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Monthly Newsletter!**

Larry Jordan's Monthly Newsletter

Editor: Larry Jordan
Issue #55 -- April, 2009

Welcome to the latest edition of my Monthly Final Cut Studio newsletter for April, 2009.

The goal of this newsletter is to provide information helpful to the professional user of Final Cut Pro. This newsletter publishes each month and past issues are now available in my store. 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, and over 450 articles and tutorials to help you get the most out of Final Cut!

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WRAP-UP

WELCOME

Happy April!

The 2009 NAB Show is getting closer and we are getting more and more excited! First, because it is my favorite trade show and, second, because the Digital Production BuZZ is the Official Podcast for the entire event and we are covering it extensively.

Also, I have **NEW video tutorials** and NAB goodies to introduce to you.

I am completely buried in reader mail -- so this month, I have an *EXTENDED* Reader Mail section in the somewhat forlorn hope I'll catch up on my backlog.

> **Note:** I get asked periodically about proof-reading and reader questions. I get about 250 emails a day and try to answer all of them. If a question has relevance to a larger audience I'll add it to a future issue of the newsletter. I often will edit a lengthy question for space and clarity - but I tend not to correct spelling or punctuation. I also try to proof-read my portion of this newsletter carefully before it goes out. But my deadlines are tight and I'm not perfect, so if you see a mistake, or want to make a comment, please send me an email - I want each issue to be as accurate as we can make it.

Whew! Lots to talk about and plenty to see. So, let's get started.

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DIGITAL PRODUCTION BUZZ SELECTED OFFICIAL PODCAST OF 2009 NAB SHOW!

Through the hard work of our producer, **Cirina Catania**, Digital Production BuZZ has been selected as the Official Podcast of the 2009 NAB Show this year!

We are delighted!

SYNDICATE NAB ON YOUR WEBSITE - TOTALLY FREE!

Starting April 18, we will be producing seven one-hour Digital Production BuZZ shows - one each day - highlighting the best of NAB. As well, we will be producing **dozens** of five-minute NAB Show News Briefs during the week of the show. These will cover breaking news and interviews at NAB.

Click here to get more information on syndicating NAB or The BuZZ to your website. FREE!

FREE EXPO TICKETS -- SAVE $150

If you want to get into the NAB expo for free - we can help. Go to the Expo registration page and enter this NAB Source Code: **X104** -- you pay *nothing* to enter NAB. Save $150!

INTERNS NEEDED

If you would like to be part of this effort, and are already planning to be at NAB, email to Debbie@larryjordan.biz. She will let you know what we need and see where you can fit.

We will have a fully-functional, networked newsroom, built on the show floor and next to the Content Theater! If you want to play with some very cool toys, have an all-access exhibitor pass to the largest toy store on the planet, and have your work heard by hundreds of thousands of people around the world, let us know.

INTERESTED IN SPONSORSHIPS OR ADVERTISING

If you, or your company, would like to reach tens of thousands of industry professionals around the world, we have a *limited* number of sponsor opportunities still available. To learn more, email our producer Cirina Catania. Please act quickly!

To learn more - and stay in touch - visit: www.nabshowbuzz.com!

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A CAUTIONARY TALE

Eric Solstein sent me the following story to share with you.

I encountered a most mysterious problem during the rendering of a short film, my computer just decided to go to sleep. I woke it up, of course, I needed the render for a DVD I had to deliver. This all happened about one third into the render thermometer's snail-like crawl, and once awoken, my reliable old G5 tower, the last of a noble breed, cranked for only another three or four minutes before it conked out again. And again soon after that... and then....

Wiser heads than my own suggested I reinstall the System, or render from a new account to diagnose the possibility of "OS Preference File corruption." Neither of these measures appealed to me, but I decided to try the less drastic, and so dilly-dallied, changing the various permissions required to allow a new account to access the files of an older one. This tactic ultimately yielded a render only interrupted to two brief snoozes, not like the deep catatonia my box had fallen prey to earlier. Maybe I was onto something... or maybe not.

The rendered movie file appeared to be all right, so now it was time to squeeze out quick fresh DVD from iDVD, my quick, easy DVD-making tool of choice. About two hours into this six hour render and burn, iDVD was going through the same narcoleptic fits as FTP, and I was the only thing burning. Clearly this was a bigger problem than I imagined, and if I was going to have to reinstall my otherwise pretty darn reliable Mac OS, I would just have to bite the bullet and do it. But I still felt vaguely uncomfortable about the whole thing.

Did I mention that I had recently moved into the hottest apartment in New York City? Soon after the move, it was noticed, my computer's fans were a bit noisier than in the past... actually, I was blissfully unaware of anything, but my wife had made a rather big point of mentioning it. So, I went into that handsome aluminum tower and cleaned out a mess of dust. Reverting back to my previous state of unawareness immediately upon the self-satisfied completion of computer cleansing, I failed to note that the noise had hardly diminished.

Now, with my normally dull senses sharpened by the impending deadline and colossal delays I had run up, it dawned on me that there might be a reason it sounded like a jumbo jet was taking off beneath my desk. I dived once again into the guts of my near-state-of-the-art graphic tool (and near term antique) with a mind to solve problems and bust down whatever invisible barriers stood in the way of that task. Penetrating more deeply into my Mac's labyrinthian innards than I had in less desperate time, I noticed around a plastic corner, a very visible barrier - a thick, fuzzy gray blanket of dust, dirt and dander, over the shiny silver louvers that defended the entryway to my dual processors. Funny, I couldn't remember seeing those louvers before.

Yes, now my computer ran (more) quietly, and no longer spontaneously sleeps. I guess I'll be working late tonight, catching up.

Larry adds: Eric, thanks for writing this up. I tend to keep my computer off the floor, but, even so, it still gets dusty. I'll make sure to clean it out more often from here on out.

UPDATES - April 2, 2009

Bob Godnik adds:

The part of Eric's story that I was especially interested in was that iDVD is his DVD-making tool of choice. Until recently, I sometimes used iDVD as well, depending on my DVD requirements but, usually used Compressor/DSP.

A couple of weeks ago, a videographer friend brought over a miniDV tape with

some wedding footage on it. He was considering a Mac and just using iLife for simplicity. He wanted me to author a few minutes of the tape to DVD and compare it to the DVD he made with an old Casablanca editing system (A dedicated hardware editor with input and output through SVHS!). I captured a couple of minutes in iMovie, exported to Quicktime and authored through iDVD (iLife '09). It looked fine..., until we watched his DVD. The iDVD sample was a lot more faded and less vibrant than his DVD. The iDVD disc looked "flat" and more film-like than video. His DVD looked much closer to what the monitor looked like during the capture. I had the "professional quality" setting invoked in iDVD.

Out of curiosity, I then used Compressor to convert the exact same Quicktime movie that was used for the iDVD sample. With the "Best Quality 90 min" setting the DVD looked much more vibrant and (surprisingly) only slightly better than his Casablanca/SVHS to DVD solution. I had previously assumed the "professional quality" setting in iDVD ('08 and '09) was the same as the "Best Quality 90 min" setting in Compressor but that wasn't the case at all, at least not when working with video footage from his miniDV camera.

I looked all over the internet for more ways to tweak the settings in iDVD or if anyone else noticed this. I couldn't find an answer. Have you heard of this or ever tested iDVD against Compressor/DSP with the same source footage?

Larry replies: Bob, I've always preferred using Compressor for both speed and quality, but have never done any "testing." If anyone has additional opinions, I'm happy to share them.

Ben Balser adds:

I can tell you, as a semi-retired IT engineer, with almost 2 prefessional decades behind me, CPUs have come a long way. Used to be, CPUs would physically overheat and burn up, bang, dead computer, expensive repair. About ten years ago the higher end, hotter running CPUs got thermal protection, that would cause them to go into sleep mode, even if the OS is set to never sleep, to cut down on heat, and save them from an internal physical melt down (literally). Today, all CPUs have this, and speed reduction, built in.

Thus, if your computer slows down a lot, or sleeps when it shouldn't, or gives similar strange symptoms, think about the the temperature of the room it's in, it's position in the room as far as air flow, and check the inside for a good cleaning. Monthly cleaning out (with compressed air) is a must for computers that run 24/7. It not only will save you from the type of situation Eric encountered, but will actually prolong the life of the CPU itself, as heat breaks it down faster over time.

Larry replies: Thanks, Ben. It is always good to hear from you.

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NEW VIDEO TRAINING COVERING HD

Our most popular seminar session, hands-down, was a one-hour discussion of how to pick the best hard drive and video format.

I've had lots and lots of requests to turn this into a download and, thanks to the help of <u>Eric Blum Productions,</u> we've done just that. These are not Final Cut Pro-specific. Rather, we step back

and look at all the different video formats available - at last count more than 400 - and help you decide how to pick the best one for your project.

Introducing: Picking the Right Hard Disk and Video Format.

This six-part, one-hour video tutorial produced specifically for download, is directly taken from my recent seminars.

> **Part 1: Introduction.** This section explains why hard disk speed is just as important as hard disk storage, and discusses significant differences between FireWire 400, FireWire 800, and SATA, along with little known speed traps in FireWire than you need to avoid.
>
> **Part 2: Video Formats.** This section explains basic video formats, NTSC, PAL, and HD. We look at how much space is required to store one hour of video, how fast the hard disk needs to be to support the format, and what a dropped frame error is actually telling you.
>
> **Part 3: Compression.** This section explains the difference between I-frame and GOP-based compression, and why it makes a difference when producing live events, or doing lots of complex rendering. This also explains why setting DVD chapter markers is better done before your video is compressed.
>
> **Part 4: Bit-depth.** Probably nothing perplexes more people than video bit-depth. The easiest way to think of this is that bit-depth determines how accurately we can represent reality in our video image. This section explains what it means and when to care about it in your projects.
>
> **Part 5: Sub-sampling.** We toss around terms like 4:4:4, 4:2:2, 4:1:1... but what do they mean and why should we care? Well, the answer depends upon what you are doing. If you are doing green-screen work, you should care a lot - this tutorial explains why.
>
> **Part 6: Summary**. In this final section, I take a look at frame rates and why they matter, the differences between progressive and interlaced scanning, and then summarize everything we've covered.

