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RECORDING-REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND INPUT/OUTPUT

CONTROL METHOD FOR THE RECORDING-REPRODUCING APPARATUS ✓

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a recording-reproducing apparatus such as a magnetic disk apparatus etc. in particular to a recording-reproducing apparatus for recording and reproducing the real-time data such as a moving picture data by controlling a temporary memory circuit built in the recording-reproducing apparatus and an input/output control method for such a recording-reproducing apparatus.

In recent years, the recording density and the data transfer rate in recording-reproducing apparatuses such as magnetic disk apparatuses have been ever on the increase. These disk apparatuses are used also for recording and reproducing multi-channel moving picture data.

For moving picture data to be continuously recorded or reproduced at a predetermined rate in a disk apparatus, it is necessary to process an input/output request within a predetermined time in the disk apparatus. Processing a plurality of input/output requests requires accurate time management of each input/output request.

The time management of the input/output requests can be executed by software processing of a host computer

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for controlling the disk apparatus. Managing input/output requests in real time, however, produces the problem of a heavy load imposed on the CPU. In view of this, as disclosed in an unexamined Japanese publication Hei 8-171526, a dedicated interface unit is connected between the disk apparatus and the host computer for time management of input/output requests.

Further, in recording or reproducing multi-channel moving picture data, a temporary memory unit for absorbing the suspension of data transfer caused by the mechanical operations such as the seeking operation for the disk apparatuses used to improve the recording-reproducing performance and to assure the continuous recording operations or reproducing operations.

Conventional disk apparatuses, as disclosed in US Patent Serial No.5465343, for example, comprise a temporary memory circuit for improving the recording-reproducing performance, in which a temporary memory circuit is used as a buffer memory or a cache memory. The temporary memory circuit is used also for prefetching. The prefetching is a process for reading a succeeding data after reading a data corresponding to an output request, and storing the succeeding data in the temporary memory unit with the aim of improving the performance of processing sequential data input/output requests.

Now, the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus using the above-mentioned interface unit and the disk apparatus will be explained with reference to the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 39 is a block diagram showing a general system configuration of the recording-reproducing apparatus using the above-mentioned interface unit and the conventional disk apparatus. As shown in FIG. 39, a host computer 71, a reference clock generating section 72 and an interface unit 73 are connected to an input/output bus 75. A disk apparatus 74 is connected to the interface unit 73 through a data bus 76.

The interface unit 73 includes a bus interface control section 82 (hereinafter called "the bus I/F control section 82"); an input/output control section 84, a schedule management section 81 and a queue-with-priority management section 83. In the interface unit 73, the schedule management section 81 controls the sequence of execution of input/output requests.

The host computer 71 issues a data input/output request to the interface unit 73. The input/output request is received through the input/output bus 75 by the I/F control section 82 of the interface unit 73, and stored in the queue-with-priority management section 83 through a command bus 73. The queue-with-priority management section 83 manages a queue with priority, a

pending queue and an input/output execution queue.

The reference clock information generated in the reference clock generating section 72 passes on the input/output bus 75, and is stored in the schedule management section 81 through the bus I/F control section 82.

The schedule management section 81 transfers an input/output request to the queue with priority in the queue-with-priority management section 83. Upon receipt of the request, the schedule management section 81 judges as to whether the queue with priority contains an input/output request.

In the case where the queue with priority contains an input/output request, the schedule management section 81 fetches the particular input/output request and judges whether the request has a high order of priority with a specified processing time. In the case where the request has a high priority, the schedule management section 81 transfers the particular input/output request to the input/output control section 84, while in the case where the priority of the request is low, the schedule management section 81 adds the request to the pending queue.

In the case where no input/output request is contained in the queue with priority, in contrast, the pending queue is checked. In the presence of any

input/output request contained in the pending queue, the particular input/output request is fetched and, when it is before the lapse of a set processing time, the fetched input/output request is executed. In the case where the input/output request has passed the set processing time and has timed out, on the other hand, the request is discarded or returned to the pending queue.

The input/output control section 84 controls the disk apparatus 74, gives an instruction on data input/output, and executes the data write or read operation.

FIG. 40 is a diagram showing a method for dividing and controlling the buffer memory making up the temporary memory unit of the disk apparatus 314.

A portion (a) in FIG. 40 shows an adaptive segmentation method. As shown in the portion (a) of FIG. 40, the buffer memory is divided into a plurality of segments which can be assigned to a write buffer and a cache for read data. Also, each segment size can be changed in accordance with the data size to be transferred in response to a write/read command.

A portion (b) in FIG. 40 shows a fixed segmentation method. In response to a set command from an external equipment, the buffer memory can be divided into a plurality of segments of fixed size. With the disk apparatus conforming with the SCSI-3 (SCSI: Small Computer

System Interface) specification, for example, the number of segments and the size of each segment of the buffer memory can be set appropriately. Each segment size is identical and fixed.

In the above-mentioned conventional control method, the disk apparatus 74 uses the buffer memory divided into segments. As a result, the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus meets the multi-task requirement in the recording and reproduction of multi-channel moving picture data, and improves recording-reproducing performance.

Explanation will be made below about certain problems encountered in the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus configured as described above.

A first problem of the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus lies in the management of the execution time of an input/output request.

The time for executing an input/output request in the disk apparatus of the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus is sometimes considerably varied depending on the variations in the time for access to a target area, i.e., the seek time or the waiting time for rotation and the operating conditions of the temporary memory circuit. In the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus having the above-mentioned configuration, the

interface unit and the external equipment lack means for obtaining information on the time for accessing the disk apparatus and the operating conditions of the temporary memory circuit, and therefore the execution time cannot be accurately predicted. As a result, a time management assuming an excessively long execution time is required for meeting a time limit to assure safety, thereby leading to the problem of a deteriorated processing efficiency.

A second problem of the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus is that the response to an input/output request is occasionally delayed for a deteriorated performance.

In the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus, an input/output request with high priority having a time limit is executed preferentially, while an input/output request low in priority is set in pending. In this way, the moving picture data high in priority are continuously recorded and reproduced. In the case where a high-priority input/output request is not contained in the queue but only low-priority input/output requests is conventional, the input/output requests of low priority are executed unconditionally.

Consequently, even in the case where a high-priority input/output request is applied from an external equipment such as a host computer during the execution of a low-priority input/output request, the

high-priority input/output request cannot be executed before complete execution of the low-priority input/output request. In such a case, the external equipment is not informed of the reason that the high-priority input/output request therefrom is not executed immediately and is required to wait until complete execution of the low-priority input/output request.

In other words, in the conventional recording-reproducing apparatus, the time management is not carried out taking the execution time of input/output requests into consideration. As a result, when a high-priority input/output request is input, the high-priority input/output request is sometimes required to join the waiting line.

Assume, on the other hand, that an input/output request of an moving picture high in priority with a time limit is input in the presence of an input/output request for a random data low in priority without any time limit waiting in queue. In such a case, the input/output request for an moving picture is executed in priority even in the case where a time margin exists, sometimes considerably delaying the response to the input/output request for a random data.

Still another problem of the conventional disk apparatuses was that of inefficient use of the temporary memory circuit.

For the continuous recording and reproduction to be assured for the moving picture data high in transfer rate in the disk apparatus, a number of temporary memory circuits are required. Moving picture data or program data low in transfer rate, however, can be processed in a smaller number of memory circuits. Generally, the moving picture data are continuous and sequential, while the program data are discrete. The method of controlling the buffer memory/cache memory varies depending on these properties of the data.

The method of using the temporary memory circuit for the conventional disk apparatus is configured to meet the requirements of arbitrary data. The conventional method, however, is not suitable for assuring the continuous recording and reproduction or improving the recording-reproducing performance of moving picture data. In the case of trick play of moving picture data, for example, a wasteful prefetch operation occurs, and thereby the response is sometimes delayed and the performance is deteriorated.

In recording or reproducing a multi-channel data containing an moving picture data, the size and the control method of the temporary memory circuit is required to be determined in accordance with the transfer rate, the real-time requirement, the continuity, etc. of each channel. Nevertheless, the conventional disk apparatus,

of which the buffer memory can be divided into a plurality of segments or of which the segment size can be changed, cannot set the multi-channel data in correspondence with each segment for each channel, and therefore cannot determine the segment size and the control method for each channel in accordance with different transfer rates, the real-time requirement or the continuity.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to provide a recording-reproducing apparatus which, in order to solve the problem of delay in processing an input/output request, predicts the execution time of each input/output request from an external equipment and thereby assures an accurate processing of the input/output request. Another object of the present invention is to provide a recording-reproducing apparatus and an input/output control method which can assure an accurate continuous recording and reproduction of moving picture data or other data of high priority and which can efficiently process input/output requests of low priority. Still another object of the present invention is to provide a recording-reproducing apparatus which can selectively execute an input/output request for a random data low in priority which has a time limit with a margin.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objects,

according to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising input means supplied with a request for predicting the input/output execution time from an external equipment, and a judging means for predicting the execution time of an input/output request in response to the request for the input/output execution time prediction.

With the above-mentioned configuration, the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention can correctly predict the execution time in response to an input/output request and can secure the execution time for the input/output request in response to an external equipment.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising judging means for predicting the execution time in response to an input/output request from an external equipment and judging whether the predicted execution time can be realized within a time limit set by the external equipment, and an input/output request processing means for executing the input/output request in the case where the input/output request is judged as executable by the judging means and for terminating the processing in the case where the input/output request is judged as not executable, thereby giving a response to the external equipment based on the result of the judgement.

According to still another aspect of the invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus further comprising judging means for giving a response with a data size capable of being input/output within a time limit preset by an external equipment to an input/output data transfer amount request from the external equipment.

With the above-mentioned configuration, the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention can predict and respond a data size capable of being input/output within a time limit, so that it can assure the execution time for a high-priority request while providing a maximum transfer rate for a low-priority request, thereby improving the processing efficiency. Also, the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention permits an external equipment such as a host computer to judge whether or not an input/output request can be executed within a time limit, and therefore can assure the execution completion time for each data input/output and can thus easily execute the real-time management of input/output requests.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a temporary memory circuit capable of being divided into a plurality of segments according to the type of an input/output request, wherein the judging

means gives an available size of a corresponding segment as a writable data size in response to a write size request from an external equipment.

According to a still further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a temporary memory circuit capable of being divided into a plurality of segments in accordance with the type of an input/output request, and a preread means for reading a designated area from a recording medium and storing it temporarily in a corresponding segment, wherein an available size of a corresponding segment is offered as a data size capable of being preread in response to an preread size request, and a preread data size of a corresponding segment is offered as a readable data size in response to a read size request.

With the above-mentioned configuration, the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention offers an available size of a corresponding segment in response to a write data transfer amount request, offers a preread data size in response to a read data transfer amount request, and offers an available size of a corresponding segment in response to a preread data transfer amount request, wherein the input/output data can always be transferred in bursts and the time management of input/output requests can be accomplished accurately and

facilitated. Also, the present invention has the effect of shortening the time during which an input/output bus is occupied.

According to a yet further aspect of the present invention, there is provided an input/output control method for a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising notification means for notifying the continuously-transferable amount of data to an external equipment in response to a data transfer amount request from the external equipment, in which a method of data transfer between the external equipment and the recording-reproducing apparatus is selected in accordance with the transferable data amount. With this configuration, the input/output control method according to the present invention can always continuously transfer the input/output data.

According to still another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus, which identifies the type of input/output requests accumulated, and in the case where an input/output request is the one with a time limit, executes a type of an input/output request selectively in accordance with the time length remaining before a deadline calculated based on the time limit.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing

apparatus which calculates the time remaining before a deadline based on the time limit for accumulated input/output requests, selects an input/output request with the minimum remaining time among the accumulated input/output requests. In the case where the remaining time of the data request is smaller than a predetermined value, the apparatus executes the particular input/output request while in the case where the above-mentioned condition fails to be met, the apparatus executes the accumulated input/output requests by selecting the sequence of execution in accordance with the data recording position corresponding to each input/output request.

With the above-mentioned configuration, the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, in which an input/output request is selected for execution based on the time remaining before a deadline, can first assure the continuous recording and reproduction of moving picture data or the like and then can assign the processing time to the recording and reproduction of random data, thereby improving the recording-reproducing performance.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a recording-reproducing apparatus for recording and reproducing moving picture data by a method of controlling a temporary memory circuit suitable for moving

picture data in order to solve the above-mentioned problem of efficient use of the temporary memory circuit. Still another object of the present invention is to provide a recording-reproducing apparatus in which a temporary memory circuit can be divided into a plurality of segments in accordance with the required number of channels, and in which the size and the method of controlling the temporary memory circuit can be set in accordance with transfer rate and the real-time processing requirement of each channel.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objects, according to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a management information memory means for storing the file management information corresponding to the data recorded in a recording medium, wherein the management information is reproduced in response to an automatic preread request from an external equipment, and wherein the position on the recording medium where a data block to be transferred to the external equipment is stored is determined and the data block is preread.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a preread means for reproducing data blocks from a recording medium in response to a plurality of preread requests with an identifier from external equipment and transferring the data blocks to a temporary

memory circuit, wherein in the case where an input/output request with an identifier is received from an external equipment, a data block is selected from among those preread in accordance with the identifier and transferred to the external equipment.

According to still another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus, in which the type of accumulated write data requests is identified and the data amount to be recorded continuously in a recording medium is selected and recorded, and in which the number of requests to be accumulated is selected by identifying the types of the accumulated read data requests thereby reproducing the data continuously from the recording medium in accordance with the number of the accumulated requests.

According to yet another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a prefetch means for transferring the data reproduced from a recording medium to a temporary memory circuit, wherein the type of each input/output request from the external equipment is identified, and one of a plurality of prefetch methods having different data amounts to be prefetched and different time lengths required for the prefetch processing is selected and executed in accordance with the type of a particular input/output request.

With this configuration, the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention can realize a method of controlling the temporary memory circuit suitable for transfer of moving picture data, and a significant effect of an improved performance is attained as a result of a reduced load of transfer processing of the external equipment and an improved efficiency of the data recording and reproducing operation of the recording-reproducing apparatus.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objects, according to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments, and a temporary memory circuit control means for selecting a segment based on the information for identifying the write/read request from an external equipment and causing the write/read data to be temporarily stored in the selected segment.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments, and a temporary memory circuit control means for determining a segment size, a method of data transfer from an external equipment and a method of data transfer to a recording medium for each segment based on the setting information supplied from the

external equipment, selecting a segment based on the information for identifying the write/read request from the external equipment, and controlling the data transfer from the external equipment and the data transfer to the recording medium by the transfer method thus determined.

