Using SoundApp

Getting Help

This topic and the Preferences topic describe how to use SoundApp and how to configure it for handling special cases. I can be reached via e-mail (see the Notes topic), and the SoundApp home page is located at <http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~franke/SoundApp/>. The latest version of SoundApp can always be downloaded from this location.

Balloon Help is always available to provide more information about the various preferences, menu items and buttons in SoundApp.

Drag and Drop Interface

Playing sounds with SoundApp is simple; just drag and drop sound files onto the SoundApp icon. You need not wait until a group of sounds have finished playing before dragging and dropping more sound files onto the SoundApp icon. SoundApp will asynchronously process additional drag-and-drop requests by adding them to the queue of sounds currently being processed. SoundApp can also optionally search through nested folders dropped onto it, looking for sounds to play inside each folder. In addition, files can be played via the Play menu item.

In addition to playing many file types, SoundApp can also convert supported sound files to a number of formats. The suitcase option, in particular, creates files that can be opened in the Finder and manipulated just like font suitcases. In order to convert files, hold down the conversion key, by default the shift key, when dragging files onto SoundApp's icon. Be sure to continue holding the conversion key down until SoundApp comes to the foreground. The conversion key can be changed in the Keys section of the Preferences dialog.

Using Play Lists

Files can be added to a Play List by dragging files or folders into it from the Finder or by using the Add menu item. In addition, files can be added to a new list by holding down the modifier key specified in the Keys section of the Preferences dialog box while dragging files onto SoundApp. By default, this is the Option key.

If the Macintosh Drag and Drop Manager is installed, files can be re-ordered by dragging file selections. Files can be dragged out of the Play List and converted files will be placed in a folder on the desktop.

Play Lists can be saved and then opened later. This can be used to group a favorite selection of sounds for easy playback. SoundApp can have any number of Play Lists opens at a time, and files can be dragged between them.

If a Play List is opened which contains files that cannot be found, the filename will be displayed in italics and the file type will be "-". Typically, this means that the original files were either moved to different volume, deleted or are on a disk or volume that is not present. If a single italicized Play List entry that cannot be found is selected in the Play List, then Fix Alias(es)… under the Options menu can be used to replace the selected file with another file. If multiple files are selected and Fix Alias(es)… is selected, SoundApp will prompt for a file that it will use for a relative search for all missing files in the selection. This operation can potentially take a long time and can be canceled by typing Command-Period. Older Play Lists will not support this feature until they are re-saved.

If an Information Window is opened for a missing file, the window will contain a Reconnect button. Clicking on this button will allow the alias to be reconnected with another file. After choosing a valid file, the Information Window will be closed and the Play List updated.

Clicking the "Repeat" check box before playing will cause SoundApp to play the sounds in the list continuously, and enabling the "Shuffle" check box will cause the files to be played in a random order when either of the Play buttons are clicked. The Play and Convert buttons play or convert the currently selected files; the Play All and Convert All buttons will play or convert all the files in the list regardless of

the selection. Typing the first few letters of a sound's name will cause that sound to be highlighted. Double-clicking on the selection will play the selected files.

If the "Auto Play" menu item in the Options menu is checked the Play List will automatically start playback when it is first opened. This allows Play Lists to be placed in the Startup Items folder to automatically play files when the computer is first started.

Play Lists can be sorted by clicking on the "Name" or "Type" columns in the window. In addition, selecting an item from the Sort sub-menu (under Options) will also sort the Play List. Once sorted and until "Unsorted" is selected, the Play List will remain sorted, which will disable drag and drop reordering of files. A special "Path" sort mode can be selected only via the Sort sub-menu. This option sorts the files by their path name, so files in the same folder will be grouped together. Note that sorting by pathname requires a significant amount of RAM for large Play Lists.

Converting Files

SoundApp can convert sound files into other formats, including the ability to change some parameters of the file, e.g. bit-depth, number of channels and sample rate. SoundApp does not currently support encoding any MPEG formats or encoding files using QuickTime codecs. (Please see the Q&A and Notes sections for more information.)

