

Larry's Final Cut Pro Newsletter

Editor: Larry Jordan
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www.larryjordan.biz

Welcome to the Ninth edition of my Final Cut Pro newsletter! (This was updated 9/25/04 with additional reader comments.)

The goal of this newsletter is to provide information helpful to the professional user of Final Cut Pro. This newsletter publishes around the middle of each month. Past issues are not archived, however, key articles are posted to my website for your future reference. Unless otherwise noted, all references are to Final Cut Pro HD, and should not be assumed to work under any other version.

Please invite your editor friends to visit my web site -- www.larryjordan.biz. Together we can make this a great Final Cut Pro resource!

Newsletter Contents

This month's newsletter is filled with lots and lots of short tips and techniques, many suggested by readers. I'm always interested in your opinions, feel free to write me at: larry@larryjordan.biz.

- [Survey: How Long Have You Been Using Final Cut Pro?](#)
- [Technique: Why using the unlink button is dangerous](#)
- [Technique: Trimming Your Edits with Ripple and Roll](#)
- [Tip from the Classroom](#)
- [Tip: Setting Multi-frame Time and Pre-roll preferences](#)
- [Technique: Getting Computer Graphics to Look Good on Video](#)
- [A Potential Bug with OS 10.3.5 and FCP HD](#)
- [Tip: Tossing Keyframes](#)
- [Tip: How to Delete a Through Edit](#)
- [Reader feedback](#)
- [Top Ten List: Improving DVD-R Compatibility](#)
- [Last Month's Survey Results](#)

Survey -- How Long Have You Been Using Final Cut Pro?

Your answers last month were great! Based on your comments, we are focusing on providing more editing tips and techniques. In addition, we are looking at additional ways to help meet your needs for better, reliable information. (Click here, if you want to see the results of last month's surveys.)

This month, I'd like to learn how long you've been using Final Cut Pro. As always, all your responses are anonymous and very much appreciated.

Editorial/Technique: The Link Selection Button is Dangerous

This whole issue crystallized for me during a class this past week, where most of my students kept getting their clips out of sync.

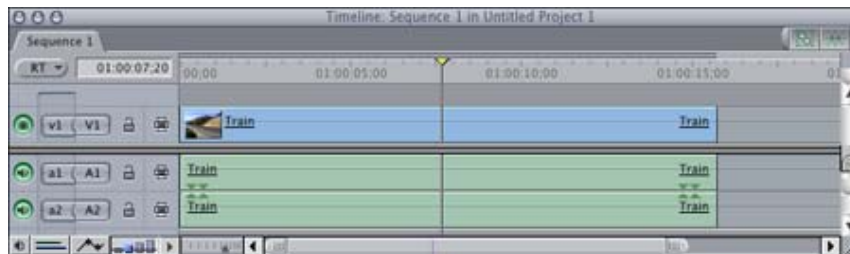
This is, perhaps, partly a technique and partly a rant. But bear with me, you'll find a better option at the end.



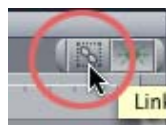
There is a button in the Timeline, next to the Snapping button, that drives me absolutely nuts. It's called the "Linked Selection" button and putting it in the Timeline is, in my opinion, a significantly unwise decision.

Let start with a definition: A linked clip is a clip where the audio and video are linked together -- indicated by an underlined file name in the Timeline. Linked clips are generally used for synced audio and video. There is absolutely nothing wrong with linked clips. It assures that the audio and video will travel together, remaining in sync, wherever the clip is moved. This is a good thing.

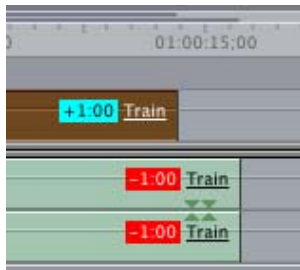
The Link Selection button, though, is not.



Here's the problem. This is a linked clip, called "Train," that is on the Timeline. What you decide to do is create an edit where the video edits before the audio. (In editing parlance, this is called an "L" edit. It's opposite number, where audio precedes video, is called a "J" edit. Why? Because that's the shape of the edit points on the Timeline.)



