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ASSOCIATED METHODOLOGY**(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

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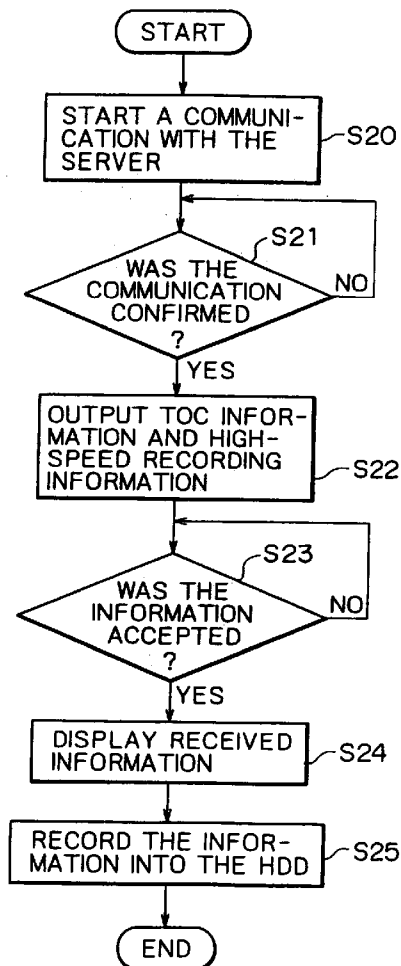
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ABSTRACT(73) Assignee: **SONY CORPORATION**, Shinagawa-ku
(JP)(21) Appl. No.: **11/434,181**(22) Filed: **May 16, 2006****Related U.S. Application Data**(63) Continuation of application No. 09/665,786, filed on
Sep. 20, 2000.

A communication system including a first apparatus having a first storage medium, and a second apparatus for transmitting data to the first apparatus. The second apparatus has a second storage medium for storing management information of data to be transferred to the first storage medium, a communicator for communicating data with the first apparatus, an editor capable of editing the management information and a controller for making a control to transfer data stored in the second storage medium to the first storage medium by way of the communicator based on the management information edited by the editor.