According to still another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus wherein the conditions for starting and stopping the data transfer between an external equipment and a corresponding segment, the conditions for starting and stopping the data transfer to and from the recording medium, the order of priority of data transfer to and from the recording medium and the unit of access from the external equipment, are determined on the basis of the setting information supplied from the external equipment.

According to yet another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus, wherein a recording/reproducing area for writing a data of a corresponding segment in a recording medium or for reading a data stored in a corresponding segment from a recording medium is set on the basis of the setting information supplied from the external equipment.

With this configuration of the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, a data size and a transfer method are set for each segment based on the setting information from the

external equipment, and the data transfer from and to the external equipment and from and to the recording medium are controlled by the transfer method thus set, making it possible to set different memory sizes and different control methods corresponding to different transfer rates, moving picture data having real-time processing requirement, or the requirement of data other than the moving picture data.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus, wherein the unit of access to the segments from an external equipment is set by the setting information from an external equipment thereby to permit the external equipment to access the segments with smaller than a normal access unit for an improved random access efficiency.

According to a still further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a recording-reproducing apparatus, wherein different recording-reproducing areas are set for different segments based on the setting information supplied from an external equipment, and in this way one-to-one correspondence can be established between the recording-reproducing areas and the segments, thereby guaranteeing the identity between the data in each segment and the data on the disk.

While the novel features of the invention are

set forth particularly in the appended claims, the invention, both as to organization and content, will be better understood and appreciated, along with other objects and features thereof, from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing a configuration of a disk apparatus according to a first embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2 is a flowchart showing the flow of processing an input/output command according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a flowchart showing the flow of processing an execution time prediction command according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process for predicting the execution time of a write command according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 5 is a diagram showing various parameters of a buffer RAM according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 6 is a graph showing an example of the accumulated segment amount, the remaining data amount and the untransferred data amount according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 7 is a flowchart showing the flow of the

process for predicting the execution time of a read command according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 8 is a flowchart showing the flow of processing a transfer data amount request command according to a second embodiment;

FIG. 9 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process for predicting a writable data size according to the second embodiment;

FIG. 10 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process for predicting a readable data size according to the second embodiment;

FIG. 11 is a flowchart showing the flow of processing a transfer data amount request command according to a third embodiment;

FIG. 12 is a block diagram showing a general configuration of a video processing unit according to a fourth embodiment;

FIG. 13 is a diagram for explaining a method of segmenting the areas of the buffer RAM according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 14 is a flowchart showing the flow of operation of the video processing unit according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 15 is a flowchart for explaining the flow of the recording operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 16 is a diagram for explaining a preread data management table according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 17 is a flowchart for explaining the reproducing operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 18 is a flowchart for explaining the data retrieval operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 19 is a diagram for explaining the file management information according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 20 is a flowchart for explaining the automatic preread operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to the fourth embodiment;

FIG. 21 is a flowchart for explaining the recording operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to a fifth embodiment;

FIG. 22 is a flowchart for explaining the reproducing operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to the fifth embodiment;

FIG. 23 is a flowchart for explaining the prefetch operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to the fifth embodiment;

FIG. 24 is a flowchart for explaining the recording and reproducing operation of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to a sixth embodiment;

FIG. 25 is a diagram for explaining a request accumulation queue according to the sixth embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 26 is a block diagram showing a configuration of a disk apparatus according to a seventh embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 27 is a block diagram showing a configuration of a HDD control circuit according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 28 is a diagram showing the correspondence between the segment setting register of a buffer control circuit and each segment of a buffer RAM;

FIG. 29 is a flowchart showing the operation of processing a segment setting command in the disk apparatus according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 30 is a diagram showing an example of changing a segment setting in response to a segment setting command according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 31 is a diagram showing various parameters associated with the segment accumulation, the host transfer (meaning data transfer to or from the host) and the disk transfer (meaning data transfer to or from the disk) according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 32 is a flowchart showing the process of data transfer from an external equipment such as a host to a segment according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 33 is a flowchart showing the host transfer process from a segment to a disk according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 34 is a flowchart showing the host transfer process from a disk to another segment according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 35 is a flowchart showing the host transfer process from a segment to an external equipment according to the seventh embodiment;

FIG. 36 is a flowchart of processing a transfer rate setting command according to an eighth embodiment;

FIG. 37 is a diagram showing the correspondence between the segmentation of the buffer RAM and the segment setting register according to a ninth embodiment;

FIG. 38 is a diagram showing the correspondence between the segment setting register of the buffer control circuit, the segmentation of the buffer RAM and each area on the disk according to a tenth embodiment;

FIG. 39 is the block diagram showing a system configuration of a conventional recording-reproducing apparatus; and

FIG. 40 is the diagram showing the method of controlling the segmentation of the buffer memory of the conventional disk apparatus constituting a recording-reproducing apparatus.

It will be recognized that some or all of the

Figures are schematic representations for purposes of illustration and do not necessarily depict the actual relative sizes or locations of the elements shown.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A disk apparatus of a recording-reproducing apparatus according to preferred embodiments of the present invention will be explained below with reference to the accompanying drawings.

<<Embodiment 1>>

FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing a configuration of a disk apparatus according to a first embodiment.

In FIG. 1, a disk apparatus is connected to an external equipment (not shown) such as a host computer through an input/output bus. Data are received and transmitted between the disk apparatus and the external equipment by an interface circuit 2. As shown in FIG. 1, in addition to the interface circuit 2, the disk apparatus according to the first embodiment comprises a buffer RAM 3 which is a temporary memory circuit of data, a read/write signal processing circuit 4 for encoding and decoding the data, a head-disk assembly 5, an actuator drive circuit 8 and a HDD control circuit 9. The RAM is an abbreviation of a random access memory, and HDD an abbreviation of a hard disk drive.

The head-disk assembly 5 includes a disk 1, a head assembly 6 and an actuator 7. The actuator 7 is driven by an actuator drive circuit 8. The HDD control circuit 9 is for controlling the buffer RAM 3, the read/write signal processing circuit 4 and the actuator drive circuit 8 on the basis of various commands supplied from the external equipment.

The interface circuit 2 issues data from the external equipment and commands, i.e., requests from the external equipment to the buffer RAM and the HDD control circuit 9, respectively. The interface circuit 2 outputs the data from the buffer RAM 3 and the command response from the HDD control circuit 9 to the external equipment.

The read/write signal processing circuit 4 encodes the write data from the buffer RAM 3 and outputs it as a write signal to a head 6a. Also, the read/write signal processing circuit 4 decodes the read signal read by the head 6a from a track of the disk 1 and outputs it as a read data to the buffer RAM 3.

The HDD control circuit 9 receives a command from the external equipment through the interface circuit 2 and interprets the command. The HDD control circuit 9 that has interpreted the command controls the buffer RAM 3, the read/write signal processing circuit 4 and the actuator drive circuit 8 thereby to perform the data write and read operation. Also, when the command requests a

response, the HDD control circuit 9 gives a command response to the external equipment through the interface circuit 2.

The actuator drive circuit 8 outputs a drive signal to the actuator 7 based on an actuator control signal from the HDD control circuit 9. The actuator drive circuit 8 controls the operation of the actuator 7 and moves the head 6a through the head assembly 6.

[Operation of HDD control circuit]

The operation of the HDD control circuit 9 of the disk apparatus according to the first embodiment configured as described above will be explained with reference to FIGs. 2 and 3.

FIG. 2 is a flowchart showing the operation for processing the input/output command by the HDD control circuit 9 according to the first embodiment.

In FIG. 2, upon application of an input/output command from the external equipment to the HDD control circuit 9 through the interface circuit 2 (step S1), the HDD control circuit 9 judges whether the applied input/output command is the one requiring the prediction of the execution time or not (step S2).

In the case where the applied input/output command is the one requiring the prediction of the execution time (execution time prediction command), the execution time of the input/output command is predicted

according to the parameters of the input/output operation delivered as command parameters and the internal state of the HDD (step S3). Then, the predicted execution time is compared with a deadline providing a maximum tolerable execution time delivered as a command parameter (step S4). When the execution time is not longer than the deadline, the data input/output is executed (step S5), while when the execution time is longer than the deadline, the input/output is not executed, but the judgement result is notified to the external equipment as an error termination process (step S6).

In the case where step S2 judges that the applied input/output command is not the one requiring the prediction of the execution time, on the other hand, the data input/output operation is immediately executed in step S5.

FIG. 3 is a flowchart showing the operation for processing the execution time prediction command by the HDD control circuit 9 according to the first embodiment.

In FIG. 3, upon application of an execution time prediction command from the external equipment to the HDD control circuit 9 (step S11), the HDD control circuit 9 predicts the execution time of the input/output command according to the parameters delivered thereto as command parameters for input/output operation and the internal state of the HDD (step S12). The execution time thus

predicted is processed for notification (step S13).

[Execution time prediction process]

Now, the detailed operation of step S12 in the execution time prediction process shown in FIG. 3 will be explained with reference to FIGs. 4 to 7.

FIG. 4 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process for predicting the execution time of a write command, i.e, the time when the data transfer to the buffer RAM 3 from the external equipment is completed.

As shown in FIG. 4, the HDD control circuit 9 first compares an available segment size with the size of the write data to be transferred (transfer data size) (step S21). In the case where the available segment size is larger than or equal to the size of the write data in step S21, the time when the continuous transfer is terminated is calculated from the bus transfer rate and the transfer data size (step S27).

In the case where the transfer data size is larger than the available segment size, on the other hand, the occurrence or non-occurrence of an overflow is judged (step S22).

In the case where no overflow occurs, the transfer termination time is calculated from the bus transfer rate and the transfer data size (step S27). In the case where an overflow occurs, on the other hand, the size of the data not transferred as of the time of

overflow occurrence is calculated (step S23). Then, the period during which the transfer is terminated is judged from the calculated size of the data not yet transferred (step S24), and the situation is discriminated according to the period during which the transfer is terminated (step S25 or S26).

Now, each processing step of execution time prediction will be explained in detail with reference to FIGs. 5 and 6.

FIG. 5 is a diagram showing various parameters of the buffer RAM 3 according to the first embodiment. As shown in FIG. 5, according to the first embodiment, each parameter for the buffer RAM 3 is defined as follows:

The transfer rate from the external equipment to the buffer RAM is defined as V_b (in units of MB/s), the write speed from the buffer RAM 3 to the disk 1 is defined as V_d (in units of MB/s), the segment size assigned to the write command is defined as M_b (in units of kB), and the write data size to be transferred is defined as M_c (in units of kB).

Also, as a function of time t (in units of ms), the segment accumulation amount at time point t is defined as $M_s(t)$ (in units of kB), the amount of the data transferred to the segment by a command at or before time point t and remaining in the segment is defined as $M_d(t)$ (in units of kB), and the amount of the data to be

transferred by a newly-issued command but not yet transferred as of the overflow time T_{ovf} is defined as $Mu(T_{ovf})$ (in units of kB).

FIG. 6 is a graph showing an example of change with time in the segment accumulation amount $Ms(t)$, the amount $Md(t)$ of the remaining data transferred by the previous command, and the amount of data $Mu(t)$ not yet transferred by a newly-issued command as of time point t .

In the graph of FIG. 6, the parameters include V_b set to 16 (MB/s), V_d set to 4 (MB/s), M_b set to 128 (kB), M_c set to 96 (kB), and $M_d(0)$ set to $M_s(0)$ equal to 64 (kB). Also, the access time T_{w1} due to the previous command is set to 8 (ms), the access period T_{w2} due to a newly-issued command is set to 12 (ms), the disk write period T_{d1} due to the previous command is set to 16 (ms), and the disk write period T_{d2} due to a newly-issued command is set to 24 (ms).

As shown in FIG. 6, the time period during which the transferred data is finally written in the disk 1 is divided into below-mentioned four time zones respectively having the periods T_1 , T_2 , T_3 , and T_4 to calculate the segment accumulation amount $M_s(t)$, etc.

(1) T_1 period: $0 < t \leq T_{w1}$

The T_1 period is the head seek and the rotational latency time due to the previous command issued before a predicted time.

The access period T_{w1} is calculated from the head position at the predicted time point and a target head position, the speed profile at head seek time and the disk rotational speed. In the case where the head seek and the rotational latency are over, the access period $T_{w1} = 0$.

(2) T2 period: $T_{w1} < t \leq T_{w1} + T_{d1}$

The T2 period represents the period during which the data is written in the disk in response to the command issued before the predicted time point.

The disk write period T_{d1} is calculated from the data amount $M_d(0)$ remaining at the predicted time point and the disk write speed V_d according to equation (1).

$$T_{d1} = M_d(0)/V_d \quad (1)$$

(3) T3 period: $T_{w1} + T_{d1} < t \leq T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2}$

The T3 period represents the head seek and the rotational latency time due to a new command to be issued.

The access period T_{w2} is calculated from the head position as of the time point of T2 period termination, the target head position, the speed profile at the head seek time and the disk rotational speed.

(4) T4 period: $T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2} < t \leq T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2} + T_{d2}$

The T4 period represents the period of time during which the data is written in the disk in response to a new command to be issued.

The disk write period T_{d2} is calculated from the

data size M_c to be transferred and the disk write speed V_d according to equation (2).

$$T_{d2} = M_c / V_d \quad (2)$$

Now, each step of the execution time prediction process for the write command shown in FIG. 4 will be described in detail.

Step S21: The available segment size is compared with the transfer data size

The available segment size ($M_b - M_s(0)$) is compared with the transfer data size M_c at the predicted time point.

Step S22: Judgement as to whether an overflow has occurred

In the case where the transfer data size is larger than the available segment size ($M_b - M_s(0) < M_c$), the segment is likely to overflow during data transfer, and therefore the segment accumulation amount is calculated to judge whether an overflow has occurred.

The remaining data amount $M_d(t)$ transferred by the previous command is given by the equation below.