If you've heard this in my seminars, this will be a great review.

If you are looking for ways to make your projects output faster, look better, or be easier to work with, you need to view this new series of tutorials.

I've spent a year researching this material and finding a way to explain it that doesn't require a doctorate in engineering. I'm very pleased with these and hope you are, too.

Each part is $9.99. The entire suite of six is $49.99.

Click here to see the contents of Part 1.

Click here for the complete package of all six tutorials -- and **SAVE 17%**.

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EDITING SOUND

Bart Weiss sent this question in:

> I have a question about editing sound. When working on a documentary we, of
> course, usually cut down the audio track. STP is great for this, especially with [its
> ability to edit on the] zero point crossing. That would be the best way to cut the
> synch track down in Final Cut, but if I round trip from FCP to STP and cut tracks
> using the zero-crossing point, the picture comes back out of synch. How can I
> used the zero point editing and get back to FCP in sync.

Larry replies: Bart, thanks for writing.

First, the short answer: you can't.

Now a bit longer explanation. When we edit in Final Cut Pro, all our edits MUST occur where the
video frame changes. For example, in NTSC, we can only edit 30 times in one second. (For PAL,
we can only edit 25 times in one second.) To keep this illustration simple, let us ignore all other
potential frame rates.

Because it is not possible to edit on the half-frame, quarter-frame or any other partial-frame, all
edits must occur on frame boundaries. Again, in NTSC, that means every 30th of a second.

However, audio is not recorded using a video frame rate. It is recorded using individual samples
-- 48,000 of them a second. When we edit audio in Soundtrack Pro, we can edit between any two
samples -- an amazing amount of precision!
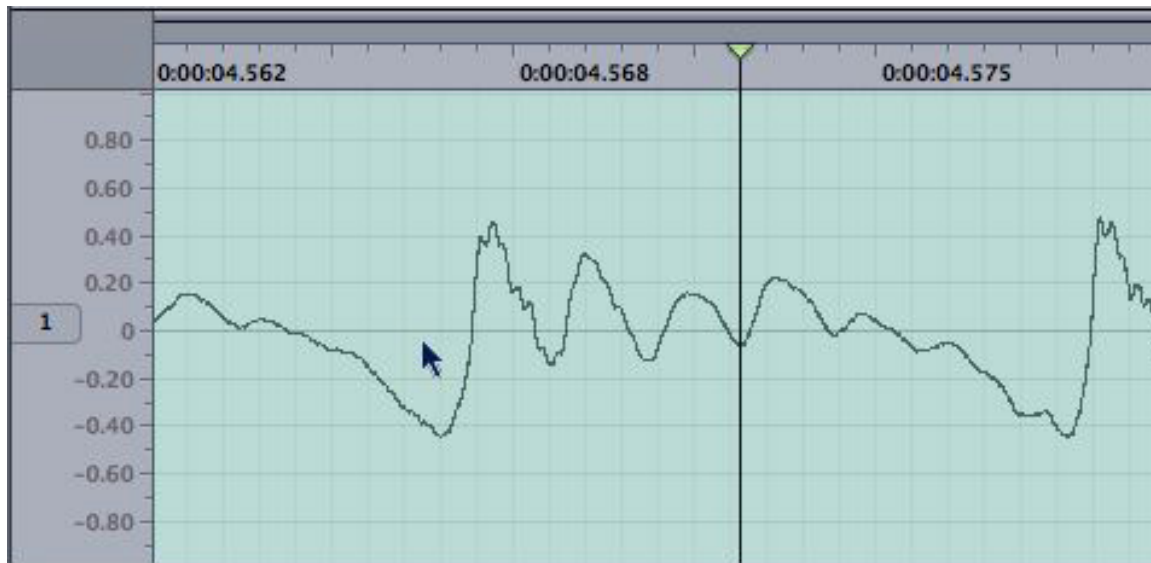
Here's an audio clip loaded into a Soundtrack Pro Audio File project. I've zoomed in so we can
see the waveform more clearly. As this illustrates, audio is a wave -- areas of high pressure (up)
and low pressure (down). Or, in electrical terms, the wave measures the change in voltage of an
audio signal. Positive voltage is up and negative voltage is down.

But notice that heavy gray line in the center, where the cursor is pointing. That's called the "zero-
crossing line." This is the point in a waveform where the audio retains all its frequency (pitch)
information, but has absolutely no volume.

If I were to make an edit as indicated by this selected area, I would be editing from an area of high pressure/voltage immediately to an area of low pressure/voltage. This will always cause a pop or click in the audio at the point of the edit. This is often the case when you edit in FCP because our audio edits MUST occur on the video frame boundary. The only way to fix this in FCP is to put a quick audio dissolve across the edit. It isn't ideal, but it will minimize the click.

A much better way to work is to edit at the zero crossing.
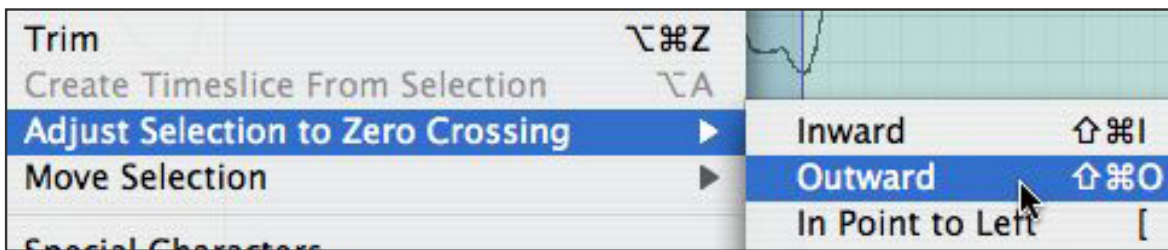
Soundtrack provides a menu choice that makes that easy. Select **Edit > Adjust Selection to Zero Crossing**. My recommendation is to generally extend it outward. This avoids any possibility of a noise intruding into your edit.

Notice what happens to the selected area when we adjust the edit point? It has expanded both

sides of the edit. Now, if you were to delete that selected area, the edit would be absolutely soundless.

This would be an ideal way to edit -- EXCEPT that there is no relation between the zero crossing line and frame boundaries. It is entirely possible that the zero crossing line is more than a frame away from the selected edit.

Consequently, while it would be great to edit all video this way, when you are working with sync sound, you are best editing inside Final Cut, then trimming your edits in STP during the final audio mix. That way, everything stays in sync and you are able to clean up any noisy edits without getting out of sync.

I do almost all of my mixes this way and hope to create a video tutorial that illustrates this in the next few weeks.

For editing synced audio and video, turn snapping on and make sure that **View > Snap To** is set to **Frames**, rather than the default of Ruler ticks.

Also, you can use **Edit > Move Selection > To Next Video Frame** - or - **To Previous Video Frame** to keep everything in alignment.

UPDATE - April 2, 2009

Bob Demers adds:

> FCP does support subframe editing for audio, which is handy for fixing zero crossing error. The resolution is 1/100 of a frame. Basically, it involves a shift-drag [of the In or Out in the Viewer] to navigate the timeline in the player audio tab. A search of the latest manual for "subframe" will lead to a couple pages on the topic.

Larry replies: Bob, you are correct. And you can set audio keyframes within a frame as well. However, the problem I have with sub-frame editing is that it is very easy to move this too far. At which point the audio will be out of sync, but FCP does not display any red flags. I've never been a fan of this technique.

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DIGITAL PRODUCTION BUZZ IS NOW SYNDICATED ON wsRADIO

We are now syndicating the highlights of Digital Production BuZZ each month on wsRADIO. The Internet is becoming the future of broadcasting. Now, with wsRADIO and the BuZZ, you have one more way to stay current.

The show is updated the second Thursday of each month.

March's show features highlights of our recent overseas tour:

> * Ken Hay, CEO of Scottish Screen, Glasgow, Scotland
> * Simon Daniels, CEO of Design for Life, Dublin, Ireland
> * Carl Grinter, Director, Business Development of Rushes Post, London
> * Kieron Seth, Managing Director, Broadcast Video Expo 2009, London
> * Andy King, Head of Technology of the BBC, London

April's show, to be posted April 9, features highlights of the run-up to NAB:

> * Chris Brown - Executive VP of the 2009 NAB Show
> * Bob Sitrick - Executive Producer, Content Central
> * Brian Koop, VP of Strategic Planning, STATS
> * Mark Rupert & Liz Langston, Executive Producers, 48-hour Film Project

You can hear what we are doing on wsRADIO here.

> **Note**: The wsRADIO website is not designed for the Safari web browser -- use Firefox instead.

