

# Great Scott!

By Scott Goodman



*Scott Goodman, owner of Sewing Machine Warehouse & Kneedle.com has been servicing the sewing public since 1976.*

## Memories...

USB memory drives are ubiquitous and fit into many different devices. Just before the turn-of-the-century, our hobby underwent a major paradigm shift in user accessibility. For the first time, embroidery machines became unleashed from proprietary cartridges that were costly and limited. Users could access thousands of free designs from internet sites like AnnTheGran (can you hear the dial-up?). Pre-USB machines used floppy disks, or worse, serial cables that required technical settings of baud rates, IRQ interrupts and other “buzz-killing”, mind-boggling concepts that disenfranchised the masses from joining our embroidery party.

Early USB thumb drives had capacities measured in double-digit megabytes. This was a huge advantage over floppy disks where even a 32MB device could hold the data of 30 floppies. Moore’s law has caused 8MB thumb drives to have the same monetary value as the vegetable brush that Fuller Brush salesmen gave to our moms as a door opener. USB drives come in many different capacities, shapes, and types. While it would be fun to share ideas about shapes (piggies, thimbles, kitties and sometimes black rectangles), capacity, format and type can cause concern.

Regarding which drives work and which will not, Anders Andersson, from Husqvarna Viking’s product development department, clarified the concept with great eloquence and simplicity:

(Please read this with a Swedish accent) “If it works...it works!” Other companies have shared ever-changing, impossibly long lists of recommended brand/style/capacity that work with various models, spewing reams of organized data on brand, model and size of known acceptable/non-acceptable memory devices.

Here are some general guidelines and possible solutions for USB drives that cannot be accessed:

**Smaller is better.** Most embroidery machines lack the horsepower to efficiently display files on a well-laden thumb drive. It could take several minutes to find that special file on a large capacity stick. Use your computer, find the file and transfer it to your reasonably sized “work” USB drive.

**Mac Attack.** Mac users can inadvertently name their files in strange and unusual ways. Apple’s Hierarchal File System formats USB drives quite differently from PC formatted USB drives. Files copied using Finder can change names in a way that is invisible to the user but confusing to your sewing machine. Characters in file names may be different in style and length than those found on a conventional PC. This may freak out (technical term) your embroidery machine. Borrow a PC computer and try simplifying the file names to old-school DOS style names.

**Plain Vanilla, Please.** Devices like “Cruzers” may contain pre-installed programs that will automatically execute on your PC while befuddling some embroidery machines.

**Format may be an issue.** You can format or re-format a USB drive. Most sewing machines prefer FAT32, the most common format.

**Now you see it, now you don't?** Certain brands will only recognize the right sized designs. Your machine may be limited to 4" x4" designs. A larger design will copy to a USB drive and will be visible on your PC, but invisible to your sewing machine. Some embroidery software requires a designated page or hoop size. A small design, saved in a larger hoop size, will be undetectable when browsing or accessing files in a small-format machine.

**Be sure to un-zip your embroidery files.** Remember dial-up? My first computer modem displayed letters slower than I could read them. Today, streaming video rivals broadcast television. Time + space = money. Zipped files save storage space and download time by deflating (compressing) the file for transmission; requiring you to inflate (decompress) the zipped file after downloading. Embroidery machines do not speak Zip. This might seem obvious, but many embroidery CDs contain PDF files showing thread colors, size, etc. Your embroidery machine does not speak PDF, either.

**The future?** You can expect USB drives to go the way of CD-Roms and floppies. I am living in the cloud. My stuff exists...somewhere. I access it...anywhere; on almost any device. We are slowly migrating from traditional Mac/PC computers. I recently downloaded AirStitch on my iPad from the Apple App Store. From Brian Bailie (the creator of Designer's Gallery and Embrilliance) AirStitch allows you to download, unzip, view, convert, and email embroidery files. You can print templates using an Air Print enabled printer. Store your designs in the "cloud" by sending to and sharing from DropBox. Using AirStash, you can send embroidery files from your iPad, directly to your embroidery machine. Maxell AirStash is a device that can be purchased from Amazon, Best Buy and others. The AirStash is a WiFi enabled device that looks like a USB drive and plugs into your embroidery machine. Using the magic of WiFi, you can transfer files directly from iPad to your AirStash connected embroidery machine.

The times they are a changin'...Bob Dylan

*Pull out your Magic 8-Ball and help me predict the future of embroidery. Best prediction wins!  
Email me: GreatScott@kneedle.com*

*AirStitch for the iPad allows you to download, unzip, view, convert, email embroidery files and even print templates using an Air Print enabled printer!*



*The AirStash is a WiFi enabled device that plugs into your embroidery machine. Allowing you the ability to transfer files directly from iPad to your AirStash connected embroidery machine.*