T1 period:

$$M_d(t) = M_d(0) \quad (3)$$

T2 period:

$$M_d(t) = M_d(0) - V_d \times (t - T_{w1}) \quad (4)$$

The data amount due to the previous command decreases according to this equation, while the write data

is transferred to the buffer RAM 3 from the external equipment, so that the segment accumulation amount $M_s(t)$ before occurrence of an overflow is given by the following equation (5).

$$M_s(t) = M_d(t) + V_b \times t \quad (5)$$

In view of the fact that the segment accumulation amount $M_s(t)$ exceeds the segment size M_b before continuous transfer of the data amount M_c to the buffer RAM 3, the condition under which an overflow occurs is given by the equation below. In the equation below, T_{ovf} designates the time point of overflow, and $M_d(T_{ovf})$ the data amount remaining at the time point of overflow.

$$M_d(T_{ovf}) + V_b \times T_{ovf} = M_b \text{ and } T_{ovf} \leq M_c/V_b \quad (6)$$

Equations (3) and (4) are substituted into $M_d(t)$ in equation (6) to determine the overflow time point T_{ovf} and thereby judges whether an overflow has occurred or not.

Step S23: Calculation of transferred data size not yet transferred as of time point of overflow

The data size transferred to the buffer RAM before occurrence of an overflow is given as $V_b \times T_{ovf}$, and therefore the data size $M_u(T_{ovf})$ not yet transferred as of the time of occurrence of an overflow is given by equation (7).

$$M_u(T_{ovf}) = M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf} \quad (7)$$

Step S24: Judgement of transfer termination period

After overflow, data can be transferred to the buffer RAM 3 by the amount written from the buffer RAM 3 to the disk 1. Therefore, the data transfer is terminated at the time point when the data size $\mu(T_{ovf})$ not yet transferred as of the time of overflow is has been written from the buffer RAM 3 into the disk 1.

In the case where a head seek or rotational latency occurs during transfer, the disk write operation is suspended and so is the transfer to the buffer RAM 3. Consequently, the transfer is not completed during the head seek period T_1 or the rotational latency period T_3 . The transfer thus is completed during T_2 period or T_4 period. Also, in the case where the head seek or the rotational latency due to a new command does not occur during the transfer, the transfer is completed during T_2 period. Otherwise, the transfer is completed during T_4 period.

Whether the head seek and the rotational latency occurs due to a new command can be judged by comparing the data size $\mu(T_{ovf})$ not yet transferred as of the time of overflow with the remaining data amount $M_d(T_{ovf})$ due to the previous command.

Assume that the data size $\mu(T_{ovf})$ not yet transferred is smaller than the remaining data amount $M_d(T_{ovf})$ due to the previous command.

The data write operation due to the previous command continues until the completion of transfer to the buffer RAM 3. Therefore, the transfer is not suspended by the head seek or the rotational latency due to a new command. In such a case, the completion time of the transfer of the data not yet transferred is calculated in step S25.

Assume that the data size $\mu(Tovf)$ not yet transferred is not less than the remaining data amount $Md(Tovf)$ due to the previous command.

The data write operation due to the previous command is completed before the transfer to the buffer RAM 3 is completed. And the transfer to the buffer RAM 3 is suspended by the head seek or the rotational latency due to a new command. In such a case, the time of complete transfer of the data not yet transferred is calculated in step S26.

Step S25: Calculation 1 of transfer completion time of the data not yet transferred (transfer completed during $T2$ period)

In this case, the transfer is completed during $T2$ period, and therefore the overflow occurs during $T1$ or $T2$ period. Depending on the time point of overflow occurrence, the transfer suspension period due to the head seek or rotational latency may be included in the period of transfer of the data not yet transferred. The equation

for calculation of the transfer completion time T_d , therefore, is different for different overflow time:

(1) In the case where overflow occurs during T_1 period:

The transfer suspension period ($T_{w1} - T_{ovf}$) is included in the transfer period of the data not yet transferred. The transfer completion time T_d (in ms) is the sum of the time before overflow, the transfer suspension time and the time during which the data transferred before the overflow time point is written in the disk. This transfer completion time T_d is calculated from equation (8).

$$\begin{aligned} T_d &= T_{ovf} + (T_{w1} - T_{ovf}) + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \\ &= T_{w1} + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

(2) In the case where an overflow occurs during T_2 period:

The transfer suspension period is not included in the transfer period of the data not yet transferred. The transfer completion time T_d is calculated from equation (9).

$$T_d = T_{ovf} + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \quad (9)$$

Step S26: Calculation 2 of transfer completion time of the data not yet transferred (transfer completed during T_4 period):

In this case, the transfer is completed during T_4 period, and therefore it is possible that an overflow occurs in any of T_1 to T_4 periods.

(1) In the case where overflow occurs during T_1 period:

$$\begin{aligned} T_d &= T_{ovf} + (T_{w1} - T_{ovf}) + T_{w2} + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \\ &= T_{w1} + T_{w2} + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

(2) In the case where overflow occurs during T2 period:

$$T_d = T_{ovf} + T_{w2} + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \quad (11)$$

(3) In the case where overflow occurs during T3 period:

$$\begin{aligned} T_d &= T_{ovf} + (T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2} - T_{ovf}) + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \\ &= T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2} + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

(4) In the case where overflow occurs during T4 period:

$$T_d = T_{ovf} + (M_c - V_b \times T_{ovf}) / V_d \quad (13)$$

Step S27: Calculation of completion time of continuous transfer

In the case where all the data can be continuously transferred from an external equipment to the buffer RAM 3, the transfer completion time T_d is calculated from equation (14).

$$T_d = M_c / V_b \quad (14)$$

Now, explanation will be made specifically about an example of determining a specific total execution time in each step of execution time prediction process for the write command described above.

Step S21: Size of vacant segment at predicted time

$$(M_b - M_s(0)) = 64 \text{ (kB)}$$

$$\text{Transfer data size } (M_c) = 96 \text{ (kB)}$$

Since $M_b - M_s(0) < M_c$, an overflow may occur.

Step S22: The remaining amount $M_d(t)$ of the data transferred to the segment in response to the previous

command is calculated from equations (3) and (4).

$$0 \leq t < 8 \quad (T1 \text{ period}): \quad Md(t) = 64 \text{ (kB)}$$

$$8 \leq t < 24 \quad (T2 \text{ period}): \quad Md(t) = 64 - Vd \times (t - 8) \text{ (kB)}$$

From these equations and equation (6) concerning the conditions for overflow occurrence,

$$Md(Tovf) + 16 \times Tovf = 128 \text{ and } Tovf \leq 6$$

Substituting $Md(t) = 64$ for T1 period into $Md(Tovf)$ of this equation determines $Tovf = 4$. In the case where $Md(t)$ for T2 period $= 64 - Vd \times (t - 8)$, there is no solution.

Step S23: The size of the data not yet transferred is given by equation (15)

$$Mc - Vb \times Tovf = 32 \quad (15)$$

Step S24: The size of data not yet transferred as of the time of overflow is 32, and the remaining amount of the data due to the command previous to overflow is 64. Then the transfer is completed during T2 period.

Step S25: The overflow occurs during T1 period, and therefore the transfer completion time Td of the data not yet transferred is calculated from the below-mentioned equation (16)

$$\begin{aligned} Td &= Tw1 + (Mc - Vb \times ovf)/Vd \\ &= 8 + (96 - 16 \times 4)/4 = 16 \text{ (ms)} \end{aligned} \quad (16)$$

The above-mentioned process can calculate the execution time of a write command, i.e., the transfer

completion time. Also in combination with other parameters, the transfer completion time can be determined similarly.

FIG. 7 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process for predicting the execution time of a read command, i.e., the completion time of the data transfer from the buffer RAM 3.

As shown in FIG. 7, the HDD control circuit 9 first compares the size of the preread data in the buffer RAM 3 with the size of the transferred data (step S31). In the first embodiment, the preread data size is defined as the size of the data stored in the temporary memory circuit provisionally.

In the case where the size of the preread data is larger than the size of the transfer data in step S31, the transfer completion time for continuous transfer is calculated from the bus transfer rate and the transfer data size (step S37).

In the case where the transfer data size is larger than the size of the preread data in step S31, on the other hand, the occurrence or no-occurrence of an underflow is judged (step S32).

In step S32, when the HDD control circuit 9 judges that there has occurred no underflow, the completion time of continuous transfer is calculated from the bus transfer rate and the transfer data size (step

S37).

In the case where an underflow occurs, in contrast, the size of the data not yet transferred as of the time of the overflow is calculated (step S33), and the period during which the transfer is completed is judged from the calculated size of the data not yet transferred (step S34). In step S34, the situation is discriminated according to the period during which the transfer is completed, and the transfer completion time is calculated (step S35 or S36).

The steps of the process for predicting the execution time of a read command is similar in detail to the aforementioned steps of the process for predicting the execution time of a write command, and will not be described any further.

As described above, the disk apparatus according to the first embodiment internally executes the prediction process, and thus can accurately predict the execution time of an input/output command. Also, execution of an input/output command is determined by comparing the predicted execution time with the maximum tolerable execution time constituting a deadline. In this way, the disk apparatus executes the process for time management of input/output commands by itself and thus can accurately define a deadline.

As a result, the disk apparatus according to the

first embodiment can perform accurate time management taking the execution time into account and can execute the process in real time while avoiding a situation in which a high-priority request is required to wait for execution.

<<Embodiment 2>>

Now, a disk apparatus according to the second embodiment of the present invention will be explained. The configuration of a disk apparatus according to the second embodiment is substantially similar to that of the disk apparatus according to the first embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

The operation of the HDD control circuit 9 according to the second embodiment will be explained with reference to FIG. 8. FIG. 8 is a flowchart showing the operation of the HDD control circuit 9 of the disk apparatus according to the second embodiment for processing a command requesting the amount of transfer data.

As shown in FIG. 8, upon application of a command requesting the transfer data amount from the external equipment to the HDD control circuit 9 (step S41), the HDD control circuit 9 predicts the size of the data that can be input or output within a deadline delivered as a command parameter, on the basis of the information about the target address, the prevailing operation of the buffer RAM 3 and the head position

delivered thereto as command parameters (step S42). Then, the predicted data size is notified to the external equipment such as a host computer (step S43).

[Data size prediction process]

The process of data size prediction in the HDD control circuit 9 according to the second embodiment will be described in detail below with reference to FIGs. 9 and 10 attached hereto.

FIG. 9 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process for predicting the data size that can be written before the deadline.

As shown in FIG. 9, the HDD control circuit 9 first compares the available segment size with the maximum size of the transfer data, i.e., the size of the data continuously transferred to the buffer RAM 3 before deadline (step S51).

In the case where the available segment size is equal to or larger than the maximum size of the transfer data in step S51, the maximum size of the transfer data is defined as the size of the data that can be input or input (step S56).

In the case where the maximum size of the transfer data is larger than the available segment size in step S51, on the other hand, whether an overflow occurs during transfer is judged (step S52). In the case where step S52 judges that no overflow occurs, the maximum size

of the transferred data is determined as the data size that can be input or output (step S56). Conversely, in the case where judgement is that an overflow occurs, the size of the transfer data at the time of overflow is calculated (step S53), at the same time calculating the size of the data transferable during the time length remaining before deadline (S54). In step S55, the size of the transfer data at the time of overflow and the size of the transfer data during the remaining time are added to each other thereby to calculate the total size of the transfer data.

Now, explanation will be made in detail about each step of the data size prediction process in the HDD control circuit 9. First, each parameter for the data size prediction process is defined as follows.

The transfer rate from the external equipment to the buffer RAM 3 is defined as V_b , the write speed into the disk 1 from the buffer RAM 3 as V_d (in units of MB/s), the segment size assigned to the write command as M_b , the size of the transfer data for the write command as M_c (in units of kB), and the deadline as T_{max} (in units of ms).

Also, as a function of time t (in units of ms), the segment accumulation amount at time point t is defined as $M_s(t)$ (in units of kB), and the change in the remaining data transferred to the segment in response to the previous command as of time point t as $M_d(t)$ (in units of

KB).

As in the process according to the first embodiment described above, the period before the transfer data are written finally in the disk is divided into four time zones described below for calculation of the segment accumulation amount, etc.

(1) T1 period: $0 < t \leq T_{w1}$

The T1 period provides the head seek and rotational latency time due to the command issued before the predicted time point.

(2) T2 period: $T_{w1} < t \leq T_{w1} + T_{d1}$

During the T2 period, data is written into the disk in response to a command issued before the predicted time point.

$$T_{d1} = M_d(0)/V_d$$

(3) T3 period: $T_{w1} + T_{d1} < t \leq T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2}$

The T3 period provides the head seek and rotational latency time due to a new command issued in the future.

(4) T4 period: $T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2} < t \leq T_{w1} + T_{d1} + T_{w2} + T_{d2}$

During the T4 period, data are written into the disk in response to a new command issued in the future.

The periods T1 to T3 remain unchanged by the size of the transfer data, but the T4 period is variable with the size of the transfer data.

Now, explanation will be made in detail about

the steps of the process for predicting whether the data has a size that can be written within the deadline providing the maximum tolerable execution time.

Step S51: Comparison between available segment size and maximum size of transfer data

The available segment size $(M_b - M_s(0))$ as of the predicted time point and the maximum size M_{max} of the transfer data are compared with each other. M_{max} is the size of the data that can be transferred continuously to the buffer RAM before deadline, and is given by equation (17).

$$M_{max} = V_b \times T_{max} \quad (17)$$

Step S52: Judgement as to occurrence of overflow

Assume that the available segment size is not more than the maximum size of the transfer data.

In view of the possibility of segment overflow occurring during the data transfer, it is necessary to calculate the memory accumulation amount during the data transfer and to judge whether an overflow occurs or not.

The condition for occurrence of an overflow is that the segment accumulation amount $M_s(t)$ outgrows the segment size M_b before the data amount M_{max} is continuously transferred to the buffer RAM 3, and therefore is expressed by equation (18).

$$M_d(T_{ovf}) + V_b \times T_{ovf} = M_b \text{ and } T_{ovf} \leq M_{max}/V_b$$

(18)

Substituting equations (3) and (4) into equation (18) gives the overflow time T_{ovf} , thus making it possible to judge whether an overflow occurs or not.