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A PERSONAL STORY

Jim sent this story in:

> I'm a fairly new user. Quite recently I came across a "funny" that I'd like to share so here goes. To try and get up to speed in Final Cut Pro I decided to re-cut a small 4 minute piece I had just finished in Avid because I thought I could quickly learn equivalent techniques in FCP and then compare alternative strategies that FCP employs to achieve the same results.
>
> Using the same footage from this recent Avid project I exported the digitized clips from Avid as a Quicktime movie using the *same as source* option, in this case PAL DVC Pro 411 Anamorphic. Meanwhile in FCP I set-up my project and set my sequence to PAL DVC Pro Anamorphic and imported.
>
> After import though, in both the canvas and viewer the clips were non-anamorphic, more worryingly, FCP was going to print the sequence squeezed with pillar boxed black bars down the side. In the window sizing drop down I made sure the correct for aspect ratio mark was on, it was, turning it off of course made the picture worse. I then highlighted and right clicked on the clip itself and under clip settings > format, discovered that the anamorphic flag was not checked. You can check this on or off. Once I'd checked it on the clip and sequence were now displayed correctly.
>
> It makes no difference when exporting from Avid which *Display Aspect Ratio* setting you use in fact this may only be an instruction for the Quicktime Player. I can only assume that on export from Avid the necessary flag describing the clip as anamorphic was missing or is unreadable to FCP.
>
> It is possible I've missed something so please feel free to point this out.

Larry replies: Thanks for writing! You have discovered the way to tell FCP how to treat the footage - clicking the Anamorphic flag.

Because an anamorphic picture has the same number of pixels as a 4:3 image (720 x 480 for NTSC or 720 x 576 in the case of PAL), when you import the footage, FCP doesn't always know whether it should be 4:3 or 16:9.

You solve this by clicking the Anamorphic flag for the clip and / or the sequence. There are a couple places you can change this setting:
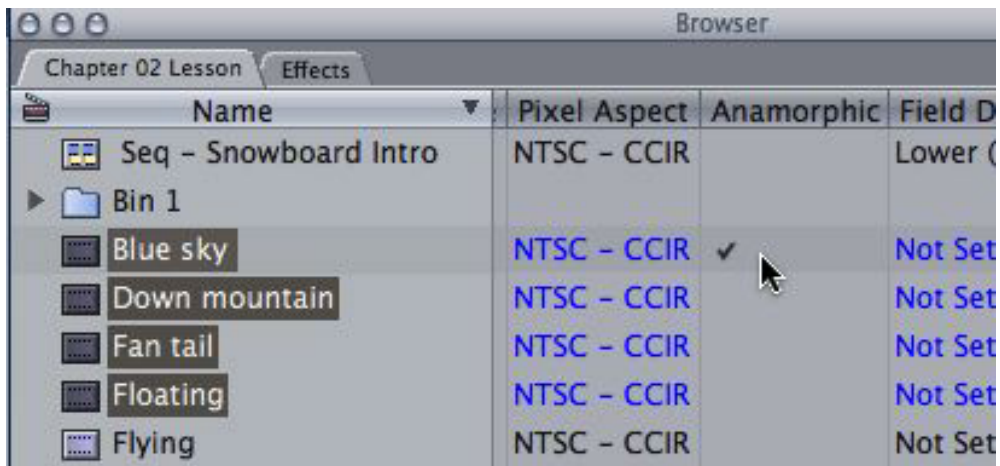
* Select the clip, or clips, you want to change in the Browser and scroll to the right until you see the **Anamorphic** column. Check the appropriate row in that column to turn 16:9 on.
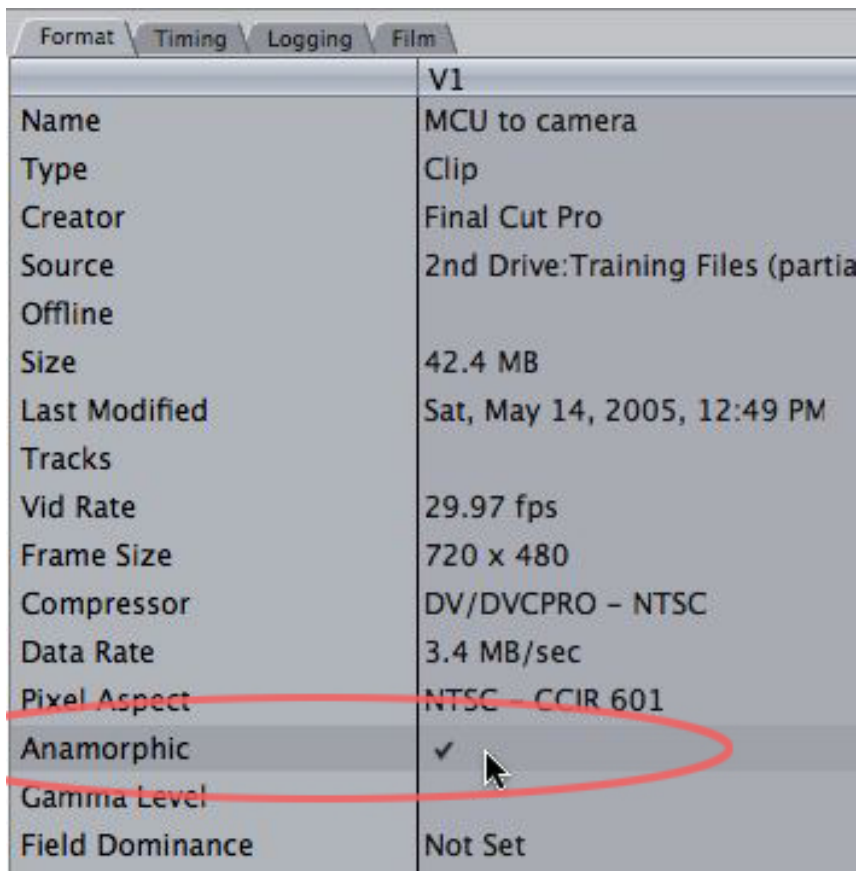
* Select a clip in the Browser or Timeline and choose **Edit > Item Properties > Format**. Turn on the Anamorphic flag by checking it.

* On footage that you capture, or use log & transfer, the anamorphic flag is set automatically.

CLIENT SATISFACTION IS KEY

Paul Grosso, from JPL, sent me the following story which I want to share with you.

> I started my non-linear editing on Media100 back in the early 90s. We were one of the first Media100 owners in Philly. It was a great alternative to Avid and the quality was better.
>
> We ended up switching to Avid purely because there were no Media100 freelancers, but plenty of Avid freelancers. Many of them would barter time on our Media100 to try and learn it, figuring it would be a new standard. They all struggled with it, and Media100 never really got to the level of Avid market penetration.
>
> When I saw FCP v1.x, I knew it would be the Avid rival that we were all waiting for. I had to set up my new production company on a much more limited budget so I went FCP, and loved it. When I came to JPL in 2001, they were a mix of Avid and tape-based linear. We converted to FCP within a few months and never looked back.
>
> Yes, they are all just tools. Can you deliver a good quality product in a timely fashion? That is indeed the most important question. But, you would have to rip FCP from my bleeding fingers before I would give it up.

Larry adds: Thanks for the story, Paul!

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LARRY IS TRAVELING TO NEW ORLEANS!

Louisiana is the third largest film market in the country, and New Orleans is truly its heart. So the South Louisiana Final Cut Pro User Groups project has invited me to present my PowerUP seminars there.

May 8th and 9th I'll be in the Crescent City with two PowerUP seminars. From ingest through editing, finishing, and output, I can help FCP users to bring their skills up a notch, helping them achieve a more productive and enjoyable editing experience. Learn how to spend more time with creative work, and less with technical issues.

These New Orleans seminars will take place at Delgado College's City Park campus from 9am to 5pm both days. The event is being produced by Apple-Certified trainer **Ben Balser** and sponsored by Delgado College and the New Orleans Video Access Center.

Even better, attendees can join us for a reception on the evening of the 9th, featuring the area's top film editors, with a discussion on building Louisiana's post production community.

This is the first time I've been in Louisiana and one event you don't want to miss! Tuition is $50 through April 27th, and $60 afterwards.

For more information and registration, contact Ben Balser at benb@bbalser.com. SLFCPUG is south Louisiana's most valuable resource for Final Cut Studio users with chapters in New Orleans and Lafayette. More information about SLFCPUG can be found at www.slfcpug.org.

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CBR vs VBR COMPRESSION

Björn Adamski, from MXF4Mac, sent me the following:

> Recently, we put together a white paper covering CBR versus VBR compression that may be of interest to your readers. As the beginning of this 11-page white paper explains:
>
>> This technical documentation refers to native, conversion free, and fast direct access to various video formats on the basis of the Material eXchange Format (MXF). Please note that aspects of image quality are not considered, this documentation only focuses on file access.
>
> Here's the link:
>
> mxf4mac.com/images/stories/downloads/principles_of_cbr_and_vbr.pdf

Larry replies: Thanks, Björn!

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DISK-BASED ARCHIVING

I've spent a lot of time over the last year writing and talking about archiving. While we still don't have the perfect solution, one of the products I looked at when I attended the Broadcast Video Expo in London last February was MatrixStore from Object Matrix. (www.object-matrix.com)

Nicolas Pearce-Tomenius, from Object Matrix, sent me this link to a blog posting on how MatrixStore is being used in Brazil.

I thought you might find it interesting, too.

> www.matrixstore.net/2009/03/18/matrixstore-assists-digital-production-workflows-in-brazil/

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READER MAIL

DEALING WITH 16:9 AND 4:3 ASPECT RATIOS

I've gotten a lot of questions about this issue recently. Each is a variation on what **Trent Anderson** sent in:

I am producing a documentary, and most of the footage that I have from years back, is 4:3., and so recently I have been shooting some interviews, and again, I choose to use 4:3 instead of 16:9, so that all of the footage would match up. However, I have noticed that most new stuff now, especially if I am going to submit it to a film festival, or TV, would prefer 16:9. I have tried to drag the old 4:3 clips into the timeline, with the sequence presets to Anamorphic, but still with NTSC 4:3. I think it looks a little "squished" or stretched. Any suggestions as to how I might accomplish this? Thanks so much for any input.

Larry replies: Trent, thanks for your question.

