

BY STEPHEN MURPHY

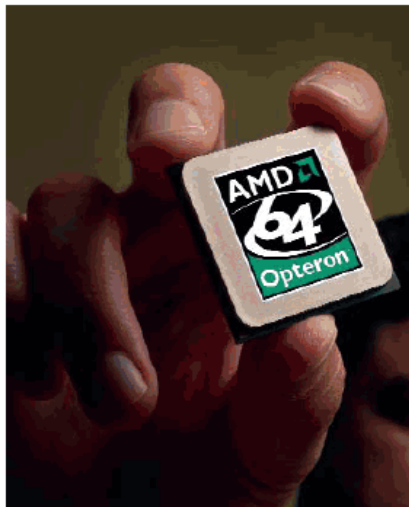
This is the last installment in the "Building the Perfect Beast" series, which provided a general roadmap to the configuration of a Windows XP-based high-performance audio workstation from the ground up. For those who are interested, the complete series is archived under "Articles" on my website ([www.smurphco.com](http://www.smurphco.com)).

### ALL ACCESS

Picking up where we left off last month, the only essential change in Windows XP for use with audio applications is to set processor scheduling to Background Services (Control Panel > System > Advanced > Performance Settings > Advanced Tab > select Background Services). While you are there, you may also want to set visual effects to a minimum (click on the Visual Effects Tab > select 'Adjust for Best Performance').

There are a number of other non-essential tweaks that can enhance performance and/or prevent unintended interruption of audio processes. Last month I noted the three most rudimentary and benign tweaks (disable screen saver, turn off power schemes, and disable system sounds). For those wishing to eek out a bit more performance and/or prevent uninvited Windows handholding attempts, here are several more tweaks to consider for your XP audio workstation.

Though most of the following are fairly simple and should cause you no worry, I strongly recommend "Ghosting" your system drive (see 'Beast' part 3) before



# Building the Perfect Beast (Part IV)



trying tweaks requiring registry modification.

1. Disable "Map Through Soundcard" (Control Panel > Sounds and Audio Devices > Hardware Tab > Double click your sound card in the list > Properties tab > Audio Devices > Double click your sound card in the list > Check the 'Do not map through this device' checkbox). Many applications attempt to play sounds through your main sound card. By not mapping these sounds through your sound card,

you prevent potentially damaging sounds from getting through and unintentional sample rate changes that can affect open projects in your audio/video editing application. For those applications (internet etc.) that you wish to hear but do not allow selection of your pro sound card, consider using the motherboard's built-in audio system (set to default device) connected to a mixer, unused pro interface inputs or a pre-amp/switcher.

2. Disable "Automatic Updates" (Control Panel > System > Automatic Updates tab > Turn off Automatic Updates). Update manually when necessary.

3. While you in the System panel, go to the Remote tab and uncheck "Remote Assistance" and "Remote Desktop" unless otherwise needed. Also, if you are one of the people that never chooses to "Send Error Report to Microsoft" when a error or crash occurs, you can disable this option permanently in the System panel Advanced tab (under 'Error Reporting').

4. Disable XP Themes and Desktop Background Image (Right click on desktop and choose Properties. On the 'Themes' tab, set to Windows Classic and on the Desktop tab set to "None"). I also like to set the "Start" bar to Windows Classic (right click the 'Start' button > Properties > Select 'Classic'). You can then select "Customize" to choose your Start bar



items and disable crap like "Personalized Menus" (where you only see a few items under program and start bar menus, and have to click an arrow to view the rest).

5. Disable "Hibernation" (Control Panel > Power Options > Hibernate > Uncheck Hibernation. Disable this to free up hard disk space equivalent to the amount of RAM installed in the computer.

6. Disable "Fast User Switching" (Control Panel > User Accounts > Change the way users log on or off > Deselect 'Use Fast User Switching'). This feature allows additional users to log on to the computer without logging off the first user or shutting down open applications. Disable to prevent accidental overhead-hogging multiple log-ons.

### ADULT SWIM ONLY

The following tweaks require a bit more computer knowledge and consideration. A registry backup and/or ghosting is highly recommended.

1. Disable "NTFS Last Access Time Logging." This is one of the more advanced and effective performance-enhancing tweaks. To quote directly from Microsoft, "Disabling the Last Access Time improves the speed of folder and file access [by reducing] the logging impact of updating the last access time."  
*continued on page 52 ►*

---

► *Studio Sense from page 46*

stamp on folders and directories.” Go to: Start > Run > type “command” (without quotes). At the command prompt, type “FSUTIL behavior set disablelastaccess 1” (without quotes). Reboot to make changes effective. Note that this may affect backup software that uses the “Last Access” time stamp.

2. Set “Indexing Service” to Manual or Disabled. The indexing service is an invasive background process that assists in searching by combing through the contents of your hard drives. When running, the process requires lots of page file space and zaps CPU power. To simply turn off or set to manual, go to Start > Run > Type “services.msc” > Scroll to “Indexing Service” and double click > Set Startup Type to “Manual” or “Disabled.” If you are determined to keep the Indexing Service, you can at least limit its operations in the preferences section of the Start > Search window.

3. Disable System Restore (Control Panel > System > System Restore tab). This function monitors hard disk activity and hardware changes and allows you to roll back to a previous state in case of trouble. My preferred safety net is to manually use the aforementioned Norton Ghost prior to installing any software or hardware, and avoid the potentially invasive Windows System Restore function.

4. Turn off those annoying (and potentially disruptive) balloon notifications in the bottom right of your desktop. To do this, go to Start > Run > Type “regedit” > Go to HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER > Software > Microsoft > Windows > CurrentVersion > Explorer > Advanced. Double click the entry on the right called EnableBalloonTips and set value to “0”, close the registry and reboot.

Although this was the last column in the “Beast” series, I will continue the computer focus in upcoming columns including tools and tips for workstation computers that are connected to the Internet, plus a round up of some favorite editing computer peripherals.

**PAR** Studio Editor Stephen Murphy has over 20 years production and engineering experience, including Grammy-winning and Gold/Platinum credits. His website is [www.smurphco.com](http://www.smurphco.com).