

Exabyte VXA-2 PacketLoader

Summary: A 1.6TB tape drive backup appliance that implements packet data rather than data streams. Winner of our Editor's Choice Award for value and reliability.

Estimated Street Price: \$1,940

In the 1990's, when hard drive space was at a premium in price, many companies used tape drives to back up their data. The process was slow and at times not the most reliable, especially with a damaged tape. Hard drives today are measured in gigabytes, rather than megabytes and their price has dramatically decreased. More people are relying on hard drive backups however large servers will find a problem with this once the size of the data reaches a certain point.

operations through an interesting menu system that is detailed completely in the user's manual.

Unlike tape drives used in the previous decade, the VXA-2 doesn't write a long data stream as its predecessors. Rather it reads and writes short 128K data packets with each of them containing a 64-byte header. This header information (somewhat like a FAT table

drive transfer rate in the range of 20GB per hour. The VXA-2 comes in two different flavors, one uses an LVD SCSI interface while the other utilizes FireWire-800 (1394b) technology. The SCSI unit also has a 10/100BaseT network port for use with a web browser-based program to monitor the drive's activities.

Exabyte offers this system on their web site however we found better pricing on the inter-



Exabyte offers a tape drive system with the VXA-2 PacketLoader 1x10 Autoloader that can hold up to 10 tapes for a total backup capacity of 800GB uncompressed and 1.6TB using compression. We give this 1U appliance our Editor's Choice Award for value and reliability.

Each of the ten tapes use enclosed barcode labels so that the VXA-2 knows what tape it is working with. Each of the tapes is front-loaded into the system through a carousel-styled tape holding system. An LCD panel that's located in front of the appliance assists in the manual

on a hard drive) identifies that data information as well as integrity checks of the data. The drive can also vary its speed based on data bursts sent to the unit, most notable when backing up small files compared to larger ones. Using four different over-scanning read heads you can be assured it will be able to read the data from the tape.

When we ran tests with the VXA-2 PacketLoader we looked for integrity and speed. We're glad to report that we received 100% accuracy in all cases. Using the appliance you should be able to obtain a data-to-

net for as low as \$1940. The 80/160MB tapes will run you around \$75 a piece. Technical specifications are available as www.exabyte.com.