So, you click the Linked Selection button to turn it off (gray) and start to move the video. The nice thing about the Linked Selection button is that when it is off, you can select just the video or the audio of a linked clip. The bad thing about this button is that it is very, VERY easy to get a clip out of sync.



Here, for example, I just bumped the video clip and now, those red flags indicate that I am out of sync by a second.

WHY PUT A BUTTON IN THE TIMELINE THAT, WHEN IT IS USED, MAKES IT DEAD EASY TO GET OUT OF SYNC?

Sigh... This is foolish.



(By the way, if you get out of sync, simply **Ctrl+click** on the red flag of the clip that's out of sync, and select **Move Into Sync**.)

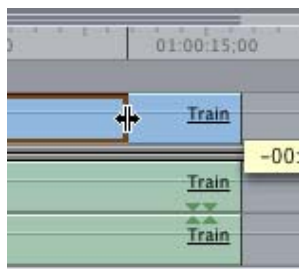
Now, I realize there are times when you need to unlink, or link, or relink clips. My objection is *not* that this button exists, but that it is on the Timeline. The Timeline should have only "safe" buttons on it. And this button is BOTH unsafe and unnecessary. It should be a menu item, hidden away from innocent hands.

Here's the secret to moving the edit point of one side of a linked clip, without running the risk of getting your audio and video out of sync:

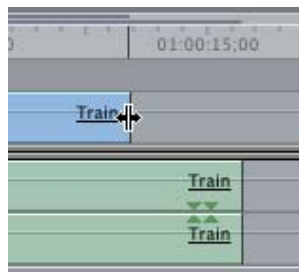
1. Hold down the Option key



2. Select the edit point you want to move, the Video out, in this case.



3. Drag the Out where you want it.



4. Release the Option key.

No sync problems, with total flexibility to move, select, or delete any portion of a linked clip.

Now, granted, if you use the option key to select the whole video or audio side of a linked clip, you can still drag it out of sync. But, most of the time, what you mostly need to do is to move one side of an edit point to create a split edit. And using the Option key is much safer, and faster, than using the Linked Selection button.

[Go to Top.](#)

Technique: Trimming Your Edits with Ripple and Roll

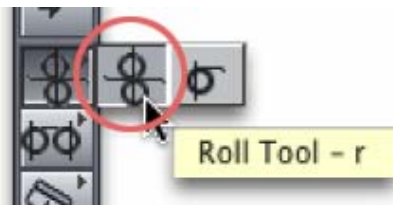
Trimming is the process of getting rid of extra frames around the edit point in order to make your edit flow smoothly. Trimming is essential to editing. So essential, in fact, that Final Cut provides a number of different ways to trim. This technique highlights some of these options.



The venerable **Arrow** tool (*shortcut: A*) is the first choice for beginning users because they already know how to use it. The problem with using the Arrow tool to trim is that you can't make an In start earlier, nor extend an Out, when the clip you want to trim is sandwiched between two other clips. For that, you'll need to use a more specialized tool -- the Ripple or the Roll tool.



The **Ripple** tool (*shortcut: RR*) allows you to change one side of an edit point -- either the In or the Out, but not both. This is the tool to use when you need to adjust the timing of one shot without making any changes to the other shot -- for instance, if you are cutting from a wide shot of someone walking up to a door to a tight shot of them walking through the door, you would use the Ripple tool to make sure the actor's position matches between the Out and the In.



The **Roll** tool (*shortcut: R*) allows you to simultaneously change both the Out and the In so that you can adjust the timing of the edit point. For instance, in the example from the last paragraph, you would use the Roll tool to move when the edit occurs -- just before she walks thru the door, just as she is walking through the door or just after she walks through the door.

A Ripple *always* affects the duration of your Timeline, A Roll *never* affects it. A Ripple only changes *one* side of the edit point, a Roll changes *both* sides.

In this technique, I'll show you several different ways you can create Ripple and Roll edits -- some with the keyboard and some with the mouse.

(As a side note, trimming always works better with Snapping turned off. Go to View > Snapping, or use the *shortcut: N*).

FIRST, SELECT THE EDIT POINT

From my point of view, an edit point has three sides: the *Out* of the out-going clip, the *In* of the in-coming clip and *both* the In and Out.