The basic problem is that both 16:9 an d4:3 footage has exactly the same number of pixels in the image. The only difference is in the shape of the pixels. 16:9 pixels are short and fat, which 4:3 pixels are tall and thin. (For the engineers in the audience, allow me some dramatic over-simplification.)

If you edit 16:9 material into a 4:3 timeline, FCP will always scale the image so that the entire image is displayed. (In fact, for EVERY video format, if you edit a larger image into a sequence with a smaller image size, FCP will always scale the larger image so that the entire image is displayed.)

This means that your 16:9 material will have black bars (called "letter-boxing") and the top and bottom of the image.

Since your sequence is already 4:3, you have now created a 4:3 image and could stop there if you want the highest possible image quality.
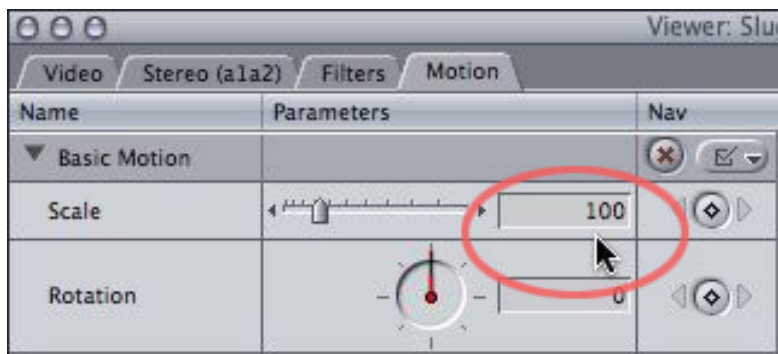
However, some people object to seeing the black bars in their shot. At this point, you can double-click the image to load it into the viewer and increase the Scale setting. As you scale, you will lose a portion of the image on each size. Another problem is that since all video is bit-mapped (composed of discreet pixels) as soon as the scale amount EXCEEDS 100%, your image will start to get fuzzy, grainy, or blurry. In other words, it starts to look bad.

As long as you don't scale it too much, you can probably get away with it. The amount you can get away with varies based upon the quality of the source image, the quality of the images before and after it, you personal standards for quality, and other, related factors.

Something similar needs to be done to fit 4:3 material into a 16:9 sequence.

When you add 4:3 material, FCP squeezes it smaller so that the entire image fits into the frame, which adds black bars to the sides (called "pillar-boxing"). You can get the 4:3 image to fit the frame by increasing its scale in Motion, but, as before, you will lose a portion of the image -- this time at the top and bottom.

Again, remember that the highest quality you can get from your image is when the scale is set to 100%. Any more will look fuzzy, and anything less means you are not showing all the detail that's

there.

George Langley adds:

> One neat trick with resizing the 16:9 in a 4:3 timeline back up to 100% is that you can then add a pan that wasn't in the original footage. (I guess technically is really a tracking shot!)
>
> Just set some keyframes and adjust their horizontal X locations as desired. You can go from one edge of the image to the other, or middle out, whatever. Adds some interest to the shot, as well as getting everything in that the videographer had in their original composition.
>
> (Guess a 4:3 in a 16:9 would subsequently allow you to add a tilt!)

Larry replies: Thanks for sharing this tip. This technique is the low-cost way of doing a pan-and-scan on your video.

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SHOOT SD OR HD FOR THE WEB?

Jennifer Koreny, of Cal State Sacramento, has a great question:

> What are the benefits, if any, using High Def cameras for video that will end up on the web? We are looking to purchase a few cameras for staff to capture events around campus. It's not something we intend to invest a lot of money in (I'm sure you've heard about Cal's budget issues) but is something we'd like to expand on our website. We will probably make a few DVD's of lectures as well.

Larry replies: Jennifer, this is an easy question to ask, and very hard to answer.

The short answer is that there isn't a LOT of benefit if all you are doing is creating web videos at 400 x 300. That's well below the resolution of standard-def, much less high-def.

Almost all DVDs, too, are standard-def.

However, since there are very, very few SD cameras being sold today, you'll probably buy high-def.

My feeling is that if you want the best pictures for the web with the least hassle, shoot 720p HD -- JVC or Panasonic make good cameras for this.

Others, I am SURE will have their own opinions - which I am happy to share. But, if it were my money, that's what I'd buy.

Steven Ludlow, from Cessna Aricraft, adds:

Regarding shooting HD or SD for the web… I don't pretend to understand all that happens to downconverted footage, but I know from just looking that I get a better image for the web when my source is HD than I do when it is SD. I realize pixels are pixels…but there is something about the original crispness and detail of HD that still looks noticeably better when downcoverted for the web.

For instance - www.flycessnaforfun.com – I shot this with a combination of an EX3 and a small Canon HG10)

Larry replies: Thanks for the comment, Steven.

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CREATING THE RIGHT OFFLINE FORMAT

Paul Fiore writes:

I have a client that is editing a movie trailer from the 94 min HDSR master with a frame rate of 23.98.

He wants me to generate a DVCAM with VISTC for him to do the offline edit with on his home system, then bring me back the FCP Project to do the online and layoff to HDSR.

I plan to make his DV files off line and recapture the shots I need from the HDSR tape at HD 10 bit, most likely 4:2:2. I know my system can handle 10 bit HD video so that isn't a concern.

So my question is: Once I down-covert to DVCAM I know I'm giving him 29.97 video to work with. So at what point do I account for this when I'm recapturing the HDSR with a frame rate of 23.98?

Am I in for a nightmare or is this workflow correct? Can I offer my client a different workflow that is going to make both our lives easier?

Larry replies: This leans toward nightmare - because if you edit 24 fps material at 29.97 fps, many of your edits will fall on "false frames" -- frames that don't actually exist in the master.

This makes recapture impossible and truly messes up sync.

You would be *MUCH* wiser to make DVCPROHD 23.98 fps masters - which is a very easy format to edit, even on older G-4 systems using FCP 4. If you have a newer system, convert it to ProRes 422. Eitehr format keeps the frame rate and image size constant and will greatly simplify the final on-line.

However, I don't do offline editing very often any more. I'm interested in what other readers suggest.

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CREATING MULTIPLE OUTPUT FILES

Jim Mitchell writes:

> Your training has been fantastic and I enjoy the newsletter. I am bringing in 10-bit uncompressed clips from digibeta through an AJA Io and re-purposing those clips. Each clip (and there are thousands) has a unique clip number. I sweeten each clip in FCP.
>
> Then, I want to output each clip from FCP in the following formats:
>
> - Output back to digibeta through the AJA with no watermark for archiving
> - Output DV quality of the same clip with no watermark to our on-line server
> - Output MPEG4 of the same clip with a unique water mark to our on-line server
> - Output MPEG4 of the same clip with a 2nd unique water mark to our on-line server
>
> In all, each clip gets re-purposed 4 times.
>
> Question: Is there any sort of batch export that one can do to output all these different formats simultaneously or must each format and each unique watermarked clip be brought out individually? These uniquely numbered clips must be kept separate from one clip to the next but all four formats bear the identical clip number for cross reference in the database. This means I can't drag them all to the time line and make one big movie. Each clip must remain separate and unique unto itself so it can be loaded with its appropriate meta data into the database of the server in all the various formats and two watermark configs. What would you do?

Larry replies: While you can't do this in one step, you can do it in four:

1. Output to DigiBeta (i.e. record to tape)
2. Export a high-res file (i.e. 10-bit uncompressed) to your hard disk using the naming convention of your choice.
3. Create a droplet in Compressor that creates the three file versions you need: DV and MPEG-4, with and without watermark.
4. You could automate this further using Automator to watch a particular folder and automatically start compressing a files as soon as it is done exporting from Final Cut Pro.

The benefit to using Compressor is that it does batch processing, format transcoding, watermarking, and FTP transfer all while running the background.

Here is an article on creating droplets: www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_droplet.html

UPDATE - April 2, 2009

Robert Croy asks:

> I have been trying to [follow your step #4] but have the problem that if it is a folder action it will fail because the action wants to start as soon as the file is being written or downloaded. So how would you do this?

Larry replies: Rob, when I have been working with Automator, I have read that there is a setting in Automator that says "wait until file download is complete. But, I am not an Automator kind of guy, so while I know it is there, I haven't used it.

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CREATING A FAST-MOTION CLIP

Karen Irvine writes:

> One thing you didn't touch on in your training is how to create a fast-motion clip.

Larry replies: There are four ways to change the speed of a clip:

- With a freeze frame
- With a Fit-to-Fill edit
- With a constant speed change effect
- With a variable speed change effect

To create a fast motion clip - sort of like a poor-man's time-lapse:

- Create a new sequence and edit the clip that you want to turn into a time-lapse clip into it
- Select the clip
- Choose **Modify > Speed**
- Set the percentage to, say, **900**
- This is too fast to play properly without dropping frames, so select **File > Export > QuickTime movie**
- Export the clip as a *self-contained* QuickTime movie
- Import that new file and edit it into your sequence.

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SHOOTING VIDEO WITH A DIGITAL STILL CAMERA

John Warner writes (I'm paraphrasing from his letter):

> I own the Canon 5D digital still camera. It shoots digital video. How can I use this video in Final Cut Pro?

Larry replies: John, you can do this, but it will be a bit of work.

- Transfer the image file to your computer.
- Using Compressor, convert it from its native RAW format into ProRes 422 HQ.
- Create a ProRes 422 HQ sequence in Final Cut Pro
- Import and edit your footage.

John wrote back:

> I assumed that it would require work and be a pain in the rear but I really like the idea of using my Canon glass and getting that really really shallow depth of field.
>
> Folks are doing some interesting things:
>
> www.usa.canon.com/dlc/controller?act=GetArticleAct&articleID=2327
> www.slashgear.com/canon-eos-5d-mark-ii-sample-video-clips-1716575/

In my dreams, I would save for the affordable RED consumer camera which debuts later this year but the shoot for next week has been approved and I have to move quickly.

