

MARS
(Mindawn Audio Ripping Software)
User Guide
(Version 1.1)

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Introduction

As an Artist the MARS application is what you are going to use to encode your CD's or WAV/AIFF (we'll say WAV from now on to mean both) files into Ogg Vorbis and Flac format for use with the Mindawn system, of course Mindawn isn't the only system that uses these formats, so you might find other uses as well. Here is a brief explanation of what Ogg Vorbis and Flac are.

Ogg Vorbis: This is very similar to MP3, it is a "lossy" compression format for audio, this means that the more compressed a file is, the more information it "loses". Typically an Ogg file will sound better and be physically smaller than a similarly encoded MP3 file. Ogg also can use "Quality" settings instead of bit rates, you can use both in MARS as described later, but basically a quality setting of 6 is typically more than enough, you won't hear much of a difference going higher and will only take more space. We disallow any Ogg files that are created with a quality setting less than 5. A setting of 5 will provide a file that is about 10 times smaller than a wav file, 6 is slightly larger. You can find out more about Ogg Vorbis from <http://www.vorbis.com/> - another advantage over MP3 is that Ogg Vorbis is royalty and license free, if you look at www.mp3licensing.com you will understand why this is important.

FLAC: Flac is interesting as it is a "lossless" format. That is to say it works rather like ZIP and compresses the file without losing any information. This means that it is a lot bigger than the Ogg file, but that also means it is CD quality. Not "near" CD quality, but actual CD quality. You can read more about Flac at <http://flac.sourceforge.net/> but fundamentally with Mindawn you can either play these files "as is" or decompress them out to either 'wav' or 'aiff', this allows people who buy your music to be able to encode them for their portable devices, or make a CD to play in their car or whatever they want. The important thing is that anyone that has a computer using virtually any operating system (Linux, Windows, Mac) can listen to your music, and anyone using any type of portable media device can get your music on it.

Here are some figures to give you an idea of what kind of sizes you will be looking at:

A song that is 6:24 long will be about 66mb in size as a wav file. As an Ogg file with a quality of 6 it will be just under 9mb, and a quality 5 it will be closer to 7mb. The Flac file at maximum compression will be approximately 40 megabytes in size.

Now MARS can take either a CD or a set of wav files as input source. For CD's it will try to retrieve the information from FreeDB if possible, if not you can type in all the track information, and optionally submit it to FreeDB (typically a good idea). For wav files you just need to type in the track information. All of this is explained in detail later in this manual.

Installation

There are four different packages provided for installation, the following file extensions are for the following platforms:

DMG – Mac OS X (10.3 or later)

EXE – Windows

RPM – RPM based Linux operating systems

TAR.GZ – Non-RPM based Linux operating systems

For Linux there is also a “thekompany-support” file that must be installed first. This allows MARS to run on virtually any Linux distribution. Use the RPM or tarball as appropriate. You will also need to ensure that oggenc, cdparanoia and flac are installed. These are commonly installed with most Linux distributions, so we do not include them by default.

On Windows simply run the exe file and answer the prompts, this will create a program group called Mindawn if it doesn't already exist.

On the Mac, just open the DMG file with Finder and you will be able to install from there.

Once you are installed and have a CD or WAV file you are going to use, you are ready to get started.

Getting Started

Ok, grab the source of music you are going to work with, it can be a collection of WAV files on disk or an audio CD, and run the program, we'll cover the main user interface from left to right and top to bottom.

The "Get Info" icon will query the FreeDB music database to try and retrieve information about your CD if it is there, this won't apply to WAV files obviously. If the information isn't there, then you will need to manually enter all the album and track information, you can then use the next icon "Submit Info" to register the CD with FreeDB so that if people have a physical copy of your CD, they will be able to play it on a computer and have the track information retrieved. Since we are doing electronic distribution here, this may or may not be a factor for you, but if you have a CD and are going to send it to internet radio stations or reviewers, they will appreciate that the CD is already registered.