Because you have these options, there are a variety of techniques to use to select an edit point:

1. Select the Ripple tool (*shortcut: RR*) or the Roll tool (*shortcut: R*) and *click* the edit point you want to adjust (In, Out or Both).
2. Position the playhead near an edit point and type the letter, **V**. The playhead jumps to the *nearest* edit point (either earlier or later in the timeline). Then, type the letter **U** to toggle between selecting the In, Out or Both.
3. With an edit point selected, press the Up or Down arrow keys to jump to the next/previous edit point. When an edit point is selected, the Up and Down arrow keys will select it in the same manner.

SECOND, ADJUST THE EDIT POINT

As with selection, there are a variety of ways to adjust an edit point. As with all trimming, handles are critical. No handles means no trimming. Handles are extra video before the In and after the Out.



(To see if a clip has handles, double-click it to load it into the Viewer. Video before the In is an In-handle, and video after the Out is an Out-handle.)

To adjust the edit point:

1. Drag it with the mouse
2. Type the **comma** key to move the edit point earlier, or the **period** key to move the edit point later
3. Press the Plus (+) or Minus (-) key on your keyboard, then a number, followed by the Enter key. (For instance, - 20 Enter.) This moves the selected edit point an amount of frames equal to the number you just entered; in this case, 20 frames.

When you are done adjusting, preview your edit by typing the **Backslash (\)** key. The playhead will back up a few seconds, play through your edit, and stop.

Very cool.

[Go to Top.](#)

Tips from the Classroom: More Trimming Techniques

I just finished teaching edit point trimming to one of my Introductory Final Cut Pro HD classes when Laura, one of my students, pointed out another trimming technique:

- Select an edit point (In, Out or Both) and type **Left bracket** to move earlier one frame, or **Right bracket** to move later *one* frame.
- Now, hold down the **Shift** key. **Shift+Left bracket** trims the edit point back (to the left) 5 frames.
- Type **Shift+Right bracket** and the edit point moves forward (to the right) 5 frames.

The amount of frames you you move when holding down the Shift key is determined by the Multi-frame Trim Size text box, located in **Final Cut Pro HD**

> **User Preferences > User Settings > Editing tab.** The default setting is 5 frames.

After some additional testing, we also discovered that:

- **Shift+Option+Left** or **Right arrow** does the same thing
- And, for that matter, so does **Shift+Comma** and **Shift+Period**.

Whew! That's almost too much of a good thing -- and all these shortcuts don't even include the Trim Edit window, which I'll cover another time.

[Go to Top.](#)

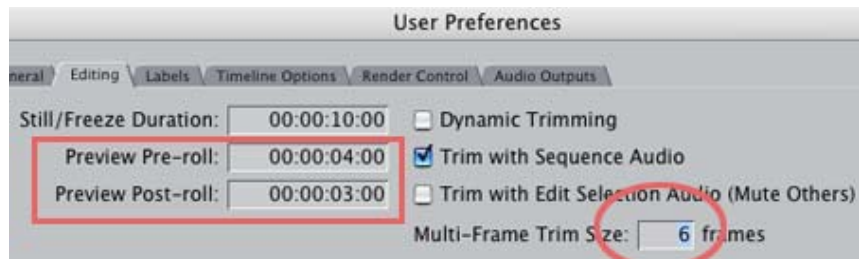
Tip: Setting Multi-Trim and Pre-roll Preferences

If you want to use the keyboard shortcuts to trim in multiple frames, there are two preference settings that I've found helpful:

1. Multi-frame trim size, which was just introduced
2. Pre-roll and post-roll.

As you just learned in the previous techniques, the multi-frame trim size is applied to any selected edit point to trim multiple frames at the same time. For me, I often find myself thinking and editing in multiples of three frames, so I've changed my multi-trim frame size to 6.

You can create multi-frame trims using the keyboard (as we discussed in the previous tip) or in the Trim Edit window. Regardless of which you use, it's purpose is the same -- to allow you to trim a specific number of frames all at one time.



To change the Multi-frame trim size from its default of 5, go to **Final Cut Pro HD > User Preferences > User Settings > Editing tab.** On my system, I set the multi-frame trim size to 6 frames. For me, trimming in multiples of 3 frames feels smoother. You can make this any setting you want, up to 99 frames.