Larry replies: Thanks for writing!

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AUDIO DRIFT WITH CAPTURE NOW

Frankie Gonzalez writes:

> I was following along with your capture lesson and you said never use capture now, your audio will drift.
>
> I just purchased a new mic and I was testing it out with my camera. While capturing the footage using your method the exact opposite happened.
>
> The audio drifted while using clip. What can I do to fix the problem?
>
> Also I'm getting lots of dropped frames running the footage what can I do.
>
> I have a macbook pro 2.4 GHZ Intel Core Duo and 4 gigs of ram. And external hard drive. I should be cruising along.

Larry replies: Thanks for writing!

Make SURE your scratch disks in FCP are set to your external drive. Dropped frames are caused by a hard disk that's too slow for what you are recording to it. Often, this indicates your scratch disks (Final Cut Pro > System Settings) are pointing to your boot drive. That won't work.

Make SURE your camera is recording audio at 48 kHz, also called 16-bit. Sync drift is often caused by the camera recording at the wrong sample rate.

Make sure your external hard drive is NOT attached via USB - that, also, is too slow on the Mac.

Here are some articles that may help further:

- Audio sample rates: www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_audio_capture_settings_32khz.html
- Trouble-shooting: www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_trouble.html

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PROTECTING YOUR GEAR

Ken Stone runs a great Final Cut Pro website. If you haven't visited it, you are missing some great articles.

Recently, **Steve Douglas** ran a review of an APC Surge Protector. While surge protectors may not be high on your list of sexy editing equipment, you owe it to yourself to read this article.

www.kenstone.net/fcp_homepage/apc_surge_arrest_douglas.html

Especially if you want your gear to last longer than the next storm.

For what it's worth, all my computer gear is protected by an <u>APC Back-UPS XS 1500</u> battery backup system. It's worked great, I've never had a computer problem caused by electricity, and it works even in the dark.

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SONY HARD DISK RECORDING UNIT TROUBLE

German sent me a question that is all too frequent:

> Last december I bought a Sony HVR DR60 hard disk recording unit and I can't make it work right with FCP.
>
> I can't transfer videos from the DR60 to Final Cut Pro using "Log and Transfer". I have Final cut version 6.0.4 and already downloaded the Plugin from this Sony web page. I also updated quick time but I cant get it to work right.
>
> This is very frustrating. I've spent days trying to find out how to make it work right with no success.

Larry replies: German, thanks for writing, but you are not going to like the answer. The reason you can't get it to work is that Final Cut does not support the unit.

This brings up a REALLY important point: *Before buying any new video gear, be sure it works with your system.*

You can find out what equipment is supported by visiting the Resources page for Final Cut Studio: www.apple.com/finalcutstudio/resources

UPDATE - April 2, 2009

Jason Boyette sent in this update:

> The HDR-DR60 works very well with FCP 6.0.5. Here's what I do to get it to work:
>
> - Connect hard drive (HDR-DR60). Do **not** turn it on
> - Open FCP
> - Shift+Command+ 8 (Opens Log & Transfer)
> - Turn on the HDR-DR60 (slide to the computer side...not video)
> - Wait patiently for about 30 sec to a minute
> - You will then see a thumbnail of each clip
> - You can't preview them but you can import them and then edit away
>
> I hope this helps, I use these steps every morning at my school doing a daily newscast!

Thanks for the great newsletter every month and the tutorials on Lynda.com. My students always ask how I know the things I do...I always tell them "Larry Jordan taught me everything I know"

Larry adds: Thanks, Jason, for sending this in.

UPDATE - April 3, 2009

Andy Mees adds:

> Quick bit of info regarding your reader German's request for help using his Sony HVR DR60 recording unit with FCP.
>
> You note that it is not supported and whilst thats absolutely correct, inasmuch as it is not on the official support list, it has actually been supported since version FCP 6.0.3 when used in conjunction with the correct Sony Log and Transfer plugin (BPE-SS-038D): www.sony.com.au/objects/Other/HVRDR60/html/soft.html#A2
>
> German notes that he already has the correct software but is having trouble getting it to work right ... maybe the workflow guidelines at the link above can help him.

Larry replies: Andy, thanks for this.

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WHY DOES EVERYTHING HAVE TO RENDER?

Randall Brown asks:

> I'm getting a red render bar on all transitions, even dissolves. I noticed that you didn't seem to have this problem in your Lynda.com training. The "option P" command also seems to briefly stop in the middle. RT is set for dynamic.
>
> What's causing the problem.

Larry replies: Randall, thanks for writing. Your MacBook Pro system is plenty fast enough. My GUESS is that your sequence settings (**Sequence > Settings**) don't match your video clips. Check there first.

> **Note**: You can verify what a clip's settings are by selecting the clip, then choosing **Edit > Item Properties > Format.**

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HOW TO AVOID RENDERING STILL IMAGES

Don Kates asks:

I'm having a problem with FCP. when I bring images in prepared as you say to do (2.5x the frame size), everything I do in the timeline with those images needs rendering(i.e.. transition, filter or even a change in length of the transition). Could you give me some insight into the problem? If I bring them in at the frame size for the sequence 1920 x 1080, i don't have the problem.

Larry replies: Don, the simplest definition of rendering is to convert an effect or image from its native format to match the video format of your timeline.

When you create an image that is significantly larger than the video format you are using, Final Cut renders it, or converts it, from that high-quality image into a form that matches your timeline.

When your image size is, essentially, the same as the timeline, Final Cut can do this in real-time. However, if the image is really big, or really small, FCP can't process it quick enough to play in real-time, so it needs to render.

The benefit of using images with higher resolution (quality) than your sequence is that you will most often end up with a higher quality result in your sequence. However, if time is of the essence and you don't need to move around the image, then bring it in at exactly the frame size you need for your project.

- For 1080 projects, a full-screen image is 1,920 x 1,080 x 72 pixels.
- For 720 projects, a full-screen image is 1,280 x 720 x 72 pixels.

For NTSC and PAL projects, image sizes vary wildly. Here's an article that explains this in more detail: www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_grfx_look.html.

Keep in mind that all stills, regardless of image size, will requiring rendering before final output or export.

Also, keep in mind that FCP does not like images larger than about 4,000 pixels, so if you are working at HD resolutions, make your image 3840 x 2160 or smaller.

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CREATING A STILLS PROJECT

Daniel Carrion writes:

> I am a retiree picking up FCP as a hobby and it is being more than challenging this for me. I want to make a movie of my daughter's wedding pictures (2304 x 1536). I started this project using the 4.3 format and the truth is that the quality is really poor in my HD 37 inches LCD flat TV. And also with just a few pictures I am already over 1GB of disk used.
>
> For this project I bought your "Moving on Stills" DVD and following the examples I came out with the idea that maybe I should make it a HD movie with the stills or at least a format that I could easily convert it to HD later on.
>
> Would you point me in the right direction?
>
> I need to know:

- Picture sizes (I imagine 2132 x 1200 is the 16.9 format)
- Settings for FCP, DVD SP
- Should I buy a blue ray burner for the Windows or for the Mac Pro?

Larry; why don't you create a "Moving on Still for HD"?

Larry replies: Daniel, without a doubt, working with stills causes headaches for everyone.

First, the key question is how are you going to distribute this video? Blu-ray discs can be created on a Mac, but you'll need Toast or Adobe Encore. Final Cut Studio can't do it.

Second, High-Def Blu-ray discs can only be played on an HD TV set.

Third, yes, an HD movie would be better quality than SD. The image problems you are seeing are most likely due to down-sampling your image to SD quality (which is very much lower than the original image).

Fourth, the video setting I recommend would be either DVCPRO HD 720p/60 or ProRes 422. An hour of DVCPRO HD takes 48 GB to store. And hour of ProRes 422 takes about 60 GB to store. Neither is small, but the quality is much higher. The reason I recommend 720p is that it can be easily displayed to computer screens - which, I suspect, is where more people will view this movie, than on Blu-ray discs.

A suggested image size should be 2560 x 1440 x 72 dpi.

Here's an article that can help: www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_grfx_look.html

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MOVING FILES BETWEEN FINAL CUT PRO AND PRO TOOLS

Mike Carroll writes:

> You interviewed me sometime ago about my first independent feature film Year and editing a monthly half-hour show on my 4 year old iBook for broadcast on KCRA-TV.
> I'm now finishing my second feature Nightbeats (nightbeats-movie.com). I exported my audio files as an OMF for him to import into Pro Tools for a sound mix & design.
> He's given me a complete AIF of the mix for the film, but I also asked for an export of all the files from his Pro Tools project, that came in a folder with a .PMR file. I'd like to open that Pro Tools timeline into Final Cut Pro to do additional tweaking and finer editing.
>
> There's lots of articles about exporting from Final Cut for Pro Tools, but how do I import Pro Tools projects into Final Cut Pro 6?
>
> Thanks for any direction you can point me toward.

Larry replies: Mike, thanks for checking back in.

First, You can't open OMF files, or ProTools files, in Final Cut. However, if your audio engineer exported the files as an OMF, you CAN open them in Soundtrack Pro. FCP only expects the final

mix as an AIF or WAV file.

