are available. These signals of the 3 ADAT inputs we therefore call "INPUT 1" to "INPUT 24". The signals of the TDM SyncBus are available as "TDM 1" to "TDM 8"¹⁶
- Signals leaving the SERAPH A3 by a routing to a specific physical output we call "OUTPUT". The SERAPH A3 has 32 outputs: 24 signals via 3 ADAT streams and 8 signals via the TDM bus¹⁷.

In the chapters "The Mixer in Detail" and "The Routing in detail" you can find out how all the signals can be processed and managed.

¹⁵ Proper security measures were undertaken to keep it this way.

¹⁶ Every ADAT stream features 8 signals. In S/MUX mode the amount of signals is cut in half per ADAT stream. In this case only "INPUT 1" to "INPUT 12" are available. Changing between ADAT mode and S/MUX mode is done in the settings of the SERAPH A3.

¹⁷ In S/MUX mode 12 signals

Operation of Mixer & Routing

Operation with keyboard and mouse

All elements of the mixer and the routing may be operated or moved by the computer mouse. Knobs are opened/closed by circular movement of the mouse. The further the mouse is from the center of the knob the finer the adjustment of the values will be. After double-clicking a numeric field, the value of a knob may also be entered in dB via the computer keyboard. The entry is confirmed with the Enter key.

Operation via MIDI

Alternatively, to the control by the computer keyboard and mouse, switches and knobs of mixer and routing may be configured to respond to MIDI commands. Knobs will respond to MIDI control data with their range mapped to the MIDI values 0 through 127. Switches will take on the “OFF” state with MIDI value “0” and the “ON” state with MIDI value 127. For switches it thus makes sense to use note on/off commands.

In order for a fader, knob or switch to receive MIDI control data, proceed as follows:

1. Open the MIDI setup with a click on the button "SETUP" in the lower left area of mixer or routing.
2. In the dialog box, select the desired MIDI Input from the section "MIDI Input". All MIDI controller data and note on/off commands arriving on this input can be used to for controlling mixer and routing. In "MIDI Stream", all incoming MIDI data is being visualized. If buttons are to be controlled via note on/off commands, the "note on/off toggles" option needs to be active. In this way switches will always keep the last state and will change it only after a new reception of the MIDI value 0 or 127.
3. Close the window.
4. Right-click the element of mixer or routing, that you wish to control. The following context menu displays all incoming MIDI data. Now send the MIDI data and click OK. This completes the assignment process. From now on the element will always react on the MIDI data it received last. For channels of mixer or routing, which have been linked, assigning a MIDI command for one of the two channels is sufficient¹⁸.
5. For configuring another element proceed from step 4

If an element was assigned a MIDI command, it is now capable to send MIDI data itself. Simply activate the desired output under „MIDI Output“ in the MIDI setup. An element will always send the MIDI commands that have been used to assign itself – thus the same MIDI controller number on the same MIDI channel. This allows to make the moving of a knob or fader of mixer or routing visible on e.g. a MIDI hardware controller. An example: You have a MIDI controller with motor fader and you wish to set it up to control one of the faders of the Mixer. If now the fader of the Mixer is being moved with the mouse, the motor fader of the hardware MIDI controller will perform the same movement. To avoid control loops and conflicts, you can set up a delay time between MIDI data receiving and MIDI data sending in the MIDI settings with „Feedback Time Threshold“. Depending on the hardware controller it may be necessary to adjust this value empirically.

All assignments of MIDI commands for knobs and buttons as well as the MIDI settings will be saved along with a setup¹⁹.

¹⁸ Combining two channels is done via the stereo button at the lower end of the first channel.

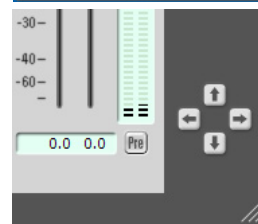
¹⁹ See chapter “Setups”

View options

In order to change the look of the mixer, single rows of control elements may be shown or hidden in the „Parts“ section. This applies for rows 1-4 of the filter as well as all Aux-knobs.

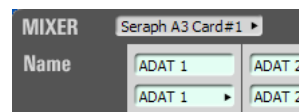



Additionally for mixer and routing the window may be changed in horizontal size. This happens in segments. Via the direction arrows in the right lower corner of the mixer or the routing the displayed section may be switched. The direction arrows are conjunct with the arrow keys of the computer keyboard and are controlled by them.



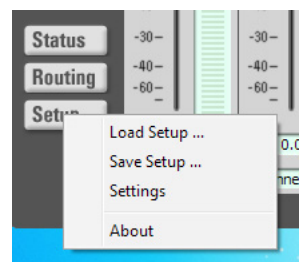
All these functions are very useful for e.g. saving precious space on the computer screen, but also if you set up special configurations with the knobs and wish to inhibit accidental changes by intentionally hiding them.

If several SERAPH A3 are installed, the selection menu in the upper frame of the window allows calling up the corresponding instance.



The lock symbol in the upper right of the window inhibits coverage by other windows. Thereby mixer or routing will always be in the foreground and visible. 

In the lower left area there are three more function switches. „Setup“ opens up a context menu that is equivalent to the menu opened from SERAPH A3 symbol in the task bar. This again allows for fast access to important functions and windows of the SERAPH A3 sound system.



„Routing“ calls up the routing window. From there again you can switch quickly to the mixer window via the „mixer“ button. „Status“ opens the clock status panel.

Snapshots



Once a visual configuration was made, it may be saved along with the current mixer settings in one of up to 3 „snapshots“. To achieve this, click „S1“ to „S3“. If a snapshot is to be recalled, click on the corresponding „L1“ to „L3“ button. All snapshots are saved along with a setup.

Setups

As opposed to snapshots, setups can save & recall all current settings of the SERAPH A3 mixer and routing as well as possible MIDI assignments in one single file.