The Pre-roll and Post-roll is, for me, even more useful. Whenever I want to watch an edit play through, I press the **backslash** key (\). The playhead backs up the amount of time specified in the Pre-roll, plays through the current location of the playhead, then stops after playing the Post-roll amount of time.

This is a great way to check the timing of an edit, without resorting to the Trim Edit window. Plus, it returns the playhead to the frame where you started, so you don't spend any time chasing the playhead.

Granted, if something needs rendering, this technique won't work, but if no rendering is involved, this is a fast way to watch your edits in real-time.

To change the pre- and post-roll from the defaults of 5:00 and 2:00, go to **Final**

Cut Pro HD > User Preferences > User Settings > Editing tab. On my system, I set the pre-roll and post-roll to 4:00 and 3:00, respectively.

[Go to Top.](#)

Technique: Compensating Graphics for Video's Non-square Pixels

One of the mailing lists I read regularly is the Apple Final Cut Pro Trainer's list. Recently, I was fascinated by a discussion of what's the correct size to create graphics on your computer that import into Final Cut with the correct proportions for video.

But, first, some background. The smallest element of a picture is the *pixel* (short for "**P**ICture **E**lement"). On your computer screen, all pixels are square. However, on a TV, pixels are rectangles. This means that if you are creating graphics on your computer to display as part of a video program, you need to compensate for the differences in shape between the two pixel sizes.

If you don't compensate for these differences, the circles you create on your computer will display as long, thin ovals on your TV set.

To make matters worse, Final Cut, in an effort to be helpful, adjusts for these pixel differences differently, depending upon whether you are importing a single layer graphic, such as a scanned photograph, or a multi-layer PhotoShop document. *AND*, with the release of Final Cut Pro HD, Apple changed the math behind how it calculates this difference in shape, which means that the old numbers we used to use may no longer be correct.

Into this discussion, Carl Jacobs, both an Apple Trainer and newsletter subscriber, wrote a really nice piece that describes what you need to know. I asked him to summarize the results exclusively for this newsletter.

Carl writes:

A little-known SMPTE Recommended Practices document from 1995 (SMPTE RP 187 -1995) both anticipates the Photoshop to FCP image workflow and specifies the SMPTE recommended pixel aspect ratio for NTSC 4:3 (.904) and 16:9 Anamorphic (1.205) Unfortunately, FCP uses different pixel aspect ratios of .888888888889 (8/9) and 1.185, respectively.

One can guess why Apple may have used different numbers (they were unaware of the SMPTE doc and made some logical assumptions of their own), but the implication for those of us who import Photoshop and other square-pixel images into FCP is that using Apple's numbers based on FCP pixel aspect ratio will make images appear correct (a circle is a circle) *within* FCP but they will be slightly distorted when output to an NTSC monitor.

On the other hand, if we use the SMPTE numbers (or Photoshop's and After Effects' presets which use SMPTE's numbers) then the image will look right on the NTSC monitor but will be slightly distorted in FCP and will not match other images created in FCP.

The numbers break down like this:

<i>Video Format</i>	<i>Final Image size</i>	<i>SMPTE recommends</i>	<i>FCP recommends</i>
DV-NTSC 4:3	720x480	720x531	720x540

DV-NTSC 16:9 Anamorphic	720x480	868x480	853x480
601-NTSC 4:3	720x486	720x538	720x547
601-NTSC 16:9 Anamorphic	720x486	868x486	853x480

For more info on Apple's numbers (including the numbers for PAL video) go here:

<http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=36836>

Before you tear out whatever hair you have left trying to figure out which numbers to use, keep in mind that most if not all NTSC displays and TV sets (which ultimately is what the viewer will see your work on) are probably not geometrically calibrated anyway and certainly not within the 2% difference between the two sets of numbers.

Larry again. Carl did a great job researching these numbers. However, I especially point out his last paragraph. There's a point where the geometry (or lack thereof) of the home viewer's set will have more impact than the size you create your images.