You might also check into the ProTools conversion utility from Automatic Duck: www.
automaticduck.com/products/pifcp/

SOUNDTRACK PRO TRICK

Tracy Evans sent this in:

> I took your course in STP on Lynda a few months ago, and it really helped jump
> start me in using the program. Just wanted to say thanks.
>
> Also, I wanted to mention a problem and solution I just found that you might be
> interested in. I was having trouble with stereo pairs when sending FCP files to
> STP. My stereo pairs were being split on to two tracks in STP.
>
> The solution was to make sure that stereo tracks in FCP started on odd number
> tracks. A stereo pair on tracks 2-3 in FCP ends up as two tracks in STP. The same
> stereo pair on tracks 3-4 in FCP end up as a proper single stereo track in STP.
>
> You probably already knew this, but I struggled with it for about an hour trying to
> solve it. I searched the web, but did not find anything on it.

Larry replies: I'm really glad you liked the seminars and I've discovered the same trick myself.
Thanks for sharing this!

PROBLEMS WITH SOUNDTRACK

Peter Zersch writes:

> I saw your Soundtrack pro tutorial (very useful). Immediately I could make use of
> it. But something didn't work out as you described. Maybe you can help.
>
> The problem was. I had a hum in my rough material (all captured as small clips,
> couldn't capture it as a long clip). I exported one clip to test if I could get rid of the
> hum. The hum remover didn't work (analyses did nothing, don't know why) and
> also the noise print/remove noise didn't do a good job (the voices got distorted,
> and the hum was still noticeable).
>
> So I opened the spectrum window (a super feature). And there I decided to get rid
> of a lot of noise in the 150-200 Hz region (selected this range and hit the
> backspace key). This did a superb job. The hum was completely gone and the
> voices in the clip where like nothing had ever happened. So far so good, but then I
> wanted to repeat this this action on all my other clips (which was a lot of clips).
> Because it would take me hours to do this same action for all these clips I decided
> to make an apple script (like you described in your tutorial).

So I saved the script and went to FCP. Made a copy of one of the clips just for testing (because of the destructiveness of the scripts), and then send it to the apple script I saved. I did it once with the 'yes' and once with the 'no' button. In both cases it didn't work out. When I went back to FCP the audio was gone (completely deleted) except for one frame.

To be sure I didn't do anything wrong in this process I made another script in Soundtrack (normalization) and tried if that would work. That one worked fine. It looks like the delete audio action made in the spectrum window doesn't work as a script.

Am I still doing something wrong or is this some kind of a bug. Do you have a solution or workaround for this?

*Larry replies:* Peter, this is a great question!

The problem with scripts is that they only process the entire clip - they don't understand selection. So, the script did not see "select this frequency range, then delete." Instead it just saw: "...delete."

I don't know of an easy way to clean up a selection of frequencies within your audio using the batch processing scripts in Soundtrack Pro.

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EXPORTING QUICKTIME FROM SOUNDTRACK PRO

Nicolas Nilsen writes:
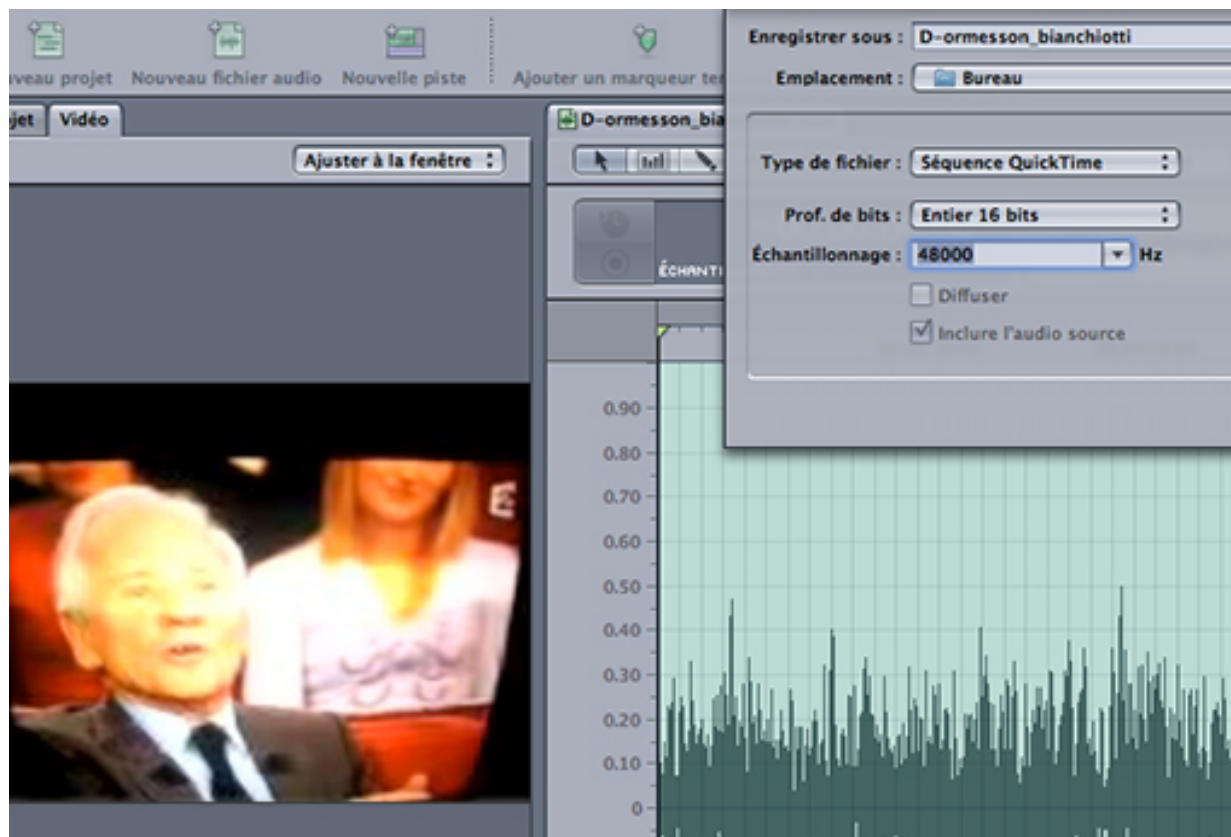
Someone gave me a short QuickTime movie (.mov) with very bad sound. So I launched SoundTrack where the video appeared OK. I corrected the sound etc. And I exported (save as) as a QuickTime sequence... BUT the exported movie has no sound! I must be missing something ! What am I supposed to do ?

Larry replies: Nicolas, thanks for writing!

You made this question even more challenging by sending me a screen shot of the German version of STP! (It is hard enough for me to speak English clearly...)

I did a test to make sure of these steps. Here's what I did and everything worked.

1. Open the video clip in STP by dragging it on top of the STP icon in the doc. It automatically opens as an audio file project.
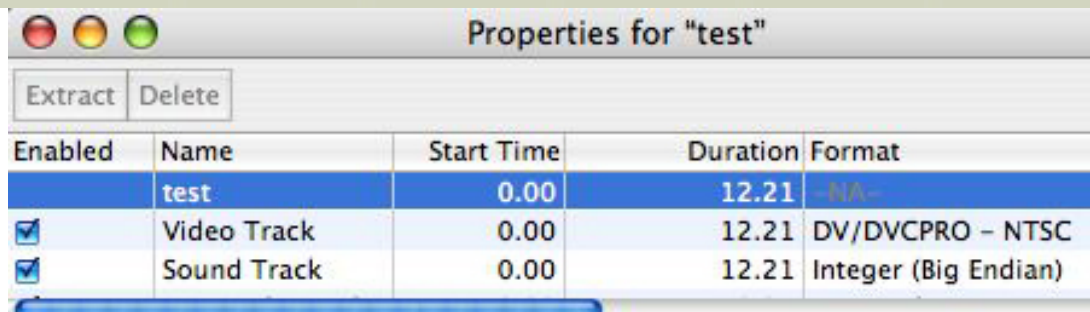
2. Make all necessary changes.
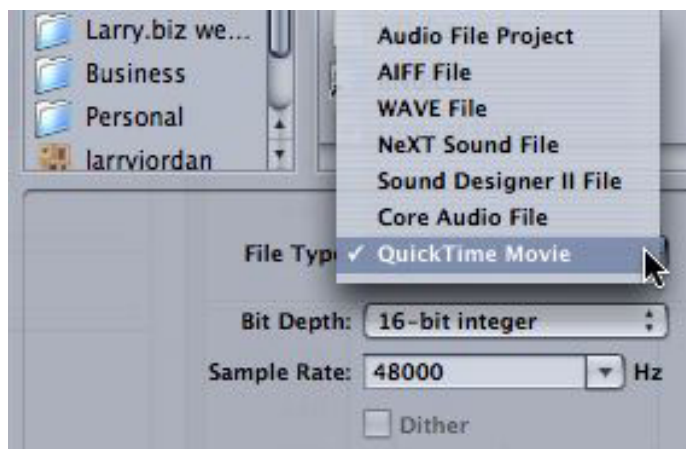
3. Normally, for a multitrack mix, you would Export. For an audio file project, you **File > Save As**. From the pop-up menu, be sure to change it from Audio File Project to **QuickTime Movie**. Also, the bit-depth needs to be **16-bit**, and the sample rate should be **48,000** for all audio recorded with video.
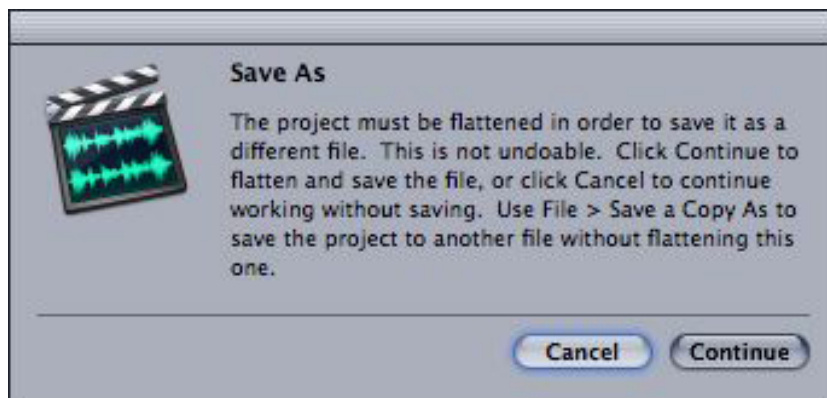
4. Because audio editing in STP is non-destructive, you need to flatten the file; that is, you need to permanently change the file based on your modifications in order to save them properly into the QuickTime file. When this dialog appears, click **Continue**.