A click on „save setup...“ opens the Windows™ file selection dialog in order to select the path and the name of a setup²⁰. Of course, several setups may be saved. By clicking „load setup...“ the Windows™ file selection dialog is opened to navigate to the location of a previously saved setup. If you choose a file, click „open“ and all settings of mixer and routing will be deleted and replaced by the settings of this setup/file.

The mixer in detail

General

The Mixer of the SERAPH A3 offers an abundance of functions for mixing and sound manipulation of signals of a software („DAW Out x“) or a physical input („INPUT x“) Thus all signals of the 64 channels may be mixed upon 7 sums and changed in sound by up to 4 filters. The handling and signal flow of this is designed similarly to those of hardware mixing desks. This concerns the possibility to

- create different mixes for the sound engineer and the musicians (using pre aux mixes)
- to send signals of single channels to external effect devices (using post aux mixes) as well as
- to solo or to mute signals, as well as changing their phase and to define their position in the stereo mix

Differences of the SERAPH A3 mixers in comparison to hardware mixing desks are the possibility to

- assign signals in any order and also multiply to the channels of the mixer²¹
- to save all settings of all knobs in different setups²²
- to activate the filters of a channel selectively only on specific mix sums or to have each signal available with or without filter

The seraph mixer allows for setting up 7 mix sums. 2 Mix sums are the master sum. It serves well as the mains for the sound engineer in the studio. The other 5 sums named „Aux 1“ to „aux 5“ have been designed for applications like headphone mixes or effect feeds.

²⁰ Use comprehensive names for the files of a setup. This will make it easier later on!

²¹ A kind of infinite signal splitter without loss of quality

²² „Total recall“ see chapter „Setups“

Channelstrip

Each channelstrip of the mixer is built up and organized identically. The following explanation of the elements of it is thereby an example for all. Two adjacent channel strips may be connected into a stereo pair using the „link“-button at the lower end of the mixer. This will link all control elements excluding the channel input selection, the phase switch as well as gain-, aux- and balance knobs.

NAME



Via the input selection list, the desired signal for this channel strip is chosen. This may be an input signal of the SERAPH A3 („TDM x“ or „ADAT x“) or a playback signal of a software („DAW Out X“)²³.

Depending on the operating mode (ADAT or S/MUX) all input selection lists are being updated²⁴.

By double clicking the field above, an individual name for the signal may be chosen.

GAIN



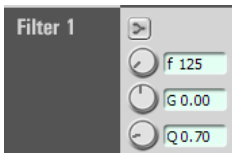
The knob GAIN or using the input field will define the pre-attenuation of the signal²⁵.

This change in level will affect all mix sums that this signal is part of, as well as all software applications, recording it.

Furthermore here the whole channel maybe muted by clicking the „M“. As a consequence, the signal will not appear on any mix sum.

Clicking „phase“ will reverse the phase position of the signal²⁶.

FILTER



A filter is activated with a click on its icon²⁷. In order for its sound manipulation to become active, the „EQ“ button of either the mix sum or the desired output has to be activated in the routing. This can be done separately for single channels, aux- or master sums²⁸.

Each filter is full-parametric. That means, that it includes a graphical and numerical entry of the filter frequency „freq“ for setting the point of action for the filter, a knob „Q“ for setting the octave rolloff and a knob „gain“ for defining the amplification or attenuation (boost or cut) of the selected frequency. Entering the filter frequency with the computer keyboard may be done in different formats. Possible entries are e.g. „7400“, „7,4k“ and „7.4k“ for 7400Hz.

On each channel 4 filters may be activated. These are 1x Low Shelf, 2x Peak and 1x high shelf²⁹.

²³ See introduction of the chapter “The SERAPH A3 in Detail I: Mixing & routing”

²⁴ The operation mode “ADAT” and “S/MUX” can be switched in the settings of the SERAPH A3

²⁵ This Gain is a digital one – an analog clipping of a preamp prior in the signal chain can not be improved with it!

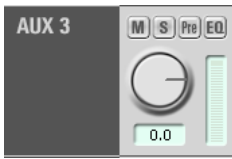
²⁶ The phase switch is useful if e.g. a signal is being recorded with two opposite-facing microphones. The consequently opposite phase signal would partially cancel each other out or hinder an objective evaluation of the sound. The phase switch also allows M/S stereophonic recordings and monitoring.

²⁷ The calculation of the filter is done in the hardware of the card and does not use any resources of the host computer.

²⁸ This allows setting up changes in sound independently for e.g. a headphone mix for a musician and a main mix for the sound engineer. Or vice versa!

²⁹ Please pay attention to the fact, that setting up the filter gain may affect the level of the signal. This is why it is important to adjust the level of the signals of the affected channels in the routing.

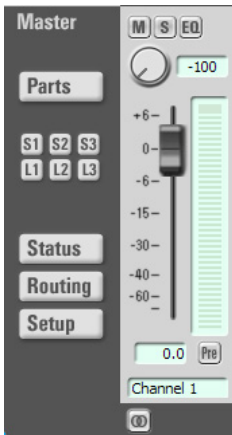
AUX



The knob or the numerical input may be used to set the volume of a channel on the specific mix sum. If the volume is to be independent of the position of the fader at the end of a channel strip (headphone mode), the „PRE“ button needs to be active. If the volume is supposed to change according to the position of the fader (effect feed), the „PRE“ button needs to be inactive. If the signal is to appear singularly on an aux sum, „SOLO“ must be switched on. A click on „EQ“ will make changes in sound as set up with the filters become audible on this mix sum.

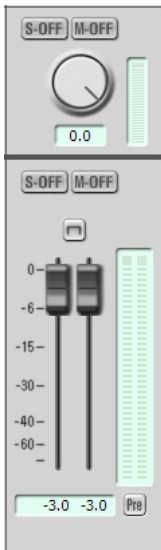
By default „Aux 1“ and „Aux 2“ are coupled into a stereo pair. In the signal flow, the signal for Aux 1+2 is taken behind the PAN knob³⁰. This allows positioning the signal between Aux 1 and Aux 2.