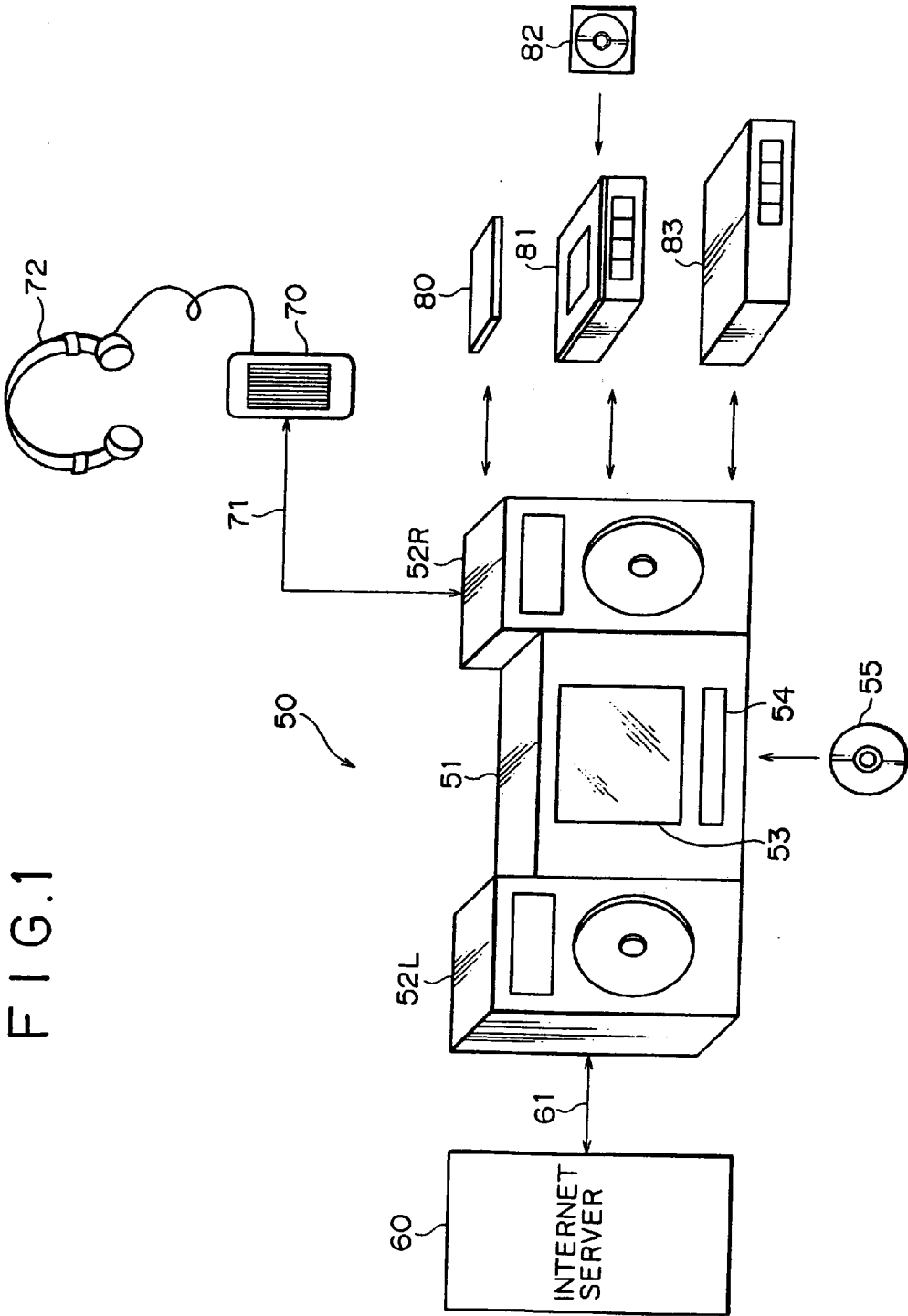


FIG. 2

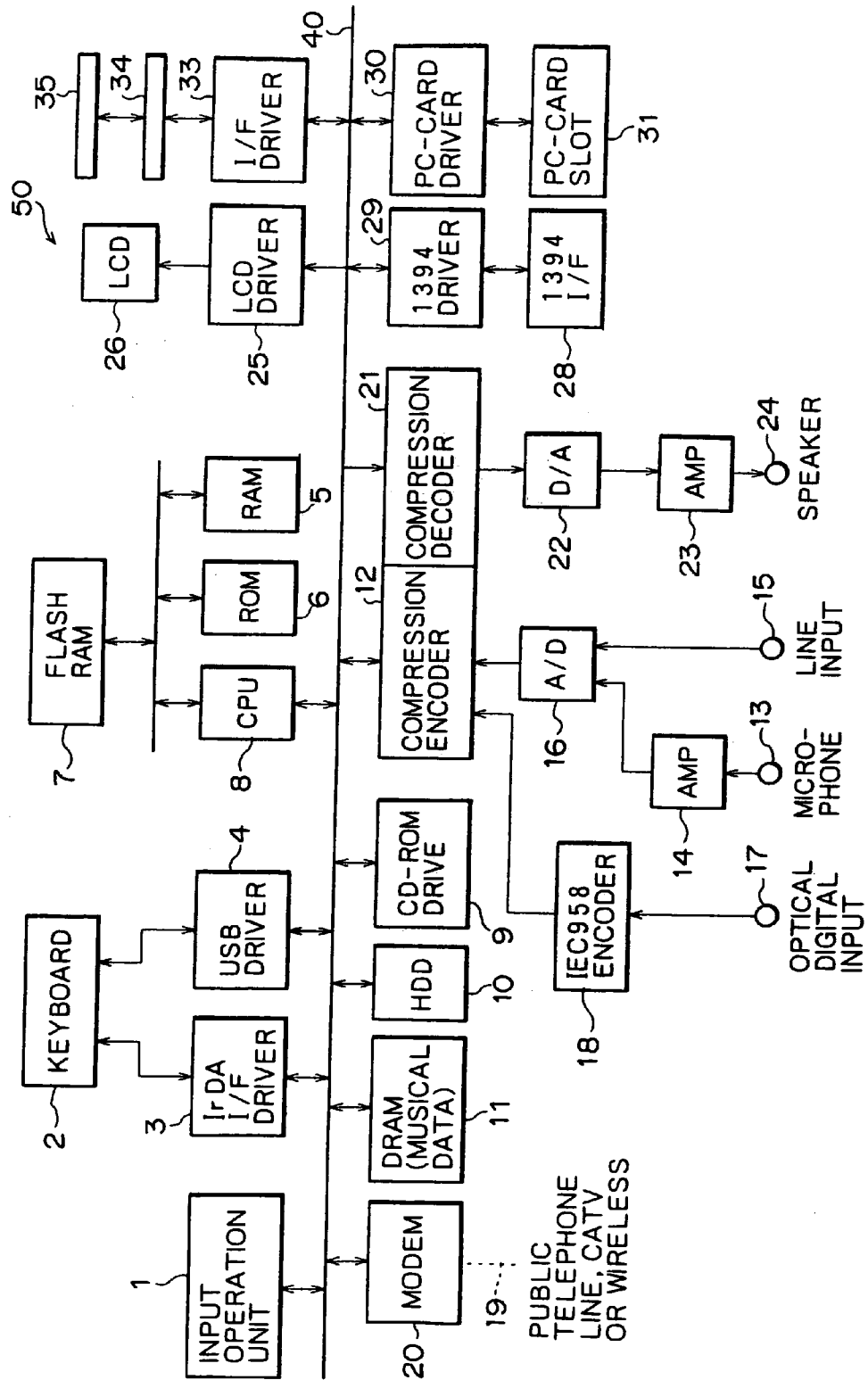


FIG. 3

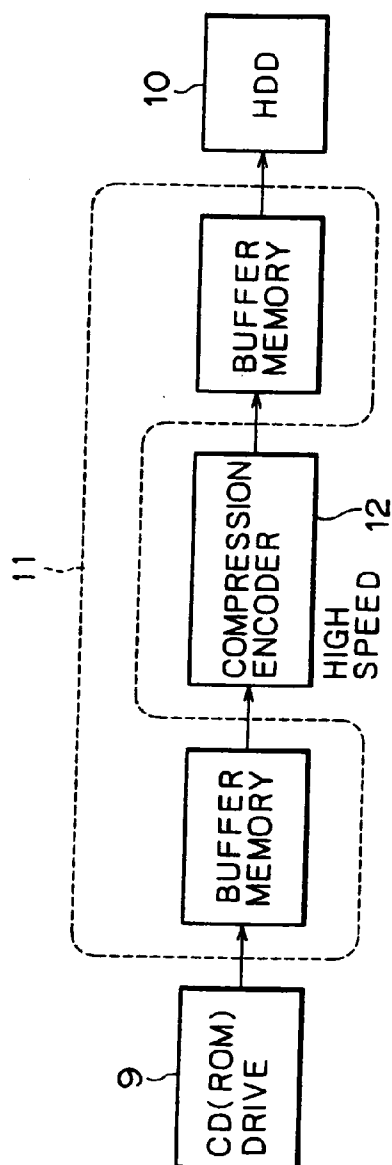


FIG. 4

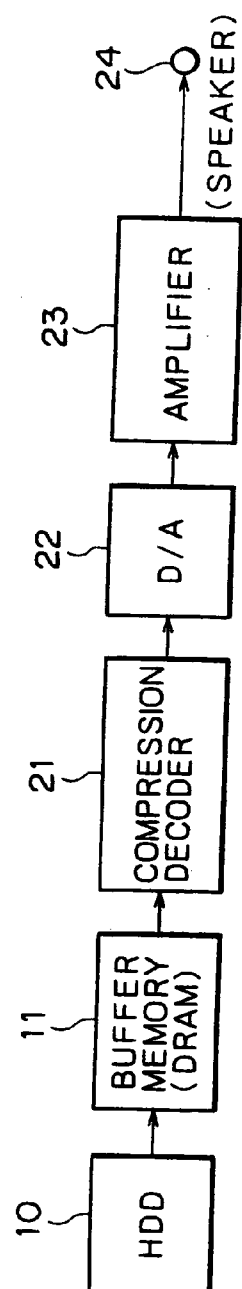


FIG. 5

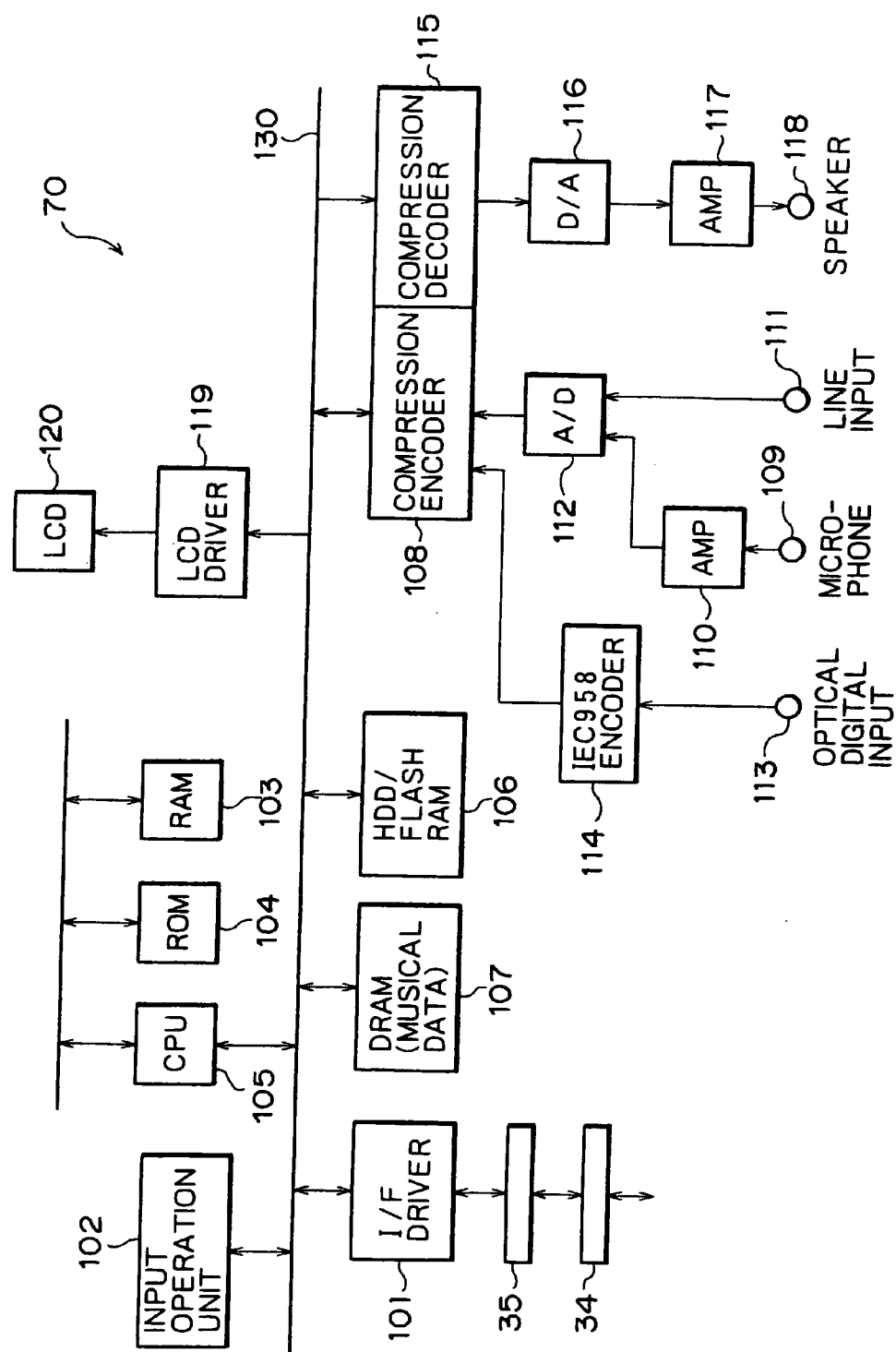


FIG. 6

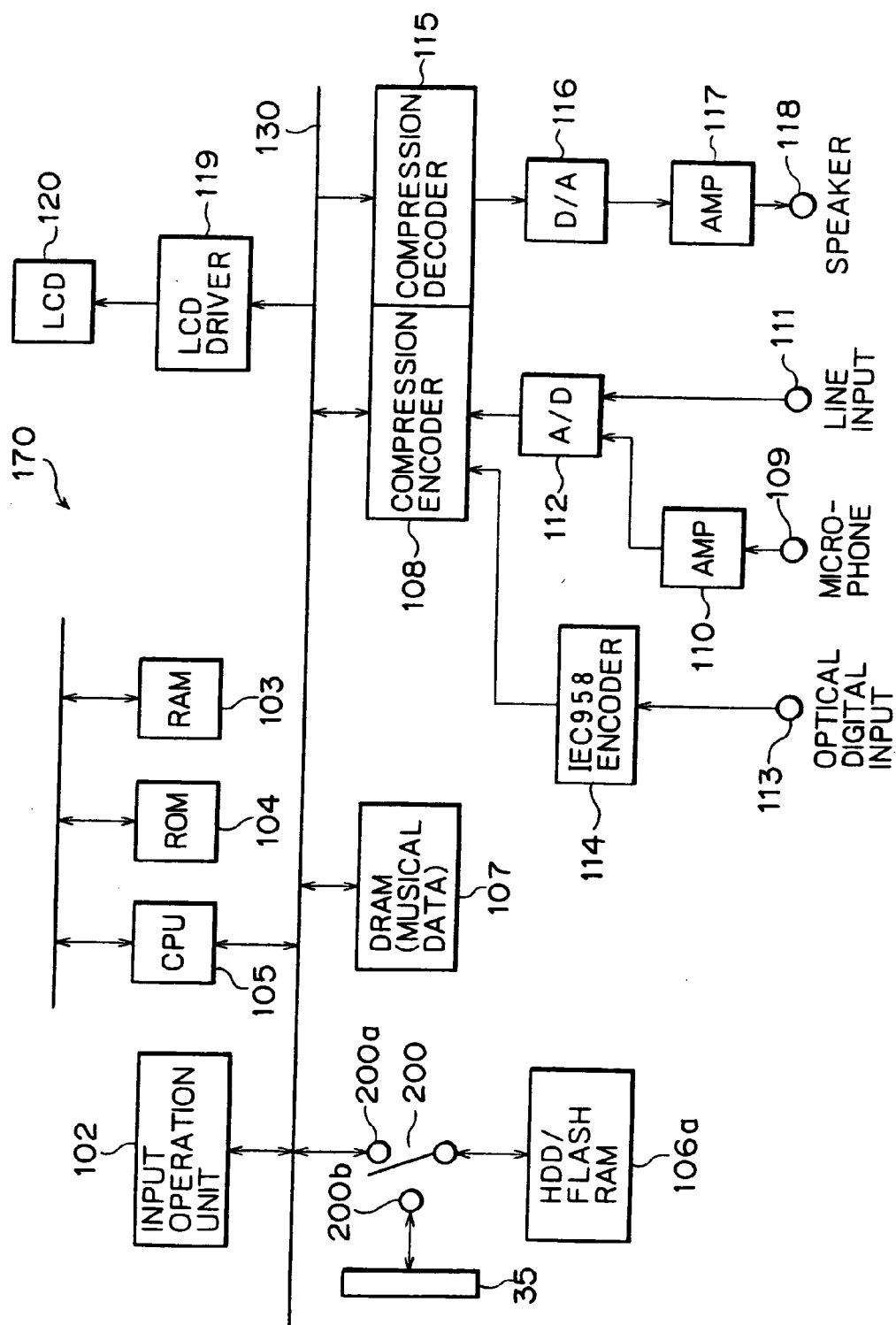


FIG. 7

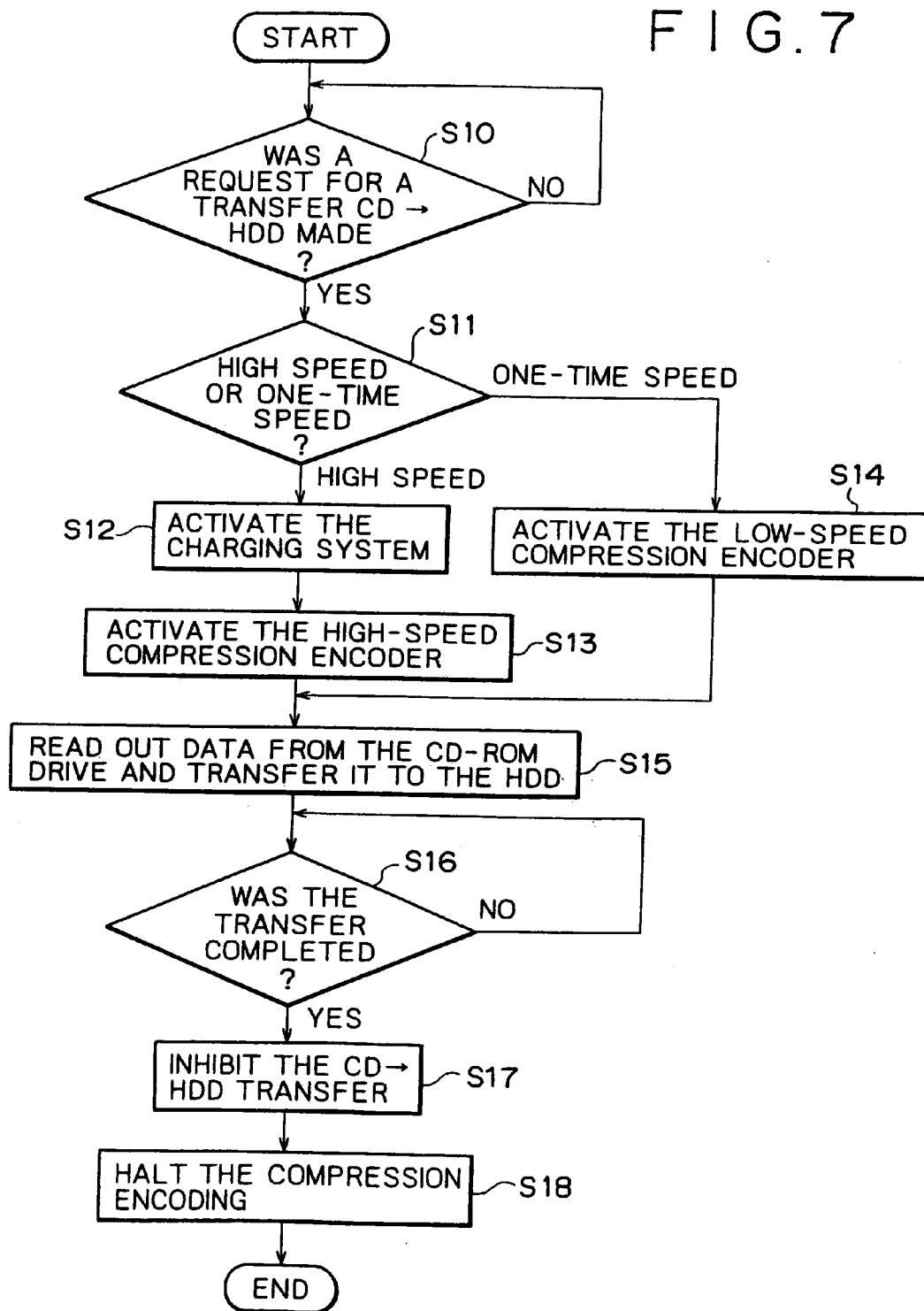


FIG. 8A

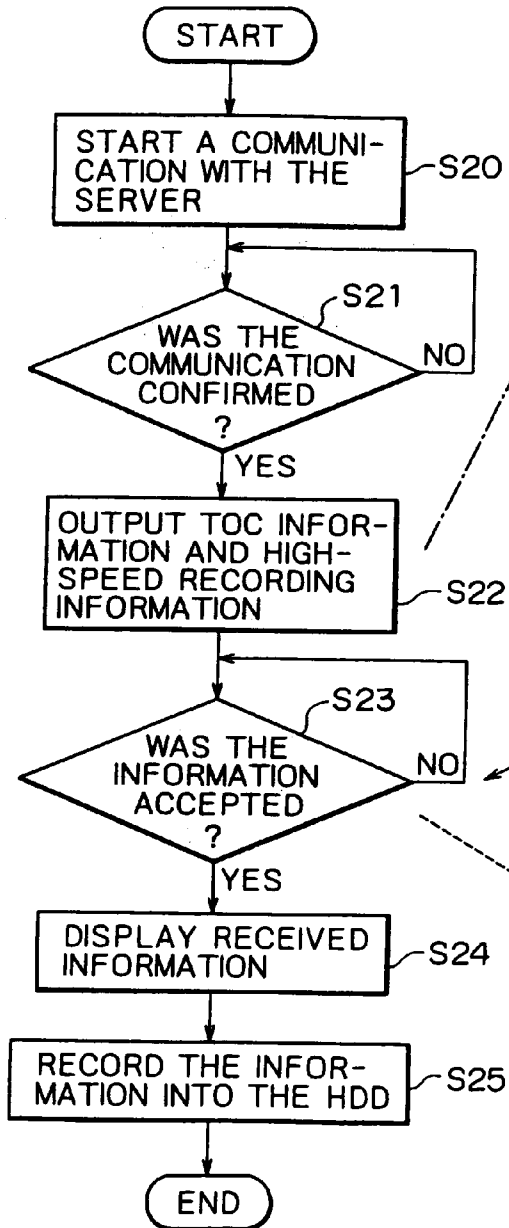


FIG. 8B

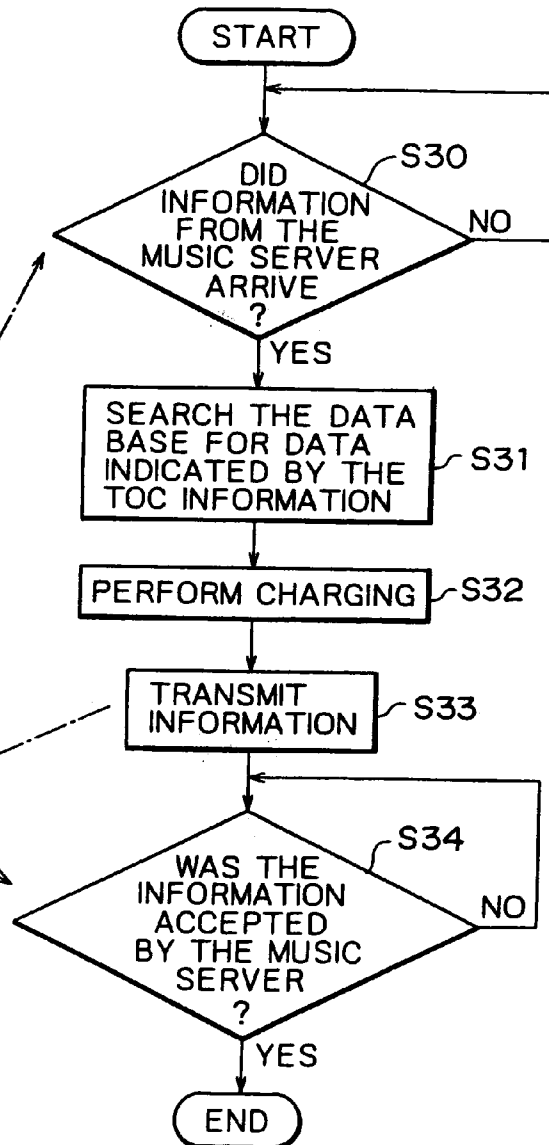


FIG. 9

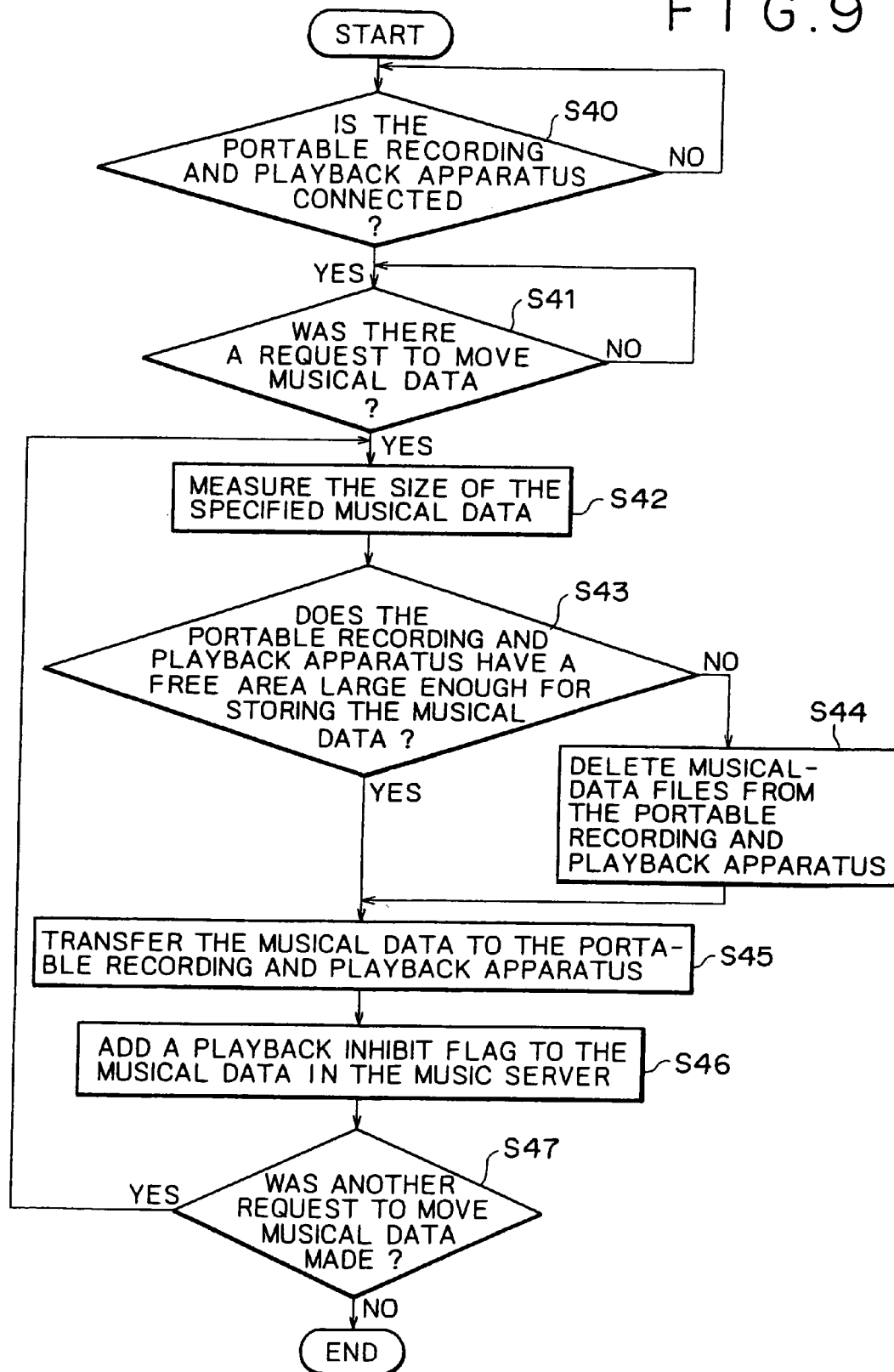


FIG. 10

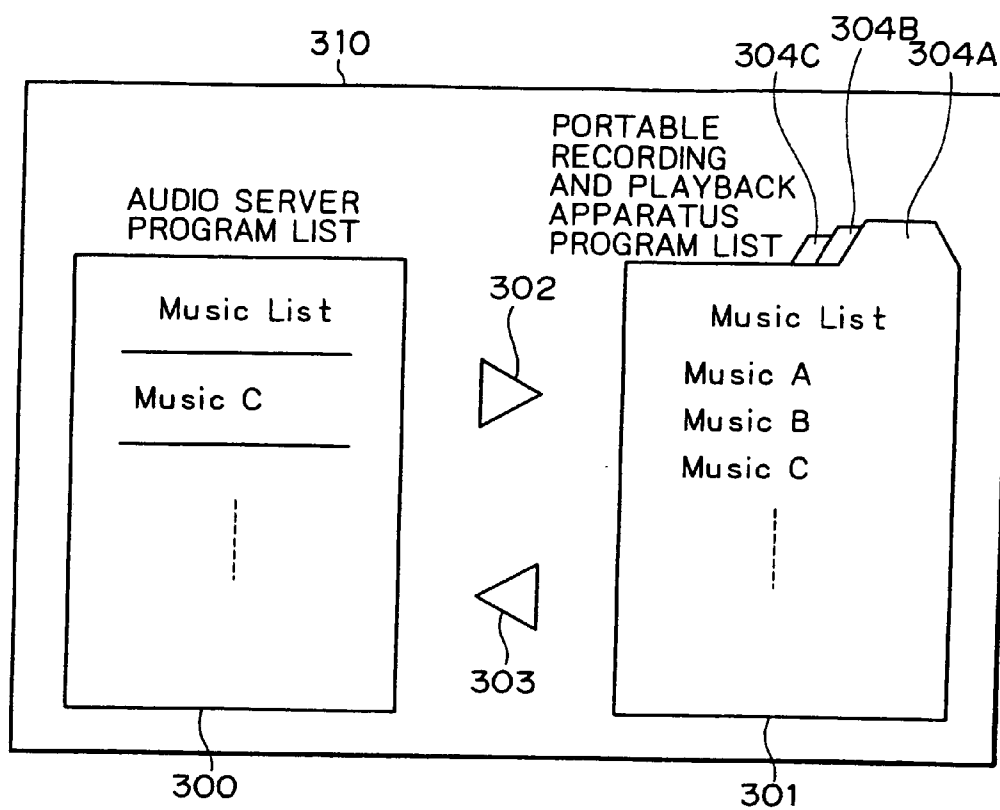
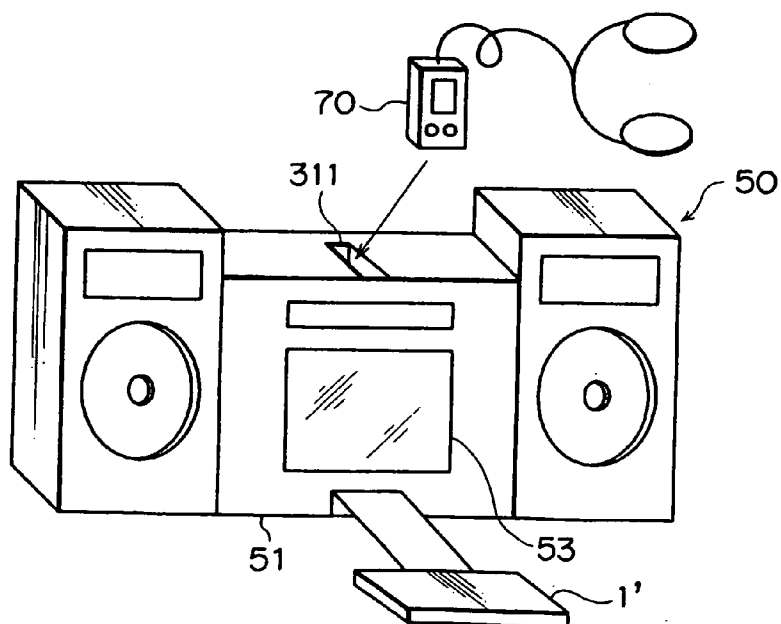


FIG. 11



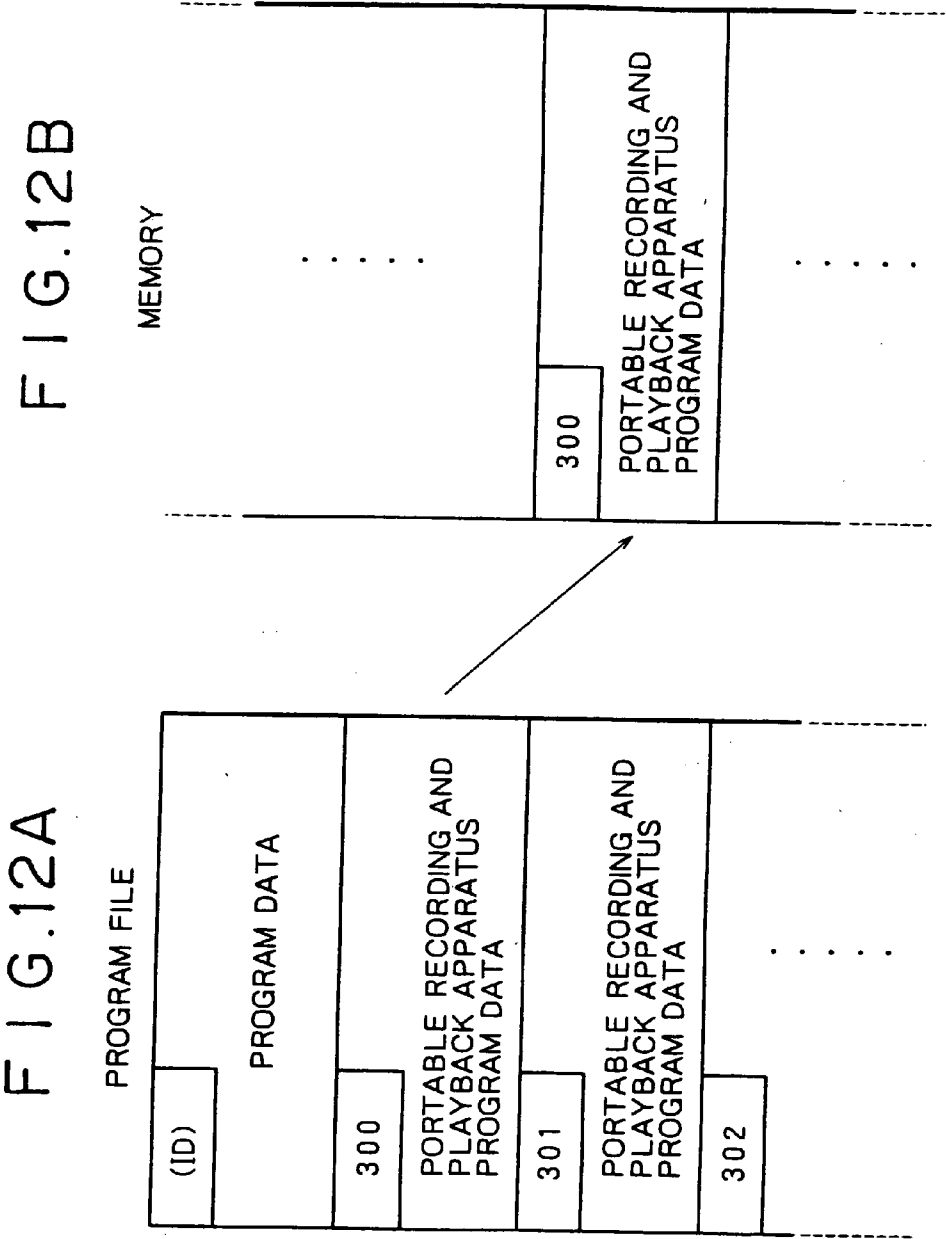
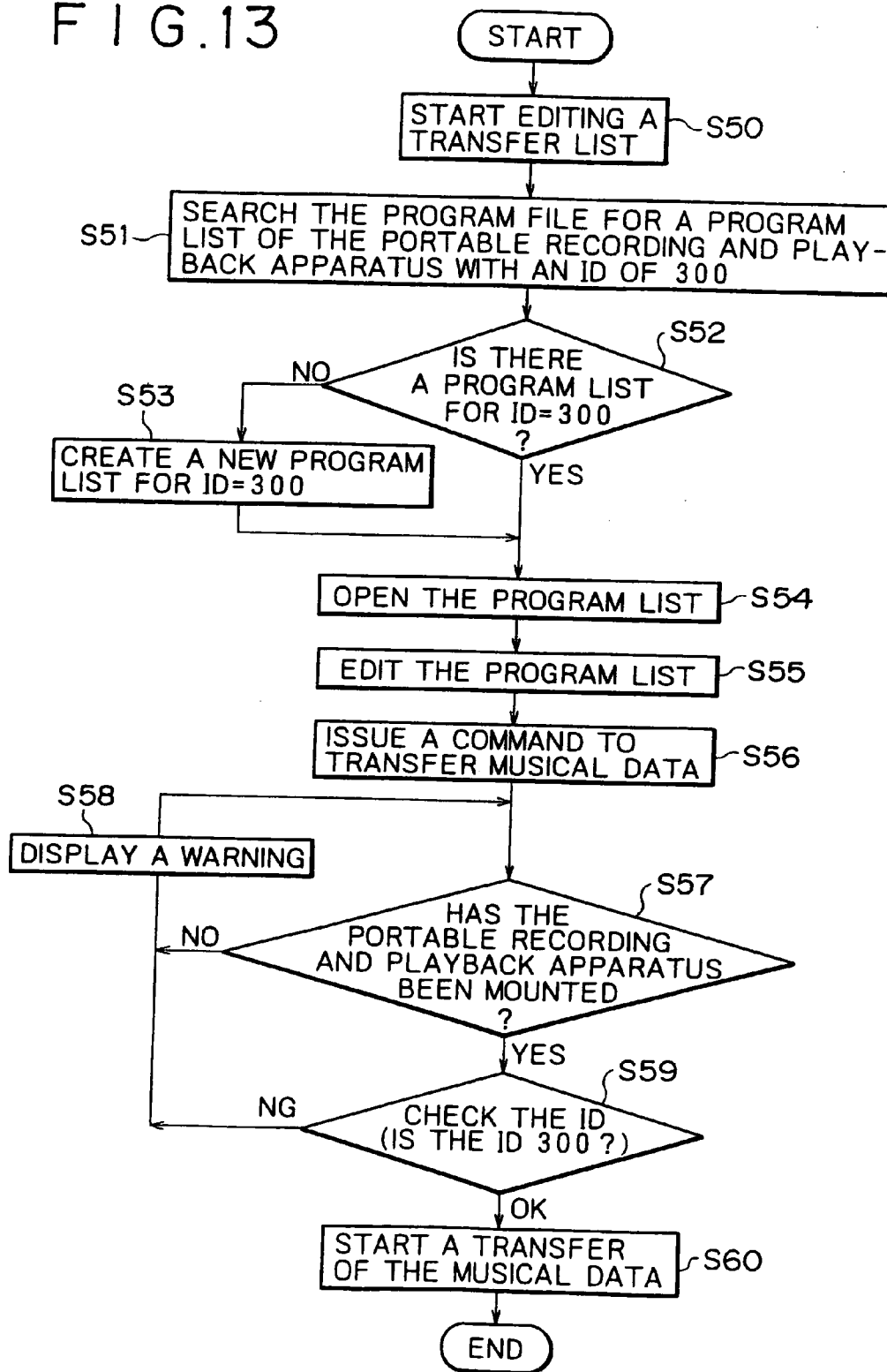


FIG. 13



CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND ASSOCIATED METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to an information communication system and its method as well as an information communication apparatus and its method, which are used for transmitting a plurality of pieces of data from equipment for storing data to other equipment.

[0002] As a conventional apparatus, there has been developed the so-called CD changer for accommodating a number of CDs (Compact Discs) and automatically playing back the CDs. In such a CD changer, several tens to several hundreds of CDs are accommodated in a single case, and a CD selected by a predetermined operation is automatically played back. The operation to play back CDs may be carried out for each selected CD. As an alternative, a plurality of CDs are selected and the operation to play back the CDs can be carried out for each of the CDs or carried out randomly for pieces of music recorded in the CDs. In general, the CD changer is installed permanently in a room.

[0003] As a portable audio-data playback apparatus, on the other hand, an apparatus using an optical disc or a magneto-optical disc with a diameter of about 64 mm has become popular in recent years. The portable audio-data playback apparatus converts an analog audio signal into a digital signal, compresses the digital signal by adoption of a compression technology known as ATRAC (Adaptive Transform Acoustic Coding: Trademark) and stores the compressed signal into a magneto-optical disc. The portable audio-data playback apparatus offers a merit of no deterioration of the sound quality caused by the operations to convert the analog audio signal into the digital signal, compress the digital signal and store the compressed signal. There is also another merit of a random playback operation due to the fact that a disc is used as a recording medium.

