

Using Dakota or WaveCenter/PCI to play Windows system sounds, internet streaming audio, and MP3 files

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Computers have become wonderful sources of audio for information and entertainment, and you can play most any sound on your Windows computer through your Dakota or WaveCenter/PCI card. But many stereo applications have no direct method for controlling the destination of their output. Such applications include:

- Internet Browser plug-ins, like Flash
- Windows Media Player
- RealPlayer
- RealJukebox
- Quicktime Movie Player
- Sound Recorder
- WinAmp
- Windows system sounds (the beeps, squawks, and other sounds that Windows can make when it starts up, minimizes a window, detects an error, etc.)

The audio output channels that are used by these audio programs are set in the Multimedia control panel (Start > Settings > Control Panel > Multimedia). In the "Audio" tab, under Playback, you can set the "Preferred device." This dropdown box will list all your stereo output devices including those on the Frontier Design audio card. Make sure that there's a checkmark in the "Use preferred devices only" box near the bottom of the window. Of course, your MP3 file will not play through the selected output device if that device is already in use (or reserved) by another audio application.

Most computer games can use Dakota or WaveCenter/PCI for their sound output, too. The only exceptions are some older games that require WaveTable or FM synthesized sounds from a SoundBlaster-compatible soundcard. Dakota and WaveCenter/PCI do not have such synthesis capability.

Note that Dakota and WaveCenter/PCI are normally used to record and play mono or stereo 16-bit or 24-bit sounds at 44.1 or 48 kHz sample rates. But the card's driver can also accept 8-bit outputs at 8, 11.025, 16, and 22.05 kHz. Many system sounds and simple stereo players use these formats. The driver uses a high-quality sample rate conversion process to translate the sound to a 16-bit depth and to a 44.1 or 48 kHz sample rate.