MASTER



The fader or the numerical input below it may set up the volume of the signal of this channel strip on the master sum. The knob „PAN“ sets the ratio of the signal between left and the right part of the master sum. If a signal is to appear singularly on the master sum, the „SOLO“ button needs to be active. Clicking „EQ“ will make the settings of the EQ become active for this channel on the master sum. The „PRE“ button allows a display of the level of the signal before the effect of gain, filter or fader.

Master channel



The master channel serves for controlling the volume of all mix sums. Thus there is a knob for each aux sum and a left and right fader for the master sum. The „S-off“ button deactivates the solo state for every channel of the corresponding mix sum. The „M-off“ button deactivates the mute status for all channels of the corresponding mix sum. The „PRE“ button allows a display of the level before the effect of the fader. In the lower-most field you may enter an individual name for that channel. This name will appear also in the selection lists of the routing.

³⁰ This implies stereo signals. For connected channel strips, turn channel one to far left (Signal goes only to AUX 1) and channel two to the far right (Signal goes to AUX 2, only)

The routing in detail

General

The routing of the SERAPH A3 is a complex digital patchbay. All signals of the channels of the mixer as well as the mix sums („master“ and „Aux x“) may be played back on any physical output (via the „output“ section) or may be recorded within the same computer system (via the “DAW Input” section). Additionally for every single channel you may define, if the changes in sound by the filter may become active or not on the routed output³¹.

DAW In section



The SERAPH A3 offers 32 channels for recording. You can find these labeled as “DAW In 1” up to “DAW In 32” in the “DAW Input”-section. To an audio application they are available in couples of two in so called “devices“ with the names “SERAPH A3 1-2” up to “SERAPH A3 31-32”. Thus the SERAPH A3 offers 16 devices to an application³².

Now, which signal of the mixer lands up on which device in the audio application, can be defined freely³³ via the selection menus³⁴.

With the “M” button, a signal can be muted. In this case it will not appear any longer at any audio application. “EQ” de/activates the filters for this signal, as set up in the channel of the mixer^{35 36}.

Of course double assignments are possible. E.g. a signal could be made available several times to different audio applications once with EQ and once without.

Finally the knob defines the volume for this signal of this device. In position “0,0” no volume or bit manipulation is applied to the signal. Below the knob you may enter a individual name for this signal.

Please note: if a signal was edited using the filter functions of the mixer, the level of it may have to be adjusted in the “DAW Input” section in order to inhibit digital overloads.

³¹ For mix sums the “EQ” switch is without function.

³² Per default, “DAW In 1” and “DAW In 2” are device “SERAPH A3 1-2” and “DAW In 3” and “DAW In 4” are device “SERAPH A3 3-4” and so on.

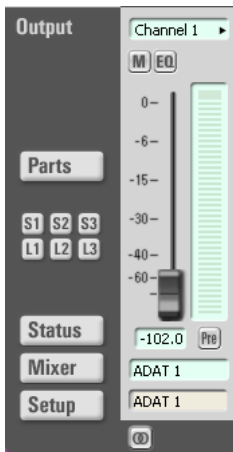
³³ You may thus define other orders of the channels than given by the ADAT input channels.

³⁴ Depending on the operating mode, the selection lists are updated. In S/MUX mode only channel “INPUT 1” to “INPUT 12” are selectable.

³⁵ For mix sums the “EQ” switch is without function

³⁶ With this a change in sound of a single signal may be audible within a mix of the mixer, but will not apply when recording it.

Output section



The SERAPH A3 offers 32/20 physical outputs³⁷.

Which signals come out of these outputs may freely be defined using the selection menu³⁸.

With the “M” switch, a signal can be muted. In this case it will not appear any longer at any audio application. “EQ” de/activates the filters for this signal, as set up in the channel of the mixer^{39 40}.

Of course double assignments are possible. E.g. a signal could be made available several times to different audio applications once with EQ and once without.

For TDM channels there is an additional “ON” button, activating the TDM channel when pressed⁴¹.

Finally, the fader defines the volume for this signal of this device. In position “0,0” no volume or bit manipulation is applied to the signal. Below the fader you may enter a individual name for this signal.

Please note: if a signal was edited using the filter functions of the mixer, the level of it may have to be adjusted in the “output” section in order to inhibit digital overloads.

³⁷ In S/MUX mode only ADAT output 1 to 12 are available.

³⁸ The selection lists are being updated depending on the operating mode. In S/MUX mode only “INPUT 1” to “INPUT 12” are selectable.

³⁹ For mix sums the “EQ” switch is without function.

⁴⁰ With this a change in sound can be applied for a mix in the mixer, but will not be audible on the corresponding output.

⁴¹ TDM channel may only host one signal at a time. That is why a TDM channel may only be activated for one TDM capable sound system. For a in depth understanding of the TDM SyncBus, please read chapter “The SERAPH A3 in Detail III: TDM SyncBus”.

The SERAPH A3 in Detail II: System settings

In this chapter you will get to know:

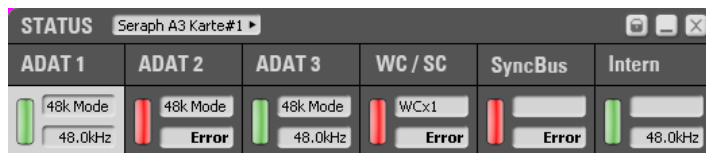
- ✓ the function and meaning of all system settings
- ✓ how to do specific modifications to the ASIO driver

Introduction

Besides the usage as explained in the examples of this manual, there are of course other possibilities to make the SERAPH A3 functionality fit to the specific needs of the daily work in the studio. Following you will find an explanation of all system settings of the SERAPH A3 with example configurations and notes about their meaning.