Step S53: Calculation of the transfer data size as of the as to whether an overflow occurrence

The size M_{ovf} of the transfer data at the time of overflow occurrence is given by equation (19).

$$M_{ovf} = V_b \times T_{ovf} \quad (19)$$

Step S54: Calculation of data size transferred during remaining time

During the remaining time from an overflow to the deadline, as much data as written from the buffer RAM 3 to the disk 1 can be transferred from the external equipment to the buffer RAM 3.

The situation is classified according to which of the T_1 to T_4 periods includes the deadline and the overflow time point. The time is calculated during which data can be written into the disk 1 from the buffer RAM 3 between the overflow and the deadline. The data size M_d transferable during the remaining time is calculated on the basis of the calculated writable time and the write speed V_d .

(1) In the case where the deadline is included in T_1 period:

No data is written from the buffer RAM 3 to the disk 1 during the remaining time between the overflow and

the deadline. Therefore, the buffer RAM 3 remains overflowing and therefore data cannot be transferred thereto. The size M_d (in units of kB) of the data transferred during the remaining time is zero.

$$M_d = 0 \quad (20)$$

(2) In the case where the deadline is included in T_2 period:

Depending on whether an overflow occurs during T_1 or T_2 period, the size M_d (in units of kB) of the data transferred during the remaining time is given by the following two equations.

In the case where an overflow occurs during T_1 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times (T_{\max} - T_{w1}) \quad (21)$$

In the case where an overflow occurs during T_2 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times (T_{\max} - T_{ovf}) \quad (22)$$

(3) In the case where the deadline is included in T_3 period:

Depending on whether an overflow occurs during which one of the T_1 to T_3 periods, the size M_d of the data transferred during the remaining time is given by any one of the following three equations (23), (24) and (25).

In the case where an overflow occurs during T_1 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times T_{d1} \quad (23)$$

In the case where an overflow occurs during T_2 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times (T_{w1} + T_{d1} - T_{ovf}) \quad (24)$$

In the case where an overflow occurs during T_3 period:

$$M_d = 0 \quad (25)$$

(4) In the case where the deadline is included in T4 period:

Depending on whether an overtime occurs during which one of the T1 to T4 periods, the size M_d of the data transferred during the remaining time is given by any one of the following four equations (26), (27), (28) and (29). In the case where an overflow occurs during T1 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times (T_{d1} + T_{max} - T_{w1} - T_{d1} - T_{w2}) \quad (26)$$

In the case where an overflow occurs during T2 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times (T_{max} - T_{ovf} - T_{w2}) \quad (27)$$

In the case where an overflow occurs during T3 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times (T_{max} - T_{w1} - T_{d1} - T_{w2}) \quad (28)$$

In the case where an overflow occurs during T4 period:

$$M_d = V_d \times (T_{max} - T_{ovf}) \quad (29)$$

Step 55: Calculation of the total size of transfer data

The total size M_a (in units of kB) of the transfer data is calculated as the sum of M_{ovf} determined from the above-mentioned equation (19) and M_d determined from equations (20) to (29)

$$M_a = M_{ovf} + M_d \quad (30)$$

Step 56: Calculation of total size of continuously transferred data

In the case where $M_b - M_s(0) \geq M_c$, all the data

can be continuously transferred from the external equipment to the buffer RAM 3, and therefore the total size M_a of all the transferred data is calculated from the following equation.

$$M_a = V_b \times T_{max} \quad (31)$$

FIG. 10 is a flowchart showing the flow of the process for predicting the data size readable before the deadline.

As shown in FIG. 10, the HDD control circuit 9 first compares the preread data size in the segment with the maximum transfer data size, i.e., the size of the data transferred and continuously read from the buffer RAM 3 before the deadline (step S61).

In the case where the size of the preread data is larger than the maximum transfer data size in step S61, the maximum transferred data size is defined as the data size that can be input or output (step S66).

In the case where the maximum transfer data size is larger than or equal to the size of the preread data, on the other hand, the possibility of an underflow occurring during transfer is judged (step S62). In the case where judgement in step S62 is that no underflow occurs, the maximum transfer data size is defined as the data size that can be input or output (step S66). Conversely, in the case where judgement is that an underflow occurs, the calculation of the transfer data

size as of the time of an underflow (step S63) and the calculation of the data size that can be transferred during the remaining time before the deadline (step S64) are carried out. The transfer data size as of the time point of underflow and the transferred data size during the remaining time are added to each other thereby to calculate the total size of the transfer data (step S65).

The process of predicting the readable data size is similar in detail to that of the writable data size described above, and will not be explained any further.

As described above, the disk apparatus according to the second embodiment can accurately predict the data size that can be input or output within the deadline by predicting the data size that can be input or output within the deadline in the disk apparatus.

Consequently, the disk apparatus according to the second embodiment can carry out time management taking the execution time into account and thus can process data in real time while preventing a high-priority request from waiting for execution. Further, this disk apparatus can transfer the maximum data size that can be transferred while guaranteeing the meeting of the deadline. Therefore, in addition to guaranteeing the execution time of a high-priority request, a maximum transfer rate is granted for a low-priority request, resulting in an improved processing efficiency.

The segments, which are assigned to write and read commands separately according to the first and second embodiments described above, can alternatively be assigned in accordance with the order of priority.

Also, unlike in the first and second embodiments explained with reference to the case where only one previously-issued command exists in the segments as of the time of prediction processing, the execution time and the transferable data size can be obviously calculated in a similar manner also in the case where there exist data due to two or more commands.

Further, apart from the first and second embodiments in which the deadline is sent to the HDD as a command parameter each time of prediction processing, the deadline can alternatively be set in advance by another command.

<<Embodiment 3>>

Now, explanation will be made about a disk apparatus according to a third embodiment of the present invention. The configuration of the disk apparatus according to the third embodiment is substantially similar to that of the disk apparatus according to the first and second embodiments shown in FIG. 1.

The operation of the HDD control circuit 9 according to the third embodiment will be explained with reference to FIG. 11 attached hereto.

FIG. 11 is a flowchart showing the operation for processing a command requesting a transfer data amount by the HDD control circuit 9 according to the third embodiment.

As shown in FIG. 11, upon application of a command requesting a transfer data amount from an external equipment to the HDD control circuit 9 (step S71), the HDD control circuit 9 judges whether the input command represents a request for the read data size, a request for the preread data size or a request for the write data size (steps S72, S73, and S74). The preread data size is defined as the data size stored in the temporary memory circuit from the disk.

In the case where the input command represents a request for the read data size, the preread data size of a corresponding segment is set as the transfer data size (step S75). In the case where the input command represents a request for the preread data size, on the other hand, the size of the corresponding available segment is set as the size of the preread data (step S76). Also, in the case where the input command represents a request for the write data size, the size of the corresponding vacant segment is set as the transferred data size (step S77).

Finally, each data size thus set is notified to the external equipment (step S78).

As described above, in the disk apparatus according to the third embodiment, the buffer RAM of the disk apparatus is checked for the transferable data size, and the size of an available size of a corresponding segment or the size of the preread data is notified. As a result, data can be transferred between the external equipment and the disk apparatus always continuously in bursts, and the execution time of an input/output request can be calculated from the size of the data to be transferred and the bus transfer rate alone. In this way, in the disk apparatus according to the third embodiment, the execution time of an input/output request can be accurately and easily calculated, thereby facilitating the time management. Also, the disk apparatus according to the third embodiment can produce the effect of reducing the occupied time of the input/output bus since the data input/output can be accomplished always by transfer in bursts.

<<Embodiment 4>>

Now, explanation will be given of a disk apparatus and an input/output control method according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention. The configuration of the disk apparatus according to the fourth embodiment is substantially similar to that of the disk apparatus according to the first embodiment shown in FIG. 1. The disk apparatus 31 according to the fourth embodiment is

different from that of other embodiments in the control method of the HDD control circuit 9. Specifically, commands are differently processed with added corresponding processing steps.

FIG. 12 is a block diagram showing a configuration of a video processing apparatus as an external equipment for recording and reproducing the video signal using the input/output control method according to the fourth embodiment.

In FIG. 12, a video processing apparatus 32 is connected to the disk apparatus 31 through an interface bus 33. The video processing apparatus 32 includes a microprocessor 34, a buffer memory 35 which is a temporary memory circuit, an interface circuit 36 for controlling the input and output to and from the interface bus 33 and a video data processing circuit 37 for compressing or expanding the video data.

FIG. 13 is a diagram showing a method of segmenting the buffer RAM 3 of the disk apparatus 31 according to the fourth embodiment. The buffer RAM 3 is segmented into a write buffer area 3a and a read buffer area 3b.

The video processing apparatus 32 configured as described above issues various requests, i.e., various commands to the disk apparatus 31. Commands requiring data transfer include a write command making up a request

for writing data, a preread command making up a request for prereading a single data block, a read command making up a request for reading data, and an auto read command for requesting the automatic reading operation by the disk apparatus 31.

Also, the disk apparatus 31 corresponds to the transfer size request command. Upon issue of a command requesting a transfer size from the video processing apparatus 32, therefore, the disk apparatus 31 notifies a data size that can be continuously transferred.

In the case of issuing a write command or a read command, the command type, the transfer data amount, the data recording position, etc. are notified to the disk apparatus 31 as data parameters. The data recording position is designated using a logic address logically assigned on the disk 1.

The command requesting the transfer data size is issued to the disk apparatus 31 together with the type of the transfer data size requested. The disk apparatus 31 notifies the data size that can be transferred continuously based on the accumulated condition of the buffer RAM 3. The operation for processing the command requesting the transfer size in the disk apparatus 31 is similar to the process described above with reference to FIG. 11 showing the third embodiment.

The auto read command, on the other hand, is

issued prior to reading the video data periodically. The file management information table used for the auto read command is generated by the video processing apparatus 32, transferred to the disk apparatus 31 and recorded in the disk 1.

The recording format of the file management information table according to the fourth embodiment is shown in FIG. 19. FIG. 19 is a diagram for explaining the file management information according to the fourth embodiment. Columns A1, A2 and A3 represent regions for storing such parameters as the frame number, the logic address and the data amount of the frame data making up the video file recorded in the disk 1. These parameters are recorded for all the frames making up the video file.

The operation of the video processing apparatus 32 and the disk apparatus 31 according to the fourth embodiment having the above-mentioned configuration will be explained below with reference to each command.

[Write command]

First, explanation will be made about the procedure in which the video processing apparatus 32 issues a write command.

In response to a periodic request of the microprocessor 34, a video data processing circuit 37 generates a data block by compressing the video data for each display unit, and stores it temporarily in a buffer

memory 35.

Then, an input/output control method executed by the microprocessor 34 will be explained with reference to FIG. 14. FIG. 14 is a flowchart showing the input/output control operation performed in the microprocessor 34.

First, step S81 issues a command requesting a transfer data size to the disk apparatus 31 and receives the amount of the continuously writable data.

Step S82 for judgement compares the continuously writable data amount with the amount of data to be transferred, and judges whether or not the block transfer (continuous transfer of each data block) is possible. If the block transfer is possible, the process proceeds to step S83, while if the block transfer is impossible, the process proceeds to step S85 for judgement.

Step S83 issues a write command corresponding to the data block, and executes the block transfer in a predetermined procedure. In the case where a plurality of data blocks are stored in the buffer memory 35, the above-mentioned block transfer process is repeated a plurality of times.

Step S84 judges whether data remains in the buffer memory 35. In the case where data remains, the process proceeds to step S85, while if no data remains, the process is terminated.

In step S85 for judgement, the amount of

continuously writable data is compared with a preset minimum data amount for starting the write operation thereby to judge whether the amount of the continuously writable data is not less than the minimum data amount for starting the write operation. In the case where the condition is fulfilled that the amount of continuously writable data is not less than the minimum data amount for starting the write operation, the data block is segmented in step S86. In step S86, a write command for the data thus segmented is issued, and the data transfer is executed.

In the case where the above-mentioned condition is not fulfilled, in contrast, the process is terminated as it is. The minimum data amount for starting the write operation can be appropriately set to a predetermined value such as one half data value of the data block in advance.

Now, the operation of processing the write command from the video processing apparatus 32 in the disk apparatus 31 will be explained with reference to FIG. 1.

The data corresponding to the write command is stored in the buffer data RAM 3 by the interface circuit 2. The HDD control circuit 9 determines a corresponding available segment size from the data amount stored in the buffer RAM 3 and changes the amount of continuously writable data. The data temporarily stored in the buffer

RAM 3 is sequentially recorded in the disk 1.

[Preread command with command ID]

Now, explanation will be made about the procedure in which the video processing apparatus 32 shown in FIG. 12 issues a preread command.

In response to a periodic request from the microprocessor 34, the interface circuit 36 issues a preread command with a command ID. The command ID is an identifier of a preread command and is set as a different value for each command.

Now, the operation of processing the preread command with command ID in the disk apparatus 31 will be explained with reference to FIGs. 1 and 15. FIG. 15 is a flowchart showing the operation of processing the preread command with a command ID.

In step S91 shown in FIG. 15, a series of processes described below are executed.

First, the HDD control circuit 9 shown in FIG. 1 reproduces the data based on the logic address notified from the video processing apparatus 32, and stores in the buffer RAM 3 as preread data. Further, the HDD control circuit 9 changes the amount of continuously readable data in accordance with the amount of the preread data stored in the buffer RAM 3.

In step S92, the management information for the preread data is stored in a preread data management table

as shown in FIG. 16. FIG. 16 is a diagram for explaining an example of the preread data management table. In FIG. 16, columns B1, B2 and B3 represent regions for storing such parameters as a command ID (identifiers), a storage position (start address) on the buffer RAM 3 and a data amount, respectively. These regions store each data preread in response to a preread command with a preread ID.

[Read command with command ID]

Now, the procedure in which a read command with a command ID is issued by the video processing apparatus 32 will be explained with reference to FIG. 17. FIG. 17 is a flowchart showing the process of issuing a read command with a command ID. The read command is issued after the preread command for the same data. Also, the read command is assigned the same command ID as the preread command and issued to the disk apparatus 31.

In step S101, a command requesting the transfer data size is issued to the disk apparatus 31, and receives the amount of continuously readable data, i.e., a preread data amount.

Step S102 judges whether data can be read by block based on the amount of continuously readable data. In the case where the data can be read by block, step S103 is executed, otherwise the process proceeds to step S105.

