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Larry Jordan's Monthly Newsletter

Editor: Larry Jordan
Issue #49 -- October, 2008

Welcome to the latest edition of my monthly Final Cut Studio newsletter for October, 2008.

The goal of this newsletter is to provide information helpful to the professional user of Final Cut Pro. This newsletter publishes each month. Past issues are archived at the end of each year with key articles posted on my website for your reference. All software references are to Final Cut Studio 2 unless otherwise noted.

Please invite your friends to visit my website -- www.larryjordan.biz. There you'll find daily tips, latest industry news, over 350 articles, and tutorials to help you get the most out of Final Cut!

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WRAP-UP

WELCOME

My gosh, these are not easy times! I'm stunned, watching what's happening in the stock market. I talk with editors on a daily basis who describe clients and jobs vanishing overnight. My heart goes out to everyone who is suffering from all this - which, at this point, seems to be just about all of us. Things are a mess.

But, rather than sit in a corner and sulk, I've decided to cram in as many interesting tips and techniques as I can this month - to give you something fun to look over and think about.

As always, I'm grateful for [all your email](#) and conversations - working with folks like you makes my life fun. Thanks!

NEW PRODUCT REVIEW -- DROBO



Storage, as you know, is essential to video editing. Even better is expandable storage. And the ideal is expandable, flexible storage. And with that, cue the music, enter Drobo.

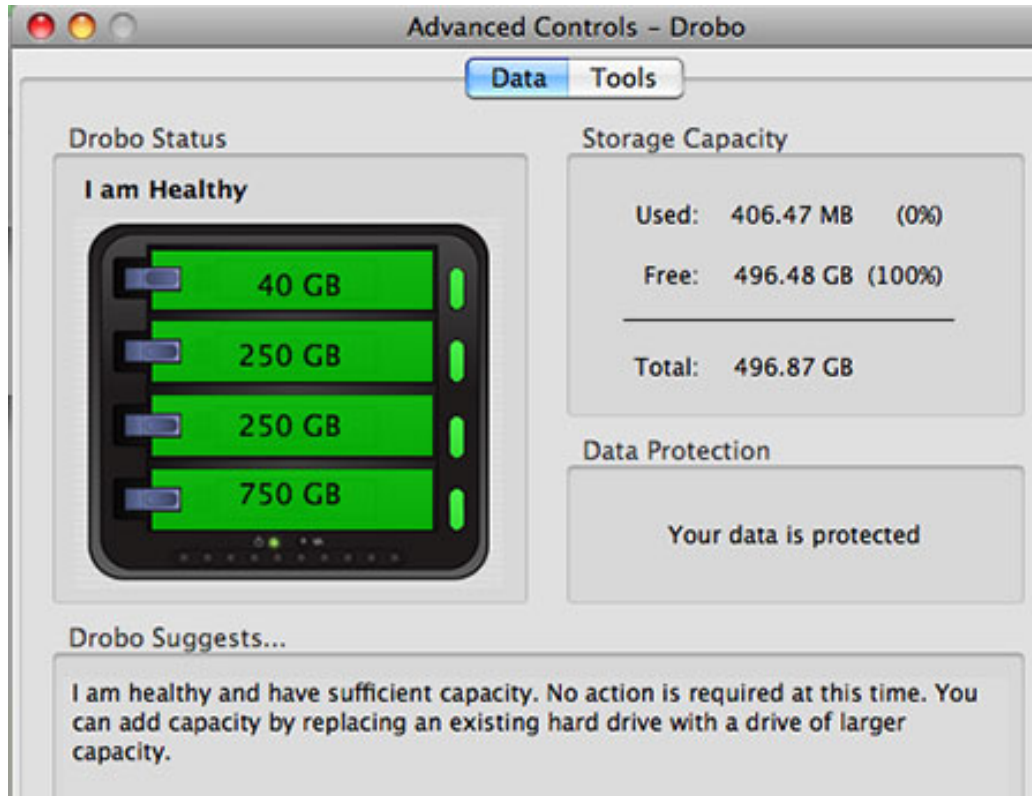
Drobo is a product of [Data Robotics](#). Recently, **Mark Fuccio**, Senior Director of Products and Markets, asked me if I'd like to review a unit. Since I love reviewing new toys, I immediately said yes and shortly thereafter, a Drobo appeared on my doorstep.

It arrived in two boxes - each about a cubic foot in size. The first box held the Drobo and the second box held the drives. Unpacking was a breeze - I especially like the fact that the Drobo came wrapped in a cloth bag, rather than plastic. I also liked the overall humor and friendliness in the packaging and instructions.

There are two cables that need to connect to the back of the unit - a power cable and a FireWire 800 cable. The cables are a bit tricky to put in, and I'd like a cable lock to help prevent the power cable from detaching, but hooking this up is not difficult.

Drobo is not like any other hard disk or RAID I've ever worked with before. It holds up to four standard-

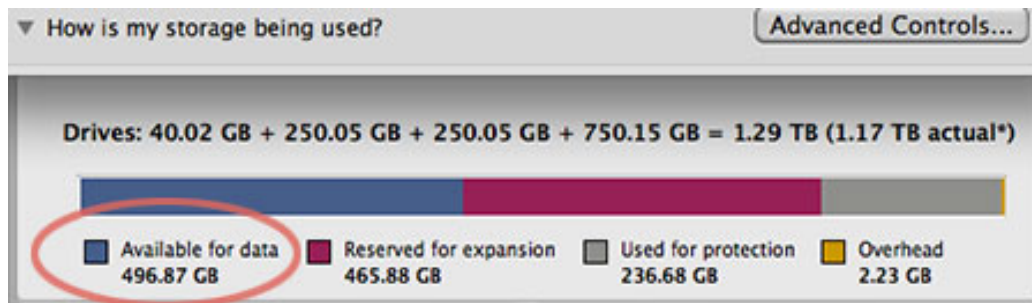
issue hard drives, which can be purchased from any vendor, including Drobo. Unlike other RAIDs, however, the drives don't have to be the same size, same speed, or even from the same vendor. In my test unit, I was given drive sizes of 40, 250, 250, 750, and 1000 GB. (I'll explain the purpose of the fifth drive in a minute.)



What makes Drobo different from other storage is that it always stores your media in a protected state (like a RAID), but unlike a RAID, you can expand your system by adding more, or larger, hard drives at any time. Drobo reconfigures itself and re-protects your data automatically. This expandability means that you can start with just two medium-sized drives and add more storage as your needs increase. This is something that can not be done without reformatting in a traditional RAID.

Note: *Protected* means that your data is copied to at least two drives. That way, if one drive fails, your data can be restored from the other drive. Most RAIDs provide protected storage (RAID 0 does not). However, Drobo can provide protected storage without using traditional RAID technology.

For my test, I installed four drives: 40, 250, 250, and 750 GB. There's no RAID that I know of that allows you to mix drive sizes this way. (It was also a delight not having to use a screw driver or socket wrench to install them. They just slid in and locked.)



This combination of hard drives gave me a total of 496 GB in protected storage. (The "Reserved for expansion" category is storage that I could access if I replaced my small 40 GB drive with something bigger.)

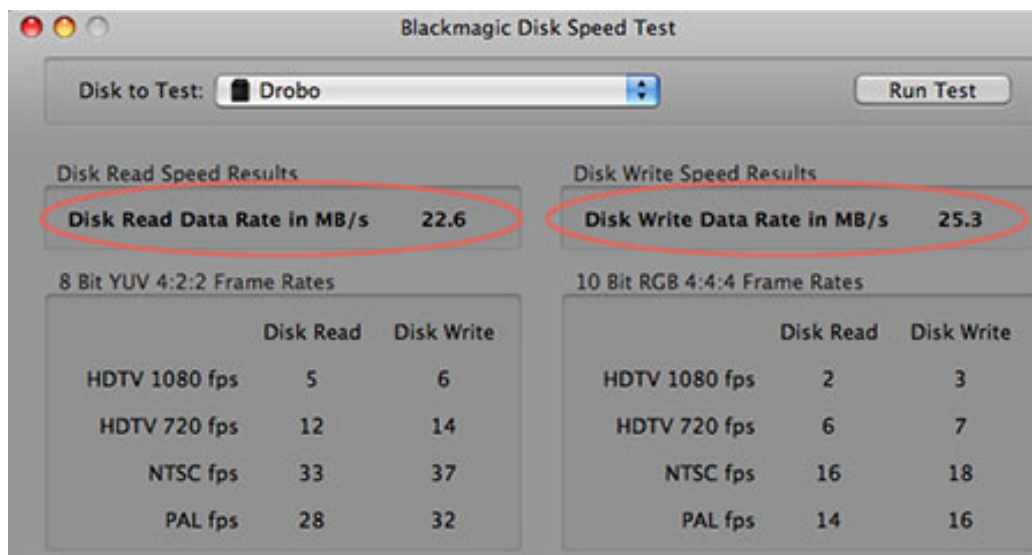
Drobo has gone through two generations so far: the first was a USB-connected device, and the second is a FireWire 800 unit. My unit used a second generation FireWire 800 connection. (Data Robotics also makes the DroboShare, a unit which attaches to your network via Ethernet. While very useful for general file storage and backups, this is too slow for video editing and I decided not to test it.)

Installing from the included CD is simple. I was surprised at how fast it formatted the disks - it was ready to accept data in less than two minutes. During the installation it asked if I wanted to use the Drobo with Time Machine. Since Time Machine only backs up the boot drive, I said no.

Drobo has a software utility, called "Dashboard," that allows you to manage the unit. After trying unsuccessfully to install Dashboard as a widget, I realized it was a stand-alone application and placed it in my Applications folder. Sigh...

