
Sonoma Recorder Software

USER MANUAL



WHAT IS THE SONOMA RECORDER SOFTWARE?

Playback Designs manufactures the renowned converter products "Merlot" DAC, "Pinot" ADC and "USB-XIII". All products have a USB interface that allows direct recording to a Windows based computer. The Sonoma Recording Software facilitates this recording process. For instance, when connected to the Merlot DAC any digital audio passing through it from one of its digital inputs can be recorded in its native format and sample rate onto the computer. The resulting file can then be played back by any audio playback software or Playback Designs' own music server "Syrah".

When connected to the Pinot ADC this software will capture any audio converted from analog to the selected digital format. Again, the resulting file can be played back by any audio playback software or Playback Designs' own music server "Syrah".

This software is not meant to be a full fledged recording and editing app with extensive meta data editing capabilities. It is rather a basic and easy to use software that allows the creation of music files from digital audio being played through Playback Designs' line of converters. It is only available for Windows computers (Windows 7 and newer) as the Mac platform does not allow recording of quad DSD formats.

INSTALLATION AND FIRST LAUNCH

First you will need to download and install the Windows driver software as instructed by the manual of your Sonoma series converter. You can find it on the support page of www.playbackdesigns.com.

Then follow these steps:

1. Download the Sonoma Recorder Software from products page at www.playbackdesigns.com
2. Double click on the installer and follow the instructions on your screen. This will install a shortcut link on your desktop that you can use to launch the app.
3. Hit Yes when asked for the installation of the Microsoft redistributable package.
4. Connect your Merlot or Pinot converter to your computer via USB.
5. Launch the Sonoma Recorder app by double clicking on the shortcut on your desktop. This will present the following user interface on your computer:



SETUP IN CONNECTION WITH MERLOT DAC

1. Select the desired digital input on your Merlot (PLink, AES or Coax).
2. Make sure the correct sample rate is displayed on the front panel of Merlot.
3. Launch the Sonoma Recorder software, if not already done.
4. Select Settings from the user interface. This will open the window as shown to the right.
5. Select "AKDesign USB ASIO" as Input Device (if not selected already automatically).
6. Select the same Sampling Rate as displayed on front panel of Merlot. If this is not set the same your recording will fail!
7. Disable the monitoring option (this is only used in connection with the Pinot ADC). You can monitor your audio directly through the analog outputs on the Merlot.
8. Hit OK to set all selected options and close the window.



SETUP IN CONNECTION WITH PINOT ADC

1. Launch the Sonoma Recorder software, if not already done.
2. Select Settings from the user interface. This will open the window as shown below.
3. Select "AKDesign USB ASIO" as Input Device (if not selected already automatically).
4. Select the desired sampling rate for your recording. The software will automatically configure the Pinot hardware. When connected to the Pinot you can no longer select the sample rate via its front panel buttons. You can only do that from this Settings window.
5. Enable the monitoring option to loop back the incoming audio right back to the Pinot. If it is connected to a DAC (such as Merlot) via its digital outputs (PLink, AES or Coax) you will be able to monitor the audio exactly as it is being recorded onto the file in your computer. If you don't want to hear any audio disable this function.
6. Hit OK to set all selected options and close the window.



SETTING FILE DESTINATION AND STARTING TO RECORD

1. From the main window hit the Set File Destination button and enter the desired file name and directory destination. Note that the file extension will automatically be set according to the selected audio file format (set by sample rate selection in Settings). PCM files will be .wav and DSD files will be .dff files.
2. Hit Save to close window. You should then see the entered file name in the main window.
3. Start your audio source you want to record
4. Hit the Record button at the desired time. This will also start the recording time counter displayed in the main window.
5. To stop the recording simply press the Stop button. This will finalize the audio file.
6. If you want to immediately start another recording you can simply press the Record button - which becomes a next button during recording - again without first entering a new file name. The software will automatically add a number at the end of the previously entered file name and start a new file. This number will be incremented every time you start a new recording until you enter a new file name. This allows you to record an entire album with several tracks without stopping the source after each track. Simply press the Next button during the pause between tracks to automatically create a new file for each track.

ADDING METADATA TO YOUR RECORDINGS

You can use any 3rd party metadata or tag editor to add various tags for each recording. There is a wide selection of such software apps available and the list seems to grow almost every day. The DSD files created with the Sonoma Recorder are in the .dff file format which only supports the most basic meta data fields. You can use 3rd party software (JRiver, Audiogate etc.) to convert the file format to the .dsf file format which supports more meta data fields.

Playback Designs is working on expanding the Sonoma Recorder to support additional file formats and other features. Check our website regularly for updates.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Recording to slow media

Generally, it is recommended that you record to hard drives (HDD) or solid state drives (SSD), because they offer enough transfer bandwidth for real time digital audio. However, the Sonoma Recorder software also supports much slower memories such as flash sticks. In such a case the software automatically detects the slow memory and records to the computer's RAM memory instead. When you then finish the recording by hitting the stop button all the audio data is transferred from RAM to the slow memory. If this happens and you are indeed recording to memory that is too slow for real time audio, then the software will take a moment after stopping to transfer the audio and get ready for the next recording. This process is indicated in the status field of the user interface. The next-button feature will not be available when the RAM memory buffer is used.

File format and system limitations

Wave files and all files on drives that are formatted in FAT32 have a size limit that can be reached during longer recordings. If this happens the recording software will automatically split the recording across multiple files.