If you are interested in a more detailed analysis, including specific "how-to" instructions to determine the correct size to make Photoshop images look correct when imported into FCP [read the longer version of Carl's article here.](#)

And a **large** thank-you to Carl for taking the time to write this up for all of us!

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By the way, for those of you outside North America scratching their heads about this, SMPTE (the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) is the official committee that determines the engineering specifications for NTSC video. There are similar governmental bodies that set the standards for PAL video. And, like NTSC, PAL video uses a non-square pixel. However, a PAL pixel is a different size than the NTSC pixel (which should, of course, surprise no one).

Apple's web site provides the necessary conversion numbers for PAL video. You may talk amongst yourselves to decide if Apple's numbers are correct.

[Go to Top.](#)

Potential Bug: OS 10.3.5 and Final Cut Pro HD

Some users have reported significant crashing issues using Final Cut, after they've upgraded to 10.3.5, when running on some G-4 systems. (Please note that this is *specific* to some G-4 machines).

I have been told that Apple is aware of the problem, but has not figured out the fix. In the meantime, if this could possibly affect you, you have three options:

1. Don't upgrade to 10.3.5 ... yet.
2. If you have upgraded, and are not having problems, do nothing and don't worry about it.
3. If you have upgraded **and** are having problems **and** can not downgrade to 10.3.4 (for instance, you want to run Motion, which requires 10.3.5), go to the **Final Cut Pro HD > System Settings > Effects handling tab** and turn all pop-up menus to None.

Choosing option 3 means that you will have no real-time effects. However, current reports also indicate that the crashes will probably stop.

(Thanks to Lisa Brenneis for the heads up on this issue.)

[Go to Top.](#)

Tip: Tossing Keyframes

OK. I stole this idea from a recent conversation between Tom Wolsky (whom I'm convinced never sleeps) and Carl Jacobs.

Carl: Hey, here's a little something one of my eager trainees discovered today: If you drag a keyframe really fast up or down off the edge, you know, kind of toss it with a flick of the mouse, it deletes itself.



Tom: Sure, it even has it's own little garbage can icon when you do that. Speed is not the prerequisite, distance is what does it. Been there since version 1.

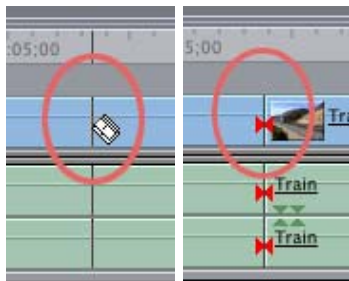
Larry: (eavesdropping) Hmm... I was just practicing this. Yes, dragging a keyframe vertically will delete it, provided you move it far enough. However, seeing the "little garbage can icon" requires really good vision, because it flickers so fast it is VERY hard to see.

Update: On the other hand, I was tossing keyframes in the Viewer. If you toss them on the Timeline, you get the nice little trash can icon illustrated above.

[Go to Top.](#)

Tip: How to Delete a Through Edit

It took me years to discover this, in fact, I learned about it two weeks ago, so I wanted to pass it on to you. (Though, you probably knew about this already.)

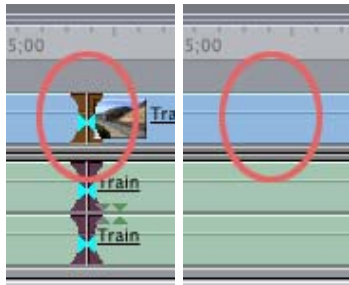


When you use the **Razor Blade** to cut a clip, you create a "Through Edit." This is an edit, invisible to the Viewer, which separates a clip into two pieces. Normally, this is what you intend. But, if you change your mind, you can "uncut" it using the Undo key -- provided you Undo it immediately. But, what if days pass before

you decide you no longer need that cut there.

I used to either live with the cut, because, after all, a through edit is invisible to the viewer, or I would delete the shortest portion of the cut clip and drag the longer part back out, using the Arrow tool, until the clip was whole again.

Both techniques worked, but neither was particularly elegant.



Then, I discovered it. To delete a through edit, simply select it by clicking on it, and press the Delete key. Poof. No more edit.

How cool is that?

[Go to Top.](#)

Reader Comments

This month brought in a full helping of reader comments.