During our conversation, Mark suggested I take a look at how the Drobo could be useful in video editing. So my first test looked at whether it would be fast enough to act as primary storage; that is, as the main media drive, for editing.

And the short answer is: not really.

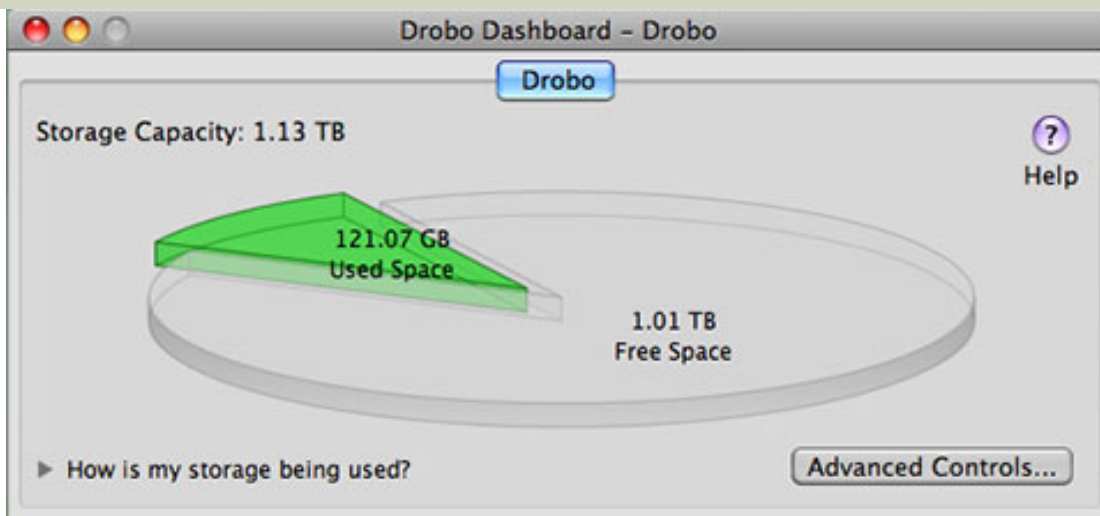


Any drive is fastest when it is empty. So, with the drives totally empty, I used a current version of [Blackmagic Design's Disk Speed Test](#) to learn that Drobo's average disk read speed is 22.6 MB per second and its average write speed is 25.3 MB per second. While fast enough for DV and HDV, this is comparable to a slow, single FireWire 400 hard drive.

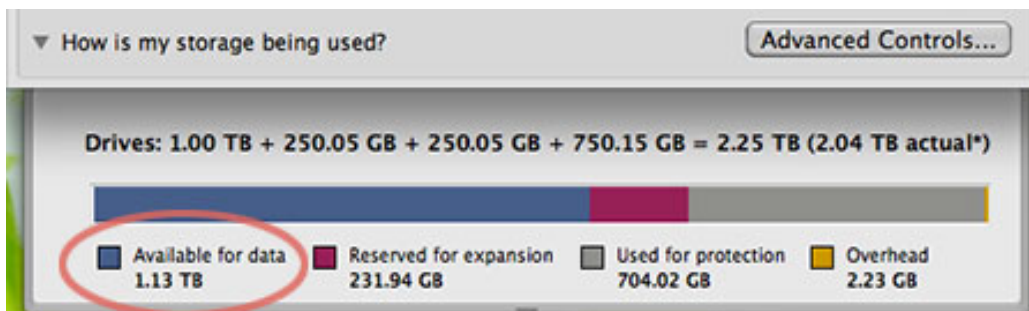
Note #1: The Drobo web site shows an average write speed of 34 MB/second and an average read speed of up to 55 MB/second. Using this test, I was not able to achieve those speeds.

Note #2: Visible on the front panel are ten lights that indicate how full the drive is. However, hidden under the front cover are activity lights that show when a transfer is taking place. If you want to see how hard your unit is working, simply remove the magnetically attached front cover.

I then decided to see how long a data transfer would take. So I copied 120 GB of data (composed of a series of large R3D HD files) from an internal RAID on my MacPro to the Drobo. It took 1 hour and 27 minutes -- roughly equal to a transfer rate of 24 MB per second.



After the drive had all this additional data on it, I decided to replace the 40 GB drive with a 750 GB one (i.e. instant storage expansion) and watch it rebuild my data. So, I yanked out the 40 and slapped in a new 750. Naturally, I didn't bother to turn off the power -- just to see what happens.



It was great. Drobo took the new drive, added it to the system, and reconfigured my storage from 496 GB to 1.3 TB. it took less than 30 seconds for the unit to reconfigure itself with the new drive.

Here's the Best Part - the Second Test

While the Drobo is too slow to be the main storage for many video formats, such as Digibeta, DVCPRO-HD, ProRes, or anything uncompressed, its expandability and data protection make it **ideal** for use in acquiring tapeless media. Whether you are shooting P2, SxS, or other tapeless video formats, all of them are MUCH slower than the Drobo. This makes the Drobo very attractive in a production environment - it instantly stores your data in a protected format, is fully expandable, its physical size makes portability easy, and it is more than fast enough to do the job.

As the video world rapidly goes tapeless, the Drobo has a significant role to play in video production and capture. Best of all, its price makes it very attractive.

An empty Drobo, ready to take drives, retails for \$499. Since drives can be purchased anywhere, in any size, prices for a fully-loaded Drobo will vary. Buying a 4 TB unit from Data Robotics costs \$1,099 (US) retail.

Drobo is a lot of very slick technology packaged in a very attractive box. If low-cost, expandability, and data security are more important to you than speed, you need to look closely at Drobo.

<http://www.drobo.com/Products/Index.html>

UPDATE - Oct. 11

Mark Spencer asked:

Very nice review on the Drobo, but I do have one question. If the Drobo is too slow for DVCPRO-HD, but it's fast enough for P2 - there's a problem, because P2 IS DVCPRO-HD! Or am I misunderstanding you?

Larry replies: Good point.

What I was saying is that for editing (which requires multiple video streams), its too slow. For transferring media from a tapeless source (which is a single video stream with the ability to vary data transfer rates as necessary), its really nice. I mean, for some things you could edit from it. But that's leading to a weakness. Its strength is that is an expandable system providing protected storage for your media.

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LAST CHANCE FOR LARRY'S POWERUP WITH FINAL CUT PRO SEMINARS

I know the economy is in the tank and all of us are scrambling to find and keep clients. On the other hand, change in our industry is a constant and what you don't know can often make the difference between success and failure.

I've designed this year's seminars to provide answers that are not covered in **any** Apple-Certified course on Final Cut Pro. In fact, much of this is not even easy to find on the Internet.

In other words, there's a lot of value to you in attending my seminar -- and there are only a few cities left.

Here's where we will be in October:

- [New York City -- Oct. 14 & 15](#)
- [Boston -- Oct. 17 & 18](#)
- [Charlotte, NC -- Oct. 20 & 21](#)
- [Miami -- Oct. 23 & 24](#)
- [Chicago -- Oct. 27 & 28](#)
- [Vancouver, BC -- Oct. 30 & 31](#)
- [Los Angeles -- Nov. 7 & 8](#)



Important Note: Due to schedule conflicts, I only have time next year to visit 5 or 6 cities -- I'll select the most popular cities from this year's tour. This means that I will not be able to return to many of this year's cities after this trip. **Please register today before it's too late!**

This year, we've created three **new** seminars:

Seminar 1: Succeeding in the New World of Tapeless and HD Video

Manufacturers and distribution are moving to HD and tapeless as fast as they can pull the tape drives out of new cameras. But this new workflow requires us to have a much different technical understanding of how this stuff works. This 4-hour seminar answers key questions like:

- What is the right HD format for my work?
- What gear do I need to move to HD?
- Where does ProRes fit in?
- How can I get better organized?
- How do I trouble-shoot my system?



**Seminar 2:
Watch How Adobe CS4 Production Premium
Can Help a Final Cut Studio Workflow**



Every editor I've ever met uses Photoshop, but did you know PhotoShop does video editing, too? DVD Studio Pro does not support Blu-ray Discs, but Encore does. Final Cut Server can help you locate files, but so can Bridge, for a fraction of the cost and much better than you might think!

This 4-hour seminar shows you how to:

- Create automatic text transcripts in Soundbooth
- Clean-up video images in Photoshop
- Easily move files between Final Cut Pro and After Effects
- Create better Flash videos
- Test your videos on hundreds of mobile devices
- Discover the benefits of using OnLocation on set

**Seminar 3:
Discover the Hidden Power in Final Cut Studio**

The number one request from our seminars last year was "show me more...". So this 8-hour seminar show you how:

- To repair poor audio
- To do better audio mixing
- To create and monitor surround sound
- To customize royalty-free music
- To automate compression for DVDs
- To create a Blu-ray Disc
- To create Flash videos
- To transcode HD to SD



In other words, if you want to improve the sound of your projects, or the look of your finished video, this seminar is for you.

Economically, I realize that times are tough. However, **I've designed my seminars to save you time and money with every job**, plus show you techniques that will blow your competitors out of the water. I can help you avoid wasting money and time.



My tour is over in less than three weeks. You don't have any time to waste. Sign up today -- I don't want you to say "I shoulda gone..."

[Click here for more information.](#)

[Click here for a list of cities.](#)

[Click here to register.](#) **Sign up today to reserve your seat!**

Thanks to our sponsors!



