Unit 5.2: Audio File Formats

MP3

MP3 (MPEG-3 Layer 1) is a professional-quality audio format which can be played on Windows, UNIX or Macintosh systems.

The best thing about MP3 is that its compression ratio is among the best. It can compress a CD-quality sound by a factor of 10.

Let say that you have a song from the CD track with the size of 40 MB.If you convert it using MP3 format, the size is only about 4MB!

Then you can copy the file into a MP3 player and enjoy the song anywhere you want.

WAV

WAV is the default Microsoft Microsoft and IBM sound format. Generally WAV sounds are not compressed, so they take a lot of disk space.

WAV has the highest quality sound files but has the largest file size. WAV is an audio file format standard for you to store audio on PCs.

For five minutes of WAV sound you need 50MB of memory!

RA

RealAudio (RA) is the trademark name of the leading streamed audio format. You can use RA format to deliver voice-quality audio even over the dial-up connection.

It means that if you do not have a high speed broadband. Real Audio is the only means of streaming audio. It is a classic streaming audio solution by Real Networks. To use this file you need to have RealPlayer.

AIFF

Audio Interchange File Format (AIFF and AIF), originally developed by Mcintosh, is for music and high quality sound.

This format can also be use by IBM and Silicon Graphics. AIFF offers the same sample rates and bit depths as a WAV file.

WMA

Windows Media Audio (WMA) refers to the audio file format developed by Microsoft. It is used as streaming audio as well. WMA files use the ".wma" file extension.

WMA is the second most widely supported compressed audio format after MP3.

MIDI Audio

Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) file does not contain waveforms. They are text files that contain a text-based description that tells a synthesizer how to play musical notes.

You have to take note that MIDI is a code that allows various musical devices to exchange the information that create a musical clip.