[0004] In the CD changer described above, however, it takes time to replace a CD with another even during an automatic playback operation. It is thus difficult to implement a continuous playback operation. In addition, a CD changer for accommodating 100 to 200 CDs has a large and heavy cabinet, which is very inconvenient when the CD changer is carried or installed.

[0005] Also in the portable audio-data playback apparatus described above, once audio data has been recorded onto a magneto-optical disc, the playback operation is limited to the range of the disc. That is to say, a random or general playback operation can not be carried out over a plurality of magneto-optical discs. It is thus necessary to replace a magneto-optical disc with several other magneto-optical discs in order to carry out a random playback operation from a plurality of magneto-optical discs or an operation to play back specified pieces of music. As a result, the user must always take a plurality of magneto-optical discs or optical discs with the portable audio-data playback apparatus.

[0006] In order to solve these problems, for example, there has been proposed a music server equipped with a recording medium such as a hard-disc drive having a relatively small size but a large recording capacity to serve as a CD changer described above. In a music server, audio data is read out from a CD, compressed and coded by adopting a predeter-

mined technique and then recorded and stored in a hard-disc drive. By using a hard-disc drive with a recording capacity of about 6 Gbyte, musical data of about 1,000 pieces of music can be recorded. In addition, unlike the CD changer, time and labor to replace a CD with another are not required in a music server. As a result, the music server offers a merit of an easy continuous playback operation. Other merits include the fact that data of numerous pieces of music can be recorded into a unit of hard-disc drive and the fact that the cabinet can be made small in size.

[0007] It has been further proposed to use a hard-disc drive or a semiconductor memory as a recording or storage medium in the portable audio-data playback apparatus described above. The music server described above may be connected to the portable audio-data playback apparatus so that audio data stored in the music server can be transferred to the portable audio-data playback apparatus to be recorded or stored into the recording medium of the apparatus. Assume that the recording or storage capacity of the recording medium is 200 MB. In this case, it is no longer necessary for the user to carry a plurality of magneto-optical discs or optical discs. Of course, it is also unnecessary to replace a magneto-optical disc or an optical disc with another.