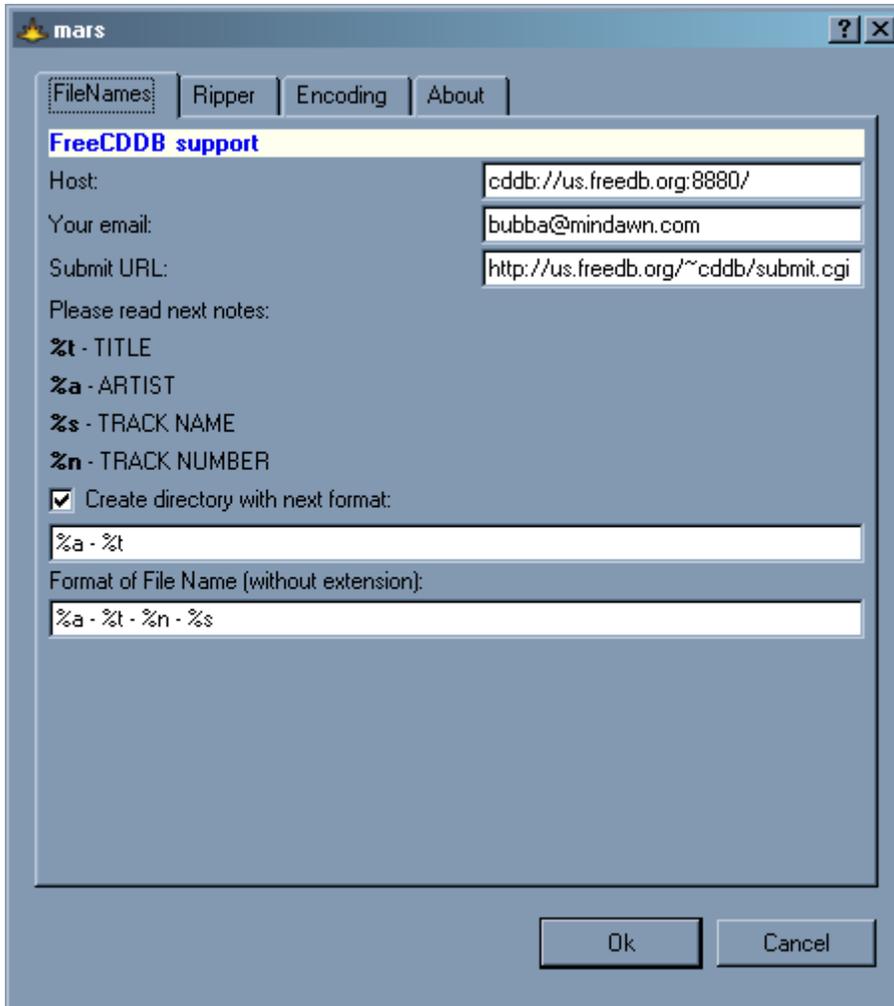
A bit of background on FreeDB for you. Originally there was an online database called CDDB that was populated with information by millions of friendly music fans that took the time to enter and submit the data whenever they had a CD that wasn't in the system. CDDB was essentially hijacked by Gracenote and there are lots of licensing and other issues with it. In response another group created FreeDB to provide the same functionality but without any licensing issues, or possibility of getting hijacked again. For this reason we support FreeDB and not CDDB. You can see both sites at www.gracenote.com for CDDB and www.freedb.org for FreeDB.

The "Convert" icon is what you will press once you have all your source and destination information set up, part of the process of setting up is to use the next icon, "Settings" which has several panels available which are explained in detail below.

Important Note: We dynamically create the demo song from your Ogg file, so if you do not offer an Ogg file, you will not have a demo song. In addition, people expect to find CD quality offerings on Mindawn, so they will want to find your FLAC file as well. While it is a bit more time consuming, it is important that you rip your material twice, once as Ogg and once as Flac and upload it twice (once for each format). This provides you the best possibility for selling your music and having a happy customer. On Windows we have the ability to rip both Ogg and Flac in a single pass, we are working to add that same functionality to the other platforms currently.

Settings -> File Names

Here is where you will specify the naming convention of the files and directories that will be created as well as specify information for submitting info to FreeDB.



The “Host” and “Submit URL” fields are pre-loaded by us, there is no reason to change this value, it is where we submit the CD information when you press “Submit Info”.

The screenshot above has our personal preference for directory and file naming, it provides for a clean sort order and clean organization, however you might like it differently, so you have flexibility in how you want to do it.