On the Windows™ task bar, you can find the symbol for the SERAPH A3 manager. It is opened with a single click allowing to call up “Clock Status”, “Settings” or “MIDI” in the following context menu. If several SERAPH A3 are installed, all the entries will appear in the corresponding amount, numbered with “#1”, “#2” and so on.

Clock Status Panel



General

The SERAPH A3 clock status panel offers fast information about sample rates and clock sources of every installed SERAPH A3. In the head of the window the clock status panel for each installed SERAPH A3 can be chosen from the selection menu.

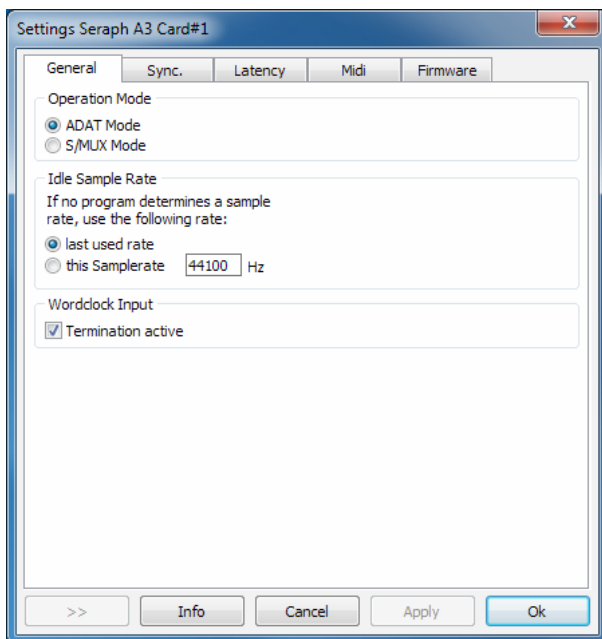
Via the lock-symbol in the upper right of the window, coverage by other windows may be inhibited. This way the clock status panel will always be visible in the foreground.

Clock Status and sample rate

In the first line of the panel, you can read which sample rate is present on each digital input (ADAT 1 to 3, WordClock or SyncBus) or which sample rate is set up for the internal clock. The green LED left of it shows, if the clock of this source was detected correctly. In this case the sample rate in kHz will displayed. If no clock could be retrieved, the red LED will light up. Additionally it will read “error”. If in the settings of the SERAPH A3, this connector was chosen as clock source, this section of the table will be highlighted in red. The connector, whose clock is actually used, will be highlighted in white. If the SERAPH A3 is configured to be SyncBus master, a little “M” will indicate this in the column “SyncBus”.

Settings

General



Operation Mode

Besides ADAT, the SERAPH A3 also supports S/MUX. Instead of 8 signals per light pipe at 44.1/48 kHz, S/MUX transports 4 signals at 88.2/96kHz. Switching between these modes is done in the section “operation mode” and is possible only, if no audio application uses the sound system. In S/MUX mode the selection lists for the number of input channels of mixer & routing are reduced. Also in the routing the list for the physical output channels will be shortened. In order to use the S/MUX mode, all devices connected with the ADAT ports of the SERAPH A3 must support this mode as well.

Free-run Sample rate

If no application is using the SERAPH A3, you may define with which sample rate the sound system is supposed to work in the field “This sample rate”⁴².

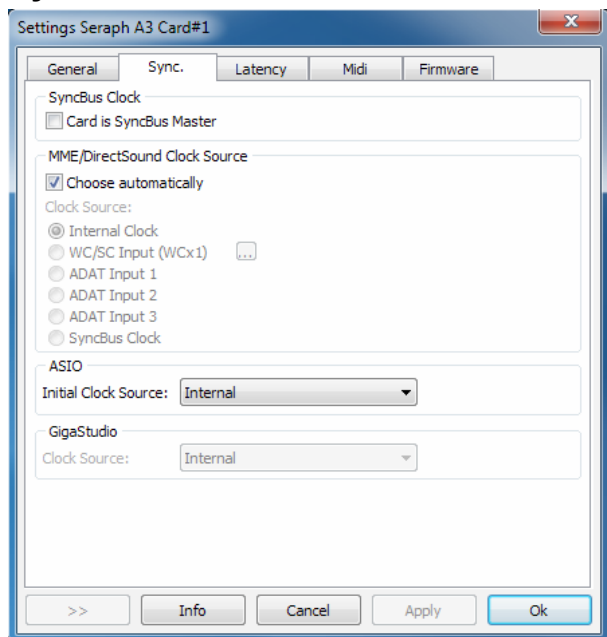
By selecting “the last used”, the SERAPH A3 will keep the sample rate that was used last for the next recording or playback via an audio application

WordClock input

If the SRAPH A3 is the last link in a WordClock chain, the termination of its WordClock input may be activated here.

⁴² If e.g. the SERAPH A3 is to be used as a pure mixing desk. When using an audio application, the sample rate is defined by the settings of the application or the playback file.

Synchronization



Working with digital audio signals, a digital clock is always required. The following settings define, which source is to be used for retrieving the clock for the SERAPH A3⁴³.

The SRAPH A3 may be operated in three clock-modes alternatively.

The SRAPH A3 as clock-master

If “internal clock” is active, the SERAPH A3 generates the clock itself. Other devices may receive this clock via an ADAT output, the SyncBus or the WordClock output.

The SERAPH A3 as clock-slave

If “SyncBus clock” is selected the clock on the connector of the SyncBus will be used⁴⁴. Equally, the SERAPH A3 can be operated in sync to one of the ADAT inputs or the WordClock input.

The SERAPH A3 as SyncBus Master

If you own 2 or more MARIAN PCI(e) sound systems and installed and connected them with a SyncBus cable, you may define via the option “card is SyncBus master” which system supplies the digital clock for the compound. For the SyncBus master card, any clock-source may be chosen⁴⁵.