[0008] By the way, a music server is capable of storing a large amount of musical data as described above. Thus, if musical data is transferred from the music server to the portable audio-data playback apparatus by selecting pieces of music thereof to be transferred piece by piece, there will be raised a problem of cumbersome work to repeat the same operation several times.

[0009] In order to solve this problem, there has been conceived a data transfer method whereby a list of selected pieces of music from the musical data stored in the music server is created and the selected musical data on the list is transferred in a batch operation. With this method, however, there is raised another problem that it is quite within the bounds of possibility that a confusion occurs due to an unclear purpose as to whether a list created by the user is used to organize numerous pieces of musical data stored in the music server or used to transfer pieces of musical data in a batch operation.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] It is thus an object of the present invention to provide an information communication system and its method as well as an information communication apparatus and its method that are capable of transferring musical data from an audio server to a portable audio-data playback apparatus with ease.

[0011] In order to solve the problems described above, according to the first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a communication system including a first apparatus having a first storage medium, and a second apparatus for transmitting data to the first apparatus, the second apparatus comprising: a second storage medium for storing management information of data to be transferred to the first storage medium; communication means for communicating data with the first apparatus; edit means capable of editing the management information; and control means for making a control to transfer data stored in the second storage medium to the first storage medium by way of the communication means on the basis of the management information edited by the edit means.

[0012] In addition, according to the second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a communication apparatus for transmitting data to another apparatus having a first storage medium, comprising: a second storage medium for storing management information of data stored in the first storage medium; communication means for communicating data with the another apparatus; edit means capable of editing the management information; and control means for making a control to transfer data stored in the second storage medium to the first storage medium by way of the communication means on the basis of the management information edited by the edit means.

[0013] Furthermore, according to the third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a communication method for communicating a first apparatus having a first storage medium to a second apparatus for transmitting data to the first apparatus, the method comprising the steps of: editing management information of data to be transferred to the first apparatus, on the second storage medium of the second apparatus, irrespective of the fact whether or not communication is established between the first apparatus and the second apparatus; and transmitting, when communication is established between the first apparatus and the second apparatus, data stored in the second storage medium to the first storage medium on the basis of the edited management information.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] **FIG. 1** is a diagram showing a music server provided by the present invention and a system employing the music server in a simple and plain manner;

[0015] **FIG. 2** is a block diagram showing a typical configuration of the music sever;

[0016] **FIG. 3** is a diagram showing a flow of a signal through a series of processes from an operation to read out musical data from a CD-ROM drive to an operation to record the data into a hard-disc drive in a simple and plain manner;

[0017] **FIG. 4** is a diagram showing a flow of a signal through a series of processes from an operation to read out compressed musical data from the hard-disc drive to an operation to output data completing playback processing to a terminal in a simple and plain manner;

[0018] **FIG. 5** is a block diagram showing a typical configuration of a portable recording and playback apparatus;

[0019] **FIG. 6** is a block diagram showing another typical configuration of a portable recording and playback apparatus;

[0020] **FIG. 7** shows a flowchart representing typical processing carried out by a music server to record musical data read out from a CD into a hard-disc drive;

[0021] **FIG. 8A** shows a flowchart representing typical processes of a music server for processing to record musical data read out from a CD into a hard-disc drive at a high speed;

[0022] **FIG. 8B** shows a flowchart representing typical processes of an Internet server for processing to record musical data read out from a CD into a hard-disc drive at a high speed;

[0023] **FIG. 9** shows a flowchart representing typical processing to move musical data in accordance with the present invention;

[0024] **FIG. 10** is a diagram showing a typical edit screen for editing a transfer list in a simple and plain manner;

[0025] **FIG. 11** is a diagram showing a typical external view of the music server in a simple and plain manner;

[0026] **FIG. 12A** is a diagram conceptually showing a typical management method for controlling a list of programs on the program file;

[0027] **FIG. 12B** is a diagram conceptually showing a typical management method for controlling a list of programs on the memory; and

[0028] **FIG. 13** shows a flowchart representing typical processing to edit a transfer list and to transfer musical data cataloged on the edited transfer list.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0029] Next, preferred embodiments of the present invention are explained by referring to diagrams. **FIG. 1** is a diagram showing a music server provided by the present invention and a system employing the music server in a simple and plain manner. As shown in the figure, the music server **50** comprises a server main body **51** and speaker units **52L** and **52R**. The server main body **51** is provided with a display unit **53** implemented typically by an LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) panel and a CD insertion unit **54** for inserting a CD **55** into the server main body **51**.

[0030] The server main body **51** has an operation unit comprising a plurality of operation switches to be operated by the user for executing functions of the server main body **51**. It should be noted that the operation unit itself is not shown in **FIG. 1**. The server main body **51** may also be provided with a signal reception unit for receiving typically an infrared signal from a remote commander, which is operated to remotely execute the functions of the server main body **51**. As will be described later, the server main body **51** also includes a controller for controlling a variety of operations by execution of a predetermined program, which is stored in advance typically in a ROM.

[0031] The user mounts a CD **55** on the server main body **51** through the CD insertion unit **54** and operates a predetermined switch on the operation unit not shown in the figure to play back musical data from the CD **55**. A playback signal reproduced from the CD **55** is output to the speaker units **52L** and **52R** to allow the user to enjoy the musical data stored in the CD **55**. If the CD **55** includes text data such as the name of a piece of music, the text data can be displayed on the display unit **53** as names of pieces of music or the like.

[0032] The music server **50** includes an internal large-capacity recording medium such as a hard disc. By operating a predetermined switch on the operation unit not shown in the figure, it is possible to record playback data reproduced from the CD **55** mounted on the server main body **51** through the CD insertion unit **54** into the recording medium such as a hard disc. At that time, it is possible to select a standard-speed recording technique or a high-speed recording technique. With the standard-speed recording technique,

the playback data is recorded from the CD 55 into the recording medium at a transfer speed equal to a standard playback speed of the CD 55. With the high-speed recording technique, on the other hand, the playback data is recorded from the CD 55 into the recording medium at a transfer speed higher than the standard playback speed of the CD 55. With the high-speed recording technique, playback data reproduced from a selected CD 55 or playback data of a selected piece of music reproduced from the CD 55 is recorded from the CD 55 into the recording medium at a transfer speed higher than the standard playback speed of the CD 55 at a fee determined by a charging process according to a predetermined procedure.

[0033] In the music server 50, musical data played back from the CD 55 is subjected to a compression-encoding process according to a predetermined technique such as the ATRAC method described earlier to produce compressed musical data, which is then recorded into the recording medium such as a hard disc. In the case of a hard disc with a storage capacity of 6 Gbyte, for example, about 1,000 pieces of music can be stored or recorded. A list of names of recorded or stored pieces of music is displayed typically on the display unit 53. The user is then capable of playing back any arbitrary piece of music selected from the list displayed on the display unit 53 to show the names of pieces of music recorded or stored in the hard disc. As hard disc can be accessed at random, a large amount of musical data stored and recorded can be read out in arbitrary order and continuously played back by the music server 50.

[0034] There are a variety of usable compression-encoding techniques. This embodiment adopts a technique referred to as an ATRAC2 (Adaptive Transform Acoustic Coding 2) method disclosed in documents such as USP (United States Patent) U.S. Pat. No. 5,717,821. This method is a compression-encoding technique resulting from extension of the ATRAC method adopted in the portable audio-data playback apparatus described above. This technique of compressing and encoding data makes use of frequency dependence of a minimum audible limit as well as a masking effect based on the sense of hearing, and utilizes a conversion-coding process in conjunction with an entropy-coding process. With this ATRAC2 method, encoding and decoding processes can be carried out at a high speed while a high sound quality is being maintained by using hardware with a relatively small size. It should be noted that, however, compression-encoding techniques other than ATRAC2, may be adopted such as ATRAC3, MPEG2ACC (Advanced Audio Code), MP3 (MPEG1 Audio Layer 3), TwinVQ (Transform-Domain weighted Interleave Vector Quantization) or MSAudio (WMA: Windows Media Audio).

[0035] The music server 50 can be connected to an external system by typically a public telephone line serving as a communication line 61 shown in FIG. 1. An example of the external system is an Internet server 60, which is a server connected to the Internet. By connecting the music server 50 to the Internet server 60 using the communication line 61, various kinds of information can be acquired from the Internet. The Internet server 60 has a data base for storing data such as information on titles of musical CDs available in the market. A unique key for making an access to the data base is assigned to the user. In order to make an access to the data base, the user utilizes the unique key. In this way, the

user is capable of acquiring data related to a musical CD such as information on the title of the CD.

[0036] The Internet server 60 also carries out a charging process to compute a fee for a service rendered to the user of the music server 50. When musical data played back from the CD 55 is recorded into recording medium at a high transfer speed as described above, the music server 50 informs the Internet server 60 that such a recording operation is carried out at a high transfer speed. The Internet server 60 then carries out processing to compute a recording fee to be charged to the user, allowing a CD to be selected or a piece of music to be selected from a CD and musical data to be recorded from the selected CD or the selected piece of music to be recorded from the CD at a high transfer speed.

[0037] As described above, the processing to compute a recording fee is carried out by the Internet server 60, which has a lot of information related to CDs. It should be noted, however, that the scope of the present invention is not limited to this scheme. For example, the processing to compute a recording fee can also be carried out by another server, which is also connected to the Internet. As another alternative, the processing to compute a recording fee can also be carried out through a special-purpose network other than the Internet.

[0038] A portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has a recording medium, which is implemented by a hard disc or a flash memory such as a semiconductor memory, a magnetic memory and an optical memory. The portable recording and playback apparatus 70 may also be provided with another kind of storage medium or another kind of recording medium provided that the medium is capable of keeping up with a speed to play back music. By connecting the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to the music server 50 using a connection line 71, musical data recorded in the music server 50 can be transmitted to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to be recorded in a storage medium employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. In this case, while the musical data transmitted to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 remains in the storage medium such as a hard disc or a flash memory in the music server 50, the musical data is put in a state of being irreproducible. The storage medium employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has a typical capacity of about 200 Mbyte, which allows data of tens of pieces of music to be stored or recorded. It should be noted that a storage device or a recording medium implemented by a semiconductor memory such as a flash memory and a recording medium implemented by a disc-shaped recording medium such as a hard disc are referred to as a storage medium, which is a generic name for these storage and recording media.

[0039] In accordance with the aforementioned transmission method adopted by the present invention, transmitted musical data is recorded into a storage medium employed in a destination of transmission and remains in a storage medium of a source of transmission but is put in a state of being irreproducible. This transmission operation is referred to as a move. By moving musical data in this way, a copy operation of musical data can be prevented from being carried out without limitation.

[0040] In the embodiment described above, the music server 50 is connected to the portable recording and play-

back apparatus 70 by the connection line 71. It should be noted, however, that this configuration is typical. As an alternative, the music server 50 is provided with a mounting unit matching another mounting unit employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. In accordance with this alternative, the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 can be mounted on the music server 50 so that data can be exchanged between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. In addition to the electrical connections, the music server 50 can be provided with an interface unit matching another interface unit employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. The interface units conform to typically an IrDA (Infrared Data Association) standard, which allows data to be exchanged between the interface units as an infrared ray signal. As a result, musical data can be exchanged between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 as an infrared ray signal.

[0041] The music server 50 may further be provided with a predetermined interface for exchanging information with a variety of media. Assume that the music server 50 is provided with an interface for a PC card 80. In this case, musical data distributed by means of the PC card 80 can be transferred to the music server 50, or data can be exchanged between a personal computer and the music server 50. The music server 50 may be provided with a serial digital interface implemented by an optical cable, which allows musical data to be exchanged with another digital musical-data recording and playback apparatus such as a disc recorder 81 for handling typically a small-size magneto-optical disc having a diameter of 64 mm. In this embodiment, a disc cartridge 82 for accommodating the small-size magneto-optical disc is mounted on the disc recorder 81. Musical data played back from the magneto-optical disc accommodated in the disc cartridge 82 is supplied to the music server 50. By the same token, the music server 50 may be provided with an interface such as an IEEE1394 interface for connection to a setup box 83 for CATV (cable television) or satellite broadcasting.

[0042] A PC card conforms to standardization of card-type peripherals for personal computers. The standardization is set jointly by the PCMCIA (Personal Memory Card International Association) of the U.S. and the JEIDA (Japanese Electronic Industry Development Association) of Japan. The IEEE1394 standard is an interface standard adopted by the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers of the U.S.

[0043] The music server 50 may be provided with a WWW (World Wide Web) browser as an embedded application. By connecting the music server 50 provided with a WWW browser to the Internet server 60 using the communication line 61, the Internet can be searched for a variety of contents described typically in an HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and any of the contents can then be displayed on the display unit 53.

[0044] With the configuration described above, the user is capable of playing back musical data stored or recorded in the music server 50 or musical data from the CD 55 mounted on the music server 50 via the CD insertion unit 54 and listening to the reproduced musical data through the speaker units 52L and 52R.

[0045] By a communication between the music server 50 and the Internet server 60, the music server 50 can auto-

matically acquire information such as the title of a CD 55 mounted on the music server 50 via the CD insertion unit 54 from the Internet server 60 through the communication line 61. Information such as a CD title acquired from the Internet server 60 is saved in the music server 50 and the saved information is displayed on the display unit 53 employed in the music server 50 when necessary.

[0046] To put it concretely, the music server 50 first transmits information unique to the user such as user ID data of the music server 50 to the Internet server 60. The information unique to the user is referred to hereafter as user information. The Internet server 60 carries out authentication and charging based on the user information received from the music server 50. The Internet server 60 also receives media information of a CD desired by the user or a CD being played back from the music server 50. The Internet server 60 then searches a data base for additional information associated with musical data indicated by the media information. The additional information includes the title of a song, the name of a performer, a song composer, a libretto writer, a libretto and a jacket image. Then, the Internet server 60 transmits predetermined information on the CD requested by the user.

[0047] An example of the media information transmitted to the Internet server 60 is of a TOC (Table of Contents) of the CD 55. The Internet server 60 includes the data base, which can be searched for additional information associated with musical data indicated by the TOC. As an alternative, the Internet can also be searched for a WWW server to get additional information by the Internet server 60. The Internet server 60 searches the data base for additional information associated with musical data indicated by the TOC received from the music server 50 and used as the media information. For example, the Internet server 60 searches the data base for a playback time duration of each piece of music, which is included in the TOC and recorded on the CD 55.

[0048] The Internet server 60 then transmits the additional information obtained as a result of the search operation to the music server 50. The music server 50 displays the additional information received from the Internet server 60 on the display unit 53. The additional information is also stored by a CPU 8 to be described later into typically the hard-disc drive along with the TOC information of the CD 55. It should be noted that the additional information can also be transmitted by the Internet server 60 as data embedded in an HTML file and displayed by WWW browser software embedded in the music server 50.

[0049] If the additional information includes another described URL (Uniform Resource Locator) on the Internet, the music server 50 is capable of making an access to a home page on the Internet indicated by the other URL.

[0050] In addition, by having data communicated between the Internet server 60 and the music server 50, musical data recorded on the CD 55 mounted on the music server 50 through the CD insertion unit 54 can be recorded into the recording medium employed in the music server 50 at a speed higher than a standard playback speed prescribed for the CD 55 so that typically musical data of a piece of CD 55 can be recorded in about 2 minutes by the music server 50. If no communication is established between the Internet server 60 and the music server 50, on the other hand, the musical data is recorded into the recording medium

employed in the music server **50** at a one-time speed, that is, a speed equal to the standard playback speed prescribed for the CD **55** by the music server **50**.