I am very grateful for the support of our sponsors. Putting on a tour of this magnitude takes a lot of hard work and money. This would not be possible without the generous support of our platinum sponsor: **Adobe Systems**; our gold level sponsors: **Blackmagic Design**, **Media Distributors**, and **The Rental Station**, and our silver level sponsors: **Automatic Duck**, and **SmartSound**.

Note: Media Distributors is running a raffle, giving away **free seats** to our seminars. If you haven't already signed up - do so here: www.mediadistributors.com.

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TECHNIQUE: BLURRING THE EDGES OF A CLIP

One of my readers suggested I write about this technique and I apologize for not writing down the name of the person that suggested it.



Here's the problem. You want to blur an image, except that the clip is less than 100% in scale. When you add a blur, the image gets blurry, but not the edges. What do you do?

Normally, Final Cut processes all filters before applying any motion effects. This is generally a good idea and doesn't cause any problems. However, sometimes you need to have it do the motion effect first, then the filter. The only way we can do that is to create a nest.

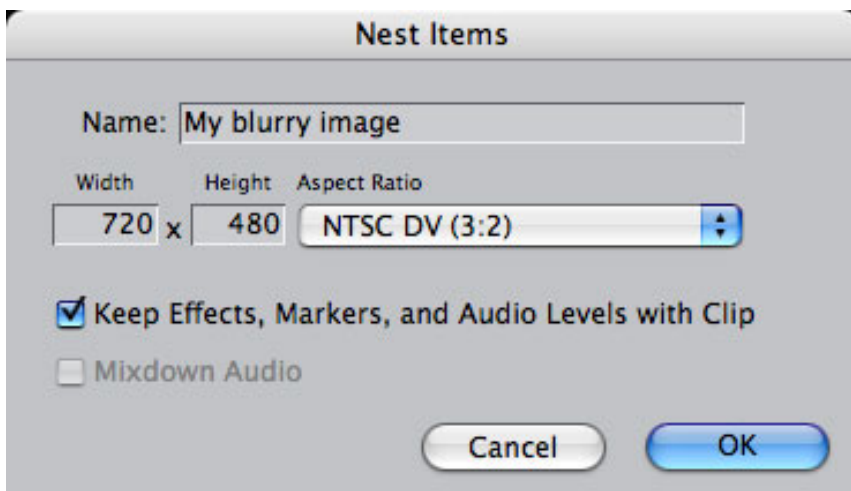
A nest is a clip, or group of clips, that have been converted to a sequence. The advantage to nesting is that we can apply an effect to a nest that affects all the clips inside the nest.

Here's how to do it.

1. Edit your clip into the Timeline, then double-click it to load it into the Viewer.



2. Select the Motion tab and change the scale to any number smaller than 100. In this case, I'm working with a 50% scale (half-size).



3. Select the clip in Timeline (this can also be a group of clips in the Timeline) and choose **Sequence > Nest Items**. In the resulting dialog, give the nest a name. (Here I'm using "My Blurry Clip.") What the nest does is turn the clip into its own sequence. And, just as we can apply effects to a clip, we can also apply effects to the sequence.

4. Select the sequence and apply **Effects > Video Filters > Blur > Gaussian Blur**. The filter is now applied to all the clips in the sequence. Normally, to load a clip into the Viewer for adjustment you would double-click it. However, that doesn't work for a sequence. If you double-click a sequence, it opens for editing. In order to load it into the Viewer, you **OPTION-double-click** it.

5. In the Filters tab, set the Radius setting to **30** (or any other number you prefer). 30 is a large amount of blur, which makes the effect very obvious.



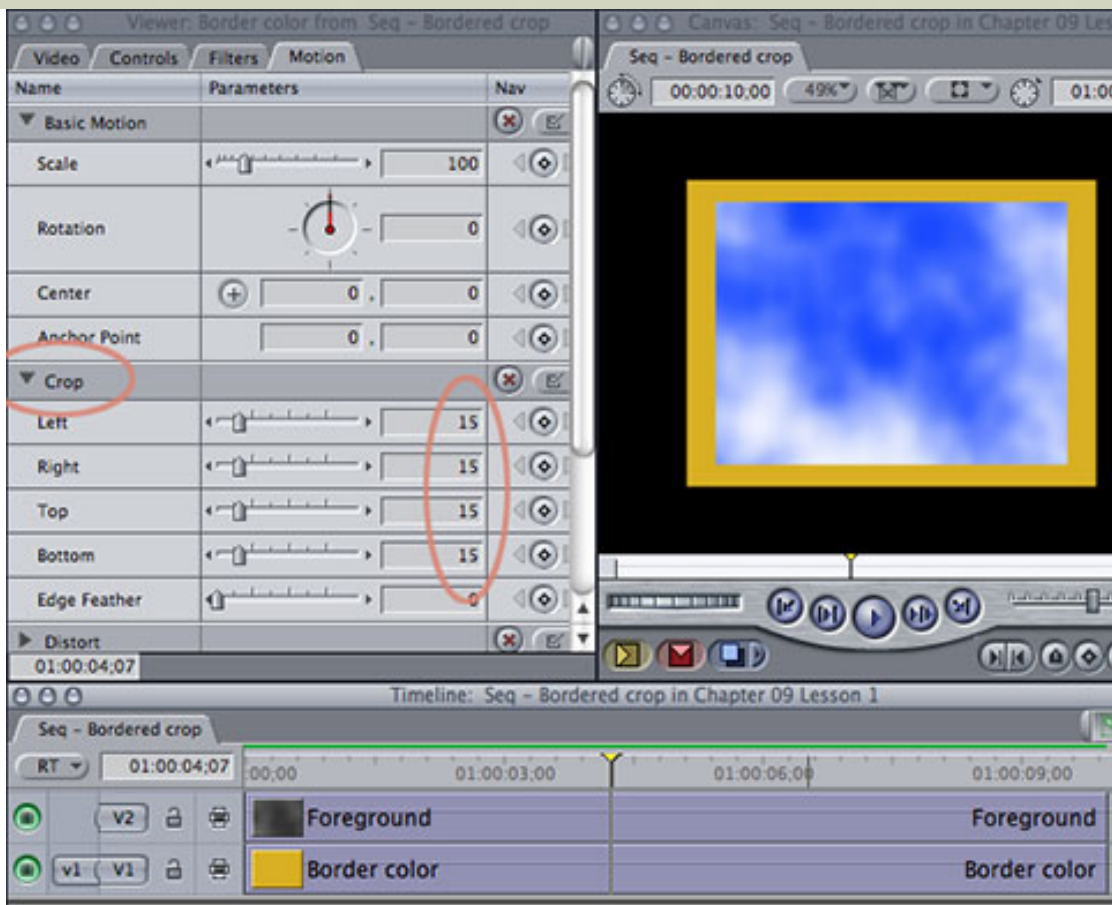
Ta-DAH! A blurry image with a blurry edge!

You can use nests in lots of different ways. For me, I use them whenever I need to apply a single effect to a number of clips (for example rotating a group of clips around a central axis) or when I need to change the order so that motion effects are processed before filter effects.

Cool.

Note: While this technique works with images that are scaled, it doesn't work with images that are cropped. If you want to apply, say, a border to a cropped image, you'll need to use two layers: the top layer is the foreground, cropped to the dimensions you need, and the bottom layer is the border color, cropped to be slightly bigger than the foreground.

The picture below illustrates this.



UPDATE - Oct. 11

George Mauro has a different way to do this same effect:

Here's what I do.

Take a clip; we'll say 720 x 480 to make it simple. Place it into a sequence of the same size; Call it 'Mary'. Now CMD+0 to open the sequence settings and change the sequence size to say 1440 x 960. The black around the clip is larger, hence the bigger stage size, but the original clip is still 720 x 480.

Now nest Mary into another 720 x 480 sequence, 'Jerry' and add the blur filter or the wave or ripple..what ever. Notice, by Option+DoubleClicking nest into the viewer that the scale of Mary is now 50%. Make it 100% and no clipping of the filter occurs.

Larry replies: George, I'll have to work this through a bit. Still, its a cool work-around. I don't often mess with changing the size of the sequence.

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DIGITAL PRODUCTION BUZZ HAS A BIRTHDAY!

Only four years ago, there were no podcasts anywhere on the planet. That changed in late 2005 with the arrival of *DV Guys*. Hosted by **Ron Margolis**, the show focused on making technology accessible. Along the way, the show transitioned from Ron to **Philip Hodgetts** and became *Digital Production Buzz*. Still later in its life, I took it over.



The BuZZ is one of the longest running podcasts still in weekly production and we

celebrate our 200th Anniversary podcast this Thursday, October 16.

I'll be in Boston, presenting at the [Boston Final Cut Pro User Group \(BosFCPug\)](#), then hosting my part of the show in front of a live audience. I'm delighted to be joined by **Dan Berube**, founder of BosFCPug, as our east coast co-host.

Back in our LA studios, **Cirina Catania** (producer of [The BuZZ](#)) will be joined by **Mike Horton** (Head-cutter of the [LAFCPUG](#)) and **Philip Hodgetts** (CEO, [Intelligent Assistance](#)) along with a host of fans, friends, and interesting guests.

If you haven't yet tuned in to The BuZZ - take a few minutes to check us out. Our goal, since the beginning, is to make the technology of video production, post-production, and distribution accessible to all of us.

I welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. [Click here to learn more!](#)

By the way, click here to learn more about BosFCPug! www.bosfcplug.org

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DIGITAL PRODUCTION BUZZ IS THE OFFICIAL PODCAST FOR DV EXPO AND GOVERNMENT EXPO!

The folks at NewBay Media have asked us to be the **Official Media Partner** of DV Expo - Nov. 4-6 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.