Consider that you have an artist named “Joyride” and an album called “I Love Driving” and the first three tracks are called “One”, “Two” and “Three”, this will result in a directory being created called:

Joyride – I Love Driving

And inside that directory will be those three songs in the following naming format:

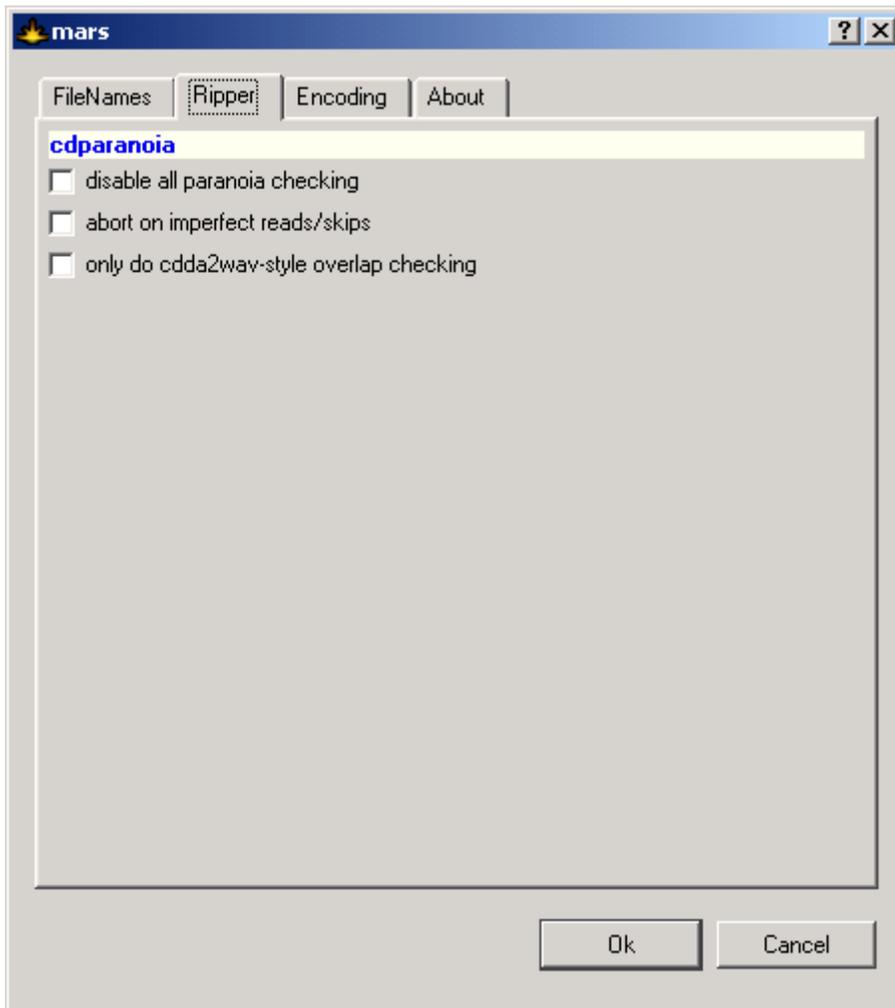
Joyride – I Love Driving – 01 – One.ogg (or .flac)

Joyride – I Love Driving – 02 – Two.ogg

Joyride – I Love Driving – 03 – Three.ogg

This gives you the track sequencing as well as the name so they are in sort order. This might not apply if you are just doing WAV files, so think about how you want to lay this out.