5. The QuickTime movie is saved.

6. Just to be sure, I opened the movie and verified (by typing **Command+J**) that the audio track was included and enabled, and that the audio played properly.

Everything worked fine.

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CREATING A DVD AUDIO DISC

Daniel Carrion writes:

> I have a question that I think needs a special person to answer it….
>
> I have an Acura TL that has a "DVD AUDIO" surround sound system. The issue is that there is not much in the market for this format. I took a look at one of these disks and noticed the format is the same as of a movie, but the AUDIO folder contains files.
>
> Can I create my own "DVD AUDIO" using FCP/STP?

Larry replies: Yes and no.

Yes, you can create the 5.1 surround mix in Soundtrack Pro. Yes, you can create a Dolby AC3 of that surround mix. However, what you can't, currently, do in Final Cut Studio is create the final format that needs to be burned to a digital audio disc. There may be third-party software out there that does this, but I don't know it.

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EXPORTING FOR A DVD

Kevin Stirling asks (and I'm paraphrasing his question here):

> Larry, what's the best way to export a video from Final Cut for a DVD?

Larry replies: There are three possible ways to export your project:

- File > Export > QuickTime Conversion
- File > Export > Using Compressor
- File > Export > QuickTime Movie

QuickTime Conversion uses the codecs (compression software) that ships with QuickTime. While this isn't bad, it isn't the best either. QuickTime Conversion is neither particularly fast nor does it create particularly small file sizes. For this reason, I don't recommend it -- with ONE exception: creating H.264 movies.

Based on the testing I've done, creating H.264 movies using Compressor or using **Export > QuickTime Conversion** yields the same results -- provided you aren't doing any transcoding (converting from one video format, say HD, to another, like SD).

Using Compressor always takes longer than real-time. And, with one exception, yields the same quality as exporting as a QuickTime movie. Based on what I have been told, the benefit of going directly to Compressor is that if you have created a Motion project using 32-bit float space for your calculations, your Motion projects will look slighting better when you go directly into compression without first exporting.

However, if you create your Motion projects using the same video codec as your Final Cut project, you don't get this benefit.

QuickTime Movie is both the fastest - always faster than real-time, assuming that all rendering is complete - and highest quality. For that reason, I recommend this option. Make sure Settings are set to Current Setting and you'll get quality equal to your video format for export.

By the way, there are two types of QuickTime movies:

- Reference
- Self-contained

A **self-contained movie** contains all your audio, fully mixed, all your render files and all your video files and collects them all into one gigantic file.

A **reference movie** contains all your audio, fully mixed, with pointers that POINT to all the render and video files on your system.

Reference movies export about 20 times faster than self-contained movies and are also about 20 times smaller. If all you need to do is create a high-quality movie that you are immediately going to compress, a reference movie is perfect.

On the other hand, if you are going to:

- Send the file to someone else
- Keep the file on your system for a long period of time
- Work with GOP-based media (HDV or XDCAM)

then you will need to create self-contained QuickTime movies.

Here's an article that explains this further: http://www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_dvd_export.html

UPDATE - April 2, 2009

Rick Lavon adds:

> I think you forgot one crucial piece of info regarding the pros and cons of exporting thru QT, FCP and Compressor. With Compressor you can take advantage of the QMaster Cluster feature. My workflow has been to create a QT Reference movie, bring that into Compressor, and use the Cluster setting you can create thru the system preferences.

It's a fairly simple setup procedure yet the benefits are dramatic. This speeds up my encoding by almost 3x...not too shabby when you are encoding a DVD of a 1/2 hour or more. The disadvantages of the other two methods are:

> 1) QT Export- you can't easily do batch encodings of multiple sequences
> 2) FCP Export- You lock up your FCP system for the length of the encode.

Using Compressor frees you up to continue editing AND lets you do batch encoding. Heck, it'll even email you when it's done...

Larry replies: Rick, I am hearing a lot of complaints about QMaster recently and no longer recommend it for regular production. I am delighted this is working for you.

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UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT BLU-RAY

Markus Wernig sent this in:

> I was inspired by your great <u>Buzz Podcast on Blu-ray</u> discs which you mentioned in your last newsletter. In that edition of The Buzz, Bruce said that with Toast 10 you can burn a short Blu-ray project onto a traditional DVD-R. He also mentioned a "Toast Blu-ray tutorial" that he put up on Ken Stone's site: <u>http://www.kenstone.net/fcp_homepage/taming_the_wild_blu_2.html</u>
>
> I have a question that no one has been able to answer yet. I managed to burn a Toast Blu-ray-DVD-R but the menu that I picked didn't work at all. The screen just stays dark when I put the Blu-ray-DVD-R into my Blu-ray player. The only way I can get the Blu-ray movie to play is if turn on the auto-play option in Toast. When the movie is done playing, the screen goes black. No menu. If I want to play the movie again, I have to eject the disc and put it back in.
>
> Bruce's tutorial makes it sound like the Blu-ray menus should work with regular DVD-Rs. Maybe someone can point me in the right direction.

Larry replies: Currently, Blu-ray burning is a moving target. We should see some changes on this at NAB this year. However, I sent your questions over to my favorite Blu-ray expert - **Bruce Nazarian** - and he graciously sent me the following:

> There are still a few glitches in the Toast world... I've encountered the bug where clicking the Menu button returns to a menu that is a black screen, with no BG image. I've reported this to Roxio and they're actively trying to solve it... seems it's only on some players, not others... there's no consistency in which Toast version or Mac OS triggers it, either... My experience has been that even if the menu is black, clicking the enter button should activate the button, and restart the movie. But the missing menu is a HUGE bug - and I've told Roxio about this.
>
> Also, this might be a similar issue what Markus reported, where the auto-loop function misfires, and loops a small section of the end of the film before it returns to the beginning of the movie. I suspect they have a few bugs yet remaining in Toast 10.

the Roxio forum is a good place to track the bug progress, or report it.

The most recent Toast update - Toast 10 - seems to have fixed the loop bug, as the movie will now play and loop properly. However, the "menu doesn't show, only button highlight appears" bug still exists - Roxio have taken steps to investigate and finally squash this bug, but I can't say how long this will take.

By the way, Larry, in addition to my written tutorials on Ken Stone, I've been adding some new video tutorials on Recipe4DVD.com, in the Learn menu: "Learn Toast", and have begun a subscription newsletter series on Blu-ray, as well as updating issues on my Digital Guy blog. www.recipe4dvd.com/blog.

Larry adds: By the way, Bruce tells me that he will be making a MAJOR Blu-ray announcement at the Final Cut Pro SuperMeet at NAB in April. As soon as I can report it, I will.

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MORE DVD PROBLEMS

Don writes:
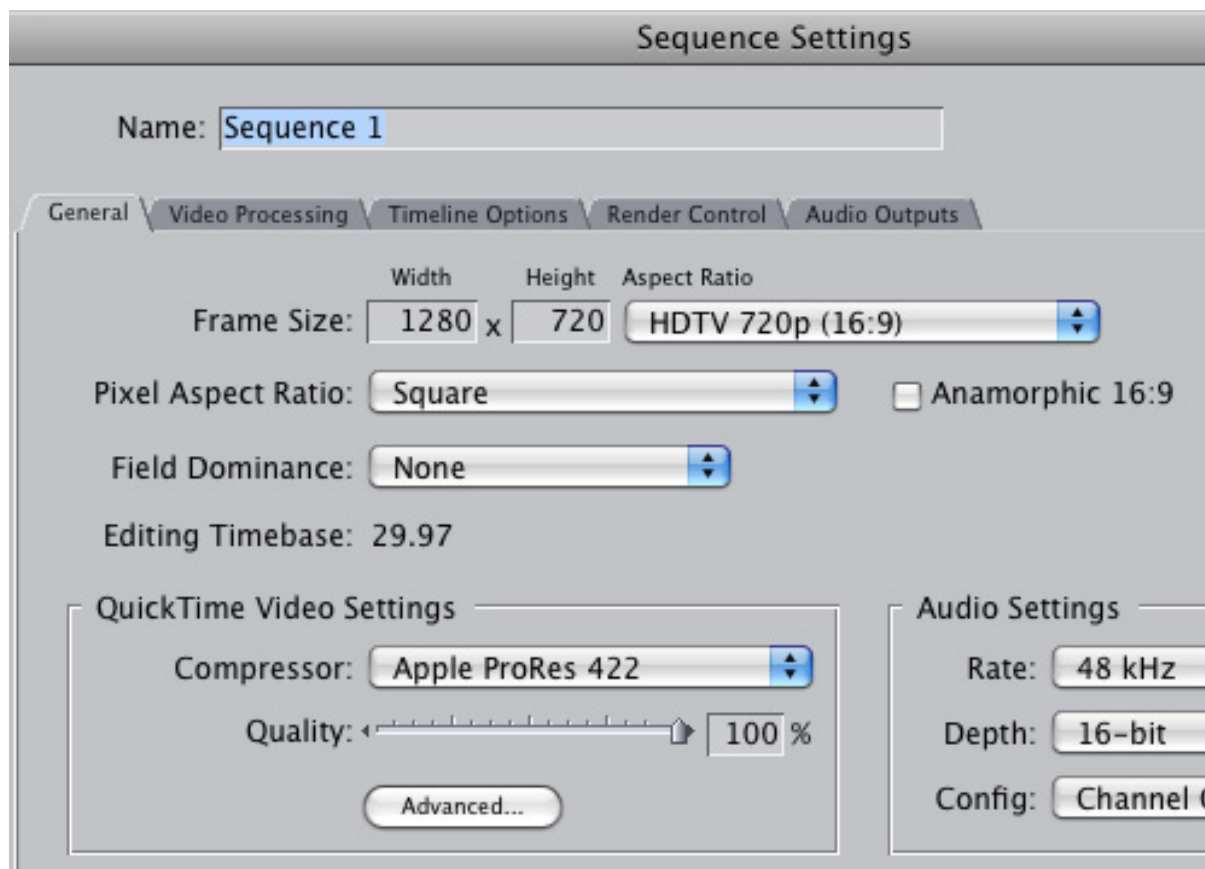
I have just one other question about creating DVDs. I've included my sequence settings for you to see.