DV EXPO

Get behind the camera at this year's DV Expo. Our camera-focused sessions include technical information and training on the industry's hottest cameras including a day-long Digital Cinematography Supersession and training on the RED ONE, Sony EX3 and Panasonic AG-HMC150 cameras.

More than 45 conference sessions and top industry exhibits showcasing hundreds of new products await you and your questions. These three days will be packed with education and information you won't get anywhere else! DV Expo is the MUST ATTEND EVENT of the year!

No sooner did we say yes to covering DV Expo, than NewBay Media came right back and asked us to be the official Media Partner for Government Expo - Dec. 2-4 at the Walter E Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC.
[Register today!](#)



GOVERNMENT VIDEO EXPO

Government Video Technology Expo reflects the diversity of the government video market, including state and local government, law enforcement and federal agencies. And of course our men and women in uniform. GV Expo delivers an exhibit hall with more than 200 vendors, certification and training classes in post-production and a wide reaching Government Video conference program covering issues in video, audio, multimedia, conferencing and broadcast.

This is a one-of-a-kind event designed to bring government buyers and sellers together. [Register today.](#)

We'll be originating **two hours of coverage every day** at both events. We'll have more on this as we get closer. But, if you can free up a day in your calendar, come on over to the show and say "Hi!" We'd love to see you.

[Click here for DV Expo.](#)

[Click here for Government Video Expo.](#)

[Click here to learn more about The BuZZ.](#)

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TECHNIQUE: CHANGING AUDIO CAPTURE SETTINGS TO 32 KHZ

Note: In looking over my email for the last couple of months, I've been getting a lot of questions about drifting audio sync. if you are capturing a clip and the audio slowly drifts out of sync, you need to pay close attention to this article. This is the classic symptom of shooting audio at one sample rate and capturing at another.

While most professional cameras record audio at a 48 kHz audio sample rate (also called 16-bit in some camera menus), less expensive cameras tend to record audio at a 32 kHz sample rate (which is sometimes called 12-bit audio, just to keep us all confused).

While 32k sample rates are perfectly adequate for recording human speech, it tends to be insufficient to adequately record music. More importantly, Final Cut defaults to capturing all audio at 48 kHz. When the audio isn't captured at the same rate at which it was shot, the audio slowly drifts out of sync.

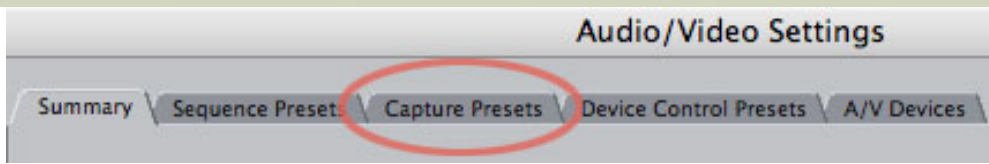
To fix this, you need to change your audio capture settings before you capture any clips. Here's how.

1. First, determine what sample rate your camera records audio. This is generally done by checking the audio setting in your camera menu. If it says 48 kHz or 16-bit, you don't need to do anything. Feel free to jump to the next article.

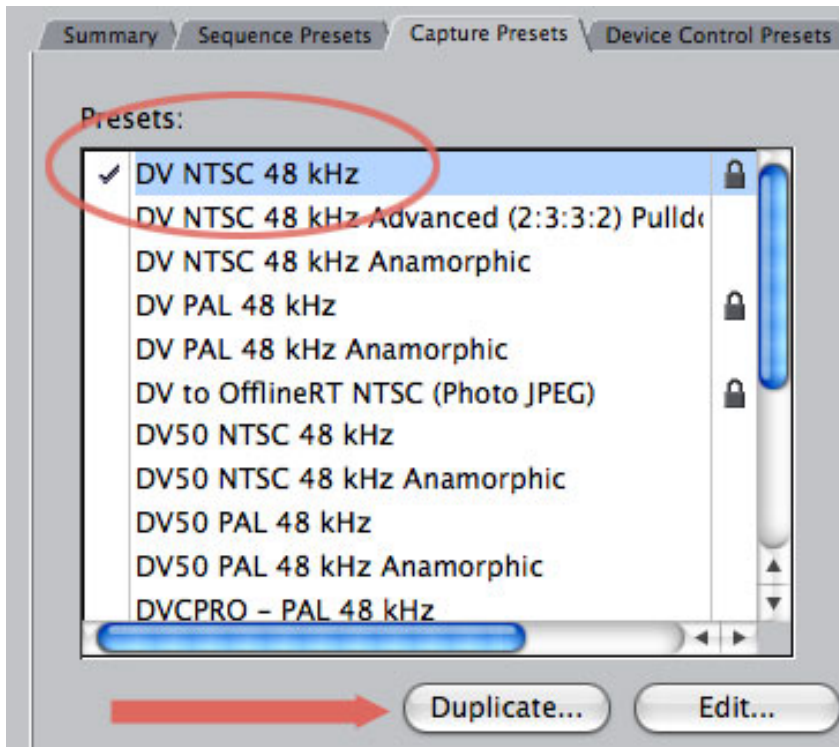
2. If it is set to 32 kHz, or 12-bit, you need to do two things: change the camera settings so it records all future audio at 48 kHz, then, create a new setting in Final Cut so that it will properly capture any material that you've already shot.

It is generally considered best practice to shoot all your audio at the same settings and 48 kHz is considered a professional audio sample rate.

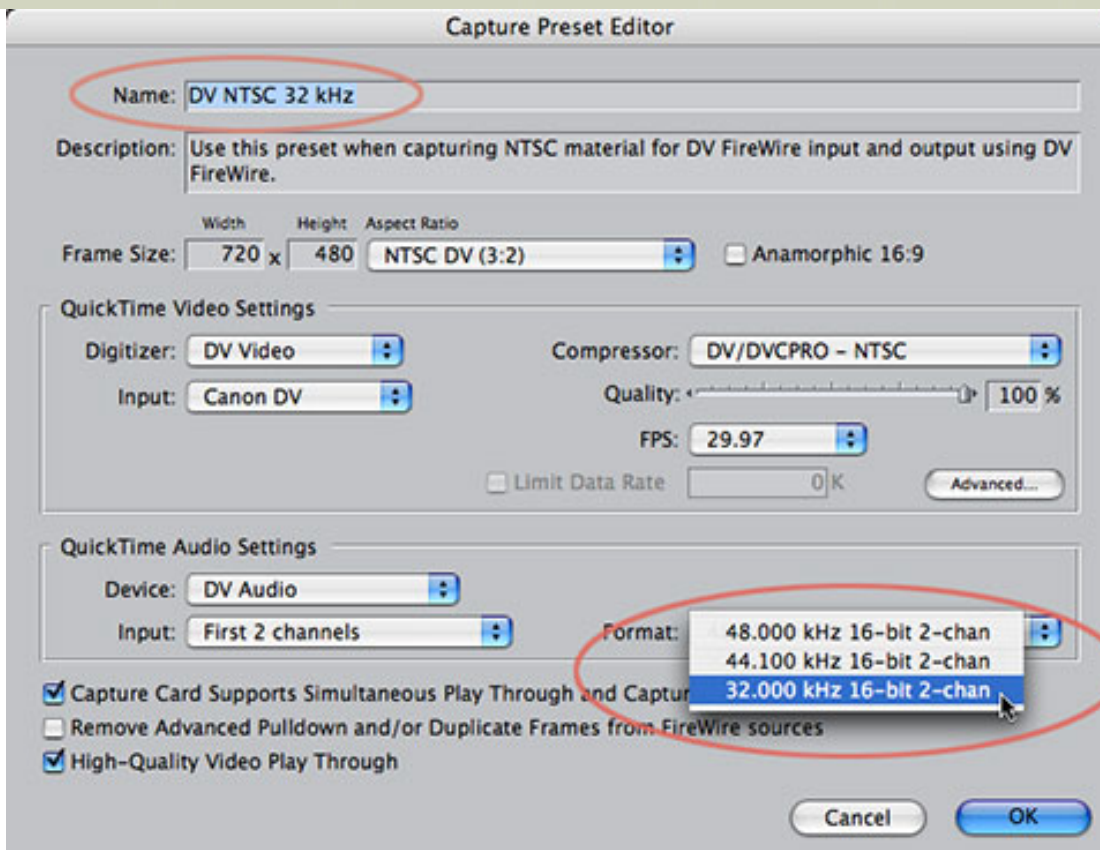
3. To create a new capture setting, open Final Cut Pro and go to **Final Cut Pro > Audio / Video Settings.**



4. Click the **Capture Presets** tab.



5. Select the video format that matches what you are shooting in your camera. In this case, I'm using DV NTSC 48 kHz. The lock at the right side indicates this is an Apple preset that can not be deleted or modified. Click the **Duplicate** button at the bottom to make a copy of this preset.



6. In the Capture Preset Editor dialog box, give the new capture preset a name, for instance "DV NTSC 32 kHz," then look to the lower right and change the audio Format menu from 48 kHz to **32 kHz**.

7. Click **OK** to create the new preset. Put a check mark next to it in the Capture Presets tab, then click **OK** again.

You are now ready to capture your 32 kHz audio.

Remember to go back to the Audio / Video settings menu and change your capture preset when you need to capture audio at 48 kHz.

UPDATE - Oct. 11

Sabrina Nelson adds:

Capturing 32khz 12bit audio is the bane of my existence... until now, I'd refused to work on any project that was recorded in that way. I've spent days redubbing tapes to DVNTSC48k for one naughty client, and suddenly I see your timely tip and is like, "Wow, I coulda had a V8!". Thank you for the tip on creating a new preset. Its so simple, I should have thought of it :P

Larry replies: Thanks.