All other MARIAN PCI sound systems will run synchronously to the master card, if their clock source is set to be “SyncBus”⁴⁶.

MME/Direct Sound Clock-source

Activating the option “choose clock source automatically” will make the SERAPH A3 driver select a valid clock-source independently. In most cases this will be the “Internal Clock”⁴⁷.

⁴³ Attention: If no clock is available or a wrong clock setup was done, playback errors or malfunction of the system may occur. Please also note the hints in the appendix about the special aspects of the clock.

⁴⁴ The option “Card is SyncBus Master” must not be active in this case!

⁴⁵ See chapter “MME/Direct Sound clock source”

⁴⁶ If a sound system runs in sync to the SyncBus clock can easily be checked with the status panel: The column “SyncBus” has to be white. The clock master of the compound is recognizable by the “M” in the status panel.

⁴⁷ Important: If the SERAPH A3 is accessed by an audio application via the ASIO interface, the clock settings of the SERAPH A3 manager are ignored and overwritten. Instead they are defined by the audio application. In most cases there is a selection list next to where the “ASIO SERAPH A3” driver was selected, offering all available clock sources of the SERAPH A3. After quitting the ASIO audio application the clock settings of the SERAPH A3 manager will be reestablished.

ASIO

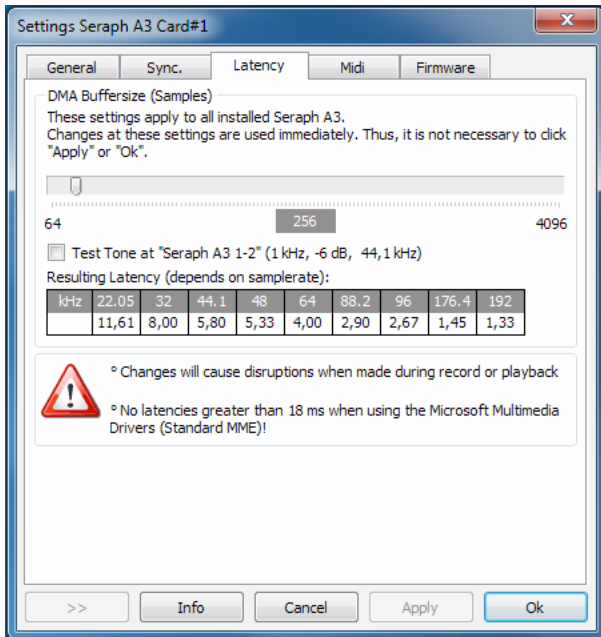
For most audio applications using the ASIO interface, the clock source for the SERAPH A3 may be chosen directly in the application. But some applications do not support this. This is why the SERAPH A3 Manager allows via “Initial clock source” to set up a certain clock source in the drop down list, which will be used after the start of such application.

With respect on the multi-client capabilities of the SERAPH A3 it is not possible to change the clock source for running ASIO applications here.

GigaStudio

This section is available only if a Tascam GigaStudio application is installed. In the drop-down list, “Clock Source” you can define, to which clock signal GigaStudio is to be synchronously operated to.

Latency

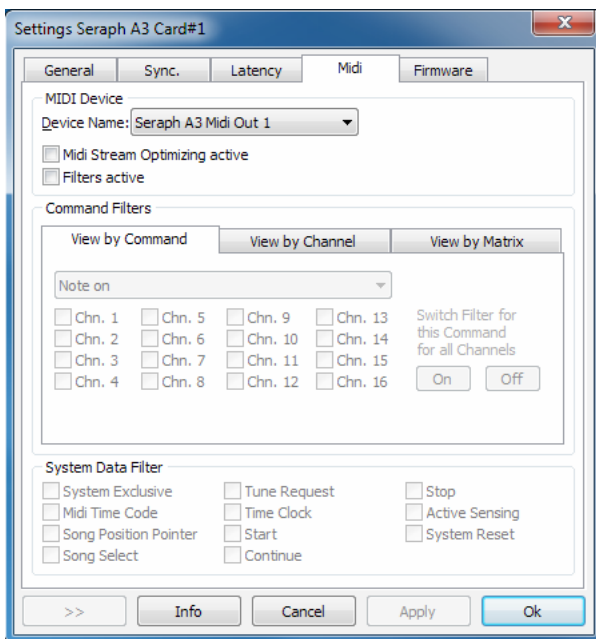


DMA Buffer Size

Via the upper slider you can adjust the minimal latency of the SERAPH A3. Here, the size of the buffer, shown in samples, is changed. Operating the soundcard with e.g. 44.1 kHz, 88 samples will result in a latency of around 2 ms. For 88,2 kHz, this number of samples would mean a latency of 1 ms. The chart "resulting latency" shows these connections for some important standard sample rates.

By activating "Play test tone at SERAPH A3 1-2" a sine tone is played back at this device. Monitor this signal and adjust the value for the DMA buffer to be as small as possible, but without receiving distortions when playing back the sine wave.

MIDI



This section gives you many options to optimize and adjust the MIDI Inputs and outputs of the TRACE 8. Those features are usually found in pretty complex audio applications only.

Device

Choose the MIDI Input or output which you would like to edit.

“MIDI Stream Optimizing active” filters unneeded data out of the transmitted MIDI data. You get shorter processing times of the MIDI signals, but without losing a single MIDI command.

“Filters active” enables all configured MIDI filter options.

For most comfortable editing, you can change the look of the section “command filters”. There are 3 viewing modes available:

On “View by Command”, “Command Filters” shows the MIDI commands, which can now be filtered for each single channel. By clicking “On” or “Off”, the chosen MIDI command is filtered or passed through on all channels.

On “View by Channel”, “Command Filters” shows all MIDI channels, on which the MIDI commands can now be filtered.

On “View by Matrix” all MIDI channels and the MIDI command filters are shown in form of a matrix.

