Patching Basics

(A very good overview is also contained in the v9 help, to be found in Distrib\Help\Ai_Man_v8.chm and in the V9 User Manual available at the Avolites Download site.).

In the beginning - when it was just the Salvation engine - almost everything needed to be patched: the engine offered a collection of modules, each specialising in a very small task, and the operator/programmer had to combine them in a meaningful way, to acchieve what he had in mind - play a video, map an image to a structure, control some parameters. A good part of the development over the last years is that many of everydays tasks are now packed into a fancy GUI, and are available with just one click. However, if something special needs to be accomplished, or some particular thing is not (yet) available via the GUI, patching might be the way to go. And honestly, after you have made the first steps, it is pure fun (after the desperation has vanished, that is).

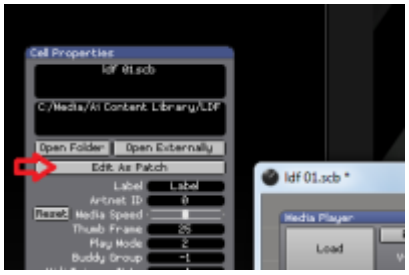
Where to start

Currently there are some entry points into the world of patching:

- the purest approach is the File/New menu in the Ai menu bar on top of the GUI display - this opens just a blank patch file
- the mightiest way is clicking Stage Patch: `Open` button in the little Ai root window. This opens a patch window which is actually the current project, with some modules and subpatches. Personally I prefer this as entry point - but you must know that you can easily render your system completely useless here.
- a more fancy way is calling the Stage Patch page from the Ai diamond in the bottom-right corner - click this, then click the stylized single DVI connector (outputs), and then the stylized wired modules (Stage Patch). This again opens the Stage Patch but in a more stylish view: you can zoom in and out (with Ctrl + and Ctrl -), entering a subpatch opens this neatly animated, and in order to ascend again you have the breadcrumps on top. It's up to you which way you prefer.
- and a special one: even all the tiles on the performance page are, down in their heart, small patches. Hence, if you right-click a tile to edit its properties the Cell Properties window to the left shows the button `Edit As Patch`. Clicking this opens a patch window with the modules assigned to this particular cell.

To start patching simply open a blank patch file, or open the Stage Patch.





Patches, Ports and Modules

In the very end, the stage patch you consist of just thousands of modules, all linked to other modules. However none could overlook this or handle it in a suitable way. That's why functional units are bundled together as subpatches which expose only a limited set of ports and parameters. By convention every subpatch, or patch file, is simply called patch, with the Stage Patch representing our topmost project, containing all other patches and modules (it's possible to have patches outside the Stage Patch though). And the process of patching is arranging and connecting modules.

Modules

Modules are the smallest parts of Ai. They are provided by the Salvation engine which is the very core of Ai. Hence, you cannot create modules yourself, but you can combine the existing modules in a meaningful way. For a full list of the available modules please see Distrib\Help\Ai_Man_v8.chm or the Module Definitions section in the V9 User Manual which is available at the Avolites Download site.

In order to insert a module right-click somewhere on the background of your patch canvas and from the context menu select `Insert Module`. This opens a list of sections which the available modules are grouped into. When you hover the mouse over a section, another list appears showing all the modules in this list. Simply click a module to select it, then place your mouse where you want the module to be inserted, and click again. This places the chosen module at this spot.

Modules are represented by grey rectangles with a blue title bar and a number of controls (buttons, text fields, knobs etc.) and ports.

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