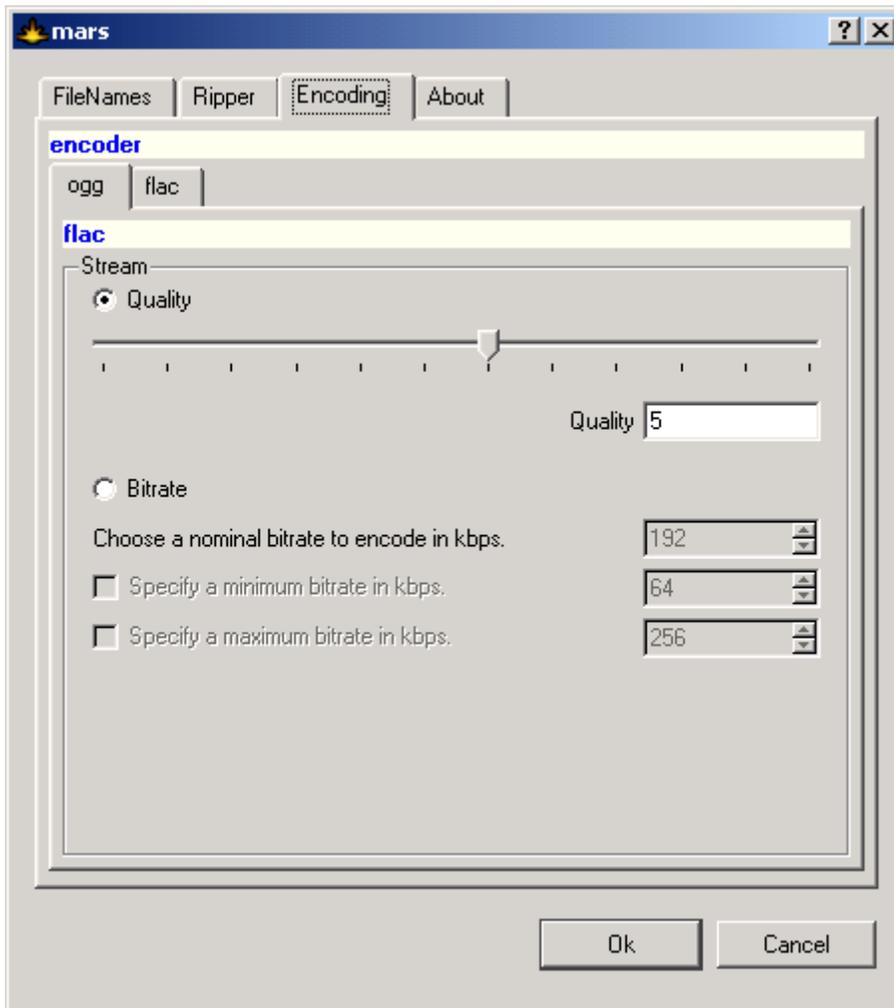
Settings -> Ripper



This panel is only applicable on the Linux operating system. These fields have the following affect:

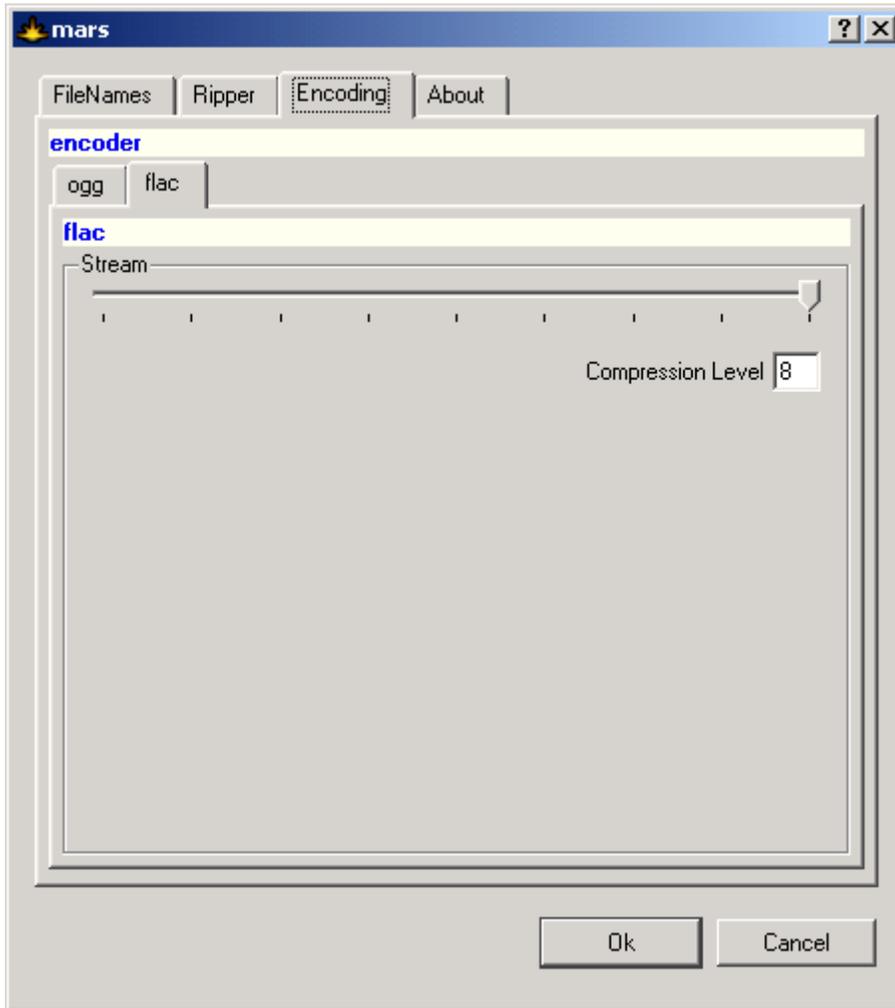
- **Disable all paranoia checking**
Disable all checking that cdparanoia typically uses. The data would be read without any attempt to recover from a read error. Not desirable under normal circumstances, you should leave it off.
- **Abort on imperfect read/skips**
If cdparanoia gets a read error from a scratch or something similar, then it will abort and leave the track incomplete. The partially created file will be deleted.
- **Only do cdda2wav-style overlap checking**
Disables intra-read data verification; only overlap checking at read boundaries is performed. It can wedge if errors occur in the attempted overlap area. Not recommended.

