



Tech Info Library

Macintosh: Controlling Multimedia Peripheral Devices

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TOPIC -----

- 1) Is there any product available that allows peripherals like the video cassette recorder, LaserDisc player, large screen projector, slide projector, sound system, lighting system, and so on, to be controlled from the Macintosh? How about a product that can control the VCR and get it to go to certain frames on the video cassette (just like the way the Macintosh can control the LaserDisc player).
- 2) Are there any products around that can record the Macintosh screen display into PAL video format?

DISCUSSION -----

- 1) We do not know of one commercial product that can control all of the listed peripherals. However, there are products for controlling most of the individual peripherals separately.
 - VCRs, camcorders and still video cameras with Control-L (Sony's video control standard) can be controlled via VidClip XCMDs for HyperCard, which are available from APDA. At this point, it appears that only Sony equipment uses the Control-L protocol. Sony does have 8mm VCRs, VHS VCRs, and still video cameras/players that support the Control-L protocol.
 - There are XCMDs for HyperCard that can control many of the laser disc players. These XCMDs are available from Voyager.
 - Sound systems and lighting systems can be controlled via MIDI. Audio mixing boards, audio equalizers, audio delay and reverb devices, and lighting control boards exist that have MIDI connections built in. A visit to a professional musicians' store should provide an array of possibilities for MIDI-controlled sound and lighting systems.
 - Slide projectors usually have a cable-attached button controller for advancing/reversing slides. These button controllers can be replaced with a MIDI-controlled device from Peavey Electronics. Peavey is a music instrument manufacturer that recently produced a line of MIDI-controlled devices for controlling various items used in live performance music. One of these devices can replace the slide projector's remote control. Again,

a professional musicians' store that carries Peavey products can supply this device.

- VidClip provides the control access to go to certain locations on tape. However, going to a specific frame on tape is not as easy as on disc. It is possible to get within about 5 frames with the typical Control-L VCR. Since recording single frames on low- to moderate-cost VCRs is not possible, the usual expectation with VCRs is to get close to (and in front of) the beginning of a video segment, start the playback, finish the segment, and stop the playback. Then cue to the next segment and continue.
- In addition to the list of media devices you have, audio CDs can also be controlled from HyperCard XCMDs. This would allow the addition of CD quality music and/or speech from audio CDs to the presentation. (Please be sure to check copyright issues when using material with copyrights.)

There are a variety of ways to integrate all of these various controllers into one application on the Macintosh. HyperCard XCMDs exist for the VCRs, laser discs, and for MIDI. Using a HyperCard stack that has access to all of the XCMDs would be able to control all of the devices at the click of a HyperCard button.

MacroMind Director 2.0 can use XCMDs from HyperCard, as well as its own XObjects. Thus, you can control the list of devices from within a Director movie, much like you would from within a HyperCard stack.

- 2) Many of the video boards can send Macintosh images to videotape in the PAL format. Truevision NuVista cards, several RasterOps Cards, and Mass Microsystems cards are all capable of providing PAL output. Some of these cards require an external encoder box to provide the PAL connection. Please check with the manufacturer for exact configurations. The Display Cards 8/24 and 8/24 GC will be able to provide PAL output via Truevision's VIDIO/0 Box. Eventually, RasterOps will have a PAL version of their Video Extender that will provide PAL.

The Tech Info Library article titled "Locating Vendor Information" can help you search for a particular vendor's address and phone number.

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22 Dec 1995 - Updated LaserDisc XCMD availability, updated format.

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