[0051] By connecting the music server **50** to the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** using a connection line **71**, musical data stored or recorded in the music server **50** can be transmitted or, strictly speaking, moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus **71**. The moved data can then be played back by the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** even if the music server **50** is disconnected from the portable recording and playback apparatus **71** via the connection line **71**. Typically, the user is capable of listening to the musical data played back by the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** by using a headphone **72**. As described earlier, the musical data transmitted or, strictly speaking, moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** can no longer be played back in the music server **50**.

[0052] FIG. 2 is a block diagram showing a typical configuration of the music server **50**. In the first place, the music server **50** comprises a RAM **5**, a ROM **6**, a flash memory **7** and a CPU **8**, which are connected to each other by a local bus as is the case with an ordinary personal computer. The CPU **8** is also connected to a bus **40**. The CPU **8** functions as a controller controlling all operations of the music server **50**.

[0053] The ROM **6** is used for storing in advance a program for controlling the operation of the music server **50**. The program is executed by the CPU **8** to perform processing corresponding to an operation carried out on an input operation unit **1** to be described later. A task area and a data area, which are required in the execution of the program, are secured temporarily in the RAM **5** and the flash memory **7**. The ROM **6** is also used for storing a program loader for loading the program from the ROM **6** into the flash memory **7**.

[0054] The input operation unit **1** comprises typically a plurality of push-type and rotary-type operation keys and switches each actuated by an operation of any of these operation keys. As an alternative, the input operation unit **1** may also be implemented by a rotary-push-type key known as a jog dial or a touch panel on the LCD. Of course, the input operation unit **1** may adopt a switch mechanism, which reacts to a press operation. A signal representing an operation carried out on the input operation unit **1** is supplied to the CPU **8** by way of the bus **40**. The CPU **8** generates a control signal for controlling the operation of the music server **50** on the basis of the signal received from the input operation unit **1**. The music server **50** operates in accordance with the control signal generated by the CPU **8**.

[0055] An infrared ray interface (IrDa I/F) driver **3** and/or a USB (Universal Serial Bus) driver **4** are connected to the bus **40**. A keyboard **2** is constructed to be capable of communicating with the IrDa I/F driver **3** and the USB driver **4** or can be connected to the IrDa I/F driver **3** and the USB driver **4**. By using the keyboard **2**, the user can enter information such as the title of recorded musical data and the name of an artist with ease. It is also possible to adopt a configuration wherein data is transferred by way of the IrDa I/F driver **3** or the USB driver **4**. It should be noted that the IrDa I/F driver **3** and the USB driver **4** could be eliminated.

[0056] A CD-ROM drive **9** is connected to the bus **40**. A CD **55** inserted into the CD insertion unit **54** as described

earlier is mounted on the CD-ROM drive **9**. The CD-ROM drive **9** reads out musical data from the set CD **55** at a prescribed standard playback speed. The CD-ROM drive **9** is also capable of reading musical data from the CD **55** at a speed higher than the prescribed standard playback speed such as a speed 16 times or 32 times the prescribed standard playback speed.

[0057] It should be noted that the CD-ROM drive **9** is not limited to the example described above. For example, the CD-ROM drive **9** can be adapted to another disc-shaped recording medium for recording musical data. Examples of the other disc-shaped recording medium are a magneto-optical disc and a DVD (Digital Versatile Disc). A drive for a memory card can also be employed. In addition, data read out by the CD-ROM drive **9** is not limited to musical data. It is also possible for the CD-ROM drive **9** to read out information such as picture data, text data and program data.

[0058] A hard-disc drive **10**, which is abbreviated hereafter to an HDD, is also connected to the bus **40**. Musical data read out by the CD-ROM drive **9** is recorded into the HDD **10**. Before being recorded into the HDD **10**, the musical data is subjected to pre-processing. To put it in detail, the musical data read out by the CD-ROM drive **9** is supplied to a compression encoder **12** by way of the bus **40** and an audio DRAM **11**.

[0059] The compression encoder **12** carries out processing to compress and encode musical data typically by adoption of the compression method disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,717,821 described earlier. It should be noted that musical data could be compressed by the compression encoder **12** at either one of 2 speeds, namely, a low speed and a high speed, either of which is selected in accordance with control executed by the CPU **8**. The low compression speed corresponds to the standard playback speed prescribed for the CD **55** in the CD-ROM drive **9**. Typically, the compression speed is switched from the low speed to the high one and vice versa in accordance with the playback speed of the CD **55** in the CD-ROM drive **9**. The compression encoder **12** implements an encoding algorithm according to the compression speed.

[0060] It should be noted that the technique adopted by the compression encoder **12** to change the compression speed is not limited to the method described above. For example, the compression speed can also be changed by switching the clock frequency of the compression encoder **12**. As an alternative, the two compression speeds are implemented by two different pieces of hardware. As another alternative, musical data is compressed by the compression encoder **12** at the low processing speed by thinning the high-speed compression.

[0061] The musical data completing the compression-encoding process in the compression encoder **12** is supplied to the HDD **10** by way of the DRAM **11** to be stored or recorded in the HDD **10**.

[0062] As described above, the musical data completing the compression-encoding process in the compression encoder **12** is supplied to the HDD **10** to be stored or recorded therein. It should be noted, however, that musical data read out by the CD-ROM drive **9** can also be supplied directly to the HDD **10** to be stored or recorded onto a hard disc of the HDD **10**.

[0063] In this embodiment, an audio signal supplied by a microphone connected to a terminal 13 by way of an amplifier 14 or an audio signal input from a line input terminal 15 is supplied to the compression encoder 12 by way of an A/D converter 16. The audio signal compressed and encoded by the compression encoder 12 can be recorded in the HDD 10. In addition, an optical digital signal from an optical digital input terminal 17 is also supplied to the compression encoder 12 by way of an IEC-958 (International Electrotechnical Commission 958) encoder 18. The optical digital signal, which is also an audio signal, is compressed and encoded by the compression encoder 12. The compressed and encoded audio signal can be recorded onto the hard disc of the HDD 10.

[0064] In the embodiment described above, the compression encoder 12 adopts an encoding algorithm like the one disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,717,821. It should be noted, however, that the scope of the present invention is not limited to this embodiment. That is to say, the compression encoder 12 may adopt another algorithm as long as the algorithm is an encoding algorithm for compressing information. The compression encoder 12 may adopt, other than the algorithm mentioned above, PASC (Precision Adaptive Sub-band Coding), RealAudio (a trademark) or LiquidAudio (a trademark) algorithm.

[0065] A modem 20 is also connected to the bus 40. The modem 20 is connected to an external network 19 such as a public telephone line, a CATV, a satellite communication network or wireless communication. The music server 50 is capable of establishing communication through the external network 19 by way of the modem 20.

[0066] Connected typically to the Internet by the external network 19, the music server 50 is capable of communicating with the Internet server 60 at a remote location. The music server 50 transmits various kinds of information to the Internet server 60. The information includes a request signal, media information, user ID data, user information and charging information for the user. The media information is data related to the CD 55 mounted on the CD-ROM drive 9. The user ID data and the user information are assigned in advance to the music server 50.

[0067] As described above, various kinds of data including the media information and the user information are transmitted to the Internet server 60. On the basis of the user information such as the user ID data received from the music server 50, the Internet server 60 carries out authentication of the user and a charging process for the user. The Internet server 60 also searches a data base for additional information for musical data indicated by the media information received from the music server 50. The additional information is then transmitted to the music server 50.

[0068] As described above, additional information associated with musical data is transmitted to the music server 50. It should be noted, however, that musical data itself could also be supplied directly to the music server 50 from the external network 19. In other words, the user is capable of downloading musical data from the Internet server 60 to the music server 50. That is to say, musical data is transmitted to the music server 50 in response to media information. For example, a bonus track of a predetermined CD 55 can be distributed to users.

[0069] In a playback operation, musical data compressed and encoded by the compression encoder 12 and then

recorded and stored in the HDD 10 is read out from the HDD 10 and supplied to a compression decoder 21 by way of the bus 40. The compression decoder 21 decodes and decompresses the compressed musical data read out from the HDD 10. The decoded and decompressed musical data is then supplied to a D/A converter 22 before being supplied to a terminal 24 by way of an amplifier 23. The data is then supplied to the speaker units 52L and 52R from the terminal 24 as music obtained as a result of the playback operation. It should be noted that, in the case of a stereo system which is not shown in FIG. 2, there are two routes from the D/A converter 22 to the terminal 24 by way of the amplifier 23. Of course, two terminals 24 are provided in the stereo system.

[0070] The compression decoder 21 adopts a decoding algorithm serving as a counterpart of the encoding algorithm adopted in the compression encoder 12. The compression encoder 12 and the compression decoder 21 can also be implemented by software executed by the CPU 8 instead of hardware.

[0071] A liquid crystal display panel 26, which is abbreviated to an LCD panel serving as the display unit 53, is connected to the bus 40 by an LCD driving circuit 25. The CPU 8 supplies a rendering control signal to the LCD driving circuit 25 by way of the bus 40. The LCD driving circuit 25 drives the LCD panel 26 in accordance with the rendering control signal received from the CPU 8 to make a predetermined display appear on the display unit 53.

[0072] For example, an operation menu of the music server 50 is displayed on the LCD panel 26. As another example, a list of titles of compressed musical data recorded and stored in the HDD 10 may also be displayed on the LCD panel 26. The list of titles displayed on the LCD panel 26 is based on data stored in the HDD 10. This stored data is based on data obtained as a result of decoding additional information received from the Internet server 60. In addition, a folder and a jacket image associated with selected playback compressed musical data may also be displayed on the LCD panel 26. The displayed folder and the jacket image are based on additional information received from the Internet server 60.

[0073] The user operates the keyboard 2 or a pointing device of the input operation unit 1 on the basis of a screen displayed on the LCD panel 26. The CPU 8 controls processing to play back musical data requested by an operation carried out by the user on the keyboard 2 or the pointing device of the input operation unit 1. Control of an operation to delete selected musical data and an operation to copy or move selected musical data to an external apparatus can also be based on a screen displayed on the LCD panel 26. For example, the input operation unit 1 may be implemented by a touch panel provided on the LCD panel 26. In this case, by touching the touch panel in accordance with a screen displayed on the LCD panel 26, the user is capable of operating the music server 50. In this way, the user is capable of administering and controlling musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 by using the LCD panel 26 as an interface.

[0074] In the first embodiment, a PC-card slot 31 and an IEEE1394 interface 8 are each used as an interface between the music server 50 and an external general information apparatus. The IEEE1394 interface 28 is connected to the

bus **40** by an IEEE1394 driver **29**. On the other hand, the PC-card slot **31** is connected to the bus **40** by a PC-card driver **30**.

[0075] The IEEE1394 interface **28** allows data to be exchanged between the music server **50** and typically a personal computer. In addition, the IEEE1394 interface **28** allows musical data to be input from a source such as a satellite-broadcasting IRD (Integrated Receiver/Decoder), a small-size optical disc and a small-size magneto-optical disc with a diameter of about 64 mm, a DVD (Digital Versatile Disc: a trademark) or a digital video tape. A PC card mounted on the PC-card slot **31** serves as one of a variety of peripheral extensions such as an external memory device, another media drive, a modem, a terminal adaptor and a capture board.

[0076] An interface **34** allows musical data to be exchanged between the music server **50** and another compatible recording and playback apparatus. The other recording and playback apparatus can be the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** shown in FIG. 1 or another music server **50**.

[0077] The interface **34** is connected to the bus **40** by an interface driver **33**. The other compatible recording and playback apparatus includes an interface **35** as the counterpart of the interface **34**. By electrically connecting the interface **34** to the interface **35** by using a predetermined connection line **71**, for example, the music server **50** is capable of transmitting musical data stored in the HDD **10** to the other recording and playback apparatus.

[0078] FIG. 3 is a diagram showing a flow of a signal through a series of processes from an operation to read out musical data from the CD-ROM drive **9** to an operation to record the data into the HDD **10** in a simple and plain manner. The musical data read out from the CD-ROM drive **9** is once stored into the DRAM **11**, which is used as a buffer memory. The musical data is then read out back from the DRAM **11** with a predetermined timing and supplied to the compression encoder **12** by way of the bus **40**. As described above, the compression encoder **12** compresses the musical data at a predetermined compression speed corresponding to the playback speed of the CD-ROM drive **9**. The musical data compressed and encoded by the compression encoder **12** is again stored temporarily into the DRAM **11**, which is used as a buffer memory. The musical data is then read out back from the DRAM **11** with a predetermined timing and supplied by way of the bus **40** to the HDD **10** to be stored into the hard disc of the HDD **10**. At that time, information on the CD **55** undergoing a playback operation in the CD-ROM drive **9** is transmitted to the Internet server **60**. In response to the information, the Internet server **60** transmits additional information for the CD **55**, which is also recorded into the hard disc of the HDD **10**. The CPU **8** and other components control the additional information and the compressed musical data obtained as a result of compression of the musical data read out from the CD **55** as described above.

[0079] FIG. 4 is a diagram showing a flow of a signal through a series of processes from an operation to read out compressed musical data from the HDD **10** to an operation to output data completing playback processing to a terminal **24** in a simple and plain manner. The compressed musical data read out from the HDD **10** is once stored into the

DRAM **11**, which is used as a buffer memory. The compressed musical data is then read out back from the DRAM **11** with a predetermined timing and supplied to the compression decoder **21** by way of the bus **40**. As described above, the compression decoder **21** decodes and decompresses the compressed musical data to reproduce the musical data, supplying the musical data to a D/A converter **22**. The D/A converter **22** converts the musical data into an analog audio signal, which is amplified by an amplifier **23** and output to the terminal **24** as a playback output. If a speaker is connected to the terminal **24**, the user is capable of enjoying music played back by the speaker. At that time, additional information read out along with the compressed musical data from the HDD **10** is decoded by the CPU **8** and other components to be displayed on the display unit **53** as a musical name and the like.

[0080] FIG. 5 is a block diagram showing a typical configuration of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70**. As shown in the figure, the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** generally has a configuration similar to that of the music server **50** shown in FIG. 2. Normally, the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** is carried by the user and used as standalone equipment by disconnecting the interface **35** of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** from the interface **34** employed in the music server **50**.

[0081] In the first place, the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** comprises a RAM **103**, a ROM **104**, and a CPU **105**, which are connected to each other by a local bus as is the case with an ordinary personal computer. Of course, a flash memory can also be provided like the configuration of the music server **50** described above. The CPU **105** is also connected to a bus **130**. The CPU **105** functions as a controller controlling all operations of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70**.

[0082] The ROM **104** is used for storing in advance a program for controlling the operation of the music apparatus **70**. The program is executed to perform processing corresponding to an operation carried out on an input operation unit **102** to be described later. A task area and a data area, which are required in the execution of the program, are secured temporarily in the RAM **103**.

[0083] The input operation unit **102** comprises typically a plurality of push-type and rotary-type operation keys and switches each actuated by an operation of any of these operation keys. As an alternative, the input operation unit **102** may also be implemented by a rotary-push-type key known as a jog dial or a touch panel on the LCD. Of course, the input operation unit **102** may adopt a mechanical switch mechanism, which reacts to a press operation. A signal representing an operation carried out on the input operation unit **102** is supplied to the CPU **105** by way of the bus **130**. The CPU **105** generates a control signal for controlling the operation of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** on the basis of the signal received from the input operation unit **102**. The signal is generated by the input operation unit **102** to represent an operation carried out on an operation key of the input operation unit **102**. The operation of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** is switched and controlled in accordance with the control signal generated by the CPU **105**.

