DATXtract Notes

Version 1.3, November, 2007

What is DATXtract?

DATXtract is a program for transferring the contents of audio DAT tapes into AIFF files.

What's New in Version 1.3

• 32 KHz tapes, recorded in either standard or LP (Long-Play) mode, are now supported.

• A new preference setting allows frames with errors to be included in the AIFF file. While DATXtract has no built-in error correction, this option allows errors to be corrected by other means. The default action is to omit error frames from the file.

• Metadata and log files may now be created for each audio file. The metadata files describes the characteristics of the recording. The log file includes any errors or other messages that were logged for the audio file. Preference settings control the creation of these files.

• Preference handling has been improved. A standard Preferences dialog is now used, and preferences and window positions are now persistent.

What are the requirements for using DATXtract?

• OS X 10.2 and later, including OS X 10.5 (Leopard). Older versions of OS X are untested but may work.

• Either an Intel or PPC Mac. DATXtract is not native on Intel Macs, but works under emulation with no known problems. A universal binary version of DATXtract is planned for the next release.

• An audio-capable computer DAT drive. "Audio-capable" means that the drive must have firmware which supports the set of SCSI commands for working with audio tapes. Although computer DAT drives are typically connected via a SCSI connection, they may also be connected via Firewire by using a SCSI-to-Firewire adapter. At this time of this writing, information about using audio DATs in DDS drives, including firmware information, is available on Ade Rixon's web pages at:
http://homepage.ntlworld.com/adrian.rixon/personal/ade/dat-dds/index.html

How has DATXtract been tested?

I've tested DATXtract in my own environment, which consists of Tascam DA-20 and DA-30 decks for recording tapes, and a Sony SDT-9000 drive for use with DATXtract. DATXtract should work with other recorders and computer drives as well. If there are problems using other hardware I will attempt to fix them, as time permits.

I can't guarantee the performance or reliability of DATXtract in your environment. Perform your own tests before using it for any critical applications.

How do I use DATXtract?

If you are using a tape drive with a SCSI connection, the tape drive must be connected and turned on at the time you boot your machine. Reboot if necessary in order to achieve this. If you are using a Firewire connection, all you have to do is turn on the drive then connect the Firewire cable to the Mac. Next, launch DATXtract. You should see in it's window that it has located the tape drive. Select the checkbox for *Inserting a tape* and wait until the status shows *Inserting tape set*. Then insert the tape into the drive. When the drive has completely finished loading the tape, uncheck *Inserting a tape*. DATXtract will load the tape in audio mode if

necessary, then position the tape at the start. Click on the *Read* button to read the contents of the tape into a file. There are two preferences for controlling what *Read* does. You can select not reading from the tape until the first start of a program is detected. You can also select starting a new output file each time a new program is detected. When new files are started, a sequential number will be appended to the file name you chose. There are also error handling preferences for controlling whether frames with errors are included in the AIFF file, and how many error should be allowed for a file before reading stops.

When using a Firewire adapter, the *Inserting a tape* checkbox should always be used, as described above. However, with a direct SCSI connection normally it will not be necessary to use the checkbox. Also, it is not necessary to use the checkbox when the drive is connected and the tape is completely loaded before DATXtract is launched. The tape drive will stop responding if the checkbox is not used when it should have been. In that case, DATXtract will display an error message indicating a drive problem needs to be corrected. To do that, quit from DATXtract, eject the tape from the drive, and unplug the Firewire connection. Then start over again following the above directions.

DATXtract uses somewhat arbitrary rules for handling errors. It ignores errors during the first 200 frames, since errors are common at the very start of a recording. Also, it will stop if the number of errors exceeds the error limit setting. The default limit is 15 errors, but you can enter a different value in the preferences. Check the *Log* section of the window to see if any errors have been encountered during reading, and how DATXtract handled them.

Is DATXtract supported?

I'll provide informal support for DATXtract as time permits. Write to me using peter@pdicamillo.org for help with questions and problems. Also, the download site contains the DATXtract source code which may be used for support purposes.

How do I get DATXtract?

The download site for DATXtract is: http://pdicamillo.org/~peter/datxtract/

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