

Questions and Answers

If You Encounter Problems...

Some of the common problems that result in questions asked of me are discussed here:

Play Lists:

Q: Why can I not start playing files at a specified position in the Play List?

Q: Why does reordering the files in a Play List after clicking Play All not change the order in which they are played?

Q: Can SoundApp have a track time and total time summary in the Play List?

Q: Can SoundApp be made to use the new Appearance Manager for a Mac OS 9-like look?

A: All these and many other ideas are planned for a future version of SoundApp, most likely 3.0. At that time I plan on re-designing the user interface and stop supporting 680x0-based Macs.

Interface:

Q: Does SoundApp support "skins"?

A: No, and it likely never will.

Source Code:

Q: Can I get the source code to SoundApp?

A: No, it is not open source. It is freeware, however. I have no plans to make the source available, as I use some code that others have given me under the condition that I not release it.

Q: Can you teach me how to program the Macintosh?

A: No. There are plenty of books on this topic. Get a copy of CodeWarrior Discovery Programming for the Macintosh (visit <http://www.developerdepot.com/>.) Also check out the free resources on Apple's developer web pages at <http://www.apple.com/developer/>. There are newsgroup discussions under the comp.sys.mac.programmer hierarchy and there are IRC channels for this as well.

Netscape and SoundApp:

Q: I've configured Netscape to use SoundApp as the sound helper application. However, whenever Netscape launches SoundApp, it reports an end-of-file error and won't play the files. Why isn't it working?

A: The "file type" pop-up in Netscape's helper configuration pane is not set properly. "PLAY", which Netscape seems to default to, is a Play List. This setting will confuse SoundApp, since the file downloaded is not a Play List.

To setup Netscape to play Windows ".wav" files via SoundApp, do the following:

1. Open the "General Preferences" dialog and select the "Helpers" pane.
2. Edit the the following entry or create it if it doesn't already exist:
 - a. MIME Type: "audio/x-wav" and Suffixes: "wav".
 - b. Then under "Handled By" click the "Appliction:" radio button.
 - c. Click the "Browse..." button, find and select SoundApp.
 - d. Using the "File type:" pop-up menu, select "WAVE" for the File Type.
3. Repeat for the "audio/wav" MIME Type.

For other file formats, either edit an existing audio MIME type or create a new one for the desired type. Typically you'll receive an alert from Netscape telling you that it can't find an appropriate plug-in for a type. See the "Formats" section for likely suffixes, for example "au" for Sun Audio files.

XM and 669:

Q: Why do some IT files sound like static?

A: SoundApp does not yet deal with compressed instruments in IT files. This will be fixed in a future version.

Q: Why doesn't SoundApp support the XM and 669 music module formats?

A: At some point I plan on writing a few more loaders for ZSS, but it will take a while to implement.

Q: What about Player Pro?

A: I have looked into Player Pro; but, for technical reasons, it is not possible to incorporate its music engine into SoundApp at this time.

MPEG:

Q: Why doesn't SoundApp support streaming MP3 files (e.g. Icecast/Shoutcast)?

A: Support for this format is planned in a future version, most likely 3.0.

Q: Why can't I play MP3/MPEG files on my 680x0 Macintosh?

A: SoundApp can only play MPEG files on PowerPC-based computers. Some 680x0-based Macintoshes may be able to play them in theory, but the code I have for MPEG playback cannot play in real-time on these machines. They are much, much too slow.

Q: Why does SoundApp refuse to play some MPEG audio files but not others?

A: SoundApp's MPEG engine may have some problems with some files depending upon their characteristics. If it can Get Info on them but not play them, then please let me know.

Q: Can SoundApp display and edit ID3 tags?

A: It will display the track name only and does not allow editing. This will change in a future version.

Q: Why doesn't SoundApp support encoding of MPEG files?

A: The main issue is that MPEG Layer III encoders require a patent license to use the technology legally. This starts at US\$10,000 per year. Obviously, since SoundApp is freeware, I cannot afford this. Secondly, the algorithm is very complex and not documented very well. I neither have the time nor desire to spend months delving into this.

For more information on the licensing issue, please visit <http://www.iis.fhg.de/amm/legal/>. They are enforcing their patents (as is their right) and a number of encoding projects have been stopped as a result.

At some point, I may include MPEG layer II encoding which, for higher bit-rates, actually sounds better than MPEG layer III. See <http://www.raum.com/mpeg/> for more information on encoding MPEGs on the Macintosh.

Other Sound Formats:

Q: Will SoundApp ever support Real Audio files?

A: It is unlikely that SoundApp will support streaming RA files since that adds a lot of overhead to SoundApp and there already is a free player for that format. For stand-alone RA files, I may try to support them depending on whether the algorithms are proprietary.

Q: But what about converting RealAudio files, which the free player doesn't do?

A: The reason it doesn't do so is to prevent people from violating the licensing agreements for the audio files. This is why they sue people who provide such capabilities.

Q: Why doesn't SoundApp support this special format, e.g., Akai or Roland samples?

A: I don't know anything about these formats, so I cannot implement support for them. Roland and Akai's formats are proprietary, as are many Internet sound and voice mail formats. If you have technical information on any popular file formats that SoundApp does not currently support, please send me the details and I will see what I can do.

Conversion:

Q: Why can't my PC play WAVE files generated by SoundApp?

A: Most likely they are not being transferred to the PC correctly. Common problems are uploading the files in text mode or MacBinary format (which PCs can't read) instead of in binary mode or forgetting the ".wav" suffix. Remember, PCs are still not very smart and require suffixes in order to access files properly.

Q: Why do I get an "Output file is too large (> 16 MB)" error when converting a CD audio track or a MP3 file?

A: You are trying to convert to a System sound file or suitcase. There is a limitation on sound in these files of 16 MB. To convert this file, select a different output file type, e.g. AIFF or WAVE from the Convert menu.

Sound Playback:

Q: Why do some files (especially MPEG Layer III) start to play then stop?

A: Your computer's processor or disk drive is too slow or overly busy. This can especially happen while accessing a CD-ROM under Mac OS 8 due to some changes apparently made in Mac OS 8.

Q: Why does the Status window's slider sometimes revert to a progress bar when playing files of certain types?

A: Not all file formats inherently support random access and SoundApp doesn't yet emulate this capability for those formats. File encodings that do not support random access are: Amiga IFF Fibonacci-delta compressed files and DVI ADPCM files.

AppleScript Ranges:

Q: Why does the start at and stop at AppleScript parameters work for some files and not others?

A: SoundApp doesn't support these parameters for stereo SoundEdit, non-block based compressed files (Fibonacci-delta, Huffman and DVI ADPCM), MOD/S3M/MTM and MIDI. Future versions may support some of the compressed types for conversion.