In step S103, a read command with a command ID

with command ID corresponding to a data block is issued and data blocks are read out continuously in a predetermined procedure. In the case where a plurality of data blocks are stored in the buffer RAM 3, the above-mentioned block transfer process is repeated a plurality of times.

Step S104 judges whether data remain in the buffer RAM 3. In the case where data remains so, the process proceeds to step S105. Otherwise, the process is terminated.

In step S105, the amount of continuously readable data is compared with a preset minimum data amount for amount for starting the read operation thereby to judge whether the amount of continuously readable data is not less than the minimum data amount for starting the read operation. In the case where the condition is fulfilled that the amount of continuously readable data is not less than the minimum data amount for starting the read operation, step S106 is executed. In the case where the above-mentioned condition fails to be fulfilled, in contrast, the process is terminated immediately. The minimum data amount for starting the write operation is set appropriately to a predetermined value such as one half the data amount of a data block.

In step S106, the data block is segmented, and a read command with command ID corresponding to the

segmented data is issued. In step S106, the segmented data are continuously read out.

Now, in the disk apparatus, the operation of processing the read command with command ID described above issued from the video processing apparatus 32 will be explained with reference to FIG. 18. FIG. 18 is a flowchart showing the operation of processing a read command with command ID in the disk apparatus 31.

In step S111, data corresponding to the command ID of the read command is retrieved and selected from the prered data management table.

In step S112, the selected data is output to the video processing apparatus 32. In step S113, the disk apparatus deletes the items of data which have been completely transferred from the prered data management table shown in FIG. 16.

[Auto read command]

Now, explanation will be made about the process for issuing an auto read command by the video processing apparatus 32.

The video processing apparatus 32 determines the prered parameters including the identifier of the file management information table for the file to be prered, the frame number (F0) to be prered first, the number of frames to be prered (NF), the number of skips (S) indicating the intervals of the frame numbers to be

preread and the preread direction (D), and issues an auto read command to the disk apparatus 31 as a command parameter.

In what is called the "fast forward playback" for displaying video data at predetermined frame intervals, the preread operation is executed by setting the number S of skips to a predetermined value. The data preread is read and displayed at time intervals similar to the case of recording the data. The preread direction D is set to "0" when prereading in the order of recording, while it is set to "1" for prereading in reverse order.

In response to the auto read command, the disk apparatus 31 issues sequentially read commands with a data recorded position as a parameter corresponding to each frame. The data preread by the buffer RAM 3 is output from the disk apparatus 31 to the video processing apparatus 32.

Now, in the disk apparatus, the operation of processing the auto read command supplied from the video processing apparatus 32 will be explained with reference to FIG. 20. FIG. 20 is a flowchart showing the operation of processing the auto read command in the disk apparatus 31.

First, step S121 reproduces the file management information from the file management information table on the disk 1. In step S122, a frame to be preread is

selected based on the file management information reproduced, thereby reading the data amount and the start address corresponding to the selected frame. The frame number (FP) to be preread is determined by the following equation;

$$FP = FO + (-1)^D \times S \times (N - 1),$$

where N is the number of processing times in step S122. D is the preread direction which is "0" when prereading in the order of recording and "1" when reading in the reverse order.

In step S123, the data block corresponding to the selected frame is reproduced and stored in the buffer RAM 3.

Next, step S124 compares the number N of processing times with the number NF of the frames to be preread and judges whether the preread operation is complete. In the case where the preread operation is incomplete, the above-mentioned process is continued. In the case where the preread operation is complete, in contrast, the above-mentioned process is completed.

If the data are preread by the buffer RAM 3, like in the preread command described above, the HDD control circuit 9 changes the amount of continuously readable data in accordance with the amount of preread data. The HDD control circuit 9 then informs the external equipment in response to the transfer data size request

from the video processing apparatus 32.

As described above, according to the input/output control method of the fourth embodiment, the video processing apparatus 32 receives the amount of continuously transferable data from the disk apparatus and controls the transfer based on the received amount of continuously transferable data. As a result, the input/output control method according to the fourth embodiment permits data to be continuously transferred always between the video processing apparatus 32 and the disk apparatus 31. In this way, the predicted execution time can be accurately predicted and managed, while at the same time reducing the processing load of the video processing apparatus.

Further, in the disk apparatus according to the fourth embodiment, the auto preread operation is executed based on the file management information of the moving picture file stored in the disk apparatus 31. As a result, the preread operation suitable for the moving picture can be executed with the disk apparatus alone, thereby realizing a reduced load on the video processing apparatus and the efficient operation of the buffer memory.

Furthermore, in the disk apparatus according to the fourth embodiment, the preread data can be directly designated and accessed using the command ID. Therefore,

the process of retrieving the preread data can be eliminated in the disk apparatus, resulting in a reduced processing load of the disk apparatus for the preread processing on the one hand and an efficient use of the buffer memory on the other hand.

Although the fourth embodiment concerns the case in which the file management table for video data is prepared by the video processing apparatus and notified to the disk apparatus, the file management information can alternatively be produced in the disk apparatus by designating a file identifier in the process of writing the video data.

According to the fourth embodiment, the data blocks selected are sequentially preread in response to an auto read command, and are output sequentially to the video processing apparatus in response to a read command. As an alternative, the selected data blocks can be output directly to the video processing apparatus in response to an auto read command.

<<Embodiment 5>>

Now, a disk apparatus according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention will be explained. The video processing apparatus according to the fifth embodiment has a substantially similar configuration to the video processing apparatus shown in FIG. 12, and the disk apparatus has a substantially similar configuration

to the disk apparatus shown in FIG. 1. The fifth embodiment is different from other embodiments in that the video processing apparatus 32 issues six types of input/output commands in accordance with the type of data and in that the disk apparatus performs the processing operation in accordance with the type of each input/output command.

The video processing apparatus 32 according to the fifth embodiment issues to a sequential data a sequential write command making up a write request, a sequential preread command making up a preread request, and a sequential read command making up a read request. Further, the video processing apparatus 32 according to the fifth embodiment issues to the random data a random write command making up a write request, a random preread command making up a preread request and a random read command making up a read request.

The operation of the disk apparatus 31 corresponding to each of the above-mentioned commands will be explained with reference to FIG. 21. FIG. 21 is a flowchart for each command issued to the disk apparatus 31.

First, explanation will be made about the operation corresponding to the sequential write command or the random write command.

In step S131, the type of the command is

discriminated. In the case of a random write command, step S132 performs the recording operation in a procedure similar to the first embodiment described above, while in the case of a sequential write command, the process proceeds to step S133.

Step S133 judges whether the data amount stored in the buffer RAM 3 is larger than the maximum amount of data that can be accumulated. In the case where the judgement is affirmative, step S134 is executed. Otherwise, the process is terminated immediately. The maximum data amount capable of being accumulated can be appropriately set based on the data amount storable in the buffer RAM, etc. in accordance with the sequential write command next to be issued.

In step S134, the data stored in the buffer RAM 3 are continuously recorded in the disk 1. In view of the fact that the sequential data stored in the buffer RAM 3 are recorded in substantially successive regions on the disk 1, and therefore a large amount of data can be recorded within a short time without any overhead time such as for the seek operation and the rotational latency time.

Now, the operation corresponding to a sequential preread command or a random preread command will be explained with reference to FIG. 22. FIG. 22 is a flowchart showing the operation associated with the

sequential preread command or the random preread command.

First, steps S141 identifies the command type. In the case of a random prewrite command, step S142 performs a preread operation in a procedure similar to the first embodiment described above. In the case of a sequential preread command, on the other hand, the process proceeds to step S143.

In step S143, the sequential preread commands are accumulated.

Step S144 judges whether the sequential preread commands thus accumulated are not less than the maximum number of commands that can be accumulated. In the case where the condition is fulfilled that the accumulated sequential preread commands are not less than the maximum number of commands that can be accumulated, then step S142 continuously reproduces the data corresponding to a plurality of accumulated commands. In the case where the above-mentioned condition fails to be met, on the other hand, the process is terminated.

The disk apparatus 31 according to the fifth embodiment also performs the prefetch operation as an internal process.

The prefetch operation is for reproducing and storing in the buffer RAM 3 the data around the recording positions of the data corresponding to the commands. According to the fifth embodiment, a parameter indicating

the advisability of the prefetch operation is notified to the disk apparatus 31 at the time of issuing each command.

The selection procedure in the prefetch operation by the disk apparatus 31 will be explained with reference to FIG. 23. FIG. 23 is a flowchart showing the prefetch operation in the disk apparatus 31.

First, step S151 executes the operation of prereading the data corresponding to the random preread command or the sequential preread command in a procedure similar to that of the first embodiment described above

Step S152 judges the advisability of the prefetch operation based on the parameters notified from the video processing apparatus 32. In the case where the prefetch operation is permitted in step S152, the prefetch operation is executed in step S153. In the case where the prefetch operation is not permitted, in contrast, the process is terminated immediately. Especially in the case of trick play of video data by the video processing apparatus 32, plurality of data stored at distant recording points on the disk 1 are often reproduced sequentially. In such a case, the prefetch operation often deteriorates the response to each command.

In the case where a random preread command is issued after the prefetch operation, on the other hand, the first process executed is to check whether or not the corresponding data is prefetched in the buffer RAM 3 or

not. If it is so prefetched, the possibility of reading the data is notified to the video processing apparatus 32.

As described above, the disk apparatus according to the fifth embodiment can switch the size of data recorded continuously in the disk or the number of commands continuously read, in accordance with the command type. For this reason, the disk apparatus according to the fifth embodiment can improve the processing performance of the moving picture data while at the same time making it possible to use the buffer memory efficiently.

Also, the disk apparatus according to the fifth embodiment can select the prefetch operation according to the command type, and therefore can use the buffer memory efficiently. Further, the disk apparatus according to the fifth embodiment can improve the response to a random data input/output request, can prevent the delayed response due to the unrequired prefetch operation in response to a sequential data input/output request, and thus can improve the processing efficiency of the disk apparatus as a whole.

<<Embodiment 6>>

Explanation will be made below about a disk apparatus according to a sixth embodiment of the present invention. The video processing apparatus according to the sixth embodiment has a configuration substantially

similar to that of the video processing apparatus shown in FIG. 12, and the disk apparatus is also substantially similar in configuration to the disk apparatus shown in FIG. 1. The sixth embodiment is different from other embodiments in that the video processing apparatus issues a sequential write command with a time limit and a sequential preread command with a time limit (both commands are hereinafter referred to collectively as the sequential data input/output request) and in that the disk apparatus performs the processing corresponding to each of these commands.

The random write command and the random preread command (hereinafter referred to collectively as the random data input/output request), on the other hand, are normal input/output commands free of a time limit.

The operation of the disk apparatus 31 in response to the above-mentioned commands will be explained with reference to FIG. 24. FIG. 24 is a flowchart showing the operation of processing the commands supplied from the video processing apparatus 32 in the disk apparatus 31.

First, step S161 identifies the command type. In the case where the command represents a sequential data input/output request in step S161, the process proceeds to step S162, while in the case where the command is a random data input/output request, on the other hand, the process proceeds to step S163.

In step S162, the time limit notified from the video processing apparatus 32 is extended in accordance with the available capacity of the buffer RAM 3. The extension time can be appropriately selected in accordance with the data amount of the data block corresponding to the sequential data input/output request or in accordance with the cycles of issue of the sequential data input/output request.

In step S163, the command is accumulated on the request accumulation queue shown in FIG. 25. FIG. 25 is a diagram for explaining a sequential request accumulation queue (a) and a random request accumulation queue (b). Columns C1 and D1 represent storage areas at the recording positions (LBA) on the disk 1, and the columns C2 and D2 represent the storage areas of the data amount. The column C3 stores time margins based on the time limit calculated in step S162. This time margin is calculated as a remaining time usable for the processing. In the sequential data input/output request accumulation queue, commands are arranged in the ascending order of time margin from the first row (No.1). In the random data input/output request accumulation queue, on the other hand, commands are arranged in the order of issue.

In step S164, it is judged whether requests are accumulated in the sequential data input/output requests accumulation queue. In the case where requests are so

accumulated, the process proceeds to step S165. In the case where requests are not accumulated so, in contrast, step S167 executes the request on the first row of the random data input/output request accumulation queue.

In step S165, the request of No.1 in the sequential data input/output request accumulation queue is selected and it is judged whether the time margin is larger than a command select reference time. In the case where the time margin is larger than a predetermined value, the process proceeds to step S168, while in the case where the time margin is smaller than a predetermined value, step S166 executes the request on the first row of the sequential data input/output request accumulation queue. The command select reference time can be set appropriately on the basis of the time predicted in advance as a time required for processing a sequential data input/output request.

In step S168, it is judged whether commands are accumulated in the random data input/output request accumulation queue. In the case where commands are not so accumulated, the process proceeds to step S170. In the case where commands are so accumulated, in contrast, step S169 executes the processing corresponding to the first-row command of the random data input/output request accumulation queue.

In step S170, the command on the first row of

the sequential data input/output request accumulation queue is selected as a command to be executed. While the head is moving from the present position to a physical position corresponding to the command to be executed, a command that can be recorded and reproduced is retrieved, and the retrieved command is determined as a command to be selected. In step S171, the scheduled execution time is compared with the time margin of the command to be executed on the assumption that a command to be selected is processed before a command to be executed, and judgement is made as to whether the command to be executed can be completely processed within the time margin. In the case where the command to be executed can be processed so, step S172 inserts the command to be selected on the first row of the sequential data input/output request accumulation queue, followed by execution of step S173. In the case where the command to be executed is impossible to process in step S171, in contrast, the process immediately proceeds to step S173.

Step S173 executes the process in response to the request accumulated on the first row of the accumulation queue.

As described above, in the disk apparatus according to the sixth embodiment, the order of recording-reproducing process is selected in accordance with the time limit and the available capacity of the

buffer RAM 3. As a result, the disk apparatus according to the sixth embodiment can increase the speed of a response to a random data input/output request while at the same time guaranteeing a real-time response to a high-priority sequential data input/output request, thereby improving the processing efficiency of the disk apparatus. Thus, it is possible to solve the problem of a considerably delayed response to random data input/output requests.