System Data Filter

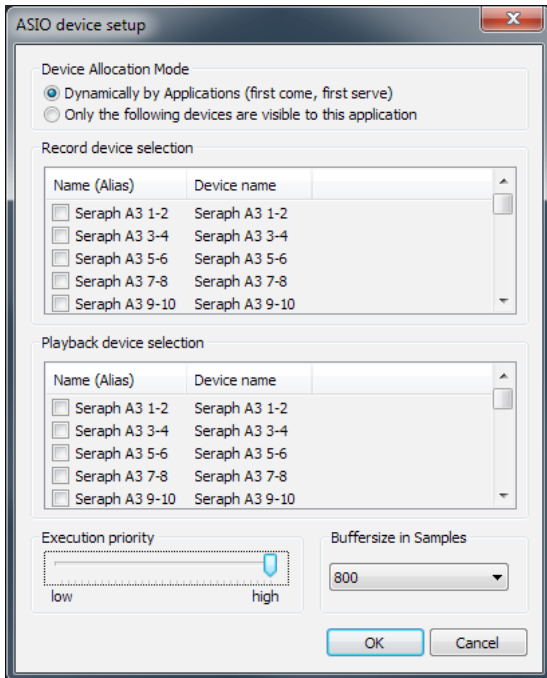
The command filters offered here are MIDI channel independent, but concern the chosen MIDI port.

Firmware

This section you may ignore. Also it is not necessary to manually perform firmware updates, since this is done automatically along with a driver update.

Note: This section may become relevant, if, after contacting the MARIAN Support Service, it is advised to perform a manual firmware update – e.g. for diagnostic purposes.

ASIO Device Setup



In the field of professional music production on the PC, the ASIO interface has established itself as a standard. The ASIO device setup offers important setup features for using the SERAPH A3 with an ASIO interface. It is opened from within the audio application that supports the ASIO standard. Mostly there is a button called “control panel” or “setup” near the selection field for the ASIO driver. Clicking it will open the ASIO device setup.

Here you will see all in- and output devices (in the BEAST labeled as “DAW In x” and “DAW Out x”), which the SERAPH A3 offers. Via default, the ASIO application may use all in- and output devices of the SERAPH A3, unless a device is already in use by another application.

Selecting „Only the following devices are visible to this application“ will allow you to choose yourself, which device can be used by the application. If an entry is checked, the corresponding device is active and visible to the application.

Clicking an entry in the column “name (Alias)” will allow you to change the name of this in- or output. This will appear in the same way in the ASIO application. Example: You name “SERAPH A 1-2” to “guitar” or “room mic”. Now in the audio application you will always see at first glance which signal comes from where.

On the left lower side of the window you can find the “execution priority” slider. It can be freely positioned between “low” and “high”. In position “high” the transfer of the audio data between ASIO application and SERAPH A3 will receive the highest priority. This means, that the processor will handle this data preferably. In position “low” the calculation of plug in effects will receive the highest priority and the audio data transfer will be dealt with secondarily.

On the lower right side of the window you can find a selection menu for “Buffersize in Samples”. This value defines the latency of the audio data transfer.

An example: working with 44.1kHz and setting up 176 samples as buffersize will result in a latency of 4ms. When working with 88.2kHz, the same buffersize will result in a latency of 2ms.

The SERAPH A3 in Detail III: TDM SyncBus

In this chapter you will learn

- ✓ to understand the TDM SyncBus via metaphors
- ✓ to use the TDM SyncBus via examples

Principles of the TDM SyncBus

The TDM SyncBus is a collective transport bus for digital audio- and synchronization signals. With the help of the TDM SyncBus up to 8 signals of an audio system featuring the TDM SyncBus may be send out to other MARIAN sound cards with TDM SyncBus or returned to an audio application again. The principle of operation of the TDM SyncBus may be compared quite well with the pneumatic dispatch or tube system within one or between several office buildings.

Imagine this: Ms. Smith, from the press department sends out a press report on channel 1 of the tube system. It arrives at the distribution central. If Mr. Mayer from the financial department wishes to read the report, he needs to call for it at the central. He will then receive it in the inbox of channel 1.

The same way as Ms. Smith uses a tube channel to send out a document within the building, you can use a TDM channel to send out a signal to the TDM SyncBus via the Output Control. The same way as Mr. Mayer receives the document in the inbox, the audio signal of the TDM SyncBus lands up in the input of the SERAPH A3 Mixer.

This is also possible: Mr. Miller from the neighboring building may also request the message of Ms. Smith. For this, the distribution central simply copies the document and sends it out a second time to Mr. Miller.

That means: If several MARIAN sound cards with TDM SyncBus are installed in a computer, the signals of the TDM channel are available to all the other sound cards as well.

BUT: The capacities of the pneumatic dispatch are limited. E.g. if Mr. Miller from the neighboring building also wishes to send a document, he must not use channel 1, since Ms. Smith from the press department is already sending out her documents here. All in all there are 8 channels, that's why Mr. Miller must decide for channel 2 to 8.

For the TDM SyncBus this means: only one signal⁴⁸ in one channel but eight channels at the maximum can be distributed simultaneously. That's another way to say that a specific TDM channel may only be active in one routing at a time.

⁴⁸ "One" signal means "one source" – of course aux- and other mix signals can be sent.

Examples of function of the TDM SyncBus

Editing mixes with the filters

As described in the previous section, signals send to the TDM SyncBus are available as input signals in the mixer. If thus a sum signal is send on the TDM SyncBus, it can be edited using the filter functions of a mixer channel.