Rob Howard writes:

In last month's technique on [Creating Default Transitions](#), you wrote: "If you are using a version of Final Cut prior to Final Cut Pro HD, you will first need to Clear the Default (Effects > Video Transitions > Clear Default) before you can set it."

This is not entirely accurate. I am still working in FCP 3, and while what you have said is accurate for the operation from the main menu, all that's necessary for me to change the default transition is to CNTRL +CLICK on the transition I want as the default and select Set Default Transition from the contextual menu that drops down. Done.

Larry replies: Thanks, Rob, for pointing this out. I never use the contextual menu to set the default transitions, so I never noticed this.

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Eric Peacock writes:

Regarding your [technique on using OMF](#), OMF audio export [also] works nicely in *Digital Performer*, which does multi-channel mixes up to 10.1 and pretty much everything ProTools or any other audio app does. This is what I use for my music, which is usually 20 or more tracks with lots of MIDI layered in so it's a vital part of my workflow.

It also works well to export a low-res video clip of the project and load that into *Digital Performer* so I can align precise effects with key events and get visual feedback.

I figure it's pretty much a given that any OMF supporting app will work as you detailed with ProTools, but it's nice to know that more economical software packages like *Digital Performer* can be used in the same workflow.

Larry replies: Thanks, Eric. For creating a low-res video for mixing, I most often create a small (160 x 120, 30 fps) QuickTime movie using the Video codec. This displays fine in *ProTools* (and, I suspect, *Digital Performer*), doesn't take a lot of screen space, and decompresses using very little CPU overhead, which is perfect for audio mixing.

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David Morgan continues the discussion on OMF:

I, too, use Pro tools. I find myself wishing that there was a fluid in and out to Pro Tools like AVID is advertising with their Xpress Pro application.

However, considering the situation where OMF only goes one way, out of FCP into Pro Tools, I find myself wondering what's the use? It would seem that exporting AIFF out and in would be just as good [as OMF] without laying out \$1,000 for DV Toolkit, simply to get OMF support into ProTools.

Larry replies: The difference between AIF and OMF is that using OMF allows you to import each clip into your audio application as an individual entity retaining handles and the ability to move that clip separately from other clips on the same track. Exporting audio as an AIF means that all clips on that track are merged into one long clip with no handles.

OMF is more flexible. Whether that flexibility is worth \$1,000 depends upon how often you intend to move files between the two applications.

Update: Tom Wolsky wrote in with additional info. "In FCP4 you can export Audio to AIFFs, which allows you to export each track separately, or as grouped stereo pairs. You don't get handles, but the AIF files include the results of whatever keyframing and effects have been applied to the clip in FCP. OMF files exported from FCP don't include keyframes, level changes or filters."

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Mark Spencer, another Final Cut trainer, writes:

Your tip about "reverse match-frame" is great, it reminded me of two other helpful techniques:

- The first tip builds on your idea about finding clips in a sequence. If you want to figure out what clips in your browser have not yet been used in your sequence, you can take advantage of the fact that FCP's Find function is context-sensitive.



So if you select your sequence (by clicking on it in the Browser, not by making the timeline active), and hit **Cmd+F**, you have the option to search for **Unused Media** in selected sequences, and the **Find Results** window that comes up will show you all the unused clips.

- Second, a great tip from Kevin Monahan, is the ability to match-frame a copy of the source clip. Place your playhead over a clip in the Timeline and press **Cmd+Option+F** to load a *copy* of the source clip into the browser.

Why do that, you may well ask? Well, it's great for applying speed changes: you won't affect your Timeline by rippling, and you won't end up with a speed change applied to the master clip in the browser either. Very sweet, Kevin!

Larry replies: Thanks, Mark. (By the way, Mark wrote me later saying the tip from Kevin Monahan (<http://www.fcpworld.com>) came, originally, from Tom Wolsky, so I am giving them both credit.)

Update: Tom wrote in with a further clarification: "This technique only works if you've logged and batch captured your material. If you work with subclips or some other post capture organization technique, the "Find Unused" technique is unfortunately pretty useless."

Larry again: Good point. I never use subclips and always log and capture my material, so I did not realize the limitations of this technique.