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LARRY HAS A BLOG!

We began this at the end of August - my very own blog. Since then, I've



discovered this is a great way to quickly comment on our industry, or discuss new changes in technology

If you haven't had a chance to visit, take a look www.larryjordan.biz/blog. I try to update it several times a week.



Also, feel free to add a comment or two - I always like to hear from you.

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TECHNIQUE: REDUCING NOISE IN SOUNDTRACK PRO 2

One of the exciting features in Soundtrack Pro is its ability to reduce background noise.

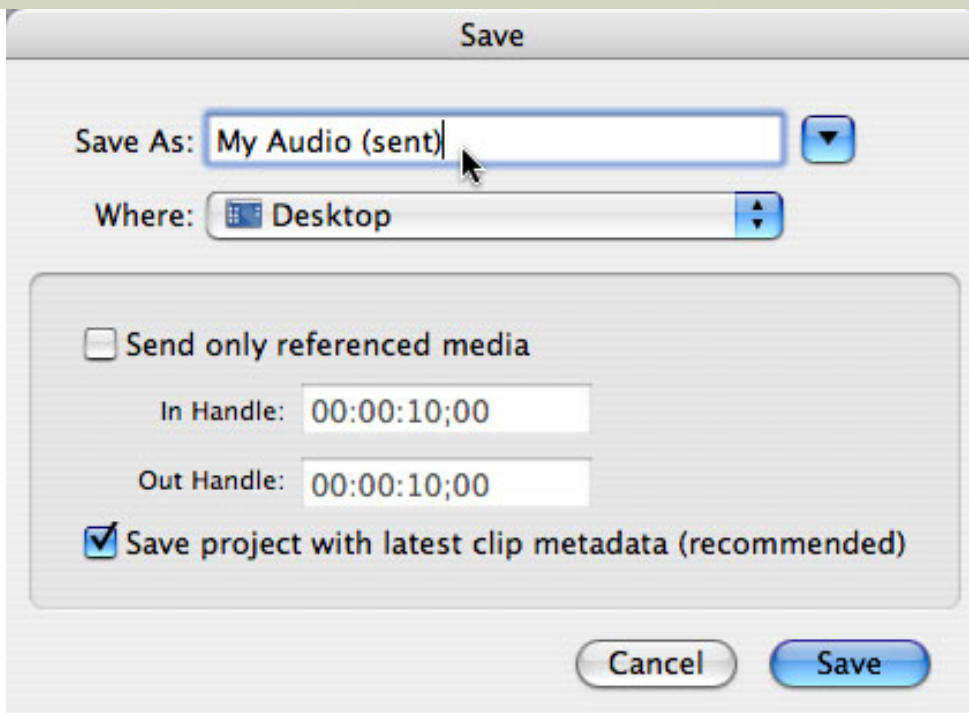
Notice that I said "reduce," not eliminate. If you need to remove a sound, you'll need to re-record the audio. If, on the other hand, you just want greater separation between your speaker and the background, this tool can do the trick.

Here's the basic problem we have with noise reduction: the normal human ear hears frequencies between 20 cycles per second and 20,000 cycles per second. 20 cycles is so low it feels more like a vibration, while 20,000 cycles is so high, it sounds more like the wind in pine trees. Every voice, sound, piece of music, or noise falls within that range of cycles. This means that many noises overlap voice frequencies. If we remove all of the noise frequencies, we also remove parts of the voice frequencies, creating very strange, and generally unpleasant, effects.

So, our goal is to isolate as much of the noise as we can and remove it without doing major damage to the voice. While all noise is different, and no two clips will have the same values, the process of reducing noise is the same.

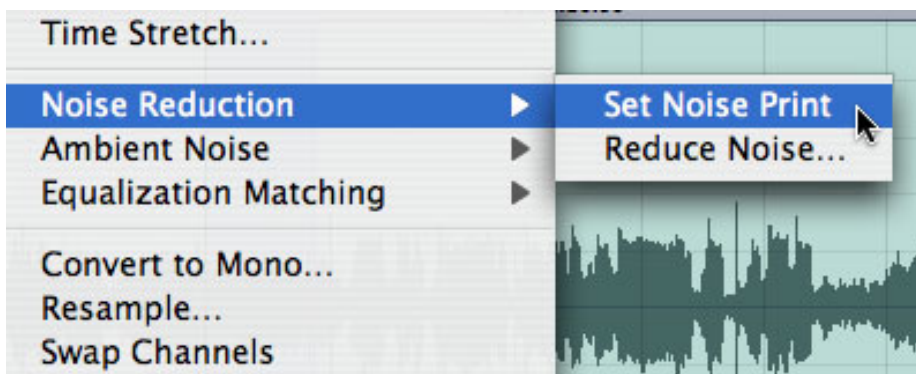
Here's the process.

1. If your clip is already edited into the Timeline in Final Cut, select it and choose **File > Send to > Soundtrack Pro Audio File Project**.



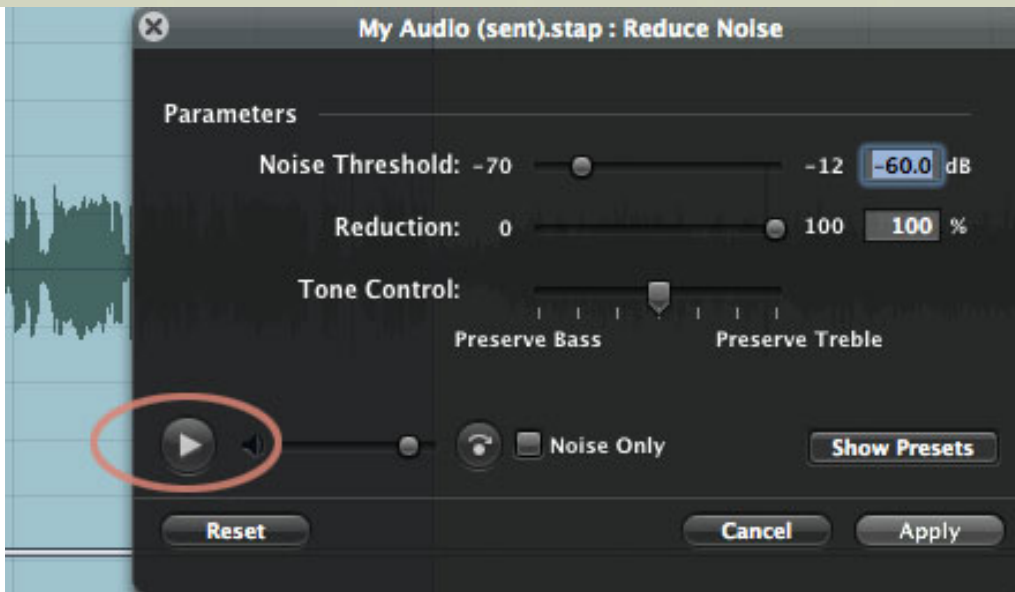
2. In the Send dialog, give the file a name and store it in your Final Cut Projects folder. This will become a permanent part of your project and will be needed for final output. The rest of the defaults are fine. Click **OK**.

Note: You can repair audio either as an audio file project or by selecting a clip in a multitrack mix and choosing the File Editor tab in the Lower Pane. Regardless of which you choose, the noise reduction process is the same. In this example, to make the screens easier to read, I'm using an Audio File project.

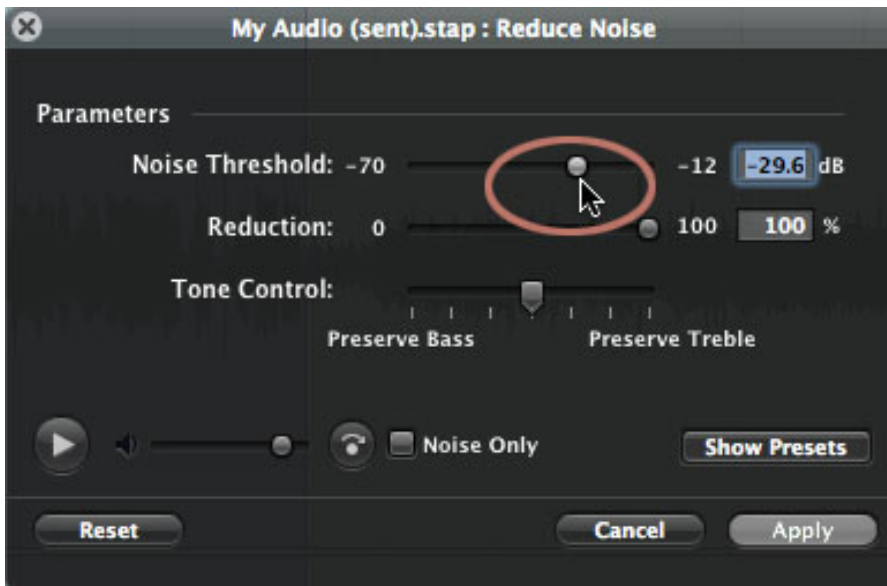


3. After listening to the clip, drag across the waveform to select a portion of the clip that only contains the noise you want to remove; it should not contain any of the sounds you want to keep. Select **Process > Noise Reduction > Set Noise Print**. This samples the noise and stores it into a special clipboard within Soundtrack Pro.

4. Next, select the portion of the clip that you want to remove the noise from. Selection can be done by dragging, or double-clicking to select between markers, or pressing **Command +A** to select the entire clip.