Also, in the disk apparatus according to the sixth embodiment, the order of processing a request is selected in accordance with the time limit and the physical address on the disk. Therefore, the real-time response to a request is guaranteed and the time required for head seek operation is reduced. Thus the processing efficiency of the disk apparatus is improved. Further, according to the sixth embodiment, the order of processing accumulated requests is determined based on the physical address, and therefore it is possible to predict and manage the execution time of each request accurately.

<<Embodiment 7>>

Now, a disk apparatus according to a seventh embodiment of the present invention will be described.

FIG. 26 is a block diagram showing a configuration of a disk apparatus according to the seventh embodiment.

As shown in FIG. 26, the disk apparatus according to the seventh embodiment is connected to an external equipment (not shown) such as a host computer through a host input/output bus 101. The disk apparatus according to the seventh embodiment comprises a CPU 42 for controlling each circuit, a buffer RAM 43 constituting a memory circuit for storing data temporarily, a read/write signal processing circuit 44 for encoding and decoding the data, a head-disk assembly 45, an actuator drive circuit 48 and a HDD control circuit 49.

The head-disk assembly 45 includes a disk 41, a head assembly 46 and an actuator 47. The actuator 47 is driven by the actuator drive circuit 48. The CPU 42 controls the buffer RAM 43, the read/write signal processing circuit 44 and the actuator drive circuit 48 through the HDD control circuit 49.

FIG. 27 is a block diagram showing a configuration of the HDD control circuit 49.

As shown in FIG. 27, the HDD control circuit 49 includes a host interface circuit 51 constituting an interface circuit with the external equipment, a CPU interface circuit 52 making up an interface circuit with the CPU 42, a buffer control circuit 53 for controlling the buffer RAM 43, and a control signal input/output circuit 54 for applying or supplied with a control signal to or from the read/write signal processing circuit 44 and

the actuator drive signal 48 of the disk apparatus.

FIG. 28 is a diagram showing the correspondence between the segment setting register 61 in the buffer control circuit 53 and each segment of the buffer RAM 43 of the disk apparatus.

As shown in FIG. 28, the buffer RAM 43 is divided into N segments #1 to #N. Each segment of the buffer RAM 43 corresponds to the registers REG#1 to REG#N of the segment setting register 61. Each of the registers REG#1 to REG#N has set therein values including an access type CSN, a segment start address ASN, a segment size MSN, a disk transfer priority order PDN, a disk transfer block size MBD and a host transfer block size MBN. The number N of segments is the total number of the segments and invariable.

The access type CSN is the number for setting the access type to the associated segment from the external equipment and is divided into three different types including (1) write-only, (2) read-only and (3) read-write. The segment start address ASN is the start address of a given segment in the buffer RAM 43, and the segment size MSN is the size of a given segment. Both are expressed by sector. One sector represents 512 bytes.

The disk transfer priority order PDN, the disk transfer block size MBDN and the host transfer block size MBHN are values for setting the conditions for

starting/stopping the host transfer between the external equipment and each segment and the disk transfer between the segments and the disk, respectively.

The disk transfer priority order PDN indicates the order of priority in which data are transferred between each segment and the disk. PDN is set in values of 1 to N. The disk transfer block size MBDN gives a unit of data transfer, by sector, between each segment and the disk. The host transfer block size MBHN represents a unit of data transfer, by sector, between each segment and the host.

Now, the operation of each part of the disk apparatus will be explained with reference to FIGs. 26, 27 and 28.

The host interface circuit 51 of the HDD control circuit 49 is supplied with data, commands and parameters from an external equipment through the host input/output bus 101. In the host interface circuit 51, data are output to the buffer control circuit 53 through an internal bus 201, and commands and parameters are applied to the internal bus 202. The host interface circuit 51 is supplied with the data read from the buffer RAM 43 through the buffer control circuit 53 and the internal bus 201. A command response from the CPU 42 is applied to the host interface circuit 51 through the CPU interface circuit 52 and the internal bus 202. These read data and responses

to commands are output to the external equipment through the host input/output bus 101.

The buffer control circuit 53 is connected to the buffer RAM 43 through the RAM input/output bus 103, and controls the data input and output to and from the buffer RAM 43 in accordance to each value set in the segment setting register 61. The data input to and output from the buffer RAM 43 include those input to and output from the external equipment through the host interface circuit 51, those input to and output from the CPU 42 through the CPU interface circuit 52, and those input to and output from the read/write signal processing circuit 44 through the read/write input/output bus 104. The segment setting register 61 of the buffer control circuit 53 is set by the CPU 42.

The read/write signal processing circuit 44 (FIG. 26) receives and encodes the write data from the buffer RAM 43 through the buffer control circuit 53 of the HDD control circuit 49. The write data thus encoded is output to a head 46a as a write signal through a signal line 107. Also, the read/write signal processing circuit 44 receives and decodes the read signal read out by the head 46a from the disk 41 through the signal line 107. The read signal thus decoded is applied to the buffer RAM 43 as a read data through the buffer control circuit 53.

The actuator drive circuit 48 outputs a drive

signal 108 to the actuator 47 on the basis of an actuator control signal 106 from the control signal input/output circuit 54 of the HDD control circuit 49. This drive signal drives the actuator 47 so that the head 46a is moved through the head assembly 46.

The CPU 42 receives commands and parameters from the external equipment through the host interface circuit 51 of the HDD control circuit 49 and the CPU interface circuit 52. The CPU 42 interprets the commands, controls the buffer control circuit 53, the read/write signal processing circuit 44 and the actuator drive circuit 48, and thus executes the data read/write operation. Also, the CPU 42 gives a response to a command, if required, to the external equipment through the CPU interface circuit 52 and the host interface circuit 51.

The command processing in the disk apparatus configured as described above will be explained below with reference to the drawings.

[Segment setting command]

Parameters for the segment setting command include the segment number, the access type, the segment size, the disk transfer priority order, the disk transfer block size and the host transfer block size. The segment number is an identification number of each segment and is given as K (= 1 to N). The access type, the segment size, the disk transfer priority order, the disk transfer block

size and the most transfer block size, respectively, correspond to each set value of the segment setting register.

FIG. 29 is a flowchart showing the operation of processing the segment setting command by the disk apparatus according to the seventh embodiment.

As shown in FIG. 29, upon application of a segment setting command from the external equipment thereto, the CPU 42 (FIG. 26) acquires each set value from the parameters of the applied segment setting command (step S181), and checks whether the acquired set value is included in a predetermined range (step S182). In the case where the set value is out of the predetermined range, an error is notified to the external equipment (step S185).

In the case where a set value is within the predetermined range, the CPU 42 considers the segment #K as an available area (step S183), and compares the secure segment size with the summed size of available areas not assigned as a segment (step S184). In the case where the segment is larger than the available area in size, an error is notified to the external equipment (step S185). In the case where the segment is smaller than the available area in size, on the other hand, the segment start address of REG#(K+1) to REG#N is recalculated and set in each register (step S186), and each value is set in

REG#K (step S187).

FIG. 30 is a diagram for explaining an example of changing the segment setting according to a segment setting command. The example shown in FIG. 30 concerns the case in which the size of the buffer RAM 43 is set to 128 kB (kB: 1024 bytes), the total number N of segments is set to 4 and the size of the segment #3 is changed from 16 kB to 32 kB. (a) of FIG. 30 shows the state before command execution, and (b) of FIG. 30 the state after command execution.

When the segment #3 is considered as an available area, the summed size of available areas is 48 kB. Since the summed size of available areas is not less than 32 kB that is the segment size to be set, the segment start address of the segment #4 is recalculated, and the start address 4000H is changed to 5000H thus ending the setting.

[Segment state request command]

Upon application of a segment state request command to the CPU 42 from the external equipment, the CPU 42 checks the segment setting registers REG#1 to REG#N sequentially, and outputs the set value of each register and the size of an available area not assigned as a segment to the external equipment.

[Write command]

Parameters for the write command include the

identification number, the disk start address and the write size. The identification number corresponds to the segment number set by the segment setting command. In the case under consideration, the identification number is assumed to be M ($M = 1$ to N). The disk start address means the write start address on the disk, and the write size is the size of the data written, each being set by sector.

Upon application of a write command to the CPU 42 from the external equipment, the CPU 42 acquires the identification number M from the parameters of the input command, and reads the value set in the segment setting register $REG\#M$.

Then, the CPU 42 controls the host interface circuit 51 and the buffer control circuit 53 thereby to execute the processing of the host transfer in which data are transferred from the external equipment to the segment $\#M$. Concurrently with the host transfer processing, the CPU 42 controls the buffer control circuit 53, the read/write signal processing circuit 44 and the actuator drive circuit 48 thereby to execute the disk transfer processing in which data are transferred from the segment $\#M$ to the disk 41.

FIG. 31 is a diagram showing parameters associated with the accumulation of the segment $\#M$, the host transfer and the disk transfer. The parameters for

the segment #M, the host transfer processing and the disk transfer processing are defined as follows.

Specifically, the segment size is defined as MSM, the segment accumulation amount as MAM, the available segment size as MFM, the write size as MW, the read size as MR, the remaining host transfer data amount as MDH and the remaining disk transfer data amount as MDD (in units of bytes). Also, the disk transfer rate is defined as VD (in units of MB/s).

Now, the host transfer for processing the write command will be explained in detail with reference to FIG. 32. The host transfer from the external equipment to the segment #M is executed while monitoring the available segment size MFM of the segment #M based on the host transfer block size MBHM set in REG #M.

FIG. 32 is a flowchart showing the processing of host transfer from the external equipment to the segment #M.

As shown in FIG. 32, with the activation of the host transfer processing, the CPU 42 acquires the available size MFM of the segment #M from the buffer control circuit 53 (step S191), and sets the host transfer size MTH (step S192). The host transfer size is the minimum value of the host transfer block size ($MBHM \times 512$) or the minimum value of the remaining host transfer data amount MDH.

Then, the CPU 42 compares the available segment size MFM with the host transfer size MTH (step S193), and repeats this process until the available segment size reaches or exceeds the host transfer size (S191 to S193). When the available segment size reaches or exceeds the host transfer size, a transfer ready signal is output to the external equipment (step S194), and the data equivalent to the host transfer size MTH input from the external equipment is written in the segment (step S195).

After complete process of writing in the segment, the CPU 42 calculates the remaining host transfer data amount (step S196) and checks whether the remaining host transfer data is zero or not (step S197). In the case where the remaining host transfer data amount is larger than zero, the host transfer process is repeatedly executed. In the case where the remaining host transfer data amount is zero, on the other hand, the host transfer process is terminated.

Now, the disk transfer processing in which data are transferred from the segment #M to the disk 41 will be explained with reference to the flowchart of FIG. 33. The disk transfer in which data are transferred to the disk 41 is executed while monitoring the segment accumulation amount MAM of the segment #M and the disk transfer for other segments based on the disk transfer block size MBDM set in the REG#M and the disk transfer priority order PDM.

FIG. 33 is a flowchart showing the processing of disk transfer from the segment #M to the disk 1.

As shown in FIG. 33, upon activation of the disk transfer processing, the CPU 42 acquires the segment accumulation amount MAM of the segment #M from the buffer control circuit 53 (step S201), and sets the disk transfer size MTD (step S202). The disk transfer size is the minimum value of the disk transfer block size ($MBDM \times 512$) or the minimum value of the remaining disk transfer data amount MDD.

Then, the CPU 42 compares the segment accumulation amount MAM with the disk transfer size MTD (step S203), and repeats this process until the segment accumulation amount reaches or exceeds the disk transfer size (S201 to S203). When the segment accumulation amount reaches or exceeds the disk transfer size, the CPU 42 monitors the disk transfer of other segments (step S204) and checks whether the disk transfer higher in priority than the disk transfer of the segment #M is under execution (step S205). When such a disk transfer is under execution, the above-mentioned process is repeated until the disk transfer higher in priority order is complete (S204 to S205). When no disk transfer higher in priority order is under execution, on the other hand, the processing for writing the data equivalent to the disk transfer size into the disk 41 is executed (step S206).

After complete process of writing in the disk, the CPU 42 calculates the remaining disk transfer data amount MDD (step S207), and checks whether the remaining disk transfer data amount is zero or not (step S208). When the remaining disk transfer data amount is larger than zero, the disk transfer processing is executed repeatedly (S201 to S208). When the remaining disk transfer data amount is zero, the disk transfer processing is complete.

[Read command]

Parameters for the read command include the identification number, the disk start address and the read size.

Upon application of a read command from the external equipment to the CPU 42, the CPU 42 acquires the identification number L from the parameters of the input command and reads each parameter set in the segment setting register REG#L.

Then, the CPU 42 controls the buffer control circuit 53, the read/write signal processing circuit 44 and the actuator drive circuit 48. Thus, the processing of disk transfer is executed from the disk 41 to the segment #L. Concurrently with the disk transfer processing, the CPU 42 executes the processing of host transfer from the segment #L to the external equipment by controlling the host interface circuit 51 and the buffer

control circuit 53.

The processing of disk transfer from the disk 41 to the segment #L is executed while monitoring the available segment size MFL of the segment #L and the disk transfer of other segments based on the disk transfer block size MBDL set in the REG #L and the disk transfer priority order PDL.

FIG. 34 is a flowchart showing the processing of disk transfer from the disk 41 to the segment #L.

As shown in FIG. 34, upon activation of the disk transfer processing, the CPU 42 acquires the available segment size MFL of the segment #L from the buffer control circuit 53 (step S211), and sets the disk transfer size MTD (step S212). The disk transfer size is the minimum value of the disk transfer block size ($MBDM \times 512$) or the minimum value of the remaining disk transfer data amount MDD.

Then, the CPU 42 compares with available segment size MFL with the disk transfer size MTD (step S213), and repeats this process until the available segment size reaches or exceeds the disk transfer size (S211 to S23). When the available segment size reaches or exceeds the disk transfer size, the CPU 42 monitors the disk transfer of other segments (step S214) and checks whether a disk transfer higher in priority order than the disk transfer of the segment #L is under execution (step S215). If such

a disk transfer is under execution, the above-mentioned process is repeated until the disk transfer higher in priority order is complete (steps S214 to S215). In the case where no disk transfer higher in priority order is under execution, on the other hand, the processing is executed for reading the data equivalent to the disk transfer size from the disk 41 (step S216).