Conversion can be done in a number of ways using SoundApp. The easist method to convert a single file is to select Convert… from the File menu. This will allow the output file settings to be modified in the file selection dialog. If Navigation Services is installed, multiple files can be converted at a time using this method.

A more powerful method for conversion involves dragging a selection of files in the Finder onto the SoundApp icon while holding down the conversion key (shift by default). All of the valid sound files in the selection (including files nested in folders) will be converted to whatever format is selected in the Convert menu. Another method is to create a new Play List, add the files to be converted to the Play List and click the "Convert All" button. This will also convert the files to the format selected in the Convert menu.

In all cases, the converted output files are saved in a location according to the "Output Location" preference. By default it will prompt for a new output folder in which all files will be created. This behavior can be changed to a variety of other methods. (See the Preferences section for more information.)

Conversion settings can be created using the Create Settings… and Edit Settings… menu items in the Convert menu. This allows conversion between diverse formats without making a number of menu selections.

Finally, if the dialog key (Control by default) is held down while converting, a dialog will be displayed allowing the output conversion parameters to be modified before conversion. This is especially handy when converting files after dragging files onto the SoundApp icon from the Finder. Individual parameters can be set and/or conversion settings can be selected via this dialog. Checking the "Save Settings" check box will save the chosen settings as the default for the next conversion operation.

Controls

While sounds are playing, typing command-period will halt playback of the current selection of files dropped onto SoundApp. Typing period will halt the playback of the current sound and play the next one, if any. In addition, the left and right arrow keys can be used to skip to the next sound or return to the previous sound, respectively. Typing semicolon will stop processing after the current file has finished and the space-bar pauses and resumes playback. The "+" and "-" keys can be used to change the volume during playback. Note that the volume is relative to the system volume as set in the "Sound" or "Monitors & Sound" control panels and the volume can range from 10% to 150%. Volumes greater than 100% may be helpful in boosting quiet sounds, but can cause undesirable distortion in loud sounds.

An optional Controls palette can be displayed which contains buttons that mimic the controls of a CD

player. The buttons are in order: get information on selected files, convert all files in the current play list; play all files in the current play list; toggle pause for playback; stop processing; jump to the previous file; jump to the next file; stop processing after the current file has finished, and pause processing after the current file has finished. If the command key is held down while clicking on the convert or play icon, only the selection will be processed. If the option key is held down while clicking on the get info icon, information is displayed for the file currently being processed. The slider in the Controls palette is used to change the playback volume, including while playing sounds. The zoom box in the Controls palette can be used to toggle display of the volume slider.

The Controls palette can be displayed using either the "Display Controls Palette" preference in the General pane or the Show Controls menu item in the Options menu.

Memory Allocation

SoundApp allocates memory for processing in the System Heap using the temporary memory allocation facilities. MOD playback can alternatively allocate memory from SoundApp's partition if the appropriate preference is set in the MOD pane of the Preferences dialog.

Keyboard

SoundApp supports the following keyboard shortcuts in addition to the command keys for menu items:

Play Lists

The following keys will affect the frontmost window only:
• Space : plays the current selection,
• Return or Enter : plays all files,
• Command-L : toggles the "Shuffle" check box,
• Command-R : toggles the "Repeat" check box,
• Delete : removes the selected files,
• Up-Arrow and Down-Arrow : move the selection up or down,
• Page-Up, Page-Down, Home and End : page scrolling, and
• Tab : select the next file alphabetically.

While Processing

• Space : pause playback,
• Period or Right-Arrow : skip to the next file,
• Left-Arrow or Comma: restart playback of the current file or go to the previous file if less than one second playback has elapsed,
• Command-Period : stop processing all files,
• "+" or "-" : increase or decrease the playback volume, and
• "*" : reset playback volume to 100% (the keypad is typically more convenient).

Notes

• MOD/S3M/MTM/IT conversion only extracts the instrument samples.
• Some of the more unusual MOD formats cannot have their instruments extracted.
• Some rare WAVE compression formats, compressed VOC files and some sub-types of Sun Audio files are not supported.

Enjoy.