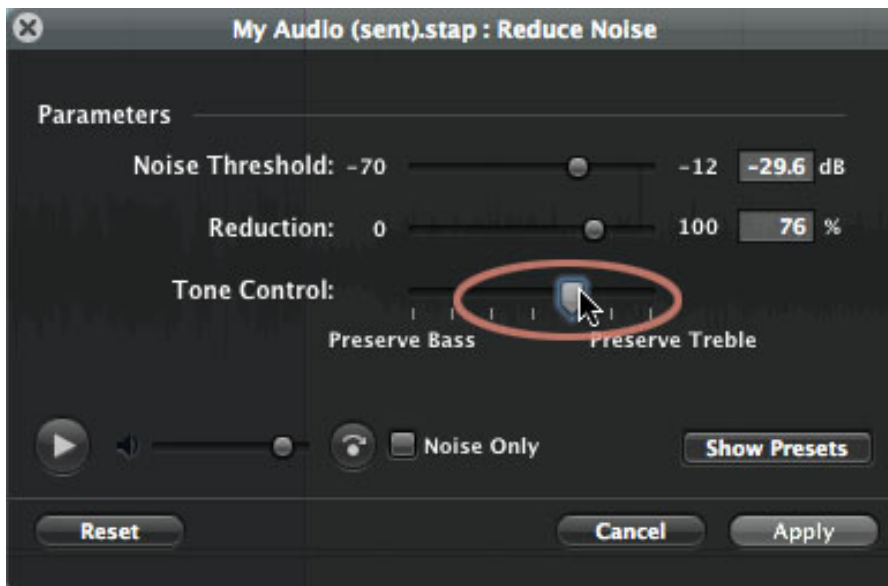
5. Choose **Process > Noise Reduction > Reduce Noise**. This opens the Noise Reduction HUD (heads-up display) that allows you to fine tune your settings to remove the noise. This dialog works from the top to the bottom. Press the right-pointing arrow to start playback.



6. Slowly drag the top slider to the right and listen carefully until the noise is gone. Here the noise was gone when we reached **-29.6 dB**. At the same time, you'll notice that the voice of the speaker starts to sound hollow, electronic, or "Darth-Vader-y". Not to panic.



7. To get the speaker's voice to sound normal, move down to the second line and drag the slider to the left. You'll hear two things: first, the speaker's voice starts to sound human again and, second, some of the noise returns. This is generally unavoidable -- that's why we call it noise *reduction*, not noise *removal*. Stop when the voice sounds "normal" to you. In this case, we stopped at **76%**. This means that we have removed 76% of the original noise. Press the right-pointing arrow to stop playback.



8. If you want a voice to sound warm, inviting, and sexy, you boost the bass. If you want a voice to sound clear and intelligible, you boost the treble. That's because vowels are low frequency sounds and provide the voice its character. Consonants, on the other hand, are high-frequency sounds and provide the voice its diction and clarity. In our case, we want to make sure people understand what is being said, so I'll preserve some of the treble.

9. Click **OK** and watch as the waveform shrinks as the noise is removed. Play the noise-reduced section and congratulate yourself on salvaging this audio.

10. To get it back into Final Cut simply choose **File > Save**. If you are doing this in a multitrack project, the changes are saved with the clip and will output during your final export.

That's it. Once you understand the process, cleaning up your audio is both quick and easy.

Final note: Whenever you remove noise, you are also removing voice frequencies. This means the speaker won't sound as good as the original clip. Sometimes the quality change is not noticeable, other times it is. In each case, you need to decide whether the improvement in intelligibility outweighs the loss in quality. If you remove noise carefully, you'll find that in most cases, the answer is yes.

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NEW TRAINING VIDEO -- CHROMA-KEYING IN FINAL CUT STUDIO

Last month, I announced a new title showing how to do [Moves on Stills](#). This month, we have a new title on how to chroma-key inside Final Cut Studio.

This title has an unusual format in that it starts with me on camera walking around a green-screen set, describing how to set and light for a key. Then, I move to Final Cut Pro to see how to use the keyer in Final Cut.

As many people have discovered, the keyer in Final Cut Pro can not be called state-of-the-art. In fact, it generally, um, sucks. So, I also show you how to use the keyer in Motion, which is much better.

But, not always good enough. Which is why this title also includes tutorials on three other keying software: **Oak Tree Software's vKey2**, **dvGarage dvMatte Blast** and **dvMatte Pro**, and **Red Giant Software's Primate Keyer Pro 4**.

Then, I spend a lot of time showing how to solve keying problems like uneven lighting, wrinkled background, and cast shadows.

If you've ever needed to remove a background and had problems doing so, you need to add this training to your library.

[Click here to order.](#)

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LARRY IS NOW ON MYSPACE

For all you MySpace fans, we now have our own page: www.myspace.com/larryjordanbiz.

Kristi Prost, our marketing director, maintains the page. And I find it fascinating to watch all the links and contacts develop. As a complement to our website, the MySpace page keeps you up-to-date with all of the exciting things we have going on, as well, it will periodically have video features, offer special discounts to our subscribers, and allow you to further network with editors and filmmakers around the world.

If you haven't visited for a while, stop by and check us out. Spread the word about the page, and if you have one of your own, add us to your friend list!

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[Final Cut Studio 2:
Chroma Keying](#)



RECONCILING VIDEO FRAME RATES

Nate Adams sent in the following:

I read your article on reconciling frame rates. I, too, have experienced this recently on a project that was receiving graphics rendered out of After Effects at 1080/23.98 (not 23.976) 8-bit and dropped into an FCP timeline. Now I want to kick myself for not trying to render things out of After Effects at 23.976. As long as the FCP render engine didn't touch the footage it was OK, but as soon as something was rendered in FCP it stuttered.

We went through it frame by frame and noticed that frames were actually getting left out and others doubled, and with no specific cadence. STILL FRAME>REPEATED STILL FRAME>MOVING FRAME>STILL FRAME>...and so on. Unfortunately we were renting two bays at the time including a 2k Da Vinci theater for bazillions of dollars a second, so we didn't really have time to fuss around. We ended up buying and using Automatic Duck to bring the sequence out of FCP without any effects, into After Effects. There we'd add the dissolve or motion effect, render out of AE, and drop it back into FCP. Strangely enough, FCP was the only application that couldn't interpret 23.98 material properly as 23.976. Scratch, Motion, After Effects, were all fine.

Larry replies: Thanks, Nate, for sending this in.

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QUICK TIP #1: REPLACING IMAGES

Rick G. sent in the following:

I just saw your lesson on how to resize photos for FCP, and realized that I made something using all JPEG's. So I went and brought all of those photos to Photoshop (CS2) and resized them, saving them as png's. When the dialogue box appeared, I left them non-interlaced before saving....

Then I imported all the photos back into the browser in FCP. I tried replacing one of the photos into the timeline, and it worked fine, except that the attributes (fades, filters, etc.) did not remain. So I Command-z'd back to keep the timeline intact.

Is there a way to replace a clip with all the attributes?

Larry replies: Sure, here's how:

- 1) Load the new image into the Viewer
- 2) Choose **Edit > Copy**
- 3) Select the image you want to replace
- 4) Choose **Edit > Paste Attributes**
- 5) UNCHECK all options, except **Replace Content**
- 6) Click **OK**

This will replace the content of the clip in the timeline, without changing any of the attributes.

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QUICK TIP #2: IMPORTING FILES

Jussi Buckbee, from Finland, writes:

Here's a quick tip to import files faster into FCP's Browser. Control-click (or right-click) on the Bin you want to import files into. Select whether you want to import files or a folder. Then select your files.

Very fast and very nifty. And right into the bin.

Larry replies: Thanks, Jussi. Great tip!

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QUICK TIP #3: CAMERA REFERENCE CHART

Scott Carrey sent this in:

You might already know this, but I found this a very handy way to compare cameras: http://www.fletch.com/images/Video_Camera_Comparson_Chart.pdf

Larry replies: Scott, thanks!

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QUICK TIP #4: PREVENTING VIRTUAL CLUSTER CRASHES

Joe Reeser writes:

A quick thought on your article "[Making Compressor Multiprocessor Aware.](#)" I've read several tutorials on creating a virtual cluster, but while trying would have consistent Compressor and FCP crashes when "Virtual Cluster" was selected. I stumbled upon a thread in the Apple forums about a similar issue and the user suggested disabling the MobileMe (formerly .Mac) feature Back to My Mac. I followed the suggestion and presto! Compressor and FCP now work flawlessly using a virtual cluster.

Larry replies: Thanks, Joe, for sending this in.

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CREATING HIGH-QUALITY STILLS FOR HD AND SD

David Scott has been working to create a high-quality HD projected image and an equally high-quality SD sequence to go onto a DVD. After many, many, (uh, MANY) emails he has finally developed a workflow that he's given me permission to share.

How to Build an FCP Show of Animated Stills and Video for High Definition Projection and Standard Definition DVDs (for optimum projected and DVD sharpness and quality)

FOR PROJECTION (at 720p)

1. Prepare stills in Photoshop at 3200 x 1800 x 72 (for 16:9 zooming) as TIFs
2. In FCP, set "Sequence" as:
 - Frame Size - HDTV 720p (1280x720) (16:9)
 - Pixel Aspect Ratio - Square
 - Field Dominance - Off
 - Compressor - H.264
3. Build show, animate, add transitions, etc.
4. Export from FCP:

as QuickTime self-contained movie "at Current Settings"

- OR -

"Using Compressor" (for even better quality)
Go to "Settings"
Go to "Custom"
Select "16-9 QuickTime H.264"
Under "Destination" tab, select "to desktop"
In "Inspector", set Frame Size to 1280x720
Pixel Aspect Ratio to Square

5. Project using an HD-compatible like the Optoma 739 or similar

FOR SD DVDs

6. From your FCP show, Export "Using Compressor"
7. Choose "Change Settings" (by control-clicking on file)
8. Under "Apple", "Other Workflows", "Advanced Format Conversions", "Standard Definition", Select NTSC-DV. click "Add"
9. In Geometry window, go to "Crop to" and select "4x3 1:33.1" which will crop image from left and right but preserve the middle
10. Submit
11. Import the resulting .mov file into DVD Studio Pro
12. Delete "Menu"
13. Set "track" in Menu and End point
14. Burn DVD master
15. From DVD master, copy TS files to hard drive
16. Use TS files in Primera Bravo SE with art to produce DVDs.