Settings -> Encoding -> Ogg



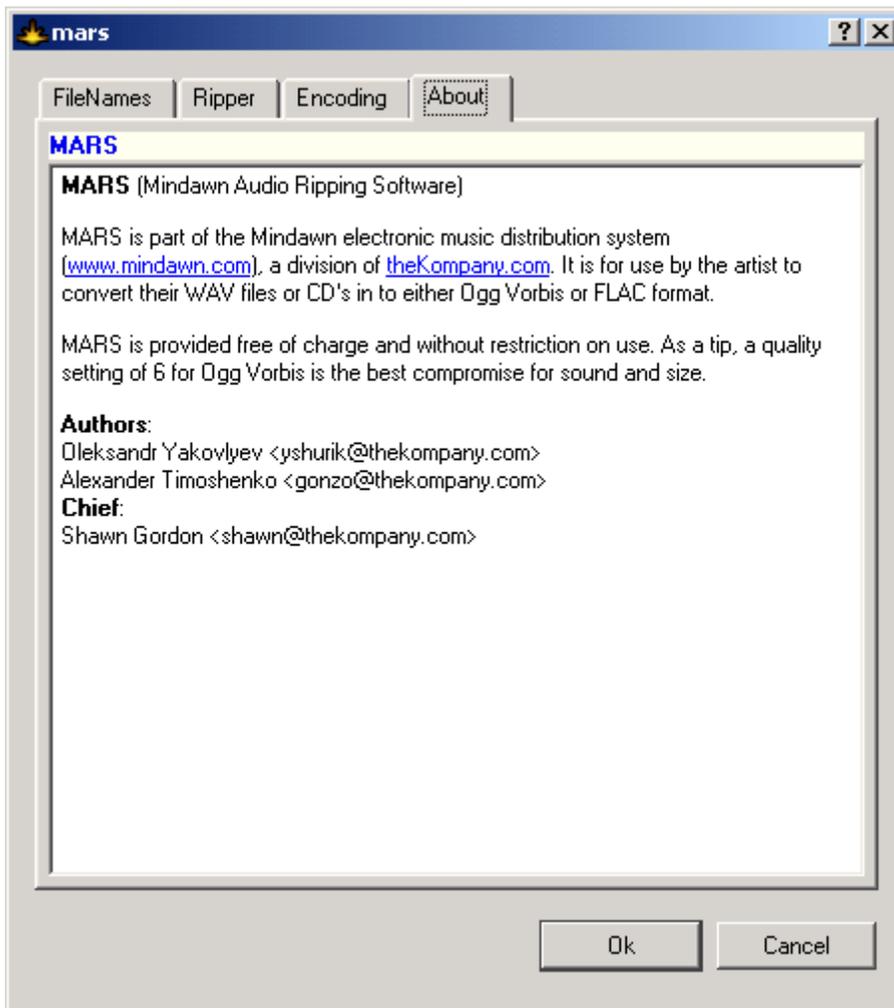
Ogg uses a “Quality” setting typically, but you can specify absolute bitrate if you want by clicking the radio button and entering the parameters. We disallow you uploading anything under a quality of 5, and recommend 5 or 6 typically for our system. Feel free to toy around with different Quality settings to see how their size and quality differ.

Settings -> Encoding -> Flac



You can change the compression ratio for flac files from 1 to 8 (why 8 and not 10? We have no idea). There is at least a 2mb difference between 1 and 8. There is no reason to use anything other than max compression, it takes a tiny bit longer to compress, but it doesn't affect the sound quality. We default it to 8, please use that for uploading to our system.