Upon complete processing for reading the disk, the CPU 42 calculates the remaining disk transfer data amount (step S217), and checks whether the remaining disk transfer amount is zero or not (step S218). In the case where the remaining disk transfer amount is larger than zero, the disk transfer processing is repeatedly executed (steps S211 to S218). In the case where the remaining disk transfer data amount is zero, in contrast, the disk transfer processing is completed.

Next, the processing of host transfer from the segment #L to the external equipment will be explained with reference to FIG. 35. FIG. 35 is a flowchart showing the processing of host transfer from the segment #L to the external equipment.

The processing of host transfer from the segment #L to the external equipment is executed while monitoring the segment accumulation amount of the segment #L based on the host transfer block size MBHL set in the register REG#L.

As shown in FIG. 35, upon activation of the host transfer processing, the CPU 42 acquires the segment accumulation amount MAL of the segment #L from the buffer control circuit 53 (step S221) and sets the host transfer size MTH (step S222). The host transfer size is the minimum value of the host transfer block size ($MBHM \times 512$) or the minimum value of the remaining host transfer data amount MDH.

Then, the CPU 42 compares the segment accumulation amount MAL with the host transfer size MTH (step S223), and repeats this process until the segment accumulation amount reaches or exceeds the host transfer size (S221 to S223). When the segment accumulation amount reaches or exceeds the host transfer size, the CPU 42 outputs a transfer ready signal to the external equipment (step S224), and the processing is executed for reading from the segment the data equivalent to the host transfer size MTH input from the external equipment (step S225).

After complete segment read processing, the CPU 42 calculates the remaining host transfer data amount (step S226), and checks whether the remaining host transfer data amount is zero or not (step S227). When the remaining host transfer data amount is larger than zero, the CPU 42 repeatedly executes the host transfer processing. When the remaining host data amount is zero, on the other hand, the host transfer processing is

terminated.

As described above, according to the seventh embodiment, the external equipment can set the segment size, the transfer block size and the conditions for starting or stopping the transfer in the order of priority of the disk transfer size corresponding to each channel data into the disk apparatus by use of the segment setting command and the segment state request command in advance of the recording/reproducing operation.

A write command or a read command carrying an identification number corresponding to each channel data is issued during the recording or reproduction. In this way, the disk apparatus according to the seventh embodiment can record or reproduce, each data in accordance with the segment size, the transfer block size and the disk transfer priority order thus set.

As described above, in the disk apparatus according to the seventh embodiment, the segment size, the transfer block size and the disk transfer priority order are set by segment based on the segment setting command from the external equipment, and the host transfer processing and the disk transfer processing are controlled by a preset control method. In this way, the memory size and the control method corresponding to each channel can be set at the time of multi-channel recording and reproduction operation.

According to the seventh embodiment, a segment is set by the segment setting command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner that the write data with the segment setting information attached thereto is transferred to the disk apparatus, and the disk apparatus detects the segment setting information contained in the write data or read data thereby to set a segment.

According to the seventh embodiment, the priority order of disk transfer, the disk transfer block size and the host transfer block size are determined as the transfer-starting conditions set for each segment. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to control the start and stop of disk transfer and host transfer using or adding other parameters.

According to the seventh embodiment, each segment is set by executing the segment setting command by segment. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to provide a segment-setting command for setting all the segments collectively.

According to the seventh embodiment, the

identification information of each command is set as a parameter of each command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the seventh embodiment, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to provide a dedicated information setting command executed before issue of a write command/read command.

<<Embodiment 8>>

Now, a disk apparatus according to an eighth embodiment of the present invention will be explained. The configuration of the disk apparatus according to the eighth embodiment is substantially similar to that of the disk apparatuses shown in FIGs. 26, 27 and 28. The disk apparatus according to the eighth embodiment processes a command for setting the data transfer rate.

Explanation will be made about the operation of processing the transfer rate setting command for the disk apparatus according to the eighth embodiment.

Parameters for the transfer rate setting command includes the identification number, the access type and the transfer rate. The transfer rate VCH is the one guaranteed for the recording and reproduction of a corresponding channel data, and expressed in units of sectors per second.

FIG. 36 is a flowchart showing the operation of processing the transfer rate setting command according to the eighth embodiment.

As shown in FIG. 36, upon application of a transfer rate setting command from the external equipment to the CPU 42, the CPU 42 acquires each set value from the parameters of the input command (step S231). The values of the access type, the segment size, the disk transfer priority order, the disk transfer block size and the host transfer block size are set for each segment in the segment setting register 61 from the set access type, the transfer rate and the performance values (step S232). The set values including the available segment size are checked (step S233). In the case where a set value is incorrect, an error is notified to the external equipment (step S234). In the case where the set value is correct, on the other hand, the segment start addresses of REG#(K+1) to REG#N are recalculated and set in each register (step S235), thus setting each set value in REG#K (step S236).

For the data transfer rate to be guaranteed, it is necessary to set the disk transfer block size and the segment size correctly. A setting method according to the eighth embodiment will be described below.

According to the eighth embodiment, the performance values of the access performance and the disk transfer performance of the disk apparatus are expressed by the following parameters. Specifically, the maximum seek time is defined as TFS, the maximum rotational

latency time as TR (in units of ms), the channel setting rate as VCH and the disk transfer rate as VD (in sectors per second).

The maximum recording-reproducing time TRW (in units of seconds) required for recording the disk transfer block size MBDK (in units of sectors) in the disk 41 or for reproducing it from the disk 41 is given as the sum of the maximum access time and the data transfer time, and expressed by equation (32) below.

$$TRW = TFS + TR + MBDK/VD \quad (32)$$

Thus the worst value VRW (in sectors per second) of the average disk transfer rate including the access time is calculated from equation (33).

$$VRW = MBDK/(TFS + TR + MBDK/VD) \quad (33)$$

If MBDK is set to secure the relation $VCH \leq VRW$ for a set channel transfer rate VCH, the transfer at a rate not less than the channel transfer rate VCH can be guaranteed. Thus, equation (34) is derived from equations (32) and (33).

$$MBDK \geq VCH \times (TFS + TR) / (1 - VCH/VD) \quad (34)$$

The disk transfer block size MBDK satisfies equation (34) and is set to the minimum integral multiple of eight sectors (4 kB). Other parameters including the segment size MSK, the host transfer block size MBHK and the priority order of disk transfer are set by the setting

method described below.

The segment size MSK (in units of sectors) is set to a minimum integral multiple of eight sectors (4 kB) within a range meeting the relation $MSK \geq 2 \times MBDK$ and not exceeding the size of the available area.

The host transfer block size MBHK (in units of sectors), on the other hand, is set equal to MSK.

The priority order of disk transfer is set in the descending order of the channel transfer rate. For the same transfer rate, a higher priority is set to the segment of access type called "write".

Explanation will be made about an example of determining a segment set value specifically by the above-mentioned setting method:

$VD = 14000$ (sectors per second), $TFS = 0.02$ (seconds), $TR = 0.01$ (seconds)

With the number of channels as four, the transfer rate for each channel is set in the following manner:

$VCH1 = 1000$ (sectors per second), $VCH2 = 2000$ (sectors per second), $VCH3 = 1400$ (sectors per second), and $VCH4 = 2400$ (sectors per second).

In the process, the following calculations are made by equation (34) (figures below the decimal point rounded-up):

$$MBD1 \geq 1000 \times (0.02 + 0.01) / (1 - 1000/14000) = 33$$

$$MBD2 \geq 2000 \times (0.02 + 0.01)/(1 - 2000/14000) = 70$$

$$MBD3 \geq 1400 \times (0.02 + 0.01)/(1 - 1400/14000) = 47$$

$$MBD4 \geq 2400 \times (0.02 + 0.01)/(1 - 2400/14000) = 87$$

From these equations, each parameter can be calculated.

Disk transfer block size MBDK (K = 1 to 4):

$$MBD1 = 40 \text{ (sectors)}, MBD2 = 72 \text{ (sectors)},$$

$$MBD3 = 48 \text{ (sectors)}, MBD4 = 88 \text{ (sectors)}$$

Segment size MSK (K = 1 to 4):

$$MS1 = 80 \text{ (sectors)}, MS2 = 144 \text{ (sectors)}$$

$$MS3 = 96 \text{ (sectors)}, MS4 = 176 \text{ (sectors)}$$

Host transfer block size MBHK (K = 1 to 4):

$$MBH1 = 80 \text{ (sectors)}, MBH2 = 144 \text{ (sectors)}$$

$$MBH3 = 96 \text{ (sectors)}, MBH4 = 176 \text{ (sectors)}$$

Disk transfer priority order PDK (K = 1 to 4)

$$PD1 = 4, PD2 = 2, PD3 = 3, PD4 = 1$$

As described above, the external equipment sets the transfer rate of each channel in the disk apparatus. As a result, the disk apparatus according to the eighth embodiment can calculate and set the disk transfer block size required for guaranteeing the transfer rate on the basis of the seek performance and the disk transfer rate of the apparatus.

In this way, the disk apparatus according to the eighth embodiment can guarantee the required data transfer rate by setting the segment size and the transfer method

for each segment on the basis of the data transfer rate of each channel supplied from the external equipment.

According to the eighth embodiment, each segment is set by the transfer rate setting command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however can alternatively be configured in such a manner that the data with write data transfer setting information attached thereto is transferred to the disk apparatus, which in turn detects the transfer rate setting information included in the write data/read data thereby to set a segment.

According to the eighth embodiment, the priority order of disk transfer, the disk transfer block size and the host transfer block size are set as the transfer starting conditions set by segment. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to control the start and stop of disk transfer and the host transfer by using or adding another parameter.

According to the eighth embodiment, the transfer rate itself is set as the transfer rate information from an external equipment. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to set the image data format information as related to a preset speed

type number and a preset transfer rate.

The eighth embodiment shows an example in which each set value of the segment setting register is determined from the transfer rate information. The setting method for the recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, is not limited to such a method.

According to the eighth embodiment, the setting command can be executed by segment thereby to set each segment. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured to include setting commands for setting all the segments collectively.

According to the eighth embodiment, the identification information for each command is set in the parameters of the particular command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to include a dedicated identification information setting command executed before issue of a write command/read command.

<<Embodiment 9>>

Now, explanation will be made about a disk apparatus according to a ninth embodiment of the present invention. The configuration of the disk apparatus according to the ninth embodiment is substantially similar

to that of the disk apparatuses shown in FIGs. 26 and 27 except for the segment setting register of the buffer control circuit 53.

FIG. 37 is a diagram showing the correspondence between the segmentation of the buffer RAM 43 and the segment setting register 61a according to the ninth embodiment.

As shown in FIG. 37, the segment setting register 61a according to the ninth embodiment can set the access unit ACK making up a unit of data transfer from the external equipment. Thus, data can be written into or read from the segment by the access unit ACK set by the segment setting register 61a. This access unit ACK is given in bytes and selected from the values of power of 2 not more than 512.

The operation of processing the commands for the disk apparatus according to the ninth embodiment of the present invention will be described below.

[Segment setting command]

Parameters of the segment setting command include the segment number, the access type, the access unit, the segment size and the priority order of disk transfer. The segment designated in the case under consideration is K.

Upon application of a segment setting command from the external equipment to the CPU 42, the CPU 42

checks the parameters and then recalculates and sets the segment start address of each segment in the register thereby to set other values in REG#K.

[Write command/read command]

The write command and the read command are similar to those described above in the first embodiment. The start address, the write size and the read size are set in units of sector.

[Segment write command]

Parameters of the segment write command include the identification number, the segment address and the write size. The identification number corresponds to the segment number set by the segment setting command. Let the identification number be K (K = 1 to N). The segment address is the write address in the segment, and is set with the start address of the segment as zero using the access unit set by the segment setting command as a unit. The write size is also set using the access unit set by the segment setting command as a unit.

Upon application of a segment write command from an external equipment to the CPU 42, the CPU 42 causes the execution of the host transfer from an external equipment to the segment #K in accordance with the set segment size and the set write size.

Further, the CPU 42 calculates the write destination address (DA + SA) on the disk 41 from the

start address DA (in units of sectors) on the disk set by the latest write command or the latest read command executed for the segment #M and from the sector address SA (in unit of sectors, with the first sector as zero) of the sector to be written in the segment #K. The CPU 42 then executes the disk transfer for transferring the updated data to the disk 41 in accordance with the set order of disk transfer.

[Segment read command]

Parameters of the segment read command include the identification number, the segment address and the read size. The segment address and the read size are set in the access unit set by the segment setting command.

Upon application of a segment read command from the external equipment to the CPU 42, the CPU 42 executes the host transfer from the segment #M to the external equipment in accordance with the set segment address and the set write size.

Now, explanation will be made about a method of using this command.

First, the external equipment issues a segment setting command and sets the segment setting register 61a as shown in FIG. 37. For the segment #K to which access is desired in units of words, the access type CSN is set to 3 (both for read and write operation) and the access unit ACK is set to 2.

Then, the segment #K is designated to execute the write command or the read command, so that the write data or the read data, as the case may be, is set in the segment #K. After that, the data stored in the segment #K is read by issuing a segment read command, and the stored data is changed by issuing a segment write command. The data written in the segment #K by the segment write command is written in the corresponding area on the disk 41 by the processing in the disk apparatus, thus holding the identity between the data in the segment #K and the data on the disk.

The segment #K thus set has stored therein, by reading with a read command, information such as the FAT (file allocation table) information which is frequently accessed and frequently rewritten in small units. As a result, subsequent random access in units of words to the buffer memory becomes possible. At the same time, the wait time due to disk access is eliminated, thereby improving the rewrite processing rate.

As described above, the disk apparatus according to the ninth embodiment permits the external equipment to randomly access directly to the segments of the buffer RAM of the disk apparatus in the access unit set as above. As a result, the disk apparatus according to the ninth embodiment can improve the random access efficiency.

According to the ninth embodiment, the segment

is set by the segment setting command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner that the write data with the segment setting information attached thereto is transferred to the disk apparatus, which sets the segment by detecting the segment setting information included in the write data/read data.

The segment setting register according to the ninth embodiment is so configured as to set neither the disk transfer block size nor the host transfer block size. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner that such set values are added to the above-mentioned set values.

According to the ninth embodiment, each segment is set by executing the segment setting command by segment. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to include a segment setting command for setting all the segments collectively.