NOTES

- Close inspection suggests exports "Using Compressor" (as outlined above) produce better enlargements than those done straight to QuickTime at Current Settings (at least, to my eyes)

- Likewise, DVDs created using the "Using Compressor" file seem better than those from the straight-to-QuickTime export (again, to my eyes)

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READER MAIL

SHAKING IN OUR BOOTS

Dan DiPaola (and many others) wrote:

Larry, after last month's article on losing data from a stored hard disk, you have us shaking in our boots here at HD-Encoding. I am sitting on over 100 TB of data from over the last 2.5 years of doing Disney's Blu-ray trailers. All on 750 GB external drives. Each one of these drives is stored in a vault that is sealed and de-humidified. I am getting ready to purchase a robotic tape system. Until then I need to know:

1. Approximately how long (mins.) should we expect it take to surface scan each 750GB drive? (I am running 750GB SATA drives into my 1394 800 FireWire port.)
2. Is one software package faster than the other?
3. What is the name of the function (surface scan or ?) that will guarantee that my data is good for the next 6 months?
4. Do you truly feel that tape (AIT drives) will eliminate this problem? If so for how long?

Larry replies: Dan, I don't have all the answers and can use some help from other readers.

I have been told you can restore data on a hard disk simply by asking it to read all the files on the hard disk. This can be done easily, I've been told, using a terminal command, where the hard disk is asked to read all files, but do nothing with the data. Since all hard disks are programmed to automatically replenish any data that is starting to fade during the reading process, this will solve any potential data loss errors.

The problem is, I don't know terminal and don't know the command(s) to use. If someone could suggest something, I'll share it.

The process of reading all the files on a hard drive should be MUCH faster than a surface scan, which can take forever; or at least a very, very long time.

Simply reading all the files on your hard drive every six months to a year should keep your data safe, from what I have been told.

And, yes, I believe that LTO-3 tape is the best archiving system we have at the moment.

Note: Not everyone has lost data from stored hard drives, but I received dozens of emails from people who have. This potential data loss is a significant problem, but not a time-to-jump-off-high-buildings problem.

As I learn more I'll pass it along in my blog and in future newsletters.

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ADDITIONAL PROTECTION

Shari Dyer sent in this tip:

A friend turned me on to this trick - get two pocket drives and back up your important files. Keep one in your safe deposit box, and switch the drives on a regular basis, upgrading the one at home. I think that's a great idea.

Larry replies: Shari, this is another good idea.

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AUDIO SOUND DRIFT

Mike Hibberd writes:

I'm a new editor and am using FCP 6 on a new Mac Book Pro 2.5 GHz using OS X 10.5.4. I've been struggling with the last few projects with importing a second sound track.

Here is what I am using: I shot with a JVC Everio onto an internal hard drive. I convert the MOV file with MPEG Streamclip to a DV file and import into FCP.

Although I have shot the video with a Rode Video Directional Mic to improve sound quality, I also have a sound track recorded through a sound desk onto a CD. This is recorded as an AIFF and then imported into FCP.

What I would like to do in most cases is to use the AIFF sound file as it is the best quality. I thought I might mix the two tracks (Video sound and the sound from the desk) for the best mix.

When I sync the two tracks in FCP they drift out of sync after about 30 seconds. By the time one hour goes by, its a good 3-4 seconds out. I have not been able to use the AIFF file and had to rely on the video with the sound recorded through the camera.

The video sequence settings in FCP are - DVCPRO50-NTSC Audio Settings - 48 KHz Depth, 16-bit, Config: Channel Grouped.

Larry replies: Mike, my first guess is that the audio sample rate of the JVC is either drifting or not set to 48 kHz. Final Cut, by default, expects 48k audio during capture. However, you probably shot this at 32k (12-bit) sample rate on the camera, which will cause the slow drift in audio sync.

The sample rates must match or audio will drift out of sync. Check your camera settings to determine the sample rate you shot at, then match it using Audio/Video settings in Final Cut Pro. ([See my article earlier in this newsletter.](#))

Also, take a look at your camera settings. If necessary, change them to be sure you are recording audio at 48 kHz for all future shoots.

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RESETTING COMPRESSOR

Dave Duquemin, from Southlake, Texas, writes:

What is up with Compressor? I have the Studio 2 suite and have been using different parts since last year. I remember that Compressor did not work very well out of the box. I finally went over to Sorenson's Squeeze. I found it very capable. However I no longer work at that location with that software. So I am back to Compressor 3.

I start it up and there are no windows showing. I then am able to open the history, preview and destinations windows and no others. It makes it kind of hard to work without the main interface.

Has Apple heard of this? Will simple "updates" solve the issue?

Larry replies: It isn't as bad as all that. I use Compressor all the time quite successfully.

Also, Compressor remembers your last window settings. Go to **Window > Layouts > Standard 1440 x 900** and your windows should all reset.

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SURROUND SOUND MONITORING

Rick Llewellyn sent this in:

On your newsletter about using Soundtrack, and to specifically answer the question of surround sound monitoring, the Griffin FireWave is really all you need. It was originally selling for about \$60, but now it is being discontinued and is available for \$20.

If you don't need sound input or hardware mixing and all you want is to output 5.1 surround, this is all you need. I am currently using it with both FCP and Soundtrack on a Macbook Pro running OS 10.5.4.

Larry replies: Thanks. Personally, I'm using a Presonus FireBox. It's nice to know there are other inexpensive options out there.

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WORKING WITH AUDIO TRACKS

Marcia Orland writes:

I have a question about audio tracks, and get conflicting answers at Apple Store, and from other sources: When recording interviews, we use 2 mics, then pick the best track. I dump one track, and copy the better one to the 2nd track so I have L & R of the best audio track. Then I set the stereo to 0 to balance them.

Recently I hired another editor to start work on a project. At the end of the day, I noticed he had only one track of audio, using the best track. He tells me it doesn't make any difference as long as stereo is balanced to 0. However it seems to me the sound is richer when the good track is copied to the 2nd track. What do you say?

Larry replies: I say your editor is right. What you hear is not richer, just louder. All you are doing is duplicating the audio, which increases its volume and runs the risk of the two tracks getting out of sync. I recommend against doubling audio tracks unless all other options to increase volume have been exhausted.

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MOVING BETWEEN FCP AND AVID

Don Duchene writes:

I am under constant pressure from a colleague of mine to switch to AVID from FCP. We often work together and it is awkward having the two different systems. I did at one point invest in Automatic Duck and while this helped, really it was not a solution unless things were kept very simple. We are about to start a project and we will once again be duking it out. You are partly to blame. Your instruction in Lynda.com has been so good that I am getting great results on FCP and I hate to start all over again.

Is there a way AVID and FCP can work together? I like to rough things out (as a producer/director) and then turn a project over to an editor when it has a shape that I like. I thought we could just use an EDL to talk to each other but on a little project that I just finished on FCP I got a message that said that it could not output a good EDL because of something-or-other but it did not make it clear what I had to change.

Is it time to give up the battle?

Larry replies: Automatic Duck is your best choice. It is reliable, fast, and very easy to use.

The problems with EDL is that they only support two video and four audio tracks -- and very limited effects.

However, when using any transfer program, any effects that you create in FCP won't move to the Avid unless both have the same effect. For this reason, you want to make the move before you get too far down the road polishing your project with effects.

UPDATE - Oct. 11

Björn Adamski adds:

Please be aware that the only video input format that can be edited by Avid natively without any conversion is Panasonic P2. Using P2 media within an Avid media bin and MXF4mac's "MXF4QT Import" to import the same media files in FCP allows direct and native parallel access to the same footage. Shared media on a shared storage between Avid and FCP is currently only possible with P2.

Larry replies: Thanks - I totally forgot that video files don't move between the two platforms.

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PICKING THE RIGHT VIDEO FORMAT

Bob Campbell writes:

I have a large number of Hi-8 tapes to capture. I am using a AJA LHe card in a MAC PRO quad core machine with internal hard drives. and want to archive/edit this material. I just read your news letter about hard drives and still think this is my lowest cost option for now.

Any way, I have searched your archive and have not found anything current. I have heard you say in your video's not to use for SD video, but I would like to maintain 422. Is DV 50 the next best thing? The AJA card will only let me select ProRes HQ, not ProRes which maybe overkill for the Hi8 playback from my camera. What would you suggest is the best approach?

Larry replies: ProRes is a good choice, but ProRes HQ is overkill. It will work, but your file sizes are really big. DVCPRO-50 will provide smaller file sizes with excellent quality. Try DVCPRO-50 first and see if you like it. If not, you have ProRes as a backup.

Using ProRes for SD material is fine, its just that you won't see much saving in quality, speed or file size. ProRes and Uncompressed 10-bit NTSC are both about the same file size and both are 10-bit. So ProRes is not a significant improvement over what is already there.

