

Hard Drives Can Die

By Tal Herzberg

Most of us are no longer using tape to record and store audio, but rather use hard drives. That's a fact.

Hard drives, like people, die. They can die if they fall on the floor, if a serious spike hits the computer system, they can have mechanical failure, they can die of directory corruption (that's sometimes salvageable for a modest \$10,000 fee). So, when hard drives die, what do we do about it?

Luckily, it is possible to clone a drive. What is the best method of doing so? Some people keep two copies of the drive. I personally like to vary the media: If my projects sit on drives, I prefer to have tape backups, using a backup program (like Dantz's Retrospect or GMR's Mezzo). I don't like the backup medium to be the same as the source. I want it to be different for more of a safety net. Plus, tape, just like CD's and DVD's, is a passive medium, that's less susceptible to moving parts related problems. Some of the more popular tape systems are AIT, DLT, VXA, DDS, ADR, LTO and EXABYTE.

The safest method is the redundant backup. The procedure is simple:

Let's say we are choosing Sony's AIT tape as our backup media; At the end of the first day of the project we start a new backup set and name it LONESOME COWBOY SET A; The entire first day data is now being backed up onto the set's first tape. At the end of the second day we start yet another new backup set and name it LONESOME COWBOY SET

B; This time, the newly commissioned tape is taking all the data from the first and second days. At the end of the third day we will use the first tape again, which will now take all the data from the second and third days (the first day is already on it since we've used it at the end of the first day). At the end of the fourth day we will use the second tape again, which will now take all the data from the third and fourth days (the first and second days data are already on it since we've used it at the end of the second day). Following this method, we will always have 2 identical backup sets of the same data. It's live on the drive, and then there are two tapes that just keep growing with the sessions.

Now, whatever happens, our hard drive died somehow, no problem—We go to the backups. First we try the first set, and even if it somehow got damaged, we have another one.

It is really important for people to understand the crime and punishment that are involved in losing half a million dollars of recording costs because they did not use data backup. I work on projects that cost several million dollars to make. Can I really go home at night knowing that the data is not backed up? I can't afford doing that. A disaster of such nature can end even a successful career. If you are working on some low budget project they will probably sue you for \$10,000, but God forbid if you are working on some big movie! It's not only the money that's lost, but also the magic that's gone. It's priceless. ■



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