

## 5.1 MP3 Surround Set for Launch

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MP3, the world's most popular audio compression format, goes multi-channel. Scientists and engineers from the Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits IIS, who developed MP3 together with their colleagues from Thomson, the exclusive licensing representative for their MP3 patents, and Agere Systems, have joined to launch MP3 Surround into the consumer and commercial markets. This technology will enable 5.1 channel surround sound for a broad spectrum of applications including web-based music distribution, broadcasting systems, PC-related audiovisual or gaming applications, consumer electronics and automotive systems.

MP3 Surround supports high-quality multi-channel sound at bit rates comparable to those currently used to encode stereo MP3 material, resulting in files half the size of common compressed surround formats. At the same time, the new format offers complete backward compatibility to any existing MP3 software and hardware devices.

Attracting attention at several recent events and fairs, the new MP3 Surround format has become eagerly anticipated by the vast MP3 user community.

The web site [www.mp3surround-format.com](http://www.mp3surround-format.com) now provides users immediate download access to free MP3 Surround evaluation software, demo samples and detailed technology information.

Thomson, which has partnered with Fraunhofer IIS since the launch of MP3 in 1992, is adding Fraunhofer Institute's new MP3 Surround technology to its licensing program.

“The free MP3 Surround evaluation software will enable everyone to test the latest feature of the digital audio standard. We encourage music artists, engineers and producers to experience this new multi-channel audio format and realize the benefits of its portability and backward compatibility,” said Henri Linde, Vice President, New Business of the Intellectual Property and Licensing unit for Thomson.

The evaluation encoder enables the creation of MP3 Surround material out of five or six channel “.wav“ files. The Fraunhofer IIS MP3 Surround player is capable of decoding and playing back the surround format’s files as well as stereo MP3 material. This software-only solution runs on any standard PC with multi-channel audio capabilities.

MP3 Surround was developed by Fraunhofer IIS in collaboration with Agere Systems. Using a psychoacoustic technique called binaural cue coding, MP3 Surround captures the spatial image information of multi-channel sound. This method is critical in achieving the compact file size that MP3 users expect.

“We are delighted to advance MP3 into the area of multi-channel audio, with the help of Agere Systems. As surround sound is increasingly gaining importance in the marketplace, we are confident that MP3 Surround will attract the attention of music production professionals and consumers alike,” comments Juergen Herre, Chief Executive Scientist at Fraunhofer IIS.

“Together, Fraunhofer IIS and Agere are developing technology that will contribute to the delivery of a compelling compressed multi-channel audio solution,” said Peter Kroon, chief multimedia architect for Agere’s Mobility business. “This work is part of Agere’s overall commitment to provide advanced multimedia technology that enables consumers to stay connected.”

The evaluation period of the MP3 Surround encoder will expire on the 31st of December 2005, while the Fraunhofer IIS player will continue to remain fully functional. The use of the software is allowed for personal and non-commercial purposes only. Professionals can license MP3 Surround from Thomson at [www.mp3licensing.com](http://www.mp3licensing.com).

Source: Fraunhofer Institut für Integrierte Schaltungen (IIS)

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