Subject: Windows XP warning
Posted by Adveser on Thu, 30 Dec 2010 17:24:06 GMT
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Hey guys. Even though sound cards and drivers are different, Direct Sound just isn't. When it comes to Windows XP, sound is ultimately processed through the Kernal Mixer and if using Direct Sound, applies certain quality filters.

This is bad I have discovered. Back in the olden days of 16-Bit, 48Khz max sound cards, these filters were very much necessary. Back in the Windows 98 days, the Headphones filter sounded incredible with my then setup, for instance and until recently I had assumed the "Stereo Desktop Speakers" filter to be expected and necessary.

If you don't know what I'm talking about:
Control Panel/Sounds and Audio Devices
Go to the Volume Tab and Click the advanced box.

A couple months ago I was running the Audio Test Bench by HigherFi.com and noticed several notch filters that I had not seem on an older computer, so I assumed it was built in and specific to the card.

For some reason, I decided to change the filter settings to see what would happen. After selecting "no speaker" (off) the 50Hz notch filter disappeared altogether.

These filters do a lot more. I had previously turned it off and realized how poorly some material sounded and changed it back. After a second attempt, I'm convinced. The bottom line is this: These filters may smooth over the sound so it all sounds more rounded off, but the albums that were recorded and mixed very well are going to sound far worse.

My advice is that if you listen to music on your computer, use the audio test bench to see what is being done specifically on your chip and software and change the filter settings to the most passive one you can find (which is always off)

The sound now is incredibly detailed in a hard to define way. It's like the sonic signature of the mixes in question are their own now. Before it was like everything sort of sounded the same. Now the timbre is far far far more accurate. Give it a shot. It'll take less time than reading this post did