
DISK MENU

The D.isk sub-function menu allows animation cue files (primary and macros) to be loaded or saved to either floppy or hard disk drives, along with other file maintenance operations. Using the "F.iles" save command, the names for all files you are currently using are recorded in a special file (FILES.DAT) which is used to determine the default files that will be loaded the next time the system is booted.

Typical files that are used with the Synthesis Show Control/Programming system and their use are:

- CUES** Default filename is SHOW.CUE. Animation (real-time programming) cues, loaded and stored into conventional memory. Macros and subroutines may be stored in an animation file cue file, and loaded either in main memory (as in Show.Cue), or merged and loaded into EMS memory as MACROS.
- MACROS** Default filename is MACROS.MCS. Subroutine, random, and loop cues in real-time animation cue format, and loaded into EMS memory. Up to 32 animation macros may be started and run (frame locked to incoming time code) concurrently. However, editing or modification of MACROS data in EMS is not possible.
- EVENTS** Default filename is EVENTS.EVT. Holds all of the cue-time events, subroutines, and ASCII text macros used by the EVENTS subsystem. There are often two events files associated with a show; those that actually run on the Synthesis Show Control computer, and an events file that is loaded and run from within a Laser Disc Controller (LDC) or BART I/O Controller frame.
- LIGHTING** Default filename is LIGHT.LGT. Contains all of the lighting cue and group information for the LIGHTING subsystem.
- NAMES** Default filename is NAMES.NMS. A file of all of the digital and analog channel function names, in addition to an index page. The data in this file is automatically related to event functions, and is useful for making assignments and performing diagnostic operations.
- ASSIGNS** Default filename is ASSIGNS.ASG. Temporary file used during programming to retain switch and fader assignments from the show programming console to specific channels. Refer to the documentation on Assigns for more information.
- DEFAULTS** Default filename is DEFAULT.DFL. Holds the default patch bay assignments, default or preset values for all analog and digital functions when the system is R.eset, and system-specific configuration data. DO NOT DELETE or alter this file in any way, or the system will not be able to correctly access the hardware in this installation.
- LASERQ** Default filename is LASRCUE.LSC. Contains the LDP configuration and cues for the laser disc random access cue subsystem.
- CHANSET** Default filename is CHANNEL.SET. Groups analog and digital channels.
- SCHEDULE** Default filename is SCHEDULE.SCH. Real time clock scheduler.
- PA422** Default filename is PA422.DAT. PA-422 (professional audio protocol) cues and data buffers are saved in this file.
- FILES.DAT** As described above, holds the names of all files to automatically load when the system re-boots. This name may be overridden by entering an alternate "file of files" when invoking the Synthesis Show Control System, by specifying the file name on the command line following the "GO" command.

Example: GO OURSHOW.DAT from the MS-DOS prompt or a batch file will cause the system to load show files as listed in the file OURSHOW.DAT, created with the F.iles or A.II Save command.

Other files may be created as required and named by the user, including EPROM image formats, print images, etc. All of the files are created in a special format by the Synthesis Show Programming System, and must **NOT** be modified with a text editor or debugger. Only by writing the files from within the system can the integrity and proper operation of the system be assured. The files contain binary information and special control codes that will seriously affect operation if changed by only one bit!

FILE NAMES

File names follow MS-DOS naming conventions, that is from one to eight alpha-numeric characters, a "." dot, and a one to three character extension. Use extreme caution when naming files. At the present time, the system allows both the name AND extension to be freely named, without regard for the type of data in the file. Use unique and meaningful names for each data file, so that it is clear which show and what type of data is in the file.

Case is not significant; the system will convert all lower case letters into upper case as required. Be extremely careful not to enter control-codes into a filename, as it may make the file difficult to recover or access.

DOS (dumb operating system) uses several punctuation symbols for special purposes, including path names, redirection, filtering, etc. For more information on DOS files and operation, refer to any DOS reference manual, version 3.1 or later.

Be sure to keep current backup copies of all data files!

OPTIONS

- A.ll Sv** Prompts for the name (or verification of the default displayed name) of each of the system files, and attempts to write all files to disk. At the conclusion, the actual filenames saved are written to "FILES.DAT".
- C.opy** Prompts for the name of a file to copy from followed by the name of the file to make a copy to. Note: This copy function will NOT allow the destruction or over-writing of an existing file. If an attempt is made to copy to an existing file, an error message is generated ("File Exists"), and the target file must either be renamed, or manually erased.
- D.ir** Displays a directory of the files in the current path of the drive you specify. Enter the letter of the drive (A, B, or C). Next you may specify a match template, such as *.DAT or SHOW.*, or just press return to see all files. After 16 names have been shown, the display will pause until you press the <return> key.
- E.rase** Prompts for the name of the {drive:}{\path\} file to be deleted. As always, press ESC.ape to cancel the operation; a deleted file may not be accessed or recovered by the Synthesis system.
- F.ilenms** Writes the FILES.DAT file that describes the default file names to load for each of the subsystems within the Synthesis system. This is normally done automatically whenever A.ll Save is performed.
- L.oad** Prompts for and attempts to load a file of animation (real-time) cues saved in a special format by the S.ave option.
- M.acros** Enters a submenu of animation macro operations. This is where real-time data files may be loaded or saved to (or from) EMS memory. The current functions available for macros include:

B.uild*	Not implemented at this time.
E.dit	Allows changing the analog bank offsets associated with each animation macro.
L.oad	Load an animation file into memory. Multiple files may be loaded up to the limit of EMS memory available.
M.ap*	Not implemented at this time.
P.rint*	Not implemented at this time.
S.ave	Save all animation macro files currently loaded as a single MACROS file.
X.fer*	Not implemented at this time.
z.ap	Clears all macros.
ESC.ape	Return to previous menu.

