

# LFORMAT -- A Handy Script File Generator

## By Ted Roche

[Editor's note: Program lines that appear on two lines in this article should be typed on one line on your screen.]

Many people use the LIST command as a substitute for DIR, the directory command. It also allows the user to view other information, such as the time and date a file was last modified, the file size and the protection bits set for each file. But LIST also has additional features.

Recently, I had to convert a number of Amiga IFF graphics to Compuserve's GIF format. I used the Amiga public domain program AMGIF to perform the conversions. AMGIF is not Intuition-based; a command had to be typed at the CLI/Shell for each file to be converted, specifying the input and output filename in the form:

```
AMGIF [input-filename] [output-filename]
```

Each file would take from five to twenty minutes to convert. While the conversion was occurring, the AMGIF program would use so much processing power and RAM that it was impractical to multitask. It seemed that I faced a long, boring task of checking on the machine regularly while working around the office, occasionally pausing to type in the next file conversion command.

There was a better way. By creating a script file containing all the commands, I could have the machine perform conversion after conversion, and I could devote my attention to other work at hand. The script file would be a simple ASCII text file containing the text:

```
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic1 DH0:GIFs/Pic1.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic2 DH0:GIFs/Pic2.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic3 DH0:GIFs/Pic3.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic4 DH0:GIFs/Pic4.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic5 DH0:GIFs/Pic5.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic6 DH0:GIFs/Pic6.GIF
```

But I had full disk of pictures to convert! With my typing skills, it would take all day to type in the commands. Now what? The LIST command comes to the rescue. The LIST command, used to list information on files in a directory, also has an LFORMAT option which may be used to create a script file of commands with the names of files imbedded within the commands. Here's what I typed:

```
LIST >T:exec.me DH0:Pictures LFORMAT="AMGIF
%s%s DH0:GIFs/%s"
```

Now there's a mouthful! Let's break it down and see what this command does. LIST, at the beginning of the line, runs AmigaDOS' LIST command. The > (greater-than sign) causes the output of the command, usually displayed to the screen, to be redirected to the device specified, in this case, the file T:exec.me. The > redirection command must directly follow the command; placement anywhere else in the line will not work. (Redirection is a handy feature of AmigaDOS to create text files or to send output to the printer using the PRT: or PAR: devices.)

Parameters are arguments supplied to LIST to modify

the way the command does its job; each parameter is separated from the others by a space on the command line. The first parameter, "DH0:Pictures," specifies the directory to be listed by AmigaDOS.

The LFORMAT parameter tells the LIST command the Line FORMAT of each line it is to output. If it is not specified, LIST produces a listing of files with information on the date and time last modified, size, and protection bit status. To create this text file, we want only the path and filename to be imbedded in the AMGIF command. Our LFORMAT parameter uses the special characters %s%s to tell the LIST command to substitute the path and filename, and the single %s characters to substitute only the filename. The other text within the quotes has no special meaning to the LIST command, so it will output it without change. The resulting file will look like this:

```
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic4 DH0:GIFs/Pic4.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic1 DH0:GIFs/Pic1.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic5 DH0:GIFs/Pic5.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic2 DH0:GIFs/Pic2.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic6 DH0:GIFs/Pic6.GIF
AMGIF DH0:Pictures/Pic3 DH0:GIFs/Pic3.GIF
```

Once the file had been created, I typed "EXECUTE T:EXEC.ME" and walked away from the machine. It happily chugged along for several hours, converting the IFF pictures, while I was able to devote my full attention to other tasks.

Having mastered the LFORMAT option of the LIST command, uses for it kept cropping up -- for example, converting a series of Doodle! pictures created by my son on his Commodore 64 to IFF format. The best use of the command, though, came after a session on Plink when I had downloaded a large number of files. With LFORMAT, I was able to create a series of drawers on a disk for the files, copy icons for the respective drawers, and de-ARC them, with little effort and few keystrokes. With the files in RAD: and a freshly-formatted disk in df0: I typed:

```
LIST >t:exec.me1 RAD: LFORMAT="makedir df0:%s"
LIST >t:exec.me2 RAD: LFORMAT="copy
DH0:Empty.info df0:%s.info"
LIST >t:exec.me3 RAD: LFORMAT="LHARC -x %s%s
df0:%s/"
```

Each of the files, t:execme1, 2, and 3 needed editing to remove the few lines I didn't want, such as the .info file and the text files I didn't need to convert. That small effort completed, I typed "EXECUTE T:EXEC.ME1", "EXECUTE T:EXEC.ME2" and "EXECUTE T:EXEC.ME3", and soon I had a disk full of de-ARC'd downloads ready to play with!

*Ted Roche is co-owner of Computer Resource, a New Hampshire-based consulting firm specializing in training on Amiga software and hardware applications. Copyright 1990 by Ted Roche. All Rights Reserved.*