1. In the routing, choose for any free TDM SyncBus channel the desired mix sum (“Master x” or “Aux x”)
2. For stereo signals combine two outputs via the link button
3. Activate the TDM SyncBus channel(s)
4. In the mixer: for the sum that you send out in the routing activate the mute button of the channel or the two combined channels. If e.g. you are sending the master sum, activate the mute button in the section “Master” for this channel. This will prevent a feedback loop.
5. As input signal for the channel/s choose the TDM SyncBus channel/s from step 1.
6. The signal edited with the filter functions can now be monitored directly via the routing. For this, activate the EQ button on the desired output and choose the used mixer channel.
7. This strategy can also be used to set up sub-groups. Simply use “post” Aux sums and bring the sum back to the mixer as explained above.

Synchronizing other MARIAN sound systems

As explained in “Let’s start I: Basics”, all digital systems working together have to be synchronized by one clock. This is what you need to do to synchronize MARIAN sound systems using the TDM SyncBus

1. For the system that is supposed to provide the clock, choose “Card is SyncBus master” in the settings of that system.
2. For all other systems deactivate the aforementioned option. Choose “SyncBus” or “TDM SyncBus” as clock source in
 - a. The ASIO application when using the ASIO interface
 - b. In the settings of the sound system when using any other than the ASIO interface
3. For the SyncBus or TDM SyncBus master system any valid clock source may be chosen. This may be the internal or any external clock (e.g. from the WordClock input or from one of the ADAT inputs)
4. Open the Status panel for every system involved and check the settings⁴⁹.
5. If 2 or more TDM SyncBus systems are synchronized, they may also exchange Audio signals via the TDM SyncBus

⁴⁹ A description of the status panel you can find in the chapter “The SERAPH A3 in Detail II: System Settings”

Technical Facts

SERAPH A3	
Typ	PCIe Audio Interface, 1 Lane (PCIe 1x) according to PCI Express Base Specification 1.1
Transfer Model	PCIe Busmaster DMA, Direct ASIO Support
Audio I/O	24 ADAT Input Channels 24 ADAT Outputs Channels
Ports	3 x TOSLINK TX 3 x TOSLINK RX 1 x Extender Connector; 26-pin internally 1 x TDM SyncBus Connector; 14-pin internally
Cables	none
Sample Rates	44.1 kHz / 48 kHz; 88.2 kHz / 96 kHz in S/MUX Mode
Sample Resolution	24 Bit physically 8...32 Bit Sample Data Exchange Driver/Application
Clock Sources	1 x Internal 1x TDM SyncBus 3 x ADAT Input 1 x WC/SC Input (MWX Version)
Jitter	< 5ns
DSP Processing	64 channel mixing, 7 mix sums, 256 filters
Multi-Card Support	Via TDM SyncBus
Driver Support	Windows™ 2000/XP/2003 Server/Vista/2008 Server, 7; 32-bit Versions each WDM Audio, DirectSound, MME, ASIO 2.1, GSIF 2, MASIAS, MXAPI Advanced Multi-Client Support
Operation Temperature	- 25°C ... +70°C
Power Consumption	+3,3V / 0,65A +12V / 0,03A
Humidity	max. 70%; non-condensing
MTBF	20°C ... 40°C: 45000h; -50% / +10°C > 40 °C

MWX (optional)		
Wordclock / Superclock Input	1 x BNC	
	Frequency Range	0 - 30 MHz
	Impedance	5 kOhm; software controlled termination to 75 Ohm
	Sensitivity	1,5 Vss - 5,0 Vss;
	Features	DC-Offset free; Schmitt-triggered; Overvoltage Protection
Wordclock / Superclock Output	1x BNC	
	Frequency Range	0 ... 30 MHz
	Internal Resistance	13 Ohm
	Output Voltage	2,8 Vss at 75 Ohm
MIDI Inputs	2 x via DIN jacks at breakout cable	
MIDI Outputs	2 x via DIN jacks at breakout cable	
Cables	Adapter cable 4 x DIN to 9-pin D-Sub	
	Connection cable Seraph PCIe Card / MWX; 26-pin ribbon cable	

Service and Support

Warranty

Each SERAPH A3 leaving us is put under extensive functionality checks. We allow full 5 years of warranty. A copy of the receipt or bill serves as proof of purchase. If there is a deficiency occurring during the time of warranty, you can exchange the unit at your dealer. Damages originating in inappropriate handling or false operation are excluded from warranty.

You can still send the unit in to us for repair after the warranty has expired. You can decide to have it repaired, after receiving a calculation of the approximate repair costs. For this, please get in contact with our support service.

Contact

If you have any questions or problems when installing or operating the SERAPH A3, please proceed as follows:

- Make sure, the newest driver is installed. The current driver files can be found on: www.MARIAN.de/en/downloads
- If still any questions remain, you can contact us via the internet using our support form at: www.MARIAN.de/en/support
- Or talk to us personally. Dial: +49 341 589 32 22

Interesting news, information as well as information about our products and authorized dealers can be found on www.MARIAN.de.

Glossary

ASIO

ASIO stands for “Audio Streaming Input Output” and is a driver interface for soundcards developed by the company Steinberg. With ASIO very small latency times can be achieved. The ASIO driver is not multi-client capable. That means, different audio applications may not use the same audio device simultaneously.

Audio Device

In the field of digital audio processing, this mostly names an input or output of an audio system, the way it appears in an audio application.

Aux

In the audio world “Aux” or “Auxiliary” names an additional input or output. That means a physical input or output or a mix signal besides the main mix signal.

Buffersize/Buffer

When transporting audio data within a computer (e.g. recording or playing back a signal), they are chopped in equal blocks called “buffer”. That means, they are a certain time frame out of a complete signal. The number and size of the buffer defines the delay time (latency).

DAW

DAW is the abbreviation for “Digital Audio Workstation” and names a software application installed on a computer, for numerous task of sound editing or a system consisting of one or several components for processing audio signals. E.g. a computer with software, appropriate interfaces and connections and additional control or input devices.

Direct Sound/Direct X

DirectX is a Windows™ system-software, which allows hardware manufacturers, to support different input-, graphic- or sound functions with their hardware and thereby accelerate it. DirectSound is a part of DirectX. A DirectSound driver creates less CPU load and enables faster latency times than a standard MME driver.