UPDATE - Oct. 11

Eddie Boyce disagrees:

I believe your reply to Bob Campbell warrants more thought. It sent me on a search to re-read the Apple white paper on ProRes. The entire point of the codec is that it is meant to be a finishing codec at a fraction of the file size. The HD data rates are actually lower than standard def uncompressed 10-bit. It's target data rate for a ProRes HQ 720x486 frame at 29.97 is 63Mb/s or 7.9MB/s. That's just a touch more than double the rate of DV.

Whereas uncompressed 10bit is a whopping 25.3 MB/s or roughly 3.2 times as large per frame. Patrick Inhofer has done tests that show that ProRes is a finishing codec up to the harshest standards and is clearly head and shoulders above DVCPRO 50 (a much more lossy format) at nearly the same data rate. The ProRes basic data rate is 5.25 MB/s, this is actually less than DVCPRO 50 which is 6.8 MB/s and ProRes is far far superior in terms of it's generational loss.

Basically, someone working in standard def would be foolish not to use the additional quality (shown to be visually lossless) of ProRes HQ when it clocks in at a less than a third of the data rate of uncompressed 10-bit and just about the same data rate as DVCPRO 50.

The Apple white paper:
http://images.apple.com/finalcutstudio/resources/white_papers/L342568A_ProRes_WP.pdf

Patrick Inhofer's tests:
http://www.fini.tv/blog/finishing_line_files/proresSD%20test%20results.php

One River Media's codec library: <http://www.onerivermedia.com/codecs/>

Please let me know if you find my information to be erroneous.

Larry replies: Eddie, thanks for writing. Because ProRes uses a variable bit rate encoding system, actual file sizes will vary depending upon the complexity of the file. My numbers differ from yours, so I'm glad to share these links so editors can make a more informed decision.

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MORE CONFUSION BETWEEN HDV AND AVCHD

Thomas Farris writes:

I'm a one man production team climbing the newbie learning curve of HD Formats, Final Cut Studio 2, Compressor, and output.

One thing puzzling me is the that 1080i and 1080p can be 1920x1080 or 1440x1080. I know it has something to do with perception or perceived pixels or non-square pixels but it gets confusing when I'm trying to down-sample and compress because often I think I'm

working with 1920x1080 but bring it into compressor and it's reading as 1440x1080 all along trying to get it to 960x540. Would 1440x1080 down-sample to 720x540.

I apologize for the rambling. It's hard to even put this problem into clear sentences.

Larry replies: Thomas, the easiest way to handle this is to ignore the actual pixel counts of your video. Assume, even though it isn't, that all your HD footage is either 1920 x 1080 (for 1080 video) or 1280 x 720 (for 720 video). Use those dimensions, or variations of them, in your compression and things will look great.

So, scaled down 16:9 sizes that would work for the web include:

960 x 540
800 x 450
640 x 360
480 x 270
320 x 180

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CAPTURING AN ENTIRE HDV TAPE

Jagadish, from Bangalore, India, writes:

I am Jagadish, working for a regional channel in India as editor. i am capturing HDV tape 1080i50. while capture time each scene is capturing separately. i have disabled scene detect option, even though it's capturing scene-wise. i am using FCP 6.0.4. i want to capture 1-hr continuously.

Larry replies: Capturing an entire tape containing multiple shots is not possible with HDV - unless you bypass FireWire and capture using the analog output of the camera with a capture card, such as AJA or Blackmagic Design.

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RECORDING DV TO AN HVX-200

John Hogarty writes:

I do some volunteer work for my kids school and they need me to provide the final output on DV tapes. I've been having a heck of a time with this while trying to use Print to Tape in Final Cut Pro 6.0.4 and my Panasonic HVX200. The last time I got it to work by exporting my project (several video and audio layers,) to a file, then create a new sequence and drop that file on it.

But this time around, following what I thought was the same steps, all I'm getting out to the camera is Audio. The video will preview on my Mac running FCP, but the camera LCD just shows a black screen. On playback thru the camera, all I get is audio. Is there a solid way to setup FCP with my HVX so I don't spend hours trying to get both video and audio out?

Larry replies: This sounds to me like your camera is expecting an HD signal, when you are sending it an SD one. Hearing audio with no video generally means the video input of the camera is set incorrectly. Double-check your camera menu settings and make sure the input is set to DV or SD.

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PICKING A BETTER WAY TO EXPORT

Mike Andrade writes:

A quick question on how to get as much quality out of DVD SP as possible. It always seems my burns look horrible when I play the disc back on my 24" iMac or any consumer DVD player. Everything gets stretched and Jaggy. I usually export an animation QT out of Motion at 854x480 and bring it in to DVD SP because if I try using the actual .motn file it will take 2 days to burn. Should I be creating larger files than the 854 to compensate for the stretching. Thanks in advance for any help you can provide.

Larry replies: Mike, this export method won't work. Use **File > Export > QuickTime movie**. Set Output to **Current Settings** (the default) and make it a self-contained QuickTime movie. Don't worry about pixel counts. Don't judge how it looks in the QuickTime movie.

Bring the file into Compressor and compress your MPEG-2 file. Proportions and quality will all look great.

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EXPORTING VIDEO TO MXF FORMAT

Juan Eduardo Capril writes:

How can i export from FCP6 to a MXF format??, the media is recording in a PMW-EX1 camcorder Sony XDCAM EX 1920x1080

Chris Kollmar sent me the answer:

If you have the XDCAM transfer plugin installed you can do an export of a sequence or selected clip in the browser to MXF format.

First, set your audio outputs to dual mono instead of Stereo.

Make sure your sequence or clip is selected in the browser. Then, go to File > Export > Sony XDCAM. A dialog box will pop up asking where you want to put the files.

I have a PMW-EX1 and just did a test - it works.

Björn Adamski adds:

The Sony XDCAM Transfer tool also offers an export plug-in to use with FCP. There were issue reports with sequences longer than 20 minutes but maybe this has been fixed with recent updates.

Here's where you can find them: <http://www.sony.ca/xdcamex/software.htm>

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ITS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

Karen writes:

I have Final Cut Studio, and have no idea how to find Motion or any of the other add ons, or if I need separate software for them. Are the cool things there? If so, how do I get to them. The interconnection between the who STUDIO thing is a step I'm missing.

Larry replies: There are seven applications within Final Cut Studio. You don't access these applications from within Final Cut Studio. Instead, each is a separate icon in your Applications folder - just double-click the icon to run the application:

- Final Cut Pro
- Soundtrack Pro
- Motion
- Compressor
- DVD Studio Pro
- LiveType
- Color

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SAVING PREFERENCE FILES

Brian Seegmiller writes:

Larry I am watching your Lynda training on FCP and you mention if you have favorite motion or effects saved they will be gone when you reset your preference files. Can you make a copy of them, save them somewhere else and then replace them when needed? Or do all of the preference files get corrupt including favorites?

Larry replies: The best way to do this is to use FCP Rescue 6. Its free and makes a backup of your preference files.

You can find a copy here: <http://fcprescue.andersholck.com/>

The best way to use this is to trash your preference files, reset everything exactly the way you want, QUIT Final Cut Pro (which writes your preference files to the disk), then run FCP Rescue.

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MODIFYING AUDIO LEVELS

Marcia Orland writes:

Once an audio track has been cut on the timeline, is there a way to globally change the audio level, other than adjusting each section individually?

Larry replies: Aside from selecting the clips you want to change and choosing **Modify > Levels**, no.

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WORKING WITH POWERPOINT SLIDES IN VIDEO

Mair Musafija writes:

I appreciate your expertise and considering you important part of the Final Cut Pro world. I have question related to incorporating graphics in the video. I have project where I am combining Power Point Presentation with DV video. The way I exported PPT in mov file and I am cutting it into the video file. The PPT slides deteriorated tremendously when included on the time line. Is there any way to compensate for the loss of quality? Maybe you can give me a reference pointing toward right answer.

Larry replies: The key is to create and design your PowerPoint slides to match, as closely as possible, the image size of video. For example, with SD, create them at 800 x 600.

There will still be a loss in quality, because video is lower in resolution than your computer, but this will minimize it.

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PROBLEMS FORMATTING A DVD

Steve writes:

Hi Larry, I am having a problem formatting a DVD in DVD Studio Pro, it says in the log that "language codes for english and english-2 must differ".

What do you think the problem is?

Larry replies: Look in the Outline tab and you'll see two EN language tags assigned to the same thing. Remove one of them and things should work OK.

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WHY DOES DV LOOK BAD?

Cliff Galbraith writes:

I created some animation in Flash, composited it in After Effects as an NTSC D1 Square Pixel 720 x 540 composition and exported it as a QuickTime, high quality, 720 x 486 -- which, when viewed as a QuickTime file, looks pristine.

Then, when I output the video to QuickTime, it looks poor -- isn't that an indicator that something's wrong?

Larry replies: No.

DV video requires a hardware chip to decode IN REAL TIME. When you compress this file for posting to the web, your video is properly decoded -- but it takes longer than real-time to do so.

Since both FCP and QuickTime are designed for real-time playback, the quality of the video is somewhat lessened. When it is compressed, monitored via a DV device, or recorded to tape, the resulting quality is excellent.

In short, this decrease in quality is an artifact of wanting to play the SOURCE file in real time, and does not show up when compressed for the web.

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WRAP-UP

Well, that's about it for this month.

For current news on what's happening in our industry, be sure to listen to the [Digital Production BuZZ](#) podcast every week.

- **Register now** for our PowerUP seminar tour - our tour will be much smaller next year.
- [Visit our store for our latest training videos](#) - like **Chroma-keying in FCP & Motion**.

In the meantime, please continue [sending me your comments](#) and questions. I love hearing from you and enjoy the conversations that develop around these stories.

Until next month, take care, and edit well.

Larry

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