



For Immediate Release.

Soundart Unveils the Chameleon at the 2002 Frankfurt Musik Messe.

24-bit rack programmable for any studio or stage task.

Frankfurt, Germany. March 13, 2002.

Soundart is proud to announce the availability of its programmable studio hardware, the Chameleon. Housed in a sturdy rack unit, the Chameleon is the only studio tool that can be completely reprogrammed to perform any conceivable audio or MIDI processing task. Customers can enjoy the crystal-clear 24-bit sound and hands-on interface, without sacrificing the flexibility of computer based audio solutions.

Soundart will also give away the programming tools on request, making the Chameleon the first professional audio platform that is truly open.

Chameleon can feel at home in the best studios.

The Chameleon is an audio processor housed in a sturdy 1U rack. The front panel delivers normal functionality such as volume control, headphone access, and power cycling. In addition, 12 push buttons, an LCD readout, a rotary control and 3 knobs for can be reprogrammed for any functionality desired by the user. Round the back are connections for power, a serial interface for connection to a PC, and MIDI and audio connections. Inside, a powerful Digital Signal Processor (DSP) chip and an embedded Coldfire microcontroller offer the same kind of processing solution found in most modern DSP synthesizers and effects units.

Until now studio hardware has been the preserve of professional audio manufacturers; users had no access to the operating system and could not reprogram their hardware. Soundart has broken down the wall separating quality hardware and user accessibility to software. Any Chameleon owner can load or program new applications - through either the serial or MIDI ports - allowing the Chameleon to 'become' a different studio processor. Synthesis, effect processing, MIDI manipulation - the Chameleon can handle all these tasks using purpose-built, professional sounding hardware.

All incoming or outgoing audio processed on the Chameleon is handled by a Motorola DSP56303 - the same chip found in the majority of 'virtual analogue' synthesizers made in recent years. Most electronics musicians already own gear using this proven hardware solution. Unlike conventional computers, DSP chips use a different programming model optimised for the kind of math necessary to produce quality real-time audio.

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Further, this powerful DSP can process audio at depths of up to 56 bits, far beyond what is capable with personal computers. As well as the chip itself, we included 4 'mega-words' of 24-bit RAM, allowing mono delay times of over 87 seconds. All audio passes through high-quality analogue-digital converters operating at 48KHz.

More hands-on control for real musicianship.

But the Chameleon isn't limited to black-box processing of audio. We employ Motorola's Coldfire processor to manage real-time data input - and visual feedback - from the unit's front panel. And the Chameleon MIDI functionality is no bolted-on afterthought; we have resurrected the powerful MIDIShare programming system that graced the Atari ST and early Macintosh computer, with up to 8 megabytes of RAM for sequence storage and another megabyte of Flash RAM for patch storage. All the most common interface and control tasks are easily manageable using our powerful real-time operating system.

Audio developers get a platform to work on that is second to none in terms of quality and robustness. By removing compatibility problems and bloated computer operating systems, developers can focus on what really matters - new ways of processing audio and MIDI for electronic music. The Chameleon's powerful operating software lets programmers exploit all the power in the hardware, without forcing them to reinvent the wheel for basic functionality.

With a Chameleon in the studio or stage rack, users get all the benefits of hardware: pristine audio quality, portability, total MIDI compatibility, and an interface they can actually touch. Once an application is loaded, the Chameleon behaves no differently from a purpose-built studio unit. Applications can even be stored in the Flash memory so that they load automatically at power-on. Instead of rebalancing delicate computer configurations every time they want more audio processing, Chameleon users can simply switch on and start work as if they had a dedicated audio processor. When their needs change, a new application can be loaded in seconds from any MIDI sequencer.

Breakthrough for developers heralds a new generation of studio tools.

Flexible studio tools have been offered before by other firms. But none has the portability and features of the Chameleon. In addition, other products have required programmers to pay crippling fees or undergo difficult approval processes before they are allowed to access pro-quality hardware. This has discouraged many aspiring electronic musicians and sound designers from taking the final step in their chosen field - building their own synthesis and effect processing tools.

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Soundart changes all that, by sharing their complete software development kit with anyone who wants it. Now both experienced developers and eager learners have access to the same tools used by pro audio developers. As well as programming tools, we also share extensive documentation and examples that expose the secrets of how studio gear actually works. Soundart has opened the door for everyone who has ever dreamed of making their dream studio tools. Our commitment to openness, combined with reference-quality studio hardware, means that those dreams can now become reality.

For commercial developers, the Chameleon is just as attractive. A powerful hardware based security system allows applications to be locked to the serial number of the unit for secure distribution. And we don't impose licensing conditions or royalty charges: developers can sell or give away their applications as they see fit. They may share the source code for collaborative products if they choose, or keep their algorithms completely private - even from us! However developers want to present their work to the public, all are welcome to sell or share applications on our website. We will even provide billing and shipping functionality, so customers have a central point of sale for all their Chameleon needs!

Chameleon already shipping to developers and colleges.

Rather than talk about future plans, Soundart believes in delivering solutions before talking about them. Chameleon units are already being shipped to developers all over the world, as well as to university research departments. Any DSP developer can start working on a Chameleon now - the only wait is the time it takes us to ship them a unit. Experienced programmers are already at work on applications for use on stage and in the studio, as well as more advanced programming tools for musicians who do not have coding experience.

Of course, this would not be news if the hardware were not affordable; but it is. The suggested retail price of the unit is a competitive Euro 795.00 plus applicable taxes. Developers are eligible for discounts depending on their experience and design ideas. Soundart values and respects the research community as well, and will make the unit available to educational institutions at discounted prices - generous support on anyone's terms.

Conclusion.

No other company can offer this combination of studio functionality, versatility, and openness. We expect the Chameleon to become a fixture in audio racks the world over, as professionals see how they can benefit from this winning combination. Digital signal processing has changed the music industry and opened up possibilities undreamt of only a few years ago. The personal computer has brought equally wide changes to the studio. The Chameleon is the first tool that combines all the advantages of both with none of the restrictions. Soundart is proud to open a new chapter in the history of electronics in music.

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