

Workarounds for XP/USB joystick/missing sound.

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The Problem:

Red Baron and Windows XP don't get along with regards to sound. As XP users with USB joysticks soon discover, the program works fine the very first time they play. Subsequent play is marred by the complete absence of sound. Players with old-style, gameport joysticks, don't usually have this problem. Unfortunately, USB joysticks are the only ones commonly found in stores now.

This problem appears to be related to Red Baron mis-analyzing the computer's hardware. Specifically, RB seems to think there is a conflict between the USB joystick and the soundcard. For subsequent play events, RB disables sound; perhaps thinking that of the two, users would rather have an operable joystick. Since both joystick and sound worked fine the first time, clearly the RB-discerned conflict is imaginary, though real enough to RB, alas.

Workarounds:

I call these workarounds, rather than solutions, since they involve more-or less inconvenient actions by the player. You can have both sound and USB joysticks. You just have to decide which of the following workarounds is less onerous to you. Several people in the RB community are responsible for developing these workarounds, including McHaggis, AATrouble4you, Charles de Thielt, and myself. I am sure there are others that helped, and I will gladly add your names to this list if you will notify me.

Hardware workaround:

Unplug the USB cord of your joystick before starting RB. Plug back in once you reach the RB main menu. You may hear a chime sound from your computer, signifying it has recognized the "new hardware," namely, your joystick. Make your selection from main menu and go fly, with both joystick and sound. If your joystick has an electric cord also (Microsoft Force Feedback, for instance), you needn't unplug that cord. Advantage: You retain your preferences data files (see below). Disadvantages: Inconvenient location of USB port. Wear and tear on USB connector.

Software workaround #1:

Delete "rbprefs.dat" from your "Sierra/RedBaron3D/Data" subdirectory before each play of RB in single player mode. Delete "mpprefs.dat" from your

“Sierra/RedBaron3D/Data/Multi” subdirectory before each play in multiplayer mode. This also works for the older, superpatched, RedBaronII game, just substitute RedBaronII for the RedBaron3D name when searching for the .dat files. Advantage: Saves USB connectors. Disadvantages: You will have to re-select all your preferences each time you play. You have to erase .dat file each time.

Software workaround #2:

After deleting the .dat files as above, make new, empty file folders in the same subdirectories with the .dat names. In the /Data subdirectory, make a folder named “rbprefs.dat” (the .dat is required). For multiplay, in the /Multi folder make a new folder named “mpprefs.dat”. Again, this works for the older RBII version, per above. Advantage: Only have to do this once. Disadvantage: Re-entering preferences each time you play.

Software workaround #3:

Install a new copy of RedBaron. During the install, the “Install Default Preferences” screen asks if you want to create a default preferences file, based on machine performance. Choose Yes. At the final “Setup Complete” screen, choose Finish -- do NOT choose to launch Red Baron. Now use file manager to locate the rbprefs.dat file that was created at the end of the install. The install program creates this file with a 30/09/1998 date although the mpprefs.dat has the current install date on it. Right click on the file, choose Properties and change the Attributes to “Read-only”. RB cannot delete or over-write this file now as it shuts down.

The above procedure has the following benefits: the rbprefs.dat file that is create is based on the actual system performance so most of the graphics, sound settings, etc. are at a higher setting than the default you start with if you delete the rbprefs.dat file each time. Therefore, few if any changes are needed to the preferences. There is also no need to delete a file before loading the game. I’m not sure if/how this fix might work for multiplayer.

I noticed that the RedBaron CD has a “\prefs” subdirectory that contains 4 different pref files. I assume these are used to create the default rbprefs.dat file. Hope the above helps in a quest for the “final solution”! "

Software Workaround #4:

Rbprefs.dat is just a list with 60 4-byte blocks. The blocks are an on/off setting (0/1) or a range(0-64) or a slider setting of 8 bytes (the AI skill and the 'overall' sliders). With a Hex editor like AXE or WINHEX the bytes could be edited to define the player’s preferences, and then set to read only. Of course you may have to play with the file to determine what blocks contain the preferences you wish to set.

Software Workaround #5

Alternatively, if you send your list preferences to another RB player who does NOT have XP, they could set the preferences in THEIR RB to those that you wish to use, then e-mail you their MPPREFS.DAT or RBPREFS.DAT file. Simply set it to "read only" and save it over top of your old one. Presto! Your prefs are saved and you do not need to erase anything or reset anything before play. If you ever want to change prefs then have your teammate do you a new file with the updated prefs. A disadvantage is that they may be unable to select Glide or similar hardware settings if they do not have Voodoo or Glidos installed. You should probably get new friends who care enough about RB to have Glide.