

Great Bear Analogue and Digital Media digitise the following formats

Audio

Compact Audio Cassette ✦ Microcassette, Minicassette & Grundig Steno-Cassette Dictation Tape ✦ 8 track and NAB cartridges ✦ All speeds and track formats of 1/4" reel to reel tape ✦ Analogue 4 and 8 Multi-track Cassettes ✦ 1/4" 4 track ✦ 1/4" 8 track ✦ 1/2" 8 track ✦ 1/2" 16 track ✦ 2" 24 track ✦ PCM Digital Audio on Video Tape ✦ Digital Audio Tape ✦ MiniDisc ✦ Alesis ADAT (Type I 16bit & Type II 20bit) ✦ Tascam DTRS

- ✦ Correct decoding of Dolby A, B, C and SR recordings
- ✦ Multi-Standard Transfers and Conversion PAL-NTSC-SECAM



Video

Domestic: 1/2" EIAJ reel to reel videotape ✦ Sony 8mm, Hi8 and Digital 8 ✦ Betamax ✦ miniDV ✦ DVCAM ✦ DVCPRO ✦ HDV ✦ N1500 ✦ N1700 ✦ Video 2000 ✦ VHS, S-VHS, VHS-C Long Play (LP) Standard Play (SP)

Professional: 1" Type A ✦ 1" Type B ✦ 1" Type C ✦ 2" Quad ✦ Betacam SP ✦ Digital Betacam SX ✦ MPEG IMX ✦ D-1 ✦ D-2 ✦ D-3 ✦ D-5 ✦ D-9 ✦ MII ✦ U-Matic low band, high band sp



Video File Format Delivery

There are many ways to deliver preservation standard digital video files. We can create preservation and access files according to your needs. Don't know what is best? We can talk you through the options.

Contact Us

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The Time to Act is Now

The British Library's Save Our Sounds project has highlighted that time is running out to preserve collections stored on obsolete media.

By 2030, archivists claim, magnetic tape will become unplayable due to the

deterioration of media carriers, a lack of engineering skills and fewer working machines.

The message is clear: valuable audio and video content risks being lost forever unless it is digitised within the next fifteen years.



Great Bear Analogue and Digital Media are experts in the preservation and repair of magnetic tape.

We help clients digitise their audio and video tape collections.

Our Bristol-based studio is stocked with well-known and obscure legacy audio and video tape formats from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Collections we transfer range from thousands of copies to a single tape.



Every tape collection is unique, so are the needs of our clients.

- ✦ Archives require extensive metadata to aid long term preservation of digital collections.
- ✦ Film and media producers request digital files that can be efficiently re-used in a creative project.
- ✦ Record companies want optimum transfers suitable for commercial release.
- ✦ Individual collectors may want access to their recordings.

With care and attention to detail we can get the best out of your tape.

We offer a free consultation service to help you decide how to approach your digitisation project.

All audiovisual archives stored on magnetic tape are endangered, but some are more endangered than others.

To help you understand your collections here is a selection of formats that, in our experience, pose specific preservation challenges.

Early Digital Audio and Video

Early digital audio and video recordings on magnetic tape should be treated as high risk formats.

Despite their young age in comparison to analogue tape recordings, minimal degradation suffered by early digital formats can result in **catastrophic signal loss**.

This may produce **mute sections, glitches or clicks** within the transferred file.



Digital Audio Tapes (DAT)

- ❖ Early digital audio format, 'immature' technology
- ❖ Vulnerable due to tape width (3.81 mm / 0.15") and helical scan method
- ❖ Snapped or surface damaged tape hard to repair without irrecoverable signal loss

- ❖ Prone to drop out and glitches
- ❖ Playback problems related to mechanical alignment
- ❖ Playback machines complex and used built-in proprietary software and hardware
- ❖ Spare parts difficult to acquire



Ampex/ Quantegy Tape

The preservation challenges of open reel audio tape vary from brand to brand.

Ampex were leading producers of open reel magnetic tape and were used by many professionals in the music industry.

They produced 1/4" and 1/2" reels, as well as audio cassettes and video tape.

Ampex branded tapes exhibit 'sticky shed syndrome' or 'binder hydrolysis.' This means tapes

- ❖ Need to be 'baked' in a special laboratory incubator which temporarily restores them to playable condition
- ❖ Shed violently and fall apart if played without appropriate treatment

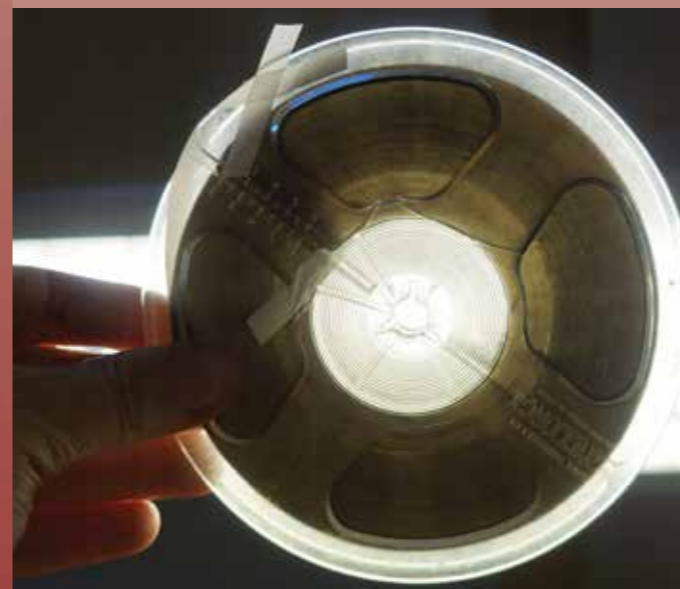
We can treat tapes suffering from 'sticky shed syndrome' in the Great Bear studio.

Acetate backed open reel tape

Acetate was used as backing material for magnetic tape between 1935-1972/73.

These tapes are vulnerable because:

- ❖ Tape becomes brittle with age; this makes it prone to snapping and harder to move through the tape transport
- ❖ 'Country-laning': tape changes shape and dimensions, difficult to achieve good play back signal
- ❖ 'Vinegar syndrome': when acetate decomposes it forms acetic acid leading to tape deterioration



Need to identify if a tape in your collection is backed with acetate? Hold the reel up to the light. If the tape appears translucent it is acetate backed. A strong smell of vinegar is also a tell-tale sign!

Portapak 1/2" open reel video tape

Any early media formats are vulnerable because they were once the 'newest' technologies.

Portapak 1/2" open reel video tapes, the first format to make portable video tape technology accessible to non-professionals, are no exception.

- ❖ Prone to shedding
- ❖ Require 'baking' / de-hydration treatment prior to playback
- ❖ Machine and parts scarcity



Do your uMatic video tapes smell like wax crayons? If the answer is yes, this is a sign they are degrading.

Mould

We have a lot of experience safely restoring mould-damaged tape.

Apart from in accelerated circumstances, we can help recover valuable material.



Metadata

Creating high quality metadata is important to many of our customers.

We can generate technical metadata, appropriate to the source format, that can become part of larger metadata schemas used to preserve digital collections.