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Scott Taylor writes:

I read your article about adding a transition [simultaneously to] multiple clips in the August newsletter. This issue comes up often on the forums and the answer you published has become well-known (to me, anyway).

What seems less obvious is that you can apply the same technique to audio tracks, applying, say, the **Audio cross fade + 3 db** to every audio cut. Just make sure the audio transition you want to apply is the default, and select and drag the audio clips to the canvas for "overwrite" the same way. They have to have enough handles, of course, just like video. In fact, if audio and video are linked, you can select and drag both video and audio to the canvas for "overwrite with transition" and both transitions will be applied.

I'm doing this with FCP 3.04. I'd hope it works the same in newer versions.

Larry replies: Cool. It's obvious, now that you mention it, but I hadn't thought about it before.

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Jim Long writes, regarding the [article on garbage mattes](#):

Your article on garbage mattes was quite interesting as well as helpful. It got me thinking. Christian Fessel had to have had a lot of experience with FCP to even know to set up the long shot before his crew even started unloading the truck. I've been shooting and editing video for over 25 years working with minimum crews and thought I was doing great to keep the "line" and continuity in my mind as we move from shot to shot. This article showed me how much more is possible.

Larry replies: I've already passed your compliments on to Christian. I was impressed with this technique myself. Thanks!

[Go to Top.](#)

Tip: Improving Compatibility when Burning DVDs

One last thing before I wrap up this month's issue.

I've been trying to write these suggestions up as a Technique for months, each issue with no success. There just wasn't enough time. So, rather than let this go for yet another month, I'm turning it into a *Top Ten List* to give you some ideas on how to improve the success of your DVD burns.

As with any list of rules, there are ALWAYS exceptions. However, notwithstanding that someone will probably object, let me plunge boldly ahead and present you with these suggestions.

Larry's Top Ten Steps to Improving DVD Compatibility

1. Burning at slower rates improves compatibility. iDVD and DVD Studio Pro do not allow you to set burn speed. Roxio (soon-to-be-Sonic) Toast does.
2. Always match the burn speed of your media to the burn speed of your drive. Burning 8x media at 1x speed is not as good as burning 1x media at 1x speed.
3. DVD-R is more compatible with more players than DVD+R
4. Burned DVDs will not play in about 1/3 of DVD set-top or computer players.
5. Replicated DVDs will not play in about 1% of DVD set-top or computer players.
6. Slowing down compression bit-rates will improve compatibility. While the maximum bit rate is about 9 megabits per second, I've found an average bit rate of 5.5 mbps with a maximum bit rate of 7.2 mbps to be a lot better, with virtually no difference in quality.
7. Buying name brand media is better than buying cheap media. There's a reason it's cheap.
8. If high-quality replication is your goal, deliver your VIDEO_TS and AUDIO_TS folders on a Firewire drive or DLT tape, not a burned DVD.
9. The image quality of VBR encoding is worth the extra time it takes. (Use the "High Quality" setting in Compressor.)
10. Always test your DVDs; both before and after burning. If you can't get it to play, no one else will either.

Last Month's Survey Results

To see the results of surveys from prior issues, click here:

<http://www.larryjordan.biz/surveys.html>

Here's the commercial that supports this newsletter.

I provide system design, consulting, editing, training and support for Final Cut Pro and DVD Studio Pro.

You can review my [support and training services here](#).

If you need help or advice, I'd appreciate it if you would give me a call, (818) 879-5105, or send me an email -- larry@larryjordan.biz -- worldwide.

My [client list](#) speaks for itself.

Your support of my services keeps this newsletter free.

Thanks.

Wrap-up

Well, that's it for this edition of the newsletter. Let me know what you think, and tell your friends to subscribe. I love reading your comments and sharing them with others. That way, we all learn!

Normally, in this space, I project what I'm going to talk about next month. Sometimes, I even guess right. Here's what I think is on tap for next month:

- Technique: Prepping Still Images for Video
- Technique: Demystifying the files Final Cut creates
- Reader feedback -- so send your comments in!
- Another "Client Report"
- Tips from the Classroom
- More reader surveys
- And more.

Oh, and I am also looking for ideas for surveys. Let me know what you'd like to learn.

Thanks -- and have fun editing!

Larry

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