[0084] Musical data read out from the HDD **10** of the music server **50** to be transferred to the portable recording

and playback apparatus 70 in response to a request is transmitted or supplied to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 by way of the interface 35, the connection line connecting the interface 35 to the interface 34 and the interface 34. At the same time, additional information associated with the musical data requested to be transferred is transmitted to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 along with the musical data. If the music server 50 is provided with a mounting unit matching another mounting unit employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, the interface 35 can be directly connected to the interface 34 so that data can be exchanged between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. As an alternative, the music server 50 may be provided with an interface unit matching another interface unit employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. If the interface units conform to typically an IrDA (Infrared Data Association) system, which allows data to be exchanged between the interface units as an infrared ray signal, musical data can be exchanged between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 as an infrared ray signal.

[0085] The musical data supplied by the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is transferred from an interface driver 101 by way of the bus 130 to an HDD 106, which serves as a musical-data recording medium in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to be recorded into a hard disc in the HDD 106.

[0086] It should be noted that the musical-data recording medium in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is not limited to the HDD 106. For example, a flash memory can also be used. As a matter of fact, for example, another recording medium such as a magneto-optical disc can be employed as the musical-data recording medium in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 provided that the recording medium is capable of keeping up with the speed to play back the musical data. If a recording medium with a storage capacity of, say, 200 Mbyte is employed as the musical-data recording medium in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, the recording medium will be capable of recording tens of pieces of music. The hard disc of the HDD 106 employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is used for storing musical data and additional information associated with the musical data, which are received from the music server 50.

[0087] In this example, musical data received from the music server 50 and recorded into the HDD 106 is compressed musical data already completing a compression/encoding process in the music server 50. It should be noted, however, that the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is not limited to this embodiment. That is to say, musical data not completing a compression/encoding process can also be recorded into the hard disc of the HDD 106. For example, musical data read out from the CD 55 mounted on the CD-ROM drive 9 employed in the music server 50 can be supplied to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 by way of an interface driver 101. It is worth noting, however, that when musical data is supplied to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 directly, the number of pieces of musical data that can be recorded is limited considerably.

[0088] As part of pre-processing prior to an operation to record musical data into the hard disc of the HDD 106, the

musical data supplied thereto is temporarily stored into an audio DRAM 107 connected to the bus 130. The musical data is then read back from the DRAM 107 and supplied to a compression encoder 108 through the bus 130. The compression encoder 108 carries out a compression-encoding process on the musical data by adoption of an encoding algorithm equivalent to the encoding algorithm adopted by the compression encoder 12 employed in the music server 50. The compressed musical data completing the compression-encoding process in the compression encoder 108 is again supplied to the DRAM 107 to be stored temporarily therein once more. Finally, the compressed musical data is read out from the DRAM 107 and recorded into the hard disc of the HDD 106.

[0089] As described above, a request can be made to move compressed musical data stored in the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. After the compressed musical data is transmitted or transferred to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 at such a request, the compressed musical data in the HDD 10 remains as data that can not be read out and played back from the HDD 10. However, the compressed musical data moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 can be returned back to the recording medium serving as a move source, that is, the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50. The compressed musical data returned back to the move source can be played back by the music server 50. When the compressed musical data is returned back to the music server 50, the compressed musical data is deleted from the hard disc of the HDD 106 employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, which serves as a move destination. That is to say, the compressed musical data returned back to the music server 50 is erased from a recording medium of the move destination.

[0090] In this embodiment, an audio signal supplied by a microphone connected to a terminal 109 by way of an amplifier 110 or an audio signal input from a line input terminal 111 is supplied to the compression encoder 108 by way of an A/D converter 112. The audio signal output by the A/D converter 112, and compressed and encoded by the compression encoder 108 can be recorded in the HDD 106. In addition, an optical digital signal from an optical digital input terminal 113 is also supplied to the compression encoder 108 by way of an IEC-958 (International Electro-technical Commission 958) encoder 114. The optical digital signal, which is also an audio signal, is compressed and encoded by the compression encoder 108. The compressed and encoded audio signal can be recorded onto the hard disc of the HDD 106. If the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is a portable playback-only apparatus only for playing back musical data, recording components such as the A/D converter 112 and the compression encoder 108 can all be eliminated.

[0091] In a playback operation, the compressed musical data is read out from the HDD 106 and supplied to a compression decoder 115 by way of the bus 130. The compression decoder 115 decodes and decompresses the compressed musical data read out from the HDD 106. The decoded and decompressed musical data is then supplied to a D/A converter 116 before being supplied to a terminal 118 by way of an amplifier 117. By mounting a headphone 72 on the terminal 118, the user is capable of enjoying the reproduced music. It should be noted that, in the case of a stereo

system which is not shown in **FIG. 5**, there are provided two routes from the D/A converter **116** to the terminal **118** by way of the amplifier **117** for left and right (L and R) channels respectively. Of course, two terminals **118** are provided in the stereo system for the L and R channels respectively.

[0092] An LCD panel **120** is connected to the bus **130** by an LCD driving circuit **119**. The CPU **105** supplies a rendering control signal to the LCD driving circuit **119** by way of the bus **130**. The LCD driving circuit **119** drives the LCD panel **120** in accordance with the rendering control signal received from the CPU **105** to make a predetermined display appear on the LCD panel **120**. For example, an operation menu of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** is displayed on the LCD panel **120**. As another example, a list of titles of compressed musical data recorded and stored in the HDD **106** may also be displayed on the LCD panel **120**. In addition, a folder and a jacket image associated with selected playback compressed musical data may also be displayed on the LCD panel **120**. The displayed folder and the jacket image are based on additional information stored in the HDD **106**.

[0093] The user operates a pointing device of the input operation unit **102** on the basis of a screen displayed on the LCD panel **120**. Control of an operation to select a piece of compressed musical data among those stored in the HDD **106** and an operation to delete selected musical data, or copy or move selected musical data to another apparatus can also be based on a screen displayed on the LCD panel **120**. For example, the input operation unit **102** may include a touch panel. In this case, by touching the touch panel in accordance with a screen displayed on the LCD panel **120**, the user is capable of entering an operation input to the portable recording and playback apparatus **70**. In this way, the user is capable of administering compressed musical data stored in the HDD **106** as well as controlling processing such as operations to play back compressed musical data stored in the HDD **106** and recording compressed musical data into the HDD **106** by using the LCD panel **120** as an interface.

[0094] It should be noted that the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** is driven by a battery, which is not shown in **FIG. 5**. That is why the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** is provided with a power supply unit employing an ordinary secondary battery or a dry battery as a power supplying source, and is provided with an electrical charging unit. With the mounting unit of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** connected directly to the mounting unit of the music server **50** or with the connection lines, the electrical charging unit electrically charges the secondary battery employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** with electrical power received from the music server **50** during a transfer of musical data from the music server **50** to the portable recording and playback apparatus **70**. It is needless to say that the secondary battery employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** can also be electrically charged by an external electrical charging unit. It should be noted that, as the power supply to serve as a power supplying source of the portable recording and playback apparatus **70**, only one of the dry cell and the rechargeable secondary battery can also be used or provided.

[0095] **FIG. 6** is a diagram showing another typical configuration of the portable recording and playback apparatus

70. It should be noted that, in the configuration shown in **FIG. 6**, members identical with those employed in the configuration shown in **FIG. 5** are denoted by the same reference numerals as the latter and detailed explanation of such members is not repeated. The portable recording and playback apparatus **70** shown in **FIG. 6** is different from the configuration shown in **FIG. 5** in that, in the case of the former, a switch circuit **200** is provided between the HDD (or the flash memory) **106a** and the bus **130**. One of select terminals **200a** of the switch circuit **200** is connected to the bus **130** while another select terminal **200b** is connected to the interface **35**. The switch circuit **200** isolates the HDD **106a** from the bus **130**.

[0096] When compressed musical data is received from the music server **50**, the switch circuit **200** is set at the select terminal **200b**, that is, the select terminal **200b** is selected. With the select terminal **200b** selected, the HDD **106a** is directly connected to the bus **40** employed in the music server **50** by the interface **35** and the interface **34**. In this connection, the HDD **106a** appears to the CPU **8** employed in the music server **50** as if the HDD **106a** were a local recording medium in the music server **50**. Thus, the CPU **8** employed in the music server **50** is capable of controlling the HDD **106a** directly. As a result, compressed musical data can be moved and transferred between the music server **50** and the portable recording and playback apparatus **70** with ease under the control of the CPU **8**.

[0097] Next, the operation of the information communication system having the configuration described above is explained. First of all, functions executed by the music server **50** as a standalone apparatus are described. **FIG. 7** shows a flowchart representing typical processing carried out by the music server **50** to record musical data read out from the CD **55** mounted on the CD-ROM drive **9** onto a hard disc of the HDD **10**.

[0098] As shown in the figure, the flowchart begins with a step **S10** at which the music server **50** enters a state of waiting for a request to be made to record musical data read out from the CD **55** mounted on the CD-ROM drive **9** onto a hard disc of the HDD **10**. As the user makes such a request by, for example, operating the input operation unit **1**, the flow of the processing goes on to a step **S11** to form a judgment as to whether the user made a request for high-speed recording or one-time-speed recording. Typically, when the user makes such a request at the step **S10**, the user also specifies a recording technique. To be more specific, the user also specifies whether the request is a request for high-speed recording or one-time-speed recording. The one-time-speed recording is an operation to read out musical data from the CD **55** and to record the data into the hard disc of the HDD **10** at a standard speed prescribed for the CD **55**. On the other hand, the high-speed recording is an operation to read out musical data from the CD **55** and to record the data into the hard disc of the HDD **10** at a speed at least twice the standard speed prescribed for the CD **55**.

[0099] If the outcome of the judgment formed at the step **S11** indicates that the high-speed recording was specified, the flow of the processing goes on to a step **S12** at which a charging system of the Internet server **60** or the music server **50** is activated. The processing carried out by the charging system of the Internet server **60** or the music server **50** will be described in detail later. At any rate, a charging process

for the music server 50 is carried out and, if the requested high-speed recording of musical data from the Internet server 60 or other sources is permitted, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S13 at which a high-speed compression process is activated in the compression encoder 12. The flow of the processing then goes on to a step S15.

[0100] If the outcome of the judgment formed at the step S11 indicates that the one-time-speed recording was specified, on the other hand, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S14 at which a low-speed compression process is activated in the compression encoder 12. The flow of the processing then goes on to the step S15.

[0101] At the step S15, the CD-ROM drive 9 is driven at a predetermined speed and musical data is read out from the CD 55 mounted on the CD-ROM drive 9 in accordance with control executed by the CPU 8. The musical data read out from the CD 55 is subjected to a compression-encoding process in the compression encoder 12 before being transferred to the HDD 10 to be recorded on a hard disc thereof.

[0102] If the transfer of the musical data read out from the CD 55 to the HDD 10 is found completed at a step S16, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S17 at which a transfer of data from the CD-ROM drive 9 to the HDD 10 is inhibited. At the next step S18, the compression processing at the compression encoder 12 is halted.

[0103] FIGS. 8A and 8B show a flowchart representing typical charging processes of the charging system carried out at the step S12 of the flowchart shown in FIG. 7. The charging process is carried out when data is communicated between the music server 50 and the Internet server 60. FIG. 8A shows a flowchart representing a partial charging process of the charging system for the music server 50 and FIG. 8B shows a flowchart representing a partial charging process of the charging system for the Internet server 60.

[0104] As shown in FIG. 8A, the flowchart begins with a step S20 when the charging process is started. At this step, communication is established by adopting a predetermined protocol between the music server 50 and the Internet server 60. The flow of the process then goes on to a step S21 to form a judgment as to whether a connection has been established between the music server 50 and the Internet server 60 and communications are possible between the music server 50 and the Internet server 60. If a connection has been established to allow communications, the flow of the process goes on to a step S22.

[0105] At the step S22, the TOC information of the CD 55 mounted on the CD-ROM drive 9 of the music server 50 with the user ID corresponding to the music server 50 is output to the Internet server 60. The CD 55 is a CD, from which data is to be transferred from the CD-ROM drive 9 of the music server 50 and to be recorded onto the hard disc of the HDD 10. The music server 50 also transmits high-speed-recording information indicating that high-speed recording is to be carried out to the Internet server 60 along with the TOC information.

[0106] On the other hand, the flowchart shown in FIG. 8B begins with a step S30 at which the Internet server 60 enters a state of waiting for the user ID, the high-speed-recording information and the TOC information to arrive from the music server 50. As the Internet server 60 receives the user ID, the high-speed-recording information and the TOC

information, the flow of the process goes on to a step S31 at which the Internet server 60 searches the data base thereof for information indicated by the TOC information. The information indicated by the TOC information may also be acquired from an external data base. The information indicated by the TOC information is used for identifying the CD 55.

[0107] At the next step S32, a charging process is carried out. To put it in detail, a recording fee is computed from information such as the number of pieces of music to undergo the high-speed recording. The fee can then be drawn from a bank account specified by the user using the user's credit-card number corresponding to the user ID cataloged in advance. The fee charging method is not limited to such a technique. Another technique to charge a recording fee to the user, where the charging process is performed on the music server 50 side, is conceivable. For example, the music server 50 may be provided with a function to read a prepaid card. In this case, the computed recording fee is transmitted to the music server 50, which draws the fee from the prepaid card. The recording fee may also be charged depending on contents of the CD 55 under the control of the Internet server 60, which can be identified from the TOC information. It is also possible to prohibit an operation to record musical data read out from the CD 55 onto the hard disc of the HDD 10.

[0108] At the next step S33, the charging information is transmitted to the music server 50. Then, the charging process continues to a step S23 of the flowchart shown in FIG. 8A at which the music server 50 checks the substance of the charging information received from the Internet server 60. In the mean time, at a step S34 of the flowchart shown in FIG. 8B, the Internet server 60 verifies whether or not the charging information was received by the music server 50 as follows. Typically, after the music server 50 confirms that the charging information received from the Internet server 60 was correctly received with no errors, the music server 50 transmits data indicating the confirmation to the Internet server 60.

[0109] If the music server 50 confirms reception of the charging information at the step S23 of the flowchart shown in FIG. 8A, the flow of the process goes on to a step S24 at which the charging information and other data are displayed on the display unit 53. At the next step S25, musical data is read out by the CD-ROM driver 9 from the CD 55 at a high speed and then subjected to a compression process in the compression encoder 12 also at a high compression speed. The compressed musical data output by the compression encoder 12 is then supplied to the HDD 10 to be stored onto the hard disc of the HDD 10. The step S25 corresponds to the step S15 of the flowchart shown in FIG. 7.

[0110] By the way, in this embodiment, a coordinated operation between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is possible. When musical data is moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, for example, a coordinated operation is carried out between two devices. FIG. 9 shows a flowchart representing this move operation.

[0111] As shown in the figure, the flowchart begins with a step S40 to form a judgment with the CPU 8 as to whether or not the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 are connected to each other by the

interfaces 34 and 35. The connection between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 can be detected by, for example, CPU 8 exchanging a predetermined signal between the interfaces 34 and 35. In addition to an exchange of a signal between the interfaces 34 and 35 by the CPU 8, a switch mechanism is provided on the junction between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to serve as a mechanical detection mechanism for CPU 8 detecting connection between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70.

[0112] If the connection between the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is verified at the step S40, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S41 to form a judgment with the CPU 8 as to whether or not there is a request for an operation to move musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. Typically, a list of pieces of information such as mainly titles of pieces of musical data stored in the HDD 10 is displayed on the display unit 53. The user is allowed to make a request for an operation to move musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 by specifying the title of a specific piece of musical data among those on the list appearing on the display unit 53. A title can be specified by the user by, for example, operating a pointing device on the input operation unit 1. The request for an operation to move the specific musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is then entered by the user via the input operation unit 1.

