

Digital Audio Tapes stir legal battle

By John Payne
Senior Reporter

Just imagine -- a way to record your favorite new compact discs onto tape with the same high-resolution clarity -- no hiss, no flaws, just pure audio utopia? A music lover's dream, right?

Actually, Digital Audio Tapes, or DATs, have been around for three years, and they're that good. So good

in fact, that they've ignited a fierce legal battle between factions of the recording industry, songwriters and electronic manufacturers who produce the DATs and DAT recorders.

The mini-cassettes deliver compact disc sound quality while providing the portability and all-around convenience of an analog cassette. Although they've been popular items in Japan, Thailand and Singapore for

over three years, they've just recently become available to American consumers.

At the forefront of the debate is the Home Recording Rights Coalition, a Washington-based group that has been fighting for the right of the U.S. consumer to tape such materials as albums and CDs for personal use.

Distinguishing between what the coalition calls "home taping" and what the National Music Publishers Association calls "piracy" has been a dilemma since conventional cassettes were introduced to the electronics market.

The recording industry, songwriters and music publishers had never pursued the matter too vigorously, realizing that most music lovers would always prefer the clarity of the original recording, be it vinyl, tape or CD. Blank audio cassettes never posed a serious threat.

The NMPA, especially the Songwriter's Guild of America, considers the DATs and DAT recorders a serious threat. Their reasoning is simple -- Digital Audio Tapes are capable of reproducing, with the same crisp sound, duplicates from other media. Many recording artists feel this would open the door for people to make an infinite number of copies from one DAT to another, while losing none of the quality from tape to tape and remaining indistinguishable from the original.

Stereo West, 4011 O St., is one of only 28 electronic retailers in the United States that carries DAT recorders and tapes. Stereo West salesman Kent Garrison lauds the DATs for what he calls "an impeccable sound."

"I was amazed when I first heard one," he said. "There's absolutely no tape hiss. They're very comparable to compact disc in sound."

DATs function much like video cassettes, with a protective sliding plate that keeps the tape itself unexposed until it is put into the tape deck. DATs record on one side only at about one-eighth the speed of analog cassettes.

Electronic manufacturers and the music industry had come to an apparent compromise last year, when manufacturers agreed to produce only DATs that could record from one source, but not onto another. This would make it possible for consumers to digitally record their favorite albums and CDs for convenience, while preventing digital copies of the copies. The agreement fell through when songwriters and the NMPA formed the Copyright Coalition and filed suit last July against several manufacturers to address the issue of royalty taxes on DATs and DAT recorders.

Mike Blevins, spokesman for the coalition, said the controversy is solely about money.

"If you look at record companies' profits, they're all having their best years ever," he said. "They're making enormous profits, and yet they want to make even more money off



Shaun Sartin/Daily Nebraskan

Stereo West manager Jim Krysl displays the Sony Digital Audio Tapes recorder.

something that has nothing to do with them. It's greed, plain and simple."

Blevins is quick to point out that a recent government survey concluded that most home tapings of pre-recorded music are made from a personal collection. Perhaps more importantly, the survey concluded that most personal taping doesn't even involve music.

"Why should college students, for example, have to pay a royalty tax to record companies if they want to record notes in class?"

Blevins said the coalition expects the Copyright Coalition to propose a royalty tax to Congress when it reconvenes in January.

"That's something we feel very strongly about," Blevins said. "We will fight it."

Such a tax probably would amount

to about 90 cents per tape, tax on DAT recorders notwithstanding, he said. Digital Audio Tapes now retail at anywhere from \$10 to \$15, depending on tape length.

Ed Murphy, a spokesman for the NMPA, says the DAT system could easily result in copyright infringement.

"We've made our position clear," Murphy said in a telephone interview from New York. "We think people should have to pay for our music."

Blevins said that until Congress reconvenes to decide on a potential proposal from the Copyright Coalition, his group will continue to make consumers aware of the situation.

"The whole crux of this matter is home taping, which is something we think people have a right to do," he said.

Films

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been for the integrated studies major, I'd probably be somewhere else majoring in film," Stilwell said.

If he could do it again, Stilwell said, "Without a doubt, I would major again in film studies."

Professor Levine said that the professors creating the major have been hampered by a lack of financial support.

"We've operated on the basis of 'how good can we make it with our existing resources?'" Levine said.

Another stumbling point for the area is that film studies is not a department. More could be accomplished

-- and the program could grow -- if film studies was a department, Levine said.

But one major plus for the area, Levine said, is the Sheldon Film Theater.

"The Sheldon is a marvelous place to view films," Levine said.

Once students are done at UNL, Levine said, they have two choices. They can go to graduate school at one of the eminent film schools in the United States -- New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and the University of California at Los Angeles are two highly regarded schools, Levine said -- or students can try to get an entry-level job in film.

Experts are divided as to which road is best, Levine said. Some promi-

nent directors, such as Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese did to graduate school, but scores of others didn't. Some directors say that on-the-job experience is the most important key to being successful in film.

Former UNL students include the librarian on the American Film Institute archives and several professors of film.

However, whichever road students choose, Levine points out that film is not an easy career to get involved with. "It's an extremely crowded, expensive field," she said. "It's not a field -- like, say, computer science -- that is growing. It (film) is not even a field where you're assured of a job if you're reasonably competent. It's difficult."

Anthrax

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ding, Melvins-like riff that can only be called heavy. Very heavy. And incredibly catchy.

"Intro to Reality" is the only downer on the album, an instrumental that seems to be Anthrax's

"One," or some sort of Metallica acoustic take-off.

But forgive and forget, because "Got the Time," that Joe Jackson tune that roamed the AOR airwaves, now has been injected with a dose of amphetamines. Anthrax takes this short spurt of a cover and zips through it with a staccato backing riff and crystal clear vocals from

Belladonna.

Ian and Benante still lack the substantial guitar solo genius that would be nice, but for pure mosh power, these guys can't be beat. Those days in S.O.D. will never leave them, luckily.

"Persistence of Time" is a must for Anthrax fans, and a superior release from one of the true originators of thrash.

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