According to the ninth embodiment, the identification information of each command is set as in the parameters of each command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured to provide a dedicated identification information setting command executed before

the write command/write command.

<<Embodiment 10>>

Now, explanation will be made about a disk apparatus according to a tenth embodiment of the present invention. The configuration of the disk apparatus according to the tenth embodiment is substantially similar to that of the disk apparatuses shown in FIGs. 26 and 27 except for the segment setting register of the buffer control circuit 53.

FIG. 38 is a diagram showing the correspondence between the segment setting register 61b of the buffer control circuit 53, the segmentation of the buffer RAM 43 and each area on the disk 41.

As shown in FIG. 38, the segment setting register 61b has set therein the access type, the segment start address, the segment size, the disk start address, the disk area size and the access unit. According to each set value, segment #1 of the buffer RAM 43 corresponds to area 1 on the disk 41, segment #2 corresponds to area 2 on the disk 2, and segment #K corresponds to area K on the disk 41. Also, it is possible to set the access unit ACK providing a unit of data transfer from the external equipment, and the operation of writing or reading data into or from the disk apparatus can be performed in the access unit ACK thus set. The access unit ACK is given in bytes and selected from a power of 2 not more than 512.

FIG. 38 is a diagram showing the correspondence between the segment setting register 61b of the buffer control circuit 53, the segmentation of the buffer RAM 43 and each area on the disk 41.

In the case under consideration, the access unit for the segment #K is 256 bytes.

Explanation will be made about the operation of processing the commands for the disk apparatus according to the tenth embodiment.

[Segment setting command]

Parameters of the segment setting command include the segment number, the access type, the disk start address, the disk area size, the access unit and the segment size. Assume that a segment number K is designated. The disk start address and the disk area size designate the range of the areas on the disk 41 in units of sectors, and this range of areas is associated with the segment #K.

[Write command]

Parameters of the write command include the identification number, the write address and the write size. The identification number corresponds to the segment number set by the segment setting command. Assume that the identification number is K. The write address and the write size are set in the access unit set by the segment setting command. The write address is a write destination address with a area start address of zero in the above-mentioned access unit within the area K on the disk.

Upon application of a write command from the

external equipment to the CPU 42, the CPU 42 executes the host transfer from the external equipment to the segment #K. Further, the CPU 42 calculates a write destination address ($DA + DW$) on the disk 41 from the write address DW and the start address DA of the area K on the disk 41 set by the segment setting register. Then, the CPU 42 executes the disk transfer for transferring data to the disk 41.

[Read command]

Parameters of the read command include the identification number, the read address and the read size. The read address and the read size are set in the access unit set by the segment setting command. The read address is a read destination address expressed in the above-mentioned access unit within the area K on the disk, and the area start address is assumed to be zero.

Upon application of a read command from the external equipment thereto, the CPU 42 calculates the read destination address ($DA + DR$) on the disk 41 from the read address DR and the start address DA on the disk 41 set by the segment setting register, and executes the disk transfer for transferring the data from the disk 41 to the segment #K. Further, the CPU 42 executes the host transfer from the segment #K to the external equipment.

As described above, the external equipment can set the access units for access to different

recording-reproducing areas on the disk for each segment by the segment setting command in the disk apparatus. The external equipment can also issue a write command or a read command for a segment designated by the identification number, and can thus record or reproduce data in different areas on the disk by different access units.

As described above, the disk apparatus according to the tenth embodiment, different recording-reproducing areas are set for different segments based on the setting information supplied from the external equipment. In this way, the recording-reproducing areas and the segments can establish a one-to-one correspondence, thus easily guaranteeing the identity between the data in each segment and the data on the disk.

The access unit providing the size of the data transferred between the external equipment and the disk apparatus can be set individually, and therefore can be set according to the type of the data to be recorded or to be reproduced.

The segment setting register according to the tenth embodiment is configured in a way not to set the disk transfer block size or the host transfer block size. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured to add these set values to other set values.

According to the tenth embodiment, the identification information of each command is set in the parameters of each command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the tenth embodiment, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to set a dedicated identification information setting command executed before the write command/read command is issued.

According to the tenth embodiment, each segment is set by executing the segment setting command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner as to provide a segment setting command for setting all the segments collectively.

According to the tenth embodiment, a segment is set by the segment setting command. The recording-reproducing apparatus according to the present invention, however, can alternatively be configured in such a manner that the segment setting information is added to the write data and transferred to the disk apparatus, which in turn detects the segment setting information included in the write data/read data thereby to set a segment.

Although the present invention has been described in terms of the presently preferred embodiments, it is to be understood that such disclosure is not to be interpreted as limiting. Various alterations and

modifications will no doubt become apparent to those skilled in the art to which the present invention pertains, after having read the above disclosure. Accordingly, it is intended that the appended claims be interpreted as covering all alterations and modifications as fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.



What is claimed is:

1. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
input means for inputting an input/output
execution time prediction request from an external
equipment; and
judging means for predicting the execution time
of the input/output request in response to said
input/output execution time prediction request.
2. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
judging means for predicting the execution time
of an input/output request from an external equipment and
judging whether said input/output request can be executed
within a time limit set by said external equipment in
response to said input/output request from said external
equipment; and
input/output request processing means for
executing said input/output request in the case where said
judging means judges that said request is executable and
for terminating the process in the case where said judging
means judges that said request is not executable, said
input/output request processing means giving a response to
said external equipment in accordance with the result of
said judgement.
3. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to
claim 1 or 2, further comprising a temporary memory
circuit divisible into a plurality of segments according



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to the type of an input/output request, wherein said judging means predicts the execution time of an input/output request on the basis of the result of prediction of the access time and the recording-reproducing time for a recording medium and the prevailing operating situation of a corresponding segment in response to said input/output request from said external equipment.

4. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
judging means for giving a response to an input/output data transfer amount request from an external equipment by means of a data size that can be input or output within a time limit set by said external equipment.

5. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments according to the type of an input/output request, wherein said judging means predicts a data size that can be input or output within said time limit by means of the result of prediction of the access time and the recording-reproducing time for a recording medium and the prevailing operating situation of a corresponding segment in response to said input/output request from an external equipment.

6. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising a temporary memory circuit



divisible into a plurality of segments according to the type of an input/output request, wherein said judging means notifies an available segment size as a writable data size in response to a write size request from said external equipment.

7. An input/output control method for a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising notification means for notifying the amount of data that can be transferred continuously to and from an external equipment in response to a data transfer amount request from said external equipment, comprising the step of:

selecting a method of data transfer between said external equipment and said recording-reproducing apparatus in accordance with said data amount that can be transferred.

8. An input/output control method according to claim 7 for a recording-reproducing apparatus comprising a temporary memory circuit for temporarily storing data and notification means for notifying the data amount that can be transferred between said external equipment and said temporary memory circuit, comprising the steps of:

selecting the number of data blocks that can be transferred continuously on the basis of said data amount that can be transferred continuously; and

controlling the data input/output to and from said recording-reproducing apparatus.



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9. An input/output control method for the recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 7, comprising the steps of:

reading periodically the data amount that can be transferred continuously;

segmenting the data blocks to be transferred into transfer data blocks having not more than said data amount that can be transferred continuously; and

controlling the input and output of said segmented transfer data blocks.

10. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:

a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments according to the type of an input/output request; and

preread means for reading data from a designated of a recording medium and storing the data only temporarily in a corresponding segment;

wherein the size of a corresponding available segment size is given as a data size that can be preread in response to a preread size request, and the size of the data of a segment that has been preread in response to a read size request is given as a readable data size.

11. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:

a temporary memory circuit capable of storing data temporarily;

management information memory means for storing



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the file management information corresponding to the data recorded in a recording medium; and

a control circuit for reproducing said management information in response to an automatic preread request from an external equipment, determining a position on said recording medium for recording a data block to be transferred to said external equipment, and prereading said data block.

12. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 11,

wherein said management information memory means stores at least a data block number and the recording position information of the data corresponding to said data block number, and

wherein said control circuit receives a data block number from the external equipment at the time of automatic preread request from the external equipment, and selects the recording position information corresponding to said data block number from among the file management information.

13. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit for storing data temporarily;

prefetch means for transferring the data reproduced from a recording medium to said temporary memory circuit; and



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a control circuit for discriminating the type of an input/output request from the external equipment, and selecting and executing a prefetch method corresponding to the type of said input/output request from among a plurality of prefetch methods having selected one of different data amounts to be prefetched and different time lengths required for the prefetching process.

14. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit for storing data temporarily;

preread means for reproducing a data block from a recording medium and transferring said data block to said temporary memory circuit; and

a control circuit for receiving an input/output request with an identifier attached thereto from said external equipment and selecting and transferring to said external equipment a data block to be transferred to said external equipment, from among a plurality of data blocks preread in accordance with said identifier.

15. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit for storing data temporarily; and

a control circuit for storing the data from said external equipment in response to a write data request from said external equipment, discriminating the type of said write data request, and selecting the data amount to



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be recorded continuously in a recording medium in accordance with the type thus discriminated.

16. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit for storing data temporarily;

accumulation means for accumulating read data requests from an external equipment; and

a control circuit for discriminating the type of a read data request from said external equipment, selecting and accumulating the number of read data requests to be accumulated in accordance with the type discriminated, and continuously reproducing the data from said recording medium in response to the accumulated request.

17. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit for storing data temporarily;

accumulation means for accumulating input/output requests from an external equipment; and

a control circuit for discriminating the type of the input/output requests accumulated, and selecting and executing an input/output request of the type to be processed in priority in accordance with the remaining time before a dead line calculated based on a limit time in the case where said input/output request has attached thereto said time limit.



18. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising:

detection means for detecting a continuously storable data amount in said temporary memory circuit from said external equipment as a data amount that can be transferred; and

a control circuit for selecting as a request to be executed an input/output request with a minimum remaining time before a predetermined deadline calculated based on a time limit from among the input/output requests with a time limit accumulated in accumulation means, and extending said time limit of said request to be executed in accordance with a possible delay time calculated in accordance with said data amount that can be transferred.

19. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:

a temporary memory circuit for storing data temporarily; and

a control circuit including means for accumulating said input/output requests, means for calculating the time remaining before a deadline based on a time limit of the accumulated input/output requests, means for selecting an input/output request with a minimum remaining time among said accumulated input/output requests, and means for executing said input/output request in the case where said minimum remaining time is smaller than a predetermined value and for executing in a



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selected order the accumulated input/output requests in accordance with the recording position of the data corresponding to each of said input/output requests in case where the above-mentioned conditions are not met.

20. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments;

temporary memory circuit control means for selecting said segments based on the identification information for a write request from an external equipment, temporarily storing in said segments the data input from said external equipment in said selected segment, and outputting said data as a write data; and
write means for writing said write data in a recording medium.

21. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments;

read means for reading data from a recording medium; and

temporary memory circuit control means for selecting said segments based on the identification information of a read request from an external equipment, temporarily storing the data read from said recording medium in said selected segment, and outputting said data to said external equipment.



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22. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments;

segment setting means for setting at least selected one of a segment size, a method of transferring data from an external equipment and a method of transferring write data to a recording medium, based on the setting information supplied from said external equipment; and

temporary memory circuit control means for selecting said segment based on the identification information of a write request from said external equipment, temporarily storing the data input from said external equipment in said selected segment, and outputting said data as a write data; and

write means for writing said write data into said recording medium.

23. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments;

read means for reading data from a recording medium;

segment setting means for setting at least selected one of a segment size, a method of transferring data read from said recording medium and a method of transferring data to said external equipment for each



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segment based on the setting information supplied from said external equipment; and

temporary memory circuit control means including means for selecting said segment based on the identification information for a read request from said external equipment, means for temporarily storing in said selected segment the data read from said recording medium based on said set method of transfer, and means for outputting said data to said external equipment.

24. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said segment setting means sets at least selected one of the condition for starting/stopping the data transfer to or from said external equipment and the condition for starting/stopping the transfer of read data from said recording medium for each segment based on the setting information from said external equipment.

25. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said segment setting means sets at least selected one of the condition for starting/stopping the data transfer to or from said external equipment for each segment and the condition for starting/stopping the transfer of write data to said recording medium based on the setting information from said external equipment.

26. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said segment setting means is configured in such a manner as to set the order of priority of the



read data transfer from said recording medium for each segment based on the setting information supplied from the external equipment.

27. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said segment setting means is configured in such a manner as to set the order of priority of the write data transfer to said recording medium for each segment based on the setting information supplied from the external equipment.

28. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said segment setting means is configured in such a manner as to set at least selected one of a segment size, a method of transferring data from the external equipment for each segment and a method of transferring data to said recording medium for each segment, based on the data transfer rate information supplied from said external equipment.

29. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said segment setting means is configured in such a manner as to set at least selected one of a segment size, a method of transferring data from said recording medium for each segment and a method of transferring data to said external equipment for each segment, based on the data transfer rate information from said external equipment.

30. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to



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claim 22, wherein said segment setting means is configured in such a manner as to set an access unit constituting a unit of data transfer from said external equipment for each segment, based on the setting information supplied from said external equipment.

31. A recording-reproducing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said segment setting means is configured in such a manner as to set an access unit constituting a unit of data transfer to said external equipment for each segment, based on the setting information supplied from said external equipment.

32. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit divisible into a plurality of segments;

access unit setting means for setting an access unit constituting a unit of data transfer to or from an external equipment for each segment, based on the setting information supplied from said external equipment;

temporary memory circuit control means for selecting said segment based on the identification information of a write request or a read request from said external equipment and writing or reading data into or from said selected segment randomly in said access unit from said external equipment; and

write/read means for writing or reading data into or from said selected segment.



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33. A recording-reproducing apparatus comprising:
a temporary memory circuit divisible into a
plurality of segments;

recording-reproducing area setting means for
setting a recording-reproducing area of a recording medium
for each segment based on the setting information supplied
from an external equipment;

temporary memory circuit control means for
selecting said segment based on the identification
information of a write request or a read request from said
external equipment, and temporarily storing in said
selected segment the write data input from said external
equipment or outputting said temporarily stored data from
said selected segment to said external equipment; and

write/read means for writing data from said
selected segment into said set recording-reproducing area
or reading data from said set recording-reproducing area
into said selected segment.