The "build" function is currently available by creating an events script with a simple program that loads multiple files from a list built in the ASCII macro text strings.

Note that if there is no EMS-standard memory driver loaded, none of the MACRO file operations are possible for EMS memory, although macros may still be created and edited within the SHOW.CUE file in conventional memory.

N.ame	Permits entry/editing of a 15 character, free-form program name which is displayed on the top status line. This name is actually associated only with the SHOW.CUE file and is mostly used as a reminder. (This name is encoded on tapes using data-on-tape data storage.)
R.ename	Allows entry of an existing MS-DOS filename (from) and a legal filename to rename (to). The from-to file names are entered on individual lines terminated with <enter>.
S.ave	Resets the animation cue file to the beginning of the file, and attempts to save the cues to a specified file on the disk. For added safety, an attempt is made to automatically rename a file with the same name, but with a ".\$xx" extension. If the disk becomes full, the best solution is to put a formatted floppy disk into a drive and try again. Alternatively, you may try to D.elete any unnecessary old or backup files.
P.ath	Not shown on screen display. (Shift-p) Allows entry of a DOS PATH to use when using any of the Disk or file operations. The default is to use the files on the drive and directory that were in effect when the program was started.
drive	(Shift-d) Allows selection of any drive that is valid on the current computer system, including RAM or virtual disks, some network systems, etc.
ESC.ape	Return to previous menu.

IMPORTANT

Note that it is **NOT POSSIBLE** to format a disk from within the animation system. Always keep plenty of formatted, empty floppy disks around. Economy is not recommended here; only use quality name brand diskettes such as Sony, Kodak, Dysan, Maxell, 3M, TDK, or Datalife. Keep backup disks in a remote location, check for any dirt or contamination on often used disks and **REPLACE** if not in perfect condition!

If you ever get a data error and receive the message "Abort, Retry, or Fail", first check that the floppy disk door is closed. If it is, re-seat the disk, close the door, and press "R" to retry. **NEVER** use Abort or Fail; get a new disk and **REBOOT THE SYSTEM**. Serious problems could result if a legitimate error is ignored, and aborting the system without a proper disconnection of certain software "hooks" will produce unpredictable and unpleasant consequences.

Do not attempt to format a disk beyond it's rated capacity. Although it may appear to work at first, the data will become unrecoverable.

NOTES AND REVISIONS

The SYNTHESIS Show Control System loads and saves any or all of the show data to or from an disk file, be it on a hard disk drive (HDD), floppy disk drive (FDD), a network, or some other device. Once the files are loaded into RAM (random access memory) within the computer, it is normally not necessary to access the disk drive unless new data is being loaded and saved, or in case the system is restarted. The drives and all associated files are normally **never** accessed during show performance or operation.

Whenever a file save operation is performed, the prompt "Do Backup?" will appear. The normal response would be "Y", which creates a backup file with the same name and extension of the original file, with a "\$" as the first character of the extension. Thus, if you are editing the EVENTS.EVT file and are at a point to save the file, press shift-S from the events menu and a SAVE window will appear with the current name of the file to be saved. Either type in a totally new file name if major changes or revisions have been made, or simply press <enter> to accept the current file name (in this case, EVENTS.EVT). If you respond "Y" to "Do Backup?", the original file would be renamed "EVENTS.\$VT" and the current file is saved as EVENTS.EVT. Only one level of backup is maintained in this fashion, so the contents of a previous "EVENTS.\$VT" would be lost.

Prior to loading any file, a check is made to be sure that any changes made to a particular file are not lost. For example, if it is desired to load a new events file, then select shift-L from the events menu to request a file load. In most instances, the system will prompt "are you sure" before over-writing the current data. Further, if there have been any changes to the data in memory, a further warning is issued informing you that the data has been changed but not saved to disk. Prior to loading a new file, you are given the opportunity to save the file to disk. If there have been known, authorized, and tested changes to the file, it is prudent to save a copy, using the "backup" feature described above. If you are UNSURE about the changes made to a file, I would recommend saving the file, but with a unique name (such as your initials and the date, followed by the standard/default extension). Make a note of this name, such that someone else's deliberate work is not lost, and that unauthorized or unexpected changes are not permanent.

During any load operation, it is possible to see what likely files of the appropriate type are already on the current disk/directory. When in the "L.oad" option from any subsystem, press the HOME key to see a directory of all files with the associated extension. NOTE: This system only recognizes and displays files WITH THE EXPECTED or default extension, and may not necessarily display all files of the type that may be loaded or edited.

Although there is a check for the revision level and certain characteristics of a file's data, there is no inherent check on the type of data being loaded or saved. Thus, it is essential that the user make certain that the name and file type which is being loaded or saved is correct for the editor or context that is expected. For example, it is possible to save or load a .NMS (names) file with a different extension or name into or from another file. The results will be disappointing at best, and very likely fatal, even causing the system to crash. Use extreme care when saving or loading files. All L.oad and S.ave operations are related to the context of the current menu or subsystem within the Synthesis system, which allows extreme flexibility and convenience, if used with reasonable care.

Proprietary and Confidential - This information is provided as a reference for the operation and maintenance of show control equipment provided by Triad Productions, Inc. and may not be revealed, disclosed, or reproduced without the consent of Triad Productions, Inc. or its author, William Synhorst.