

CASSETTE HINTS

Cassette I/O Reliability

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A few people have written to us and have indicated that they experience unreliable cassette I/O. As far as we are aware, if everything is set up correctly, very very few errors should be encountered at normal speeds. The same applies at double speed on a Nascom 1 or 2400 Baud on a Nascom 2.

If you have cassette I/O reliability problems then the check list below may help:-

- 1) Make sure that the tape transport is clean (wiping with a tissue will do for starters) i.e. that the heads, the pinch roller and capstan are free of loose tape material.
- 2) Check for earth loops. If the cassette recorder is earthed, and the Nascom is earthed (it should be) and there is an earth connection between them, then problems may arise. The safest one to disconnect is the one(s) between the Nascom and the recorder. That's the safest, the best one to remove would be the cassette mains earth. But on your own head be it.
- 3) The settings of the volume and tone controls can be quite critical. Too much volume on record or play back may cause the amplifiers in the cassette recorder to deliver a distorted signal. Too little will not drive the cassette interface on the Nascom. On recorders with one tone control (normally a treble cut) this should be set at or near the max. treble end (i.e. no treble cut). On others a flat or zero setting will normally be best.
- 4) On a Nascom 2, VR1 is best set up using an oscilloscope. Record about five minutes of tone (plug in the recorder, and just switch to record. Play back the tone, monitoring TP19 with the 'scope. Adjust VR1 to give as good a square wave as possible.
- 5) Use a reasonable quality tape. Since most cassettes are meant for music/speech, using them to store very fast transitions is not ideal. Some cheap tapes give a very low play back level even when recorded at a good level. This is not critical for sound but can cause problems for data.

A suggestion we have received from a member in Nottingham is to load the cassette output (when the speaker output is being used) with an 8 ohm resistor (or close to, but above this value) by connecting it across the output plug. See 'Cut that Noise' elsewhere in this issue.

Cut That Noise

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If you are using a signal output from a cassette recorder that still has the speaker blaring away on play back then you may be interested in this idea from a member in Nottingham.

Connect a Light Emitting Diode (LED) and a small ordinary diode back to back with an 8 ohm resistor (or close to, but above this value) in series across the speaker output. This will then give a visual indication of 'tone - data - nothing' being output.