Driver

A driver is a package of software, consisting of a couple of single programs or a part of a software, which ensures communication between a hardware device and other drivers or software applications on standardized level. Certain interfaces are used doing this.

DSP

DSP stands for “Digital Signal Processing”. Most times this names an electrical component, processing audio signals digitally. It calculates, for example, the sum of two signals or an effect into an audio signal.

GSIF

GSIF stands for “GigaStudio InterFace” and is a driver interface for soundcards developed by the company TASCAM. GSIF is mainly used for the Tascam software “Giga Sampler” and “GigaStudio”.

Interface

Interface names a part of a device or software, which other devices or software applications can communicate and possibly exchange data with.

Latency

Latency is, in the field of digital audio signal processing, another word for “delay time”. Example: if you connect a microphone signal to the SERAPH A3, it takes some time until it comes from the SERAPH A3 input all the way to an audio application (e.g. your recording software). Similar, it needs some time, until a playback signal of an audio application actually can be heard at the SERAPH A3. This time is called latency and is specified in milliseconds.

Metering

Or level metering. Means the visualization of volume relations of an audio signal.

MIDI

MIDI stands for “Musical instrument digital Interface” and is a standard of transmitting control signals for sound expanders. It transmits e.g. note information, which request a sound expander to play certain notes.

MME

Is an abbreviation for “Microsoft Multimedia Extension”. It is a driver interface for the audio transport on Windows Systems.

Pitch

In the field of audio techniques, this means the difference of a sample rate from a pre-defined one. If several digital audio devices are present, this fluctuation of sample rate has to be supported by all devices.

Routing

This word describes which paths on switches audio signals and clock signals take within a system.

Sample rate

In order to convert analog audio signals into digital audio data, they are chopped into a time grid. In this rate, the volume of the audio signal is measure, e.g. 44100 times a second. The smaller the grid, the better is the resulting audio quality.

S/PDIF

S/PDIF stands for “Sony Philips Digital Interface” and was developed by the companies Sony and Philips. With it a digital audio signal is transported either with a light conductor cable (TOSLINK) or a RCA coaxial cable.

WDM

WDM stands for “Windows™ Driver Model” and is an extensive driver model developed by the company Microsoft. Other drivers can build upon this. A derivation of it is used, to handle digital audio data within the computer – see Direct X.

WordClock

Is the name for a synchronization signal for digital audio systems. It ensures, for all devices connected, to work with the identical sample rate (e.g. 44.1 kHz). Most digital audio formats transmit a clock besides the audio information. E.g. S/PDIF, AES/EBU or ADAT. If no synchronization is possible via the audio connection (e.g. TDIF), digital audio devices have to be supplied with the WordClock signal. Please don't confuse this with MIDI clock or time code synchronization (e.g. SMTPE).

Appendix

The following sections include remarks on special aspects of clock and sample rate that result from the specifics of Windows™ operating systems. The notes are of a general nature and valid in principle for other sound systems as well. For more transparency, though, we are referring to the SERAPH A3.

Clock settings when using ASIO

Working with an audio application using the ASIO interface of the SERAPH A3, all clock settings will be managed by that program and overwrite the current settings in the manager! Which clock source is used, can still be read in the clock settings within the SERAPH A3 manager. The manual of the application should give report about which clock source the audio application chooses under which circumstance. If the audio application is closed (communication with the ASIO driver is terminated), all previous clock settings are being reset. For ASIO audio applications, that do not allow setting up the clock source, the SERAPH A3 manager offers the option “ASIO initial clock source”.

Level metering in the SERAPH A3 Mixer

In order for the SERAPH A3 Mixer to show the levels of a digital input signal, it has to use the clock of this input or the sound system must run on the same clock reference as the input signal.

Example: The SERAPH A3 uses “ADAT input 1” as clock source. For channel 1 to 8 the level of these signals can thus be displayed. If on ADAT input 2 there is a device not running on the same clock as ADAT input 1, the signals of this device can not be processed or displayed.

Sample rate on record/playback

Please note, that a certain sample rate for the SERAPH A3 can only be set, if the clock source used is the internal clock. If synchronized externally (Clock is being read from WordClock input or from SyncBus), the sample rate will be defined by the connected devices.

Windows™ Vista only:

On Windows™ Vista a certain sample rate is no longer reported to the sound card, if the audio application is not using the ASIO interface or WSAPI. The sample rate set up in the advanced settings of an audio device in the Windows™ control panel is used instead. This leads to the following:

1. If the desired sample rate of an audio application is not equal to the current sample rate, a sample rate conversion with possibly an audible loss of quality will be the result!
2. When using an audio device of the sound system with the sample rate x and additionally attempting to use another device but with a sample rate y, an error message will appear, since the soundcard may only be used with one sample rate at a time. In this case no resampling (rate conversion) is done!
3. In order to operate several devices with a certain sample rate, this sample rate has to be set up in the advanced settings of an audio device in the Windows™ control panel for each device separately. As concluded from 2 – no device of the sound system should be in use, or else a change will be rejected!

Different sample rates on record/playback via ASIO

Example: You already work with certain inputs or outputs of the SERAPH A3 with a certain sample rate. Now you wish to use other inputs or outputs simultaneously, but with another sample rate. Since the SERAPH A3 can be operated with one sample rate, only, the driver will inhibit the usage of the additional inputs or outputs. The simultaneous operation of the SERAPH A3 with different sample rates is possible using the standard-MME or DirectSound driver, only.

Simultaneous playback on one device via ASIO

Example: You are playing back on a certain device (e.g. “SERAPH A3 1-2”) of the SERAPH A3. Now you wish to playback another signal of another software application via the same device. The SERAPH A3 driver will inhibit this, except if the simultaneous playback of several audio programs via the same device happens using the standard-MME or DirectSound drivers.