[0113] There are conceivable techniques of entering a request for an operation to move compressed musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 via the input operation unit 1. In accordance with one of the techniques, a button for making a request for an operation to move compressed musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is displayed on the display unit 53, and the user specifies this button by using the pointing device of the input operation unit 1. In accordance with another technique, an icon is displayed on the display unit 53 for each piece of compressed musical data and the user moves the icon of a piece of compressed musical data to be transferred to an icon of the move destination, the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, also displayed on the display unit 53 in the so-called drag and drop operation. In this case, the destination of the move operation is the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. Of course, a request for an operation to move compressed musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 can also be made by operating an operation switch provided on the input operation unit 1. CPU 8 makes the judgment by detecting the input operation mentioned above whether or not the request for movement is made.

[0114] If the outcome of the judgment formed at the step S41 indicates that a request for an operation to move compressed musical data stored or recorded in the HDD 10 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 was made, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S42 at which typically the CPU 8 employed in the music server 50 examines the file size of the compressed musical data to be

moved, that is, the amount of data. At the next step S43, the CPU 105 employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 which can communicate with the CPU 8 examines the size of a free area in the HDD 106 and, typically, the CPU 8 employed in the music server 50 compares the size of the free size with the file size of the compressed musical data to be moved examined at the step S42. The CPU 8 forms a judgment as to whether or not the compressed musical data to be moved can be recorded into the free area in the HDD 106 at the step 43. The formation of the judgment is based on the result of the comparison carried out at the step S43. If the outcome of the judgment indicates that the compressed musical data to be moved can be recorded into the free area in the HDD 106, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S45 at which the operation to move the compressed musical from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is started.

[0115] If the outcome of the judgment formed with the CPU 8 at the step S43 indicates that the size of the free area in the HDD 106 employed by the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is not sufficient, on the other hand, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S44. At the step S44, the CPU 105 employed in the apparatus 70 deletes some compressed musical data already recorded in the HDD 106 automatically or in accordance with a procedure or a technique described later so that the compressed musical data to be moved can be recorded into the HDD 106. The flow of the processing then goes on to the step S45.

[0116] At the step S44, compressed musical data is deleted from the HDD 106 automatically under control executed by the CPU 105 on the basis of a predetermined parameter of compressed musical data already recorded in the HDD 106. For example, in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, the number of playback-operation executions is counted for each piece of compressed musical data recorded in the HDD 106. Pieces of compressed musical data may then be deleted from the HDD 106 starting with one having a smallest number of playback-operation executions. Pieces of compressed musical data may also be deleted from the HDD 106 starting with that having a least recent recording date where a recording date is a date on which a piece of compressed musical data is recorded into the HDD 106.

[0117] When pieces of compressed musical data are deleted from the HDD 106 automatically at the step S44, it is quite within the bounds of possibility that a piece of compressed musical data of importance to the user is erased from the HDD 106. In order to prevent a piece of compressed musical data of importance to the user from being erased, a warning message is displayed on the display unit 53 employed in the music server 50 or the LCD panel 120 of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. The warning message may notify the user that an operation to delete a piece of compressed musical data automatically from the HDD 106 will be carried out or may be a list of pieces of compressed musical data to be deleted. In this case, a piece of compressed musical data will be deleted only if the deletion is approved by the user. As another alternative, the user selects a piece of compressed musical data from those on a list displayed on the display unit 53 employed in the music server 50 or the LCD panel 120 of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70.

[0118] When the flow of the processing departs from the step S43 or S44, a piece of compressed musical data to be moved from the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50 to the HDD 106 can be recorded into the HDD 106. At the next step S45, the transmission or the transfer of the compressed musical data from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is started. That is to say, the compressed musical data read out from the HDD 10 is supplied to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 by way of the bus 40 and the interface 34. In the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, the compressed musical data received from the music server 50 through the interface 34 is recorded into the HDD 106 by way of the interface 35.

[0119] The compressed musical data transferred to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 remains also in the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50 as it was before the transfer. In this embodiment, however, an operation to play back compressed musical data remaining in the HDD 10 but already transferred or moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is prohibited at the step S46. Typically, a playback inhibit flag is set upon completion of the transfer of the compressed musical data to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to indicate that an operation to play back the compressed musical data from the HDD 10 is prohibited. That is to say, the playback inhibit flag prevents the CPU 8 employed in the music server 50 from playing back the compressed musical data remaining in the HDD 10 but already transferred or moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. The playback inhibit flag also indicates that the compressed musical data recorded in the HDD 10 has virtually migrated from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. Thus, even if a plurality of same pieces of compressed musical data exist in both the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, only one of them can be played back. As a result, an operation to illegally copy musical data is prohibited.

[0120] The flow of the processing then goes on to a step S47 to form a judgment as to whether or not a request to move a next piece of musical data to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is made. If a request to move a next piece of musical data to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is made, the flow of the processing goes back to the step S42. If no request to move a next piece of musical data to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is made, on the other hand, the processing to move a series of pieces of musical data is completed.

[0121] As described above, at the steps S42 to S46 of the flowchart shown in FIG. 9, only one of a plurality of pieces of compressed musical data stored in the HDD 10 is moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. It should be noted, however, that the way to move compressed musical data is not limited to what is described above. For example, a plurality of pieces of compressed musical data stored in the HDD 10 can also be moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 simultaneously at the same time in a batch operation.

[0122] In the embodiment described above, the compressed musical data physically left in the HDD 10 of the music server 50 serving as the move source but virtually

moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is merely put in a playback inhibit status at the step S46. It should be noted, however, that, the way to handle compressed musical data moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is not limited to what is described above. For example, the compressed musical data moved to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 can be deleted from the HDD 10. That is to say, the compressed musical data itself can be physically erased from the HDD 10.

[0123] In the embodiment described above, compressed musical data is moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. It is worth noting, however, that compressed musical data can also be moved in the opposite direction by carrying out processing similar to the processing represented by the flowchart shown in FIG. 9. That is to say, compressed musical data recorded in the HDD 106 of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 can be moved to the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50.

[0124] When a piece of compressed musical data moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is moved back from the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to the music server 50, the playback inhibit flag of the piece of compressed musical data in the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50 is reset. By resetting the playback inhibit flag, the piece of compressed musical data, which was the source of the original move, can again be played back in the music server 50. The compressed musical data, which was present in the HDD 106 employed in the apparatus 70 but moved back to the music server 50, is deleted from the HDD 106. As an alternative, instead of deleting the compressed musical data itself, the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 may also delete management information of the compressed musical data from a management table.

[0125] With this embodiment, the user is capable of creating a list of programs. A list of programs is a list of pieces of music properly selected from those recorded in the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50. The music server 50 displays an edit screen on the display unit 53. The edit screen is used for creating and editing a list of programs. That is to say, the user is capable of editing an existing list of programs and creating a new list of programs by using the edit screen. The user is capable of controlling pieces of musical data recorded in the HDD 10 of the music server 50 by using a list of programs. A list of programs created in this way is stored in predetermined memory means such as the HDD 10. The music server 50 may have a plurality of program lists.

[0126] The user is capable of selecting a plurality of favorite pieces of musical data recorded in the HDD 10 of the music server 50 as a collection on a list of programs and playing back the favorite pieces of musical data for enjoyment like a CD album. In addition, a plurality of pieces of musical data put on a list of programs can be moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 in a batch operation.

[0127] The present invention also provides dedicated edit means for editing a list of programs used when moving a plurality of pieces of musical data in a batch operation. The following description explains a list of programs for use in a batch operation to move musical data and processing to create and edit such a list of programs.

[0128] It should be noted that, in the following description, a list of pieces of musical data stored in the HDD 10 of the music server 50 is referred to as a stock list, and a list of pieces of musical data to be transferred from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is known as a transfer list. The stock list and the transfer list are each a kind of program list described above.

[0129] FIG. 10 is a diagram showing a typical edit screen for editing a transfer list. On the edit screen, a transfer list and a stock list are displayed as examples. To be more specific, a transfer-list edit screen 310 appears on the display unit 53 as shown in FIG. 10. The edit screen 310 includes list areas 300 and 301, which are each displayed as a window. In the list area 300, a stock list is displayed. The stock list is a list of pieces of musical data stored in the music server 50. In the list area 301, on the other hand, a transfer list to be edited is displayed. The transfer list is a list of pieces of musical data to be moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. What are actually put on the transfer and stock lists are titles of musical data.

[0130] Tri-angular buttons 302 and 303 oriented in directions opposite to each other are buttons for editing the transfer list displayed in the list area 301. To be more specific, the button 302 is used for adding a piece of musical data selected among those on the stock list displayed in the list area 300 to the transfer list appearing in the list area 301. On the other hand, the button 303 is used for deleting a piece of musical data selected among those on the transfer list displayed in the list area 301 from the transfer list.

[0131] As described above, the music server 50 may have a plurality of program lists corresponding to the each part of the apparatus 70. Thus, a plurality of transfer lists may exist. The edit screen 310 shown in FIG. 10 displays 3 transfer lists as an example. In this case, tabs 304A, 304B and 304C are displayed on the top of the list area 301 for the 3 transfer lists respectively. In the list area 301, a transfer list of a selected tab 304A, 304B or 304C is displayed. It is nice to display an ID of the apparatus 70 to be described later at a predetermined position in the list area 301. It should be noted that such an ID is not shown in the figure.

[0132] A variety of operations can be carried out on the input operation unit 1 shown in FIG. 2 for the edit screen 310. The display unit 53 will display information corresponding to an operation carried out on the input operation unit 1 on the edit screen 310. While looking at the edit screen 310 on the display unit 53, the user typically operates a variety of switches such as dial-type and push-type operation keys provided in the input operation unit 1 to specify a location on the edit screen 310 and to enter a command. Signals representing a variety of operations carried out on the input operation unit 1 are supplied to the CPU 8 by way of the bus 40.

[0133] As described above, the input operation unit 1 is directly provided on the server main body 51 shown in FIG. 2. It should be noted, however, that the information communication system is not limited to such a configuration. For example, an external operation unit 1' can be provided by connecting it to the server main body 51 by a wire as is the case with an embodiment shown in FIG. 11. To put it in detail, the input operation unit 1' is connected to the bus 40 of the server main body 51 either directly or indirectly

through a predetermined interface. The input operation unit 1' includes a variety of operators for editing a transfer list displayed on the edit screen 310 and a transfer button for making a request for a transfer of pieces of musical data put on a transfer list from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70.

[0134] In addition, in the case of the embodiment shown in FIG. 11, the server main body 51 has a mounting unit 311 for mounting the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. On the mounting unit 311, an interface 34 is provided. By mounting the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 on the mounting unit 311, the interface 35 employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is electrically connected to the interface 34 so that communication can be established between the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 and the music server 50. Thereby, musical data can be transferred from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70.

[0135] FIGS. 12A and 12B are diagrams conceptually showing a typical management method for controlling a list of programs. Program lists are stored in a program file. A program file is typically stored in a predetermined area of the HDD 10 employed in the music server 50. The area is used for storing all program lists of the music server 50. A program file conceptually has a structure shown in FIG. 12A. As shown in the figure, program lists in a program file are distinguished from each other by assigning an ID to each of the program lists.

[0136] On the other hand, the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 also has a unique ID for distinguishing the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 individually from others. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 5, for example, this ID is stored in the ROM 104 in advance. Each program-list ID in the program file stored in the music server 50 is typically associated with the ID of a portable recording and playback apparatus 70 so that it is possible to create a list of programs applicable only to a specific portable recording and playback apparatus 70. In this case, the ID of a program list is the same as the ID assigned to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 associated with the program list.

[0137] In the embodiment shown in FIG. 12, a program-list ID of 300 is assigned to a list of programs associated with a certain portable recording and playback apparatus 70. With such ID assignment, pieces of musical data on the list of programs having the list ID of 300 can be moved only to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 with the same apparatus ID as the list ID.

[0138] By the same token, by using another program-list ID such as an ID of 301, it is possible to define a list of programs associated with a portable recording and playback apparatus 70 having the same apparatus ID as the program-list ID. In this way, the music server 50 can be provided with a plurality of program lists, which are each associated with a portable recording and playback apparatus 70 and can be distinguished from each other by assigning an ID to each of the program lists.

[0139] In addition, an ID assigned to a list of programs can be used for identifying the type of the program list.

[0140] In processing to edit a list of programs by using the screen edit 310, the list of programs to be edited is indicated

by specifying an ID assigned to the list and the specified list is read out from the program file. The list of programs read out from the program file is stored in a predetermined area of typically the RAM 5 along with the program-list ID as shown in FIG. 12B. The CPU 8 controls an operation to display pieces of musical data on the list of programs stored in the RAM 5 in the list area 301 of the edit screen 310 as a transfer list. The user then edits the transfer list displayed on the screen edit 310. To be more specific, for example, the user adds a piece of musical data to the transfer list or deletes one from the list. The list of programs stored in the RAM 5 is updated in accordance with results of the editing operation.

[0141] Then, musical data is transferred from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 in accordance with the edited list of programs. Thus, the work to edit the list of programs to be referred to in transferring musical data can be done without regard to whether or not the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been mounted on or connected to the music server 50.

[0142] FIG. 13 shows a flowchart representing typical processing to edit a transfer list and to transfer musical data cataloged on the edited transfer list. As shown in the figure, the flowchart begins with a step S50 at which the work to edit the transfer list is started. Typically, the input operation unit 1 has a list edit button to be operated to request the music server 50 to carry out work to edit a transfer list. When this list edit button is pressed by the user, the HDD 10 is searched for a list management module.

[0143] Provided in a predetermined area at the beginning of the program file, the list management module is used for recording information on program lists. The CPU 8 reads out the information from the list management module to acquire a predetermined address of transfer list data in the HDD 10. The transfer list stored at the acquired address is then obtained by the CPU 8. Subsequently, display data based on the transfer list obtained by the CPU 8 is generated. The CPU 8 then supplies the display data to the LCD panel 26 employed in the display unit 53 by way of the LCD driver 25 to be displayed on the LCD panel 26.

[0144] In this way, the edit screen shown in FIG. 10 described above is displayed on the display unit 53 with the transfer list put in a state of being editable. The ID of a portable recording and playback apparatus 70 serving as a recipient of musical data to be transferred is entered. Such an ID is entered by specifying a desired one of the tabs 304A to 304C of the edit screen 310 shown in FIG. 10. In an example described below, a list of programs with an ID of 300 is selected.

[0145] At the next step S51, the program file stored in the HDD 10 is searched for a list of programs with an ID of 300 by the CPU 8. The flow of the processing then goes on to a step S52 to form a judgment as to whether or not the program file includes such a list of programs. If the program file does not include such a list of programs, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S53 at which a new list of programs with an ID of 300 is created in the program file stored in the HDD 10. After the new list of programs is created, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S54. If the program list includes such a list of programs, on the other hand, the flow of the processing goes on directly to the step

S54. In this embodiment, when the program file does not include such a list of programs, a new list of programs is created in the program file stored in the HDD 10. However, it is also possible to adopt the following construction such that if the program list corresponding to the input ID of the apparatus 70 which can be transferred is created in advance in the HDD 10 of the music server 50, when the program list is not included in the program file as described above, transfer of the data may be prohibited as the CPU 8 makes a judgment that the transfer of the data to the apparatus 70 corresponding to the input ID is not permitted.