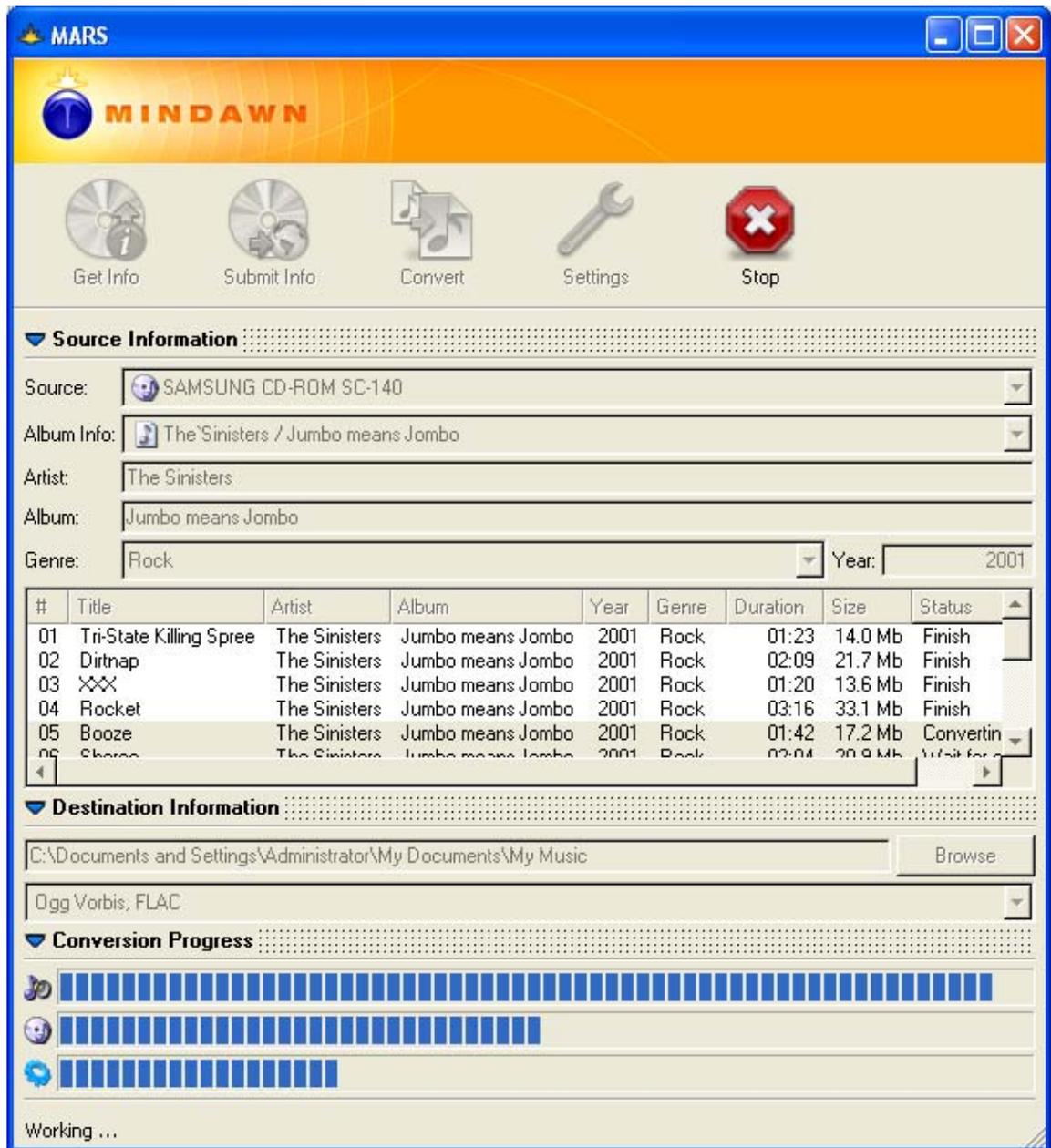
Settings -> About



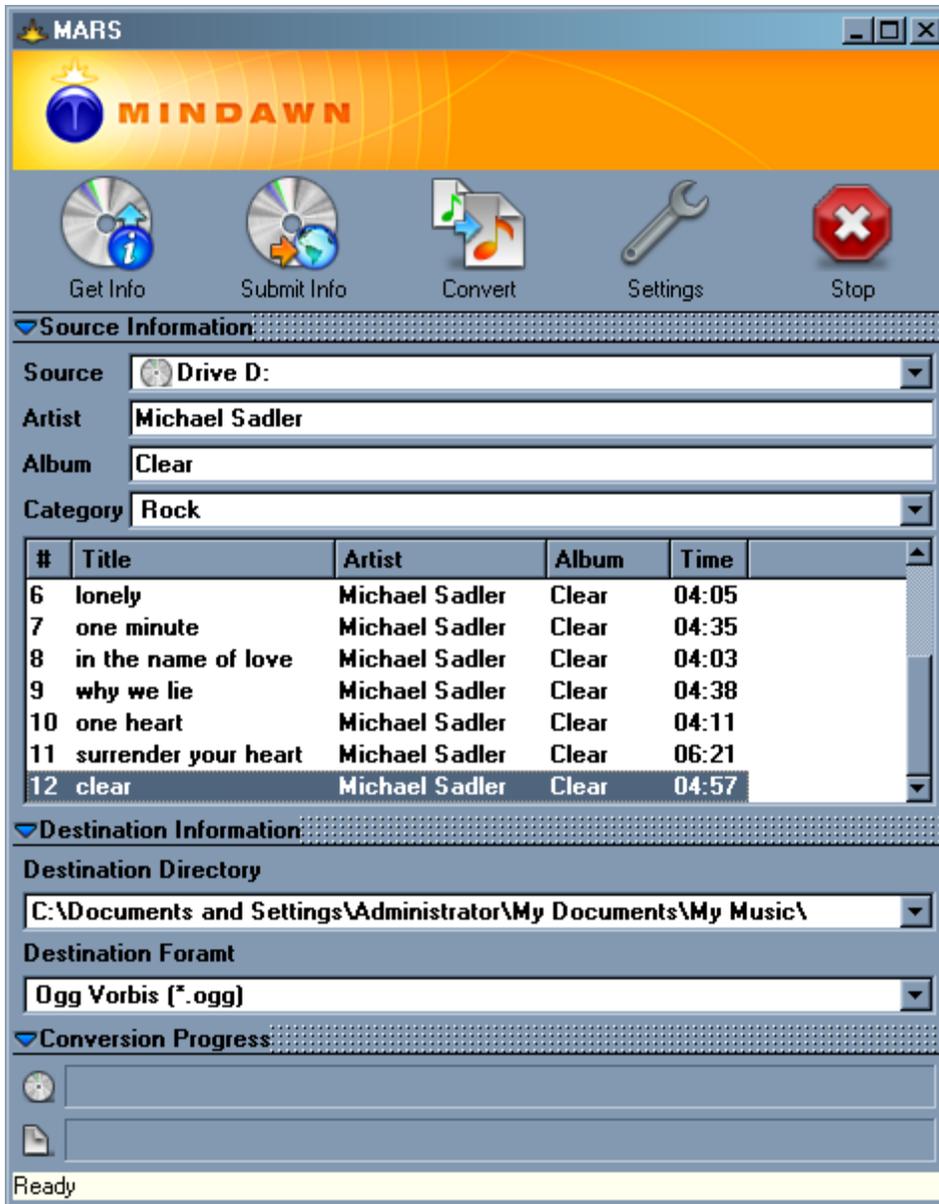
Some basic information and credits.

Main User Interface

Ok, now to the main application, lets assume you are working with a CD for the moment. If you select 'Get Info' on a CD that does not have an entry in FreeDB it will tell you and you will have a display that looks something like the following:

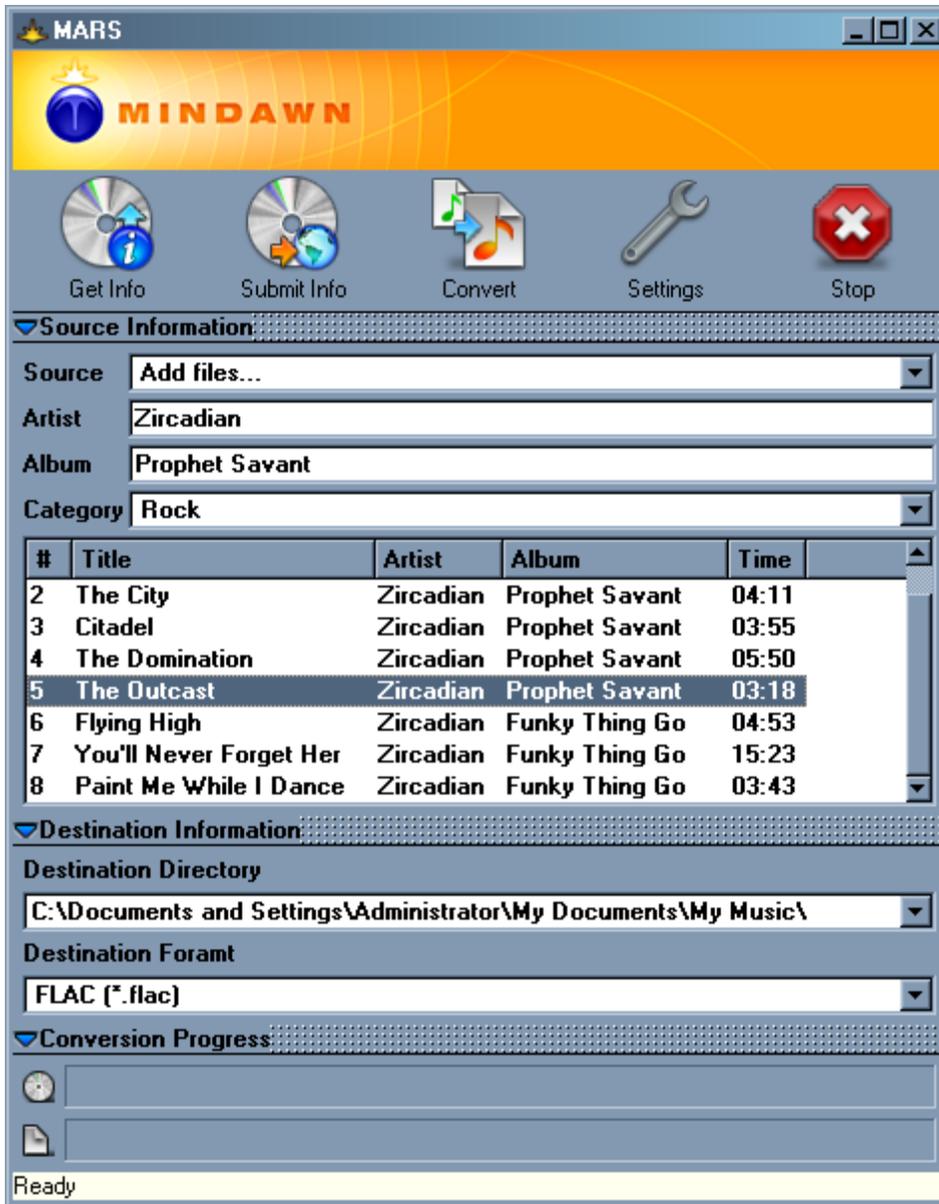


At this point you will want to enter the appropriate information. First, fill in the Artist and Album information in the top fields and you will see this auto populate the same fields in the grid. Next select a category from the combo box, the choices supplied are the ones available from FreeDB, we don't control them. Then double click on each track to fill in its title. Once you are done it will look something like this:



Now you can press the 'Submit Info' icon and this will be submitted to FreeDB and anyone else with this CD will be able to retrieve the information. Make sure you have filled in your email address in the Settings tab as described earlier though or you will receive an error. You can also just rip your CD without submitting the information, the choice is yours. One tip before ripping, you can select individual tracks to rip by clicking or ctrl+clicking on them before clicking "Convert" to de-select them you must ctrl+click on each one to un-highlight it.

When processing WAV or AIFF files, you can modify any of the information per track such as artist and album, for CD's you cannot override Artist or Album, they are globally applied once you have entered them. Here is an example of how a mixed input of WAV files would look:



You'll notice under the song grid you can quickly toggle between FLAC and OGG output format as well as selecting your output directory. In the first screenshot in this section you'll notice it is slightly different, that is currently the Windows version and it shows a bit more information as well as letting you select both FLAC and OGG as output so that it will rip both files in one pass. That's all there is to it, MARS has been designed to be as fast and easy to work with as possible, we welcome any feedback you might have that might make it even easier, please email us at info@mindawn.com with any suggestions.