[0146] At the step S54, the list of programs with an ID of 300 is opened. To put it in more detail, the list of programs with an ID of 300 is read out with CPU 8 from the program file stored in the HDD 10 as shown in FIG. 12. The list of programs read out from the program file is stored into the RAM 5 to be read out later by the CPU 8. After reading out the list of programs, the CPU 8 controls an operation to display the edit screen 310 shown in FIG. 10 on the display unit 53, allowing the user to edit the transfer list.

[0147] Thus, in the list area 301 of the edit screen 310, the list of programs opened at the step S54 is displayed in the list area 301. If the list of programs was newly created, that is, if the list of programs contains no data, the transfer list displayed in the list area 301 is empty. In the list area 300, on the other hand, a table of pieces of musical data stored in the HDD 10 is displayed. As described earlier, this table is referred to as a stock list. It should be noted that, instead of displaying such a stock list, it is also possible to display a list of only pieces of musical data, which are obtained as a result of an operation to search all pieces of musical data stored in the HDD 10 for ones satisfying a predetermined condition.

[0148] As described above, the user appropriately operates the buttons 302 and 303 to transfer musical data from the list area 300 to the list area 301 and vice versa. In this way, pieces of musical data can be added to or deleted from the transfer list displayed in the list area 301. Or the user may select the musical data by using the mouse pointer and the like and may make a request for the addition or deletion of the pieces of musical data by so-called drag and drop operation using the mouse pointer between the list area 300 and the list area 301.

[0149] When the user finishes the work to edit the transfer list, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S56 to make a request for a transfer of musical data cataloged on the transfer list from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. The input operation unit 1 includes typically a transfer button for requesting the music server 50 to transfer pieces of musical data put on a transfer list. The user presses the transfer button to make a request for the transfer of the pieces of musical data put on the transfer list.

[0150] The flow of the processing then goes on to a step S57 to form a judgment as to whether or not the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been really mounted on the music server 50. If the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has not been mounted on the music server 50, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S58 at which a warning is output to indicate that the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has not been mounted on the music server 50. The flow of the processing then goes back to the step S57 to repeat the pieces of processing at the

steps S57 and S58 till the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is mounted. As the outcome of the judgment formed at the step S57 confirms that the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been mounted on the music server 50, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S59.

[0151] It should be noted that there are a variety of conceivable methods to form a judgment as to whether or not the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been really mounted on the music server 50. A typical method is explained below. For example, the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is provided with a micro switch serving as hardware detection means for detecting the fact that the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is mounted on the music server 50. When the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is mounted on the music server 50, the detection means detects the fact that the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is mounted on the music server 50, causing a predetermined pin of the interface 35 employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 such as the 3rd pin, for example, to be set in an 'H' (high) state.

[0152] A pin of the interface 34 employed in the music server 50 serving as the counterpart of the predetermined pin of the interface 35 is connected to an interrupt pin of the CPU 8. When the predetermined pin of the interface 35 is set in an 'H' state, the CPU 8 is interrupted. The interrupt sets a predetermined bit of a register employed in the CPU 8 in an 'H' state, too. At the step S57, the CPU 8 detects the bit value of the register to form a judgment as to whether or not the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been really mounted on the music server 50. An 'H' state of the register bit indicates that the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been really mounted on the music server 50.

[0153] Refer back to the flowchart shown in FIG. 13. If the outcome of the judgment formed at the step S57 indicates the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been really mounted on the music server 50, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S59. At the step S59, the ID of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 mounted on the music server 50 is checked to form a judgment as to whether or not the ID matches the ID of 300 input at the step S50 or the ID corresponds to the list area 301. The ID checked at this step is typically read out by the CPU 8 employed in the music server 50 from the ROM 104 of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 through the interfaces 34 and 35.

[0154] If the ID of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 does not match the ID input at the step S50, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S58 to output a warning indicating that the ID of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 does not match the ID input at the step S50. If the ID of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 matches the ID input at the step S50, on the other hand, the flow of the processing goes on to a step S60.

[0155] At the step S60, musical data put on the transfer list edited at the step S55 is moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. At that time, the transfer list showing the moved musical data can also be transferred from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 along with the musical data.

[0156] As described above, a transfer list unique to each portable recording and playback apparatus 70 can be created. A transfer of musical data to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is based on the transfer list unique to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. A transfer list is kept in the music server 50. It is not until detection of the mounting of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 on the music server 50 that musical data put on the transfer list is transferred to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. Thus, a transfer list can be edited even if the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is not mounted on the music server 50.

[0157] Let us consider a case in which musical data moved previously from the music server 50 is still stored in the HDD 106 of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. As described above, in this embodiment, musical data moved from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is put in status of being irreproducible in the music server 50 till the musical data is returned from the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 back to the music server 50.

[0158] Assume that musical data stored in the HDD 106 of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is overwritten by musical data newly received from the music server 50, or musical data previously stored in the HDD 106 of the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is inadvertently erased in an operation to store musical data newly received from the music server 50 into the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. In this case, the overwritten or erased musical data transferred originally from the music server 50 can no longer be played back in the music server 50 and the portable recording and playback apparatus 70.

[0159] In a transfer of musical data put on a transfer list from the music server 50 to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, the music server 50 acquires a list of musical data stored in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 and for example the CPU 8 compares this list with the transfer list. If the result of the comparison indicates that a piece of musical data stored in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is different from pieces of musical data on the transfer list, the piece of musical data stored in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 is examined by the CPU 8 to find out whether or not this piece of musical data stored in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has been returned to the music server 50 by checking the playback inhibit flag of the data in the program file. If the piece of musical data stored in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 has not been returned to the music server 50, the CPU 8 issues a command to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to return the piece of data from the HDD 106 employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to the HDD 10 of the music server 50. CPU 5 is controlled to transfer the data from the HDD 106 to the HDD 10 in accordance with the request from the CPU 8. For example, under the control of the CPU 5, the management data of the data in question of the HDD 106 is deleted and at the same time, the data itself is stored by releasing, with CPU 8, the playback inhibit flag of the data.

[0160] It should be noted that, if there is a piece of musical data common to both the list in the portable recording and

playback apparatus 70 and the transfer list in the music server 50, the transfer of the common piece of musical data can be omitted so that the time it takes to carry out the processing becomes shorter.

[0161] The CPU 8 of the music server 50 is capable of obtaining the list in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 by issuing an instruction to the CPU 105 employed in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 by way of the interfaces 34 and 35 to request the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 to transmit the list. In accordance with this instruction, the CPU 105 creates a list of musical data stored in the HDD 106 and supplies the created list to the CPU 8 of the music server 50 by way of the interfaces 34 and 35. Instead of comparison of the transfer list with the list in the portable recording and playback apparatus 70, a created transfer list is saved by the music server 50 and, when a new transfer list is created, the newly created transfer list is compared with the saved transfer list.

[0162] As described above, the portable recording and playback apparatus 70 serves as a destination of a transfer of musical data from the music server 50. It should be noted that the transfer destination is not limited to the portable recording and playback apparatus 70. For example, an optical disc or a magneto-optical disc having a diameter of about 64 mm can also be used as a transfer destination. Typically, the music server 50 is provided with a drive unit capable of recording and/or playing back data into and/or from an optical disc or a magneto-optical disc with a diameter of about 64 mm, which serves as a transfer destination. Pieces of musical data to be transferred to the optical disc or the magneto-optical disc with a diameter of about 64 mm can be selected in advance even if the optical disc or the magneto-optical disc with a diameter of about 64 mm has not been mounted on the drive unit yet. If an optical disc or a magneto-optical disc with a diameter of about 64 mm is used as a transfer destination, the ID checking described above can be omitted.

[0163] In the above description, the ATRAC method is adopted as a compression-encoding technique for carrying out a compression-encoding process on musical data recorded onto the HDD 10, the HDD 106 or the HDD 106a. It should be noted, however, that the compression-encoding technique is not limited to the ATRAC method. For example, a compression-encoding technique known as MPEG Audio Layer III (Moving Picture Experts Group Audio Layer III) or simply as MP3 can also be applied to the present invention.

[0164] As described above, in accordance with the present invention, there is exhibited an effect of an ability to transfer musical data cataloged on a transfer list from a music server to a portable recording and playback apparatus in a batch operation.

[0165] Moreover, the transfer list is kept in the music server and, it is not until detection of mounting of the portable recording and playback apparatus on the music server that the musical data cataloged on a transfer list is transferred from the music server to the portable recording and playback apparatus. For this reason, there is also exhibited an effect of an ability to edit the transfer list even if the portable recording and playback apparatus is not mounted on the musical server.

[0166] In addition, since the transfer list is edited by using an edit screen, there is also exhibited an effect of elimination of confusion due to the fact that the present list editing purpose is no longer known.

[0167] Furthermore, since a program list used in moving musical data from the music server to the portable recording and playback apparatus must be a transfer list, there is also exhibited an effect of, for example, prevention of a program list created for organizing pieces of music data stored in the music server from being used inadvertently in transferring pieces of musical data in a batch operation due to carelessness.

What is claimed is:

1. A communication system including a first apparatus having a first storage medium, and a second apparatus configured to transmit data to said first apparatus, said second apparatus comprising:

a second storage medium configured to store management information of audio data to be transferred to said first storage medium;

a communication unit configured to communicate audio data with said first apparatus;

a comparison unit configured to compare management information of audio data stored in said first storage medium with management information stored in said second storage medium of said audio data stored in said first storage medium; and

a control unit configured to control transfer of audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication unit based on said management information,

wherein said first apparatus is portable and comprises a reproducing unit configured to reproduce audio data stored in said first storage medium, and said control unit controls transfer of said audio data from said second apparatus to said first apparatus based on a comparison result by said comparison unit.

2. The communication system according to claim 1, further comprising:

an edit unit configured to edit said management information.

3. The communication system according to claim 2, wherein said edit unit is capable of editing said management information and said control unit controls to store said management information edited by said edit unit to said second storage medium even when communication is not established between said first apparatus and said second apparatus,

wherein said second storage medium is non-volatile.

4. The communication system according to claim 1, wherein said second apparatus further comprises:

a display configured to provide a first window for displaying audio data identification information based on said management information of said audio data to be transferred to said first storage medium, and a second window for displaying audio data identification information based on management information of said audio data stored in said second storage medium.

5. The communication system according to claim 4, wherein said second apparatus further comprises:

an instruction unit configured to select said audio data stored in said second storage medium and assigning identification information indicating said first apparatus to said selected audio data, and

wherein said edit unit edits said selected audio data based on said assigned identification information.

6. The communication system according to claim 5, wherein said first window corresponds to said identification information indicating said first apparatus;

said instruction unit assigns said identification information to said selected audio data by making an instruction to transfer said selected audio data to said first window; and

said edit unit controls said second storage medium so that said second storage medium stores said identification information assigned to said selected audio data, said identification information being displayed on said first window.

7. The communication system according to claim 6, wherein said second apparatus further comprises:

a memory configured to store audio data temporarily;

wherein said edit unit controls said memory unit so that said memory stores said selected audio data and said identification information assigned to said selected audio data based on said instruction by said instruction unit.

8. The communication system according to claim 6, wherein said display displays said identification information assigned to said selected audio data on said first window based on said instruction by said instruction unit.

9. The communication system according to claim 1, wherein said control unit controls said second apparatus so that said second apparatus receives identification of said first apparatus by way of said communication unit; and

said control unit controls transfer of said audio stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication unit based on said identification information received by said second apparatus.

10. The communication system according to claim 9, wherein said second storage medium stores identification information of a plurality of apparatuses; and

when said identification information of said plurality of apparatuses stored in said second storage medium contains identification information received from said first storage medium, said control unit permits transmission of said audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium.

11. The communication system according to claim 1, wherein said second apparatus further comprises:

a transmission instructing unit configured to give a transmission instruction to said control unit so that said control unit controls transfer of said audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication means based on said management information.

12. The communication system according to claim 10, wherein said second apparatus further comprises:

a judging unit configured to make a judgment whether said first apparatus is mounted; and

wherein when said control unit receives a transmission instruction by said transmission instructing unit and it is judged by said judging unit that said first apparatus is mounted, said control means controls transfer of said audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication unit on said management information.

13. A communication apparatus configured to transmit audio data to another apparatus having a first storage medium comprising:

a second storage medium configured to store management information of audio data stored in said first storage medium;

a communication unit configured to communicate audio data with said other apparatus;

a comparison unit configured to compare management information of audio data stored in said first storage medium with said management information stored in said second storage medium of said audio data stored in said first storage medium; and

a control unit configured to control transfer of audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication unit based on said management information,

wherein said control unit controls transfer of said audio data from said communication apparatus to said another apparatus based on a comparison result by said comparison unit.

14. The communication apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising:

an edit unit configured to edit said management information.

15. The communication apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said edit unit is capable of editing said management information and said control unit controls to store said management information edited by said edit unit to said second storage medium even when communication is not established between said first apparatus and said other apparatus,

wherein said second storage medium is non-volatile.

16. The communication apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising:

a display configured to provide a first window for displaying audio data identification information based on management information of audio data to be transferred to said first storage medium, and a second window for displaying audio data identification information based on management information of audio data stored in said second storage medium.

17. The communication apparatus according to claim 16, further comprising:

an instruction unit configured to select said audio data stored in said second storage medium and assigning identification information indicating said other apparatus to said selected audio data;

wherein said edit unit edits said selected audio data based on said assigned identification information.

18. The communication apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said first window corresponds to said identification information indicating said other apparatus;

said instruction unit assigns said identification information to said selected audio data by making an instruction to transfer said selected audio data to said first window; and

said edit unit controls said second storage medium so that said second storage medium stores said identification information assigned to said selected audio data,

said identification information being displayed on said first window.

19. The communication apparatus according to claim 18, further comprising:

a memory configured to store audio data temporarily;

wherein said edit unit controls said memory so that said memory stores said selected audio data and said identification information assigned to said selected audio data based on said instruction by said instruction unit.

20. The communication apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said display displays said identification information assigned to said selected audio data on said first window based on said instruction by said instruction unit.

21. The communication apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said control unit controls said communication apparatus so that said communication apparatus receives identification information of said other apparatus by way of said communication unit; and

said control unit controls transfer of said audio data stored in said second storage medium to said other storage medium by way of said communication means based on said identification information received by said communication apparatus.

22. The communication apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said second storage medium stores identification information of a plurality of apparatuses; and

when said identification information of said plurality of apparatuses stored in said second storage medium contains identification information received from said first storage medium, said control means permits transmission of said audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium.

23. The communication apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising:

a transmission instructing unit configured to give a transmission instruction to said control unit so that said control unit controls transfer of said audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication means based on said management information.

24. The communication apparatus according to claim 23, further comprising:

a judging unit configured to make a judgment whether said other apparatus is mounted;

wherein when said control unit receives a transmission instruction by said transmission instructing unit and it is judged by said judging unit that said other apparatus is mounted, said control unit controls transfer of said audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication means based on said management information.

25. A communication method configured to communicate a first apparatus having a first storage medium to a second apparatus for transmitting audio data to said first apparatus, said method comprising:

comparing management information of audio data stored in said first storage medium with management information stored in said second storage medium of said audio data stored in said first storage medium;

transmitting, when communication is established between said first apparatus and said second apparatus, audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium based on said edited management information; and

controlling transfer of audio data stored in said second storage medium to said first storage medium by way of said communication unit based on said management information,

wherein said controlling step controls transfer of said audio data from said second apparatus to said first apparatus based on a comparison result by said comparing step.

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