If i output this in QT using the current settings, use that file in DVDSP and create an DVD that is HD, the result is beautiful - very smooth transitions etc. but will not play on a standard DVD player. If instead I use it to create a DVD that is SD

(setting attached), the result is far less quality, non smooth transitions etc.
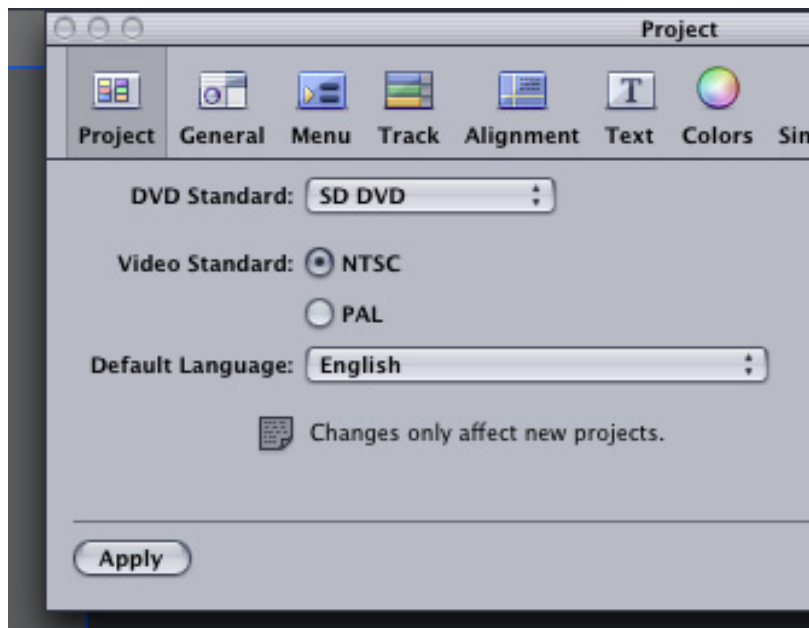
I can understand the drop in quality from the HD version but I don't understand why the transitions, pans (on stills) are not smooth and why lines tend to "flicker". I had none of this in the HD version.

Plus if I take the same QT movie and create a DVD using iDVD instead of DVDSP using a 16:9 aspect ratio, the result is nearly as good as the HD version and plays on a standard DVD player. What is going on? I think my settings in DVDSP are not right but I don't know what to set them to to get a 16:9 ratio in SD so it will play in a regular DVD player. Do you know the default settings for iDVD? Possibly I could just mimic those in DVDSP?

Sorry for the long question but this is really the only problem I am having. Because of your training I can move through all the other aspects of FCP and DVDSP with no problems. I'm just not happy with the SD DVD produced from DVDSP. I thank you for your help.

Larry replies: Don, we have a number of problems here.

First, DVD SP does not do a good job of transcoding from HD to SD. You are MUCH better off compressing your video in Compressor. Apple has updated the compression engine in both iDVD and Compressor many times, while the compression inside DVD SP hasn't really changed for the last couple of years. At this point, I attribute the poor quality of your video to the poor compressor built into DVD Studio Pro.

Second, standard DVD players have no ability to play HD movies. That's what all the excitement of Blu-ray is about -- Blu-ray players can play both SD video and HD video, provided it is encoded and burned using the Blu-ray spec. DVD Studio Pro only supports the HD-DVD spec, which is no longer supported by anyone.

To create Blu-ray Discs on the Mac, you would need to use Adobe Encore or Roxio Toast.

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_____

ANOTHER DVD QUESTION

Brian Pshyk asks:

> I made a QT movie for iDVD (it up-scales nicely on a wide screen TV) and now
> would like to make a Letterbox version so I can offer the anamorphic (wide)
> version and a formatted for 4:3 version on the same DVD.

Larry replies: You can't get there from here. You'll need to create two sequences in Final Cut Pro
- one 4:3 and the other 16:9.

Then, you'll need to create two tracks in DVD Studio Pro - again, one 4:3 and the other 16:9.
DVD Studio Pro allows you to mix and match 4:3 and 16:9 tracks in the same project, but you
can NOT mix and match different aspect ratios within the same track.

Also, while not required, I would suggest creating all your menus at the same aspect ratio (4:3 or
16:9) just to maintain a consistent look across your entire DVD.

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USE JPEGs OR TIFFs?

Daniel writes:

> I want to make a movie of my daughter's wedding to give her as a memory/
> present. All I have are JPG pictures (2304 x 1536).
>
> When you mention the benefits to work with uncompressed format (TIFF), does
> this mean to convert JPG to TIFF before going to FCP? Will I benefit (within FCP)
> in some form or shape with the conversion?

Larry replies: Thanks for writing, Daniel. I'm of two minds about this.

JPEGs are highly compressed, which means they often show blockiness or other image artifacts.
However, they tend to have smaller file sizes. TIFFs are uncompressed with great image quality.
However, their file sizes tend to be lots bigger. All things being equal, I'd use TIFFs.

So, for me, this question is part image quality and part problem prevention.

Though your images are JPEGs, they are also large, which mitigates the artifacts in the JPEG
compression as they get reduced for video. You can probably get away with using these JPEGs
in Final Cut - it fully supports them. However, you may want to consider resizing them. I
ALWAYS size my images properly, then convert them to TIFF before editing in Final Cut and
have never had any problems.

Here's an article that explains more about this: http://www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_grfx_look.html

UPDATE - April 4, 2009

Eric Mittan adds:

> Always keep in mind that while working with uncompressed picture files can make
> a better quality movie, it only makes a difference if you can have the original file

BEFORE being compressed to JPEG. If you have a JPEG file that shows the compression artifacts Larry mentions, simply converting THAT file to a TIFF will not get ride of those artifacts.

Unless you are using a specific piece of software designed to, in some way, "up rez" your compressed still photos, moving to an uncompressed TIFF simply makes an almost exact copy of your compressed image and stores it in a much larger filesize.

Larry replies: Eric, a good point. Just as with video, once the image quality has been removed, changing the format won't make any difference. Thanks.

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INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES

Steve MacDonald sent me the following:

I was wondering if you could answer a hardware question? Is there any advantage in having your hard drives internal as opposed to external drives connected via firewire for editing in Final Cut Studio 2?

Larry replies: Steve, this is a good question. An internal hard drive will be faster than an external FireWire drive, but generally NOT as fast as an external SATA drive.

The big benefit to internal is that all your drives are in one unit.

The big benefit to external is that if there is a problem with the drive, you can get it repaired without losing access to your computer.

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GETTING SMOOTHCAM TO WORK FASTER

Bob Cusumano writes:

I recently shot a wedding for a friend and the clips were quite long as you can imagine. I made a bunch of sub clips for editing sanity. However, I came across this problem and I'm hoping you can help. I tried to apply the motion stabilizer to one of the subclips and instead of analyzing the subclip, FC started to look at the master clip. I double clicked on the subclip in the timeline to load it in the viewer and I loaded it in the viewer from the browser and got the same results. What am I doing wrong?

Larry replies: Bob, you didn't do anything wrong, but you are not playing into the strengths of Smoothcam. The Smoothcam (Motion Stabilizer) filter looks at the ENTIRE clip in order to work. Otherwise, you would need to reanalyze a clip every time you trimmed the In or the Out.

The best workaround when you want to stabilize a very short portion of a very long clip is to export just the portion of the clip you want to stabilize as a self-contained QuickTime movie, then reimport it into Final Cut.

The only disadvantage to this approach is that creating a new QuickTime movie will change the timecode of the clip, which means that if you need to recapture it from the master source for some reason, you may have problems.

UPDATE - April 4, 2009

Eric Mittan adds:

> While exporting a portion of the clip individually by setting an in and an out and using **File > Export > Quicktime Movie** will, in fact, change the timecode of the clip, there is a way for you to preserve your timecode (making it safe to recapture your footage if needed) while still making self-contained QuickTimes.
>
> Since you've already created subclips, highlight all of your subclips and choose **File > Batch Export**. In the Export Queue window that appears, choose the **Settings** button, choose a Destination for your new self-contained QuickTime movies, and make sure **Make Self-Contained** is checked. I also suggest clicking the "Set Naming Options…" button and making sure **Add File Type Extension** is checked. Click **OK** on the settings window and then click **Export** on the Export Queue. Your subclips will be exported as QuickTime Movies and timecode will be preserved!
>
> The one caveat I will point out using this method, is that if you happen to have long names for your clips, Final Cut may abbreviate the name of the resulting QuickTime movie and replace some of it with garbage, resulting in a file name like "Xmas Plants OSR_#B88800.mov". If this happens, I've also noticed that the timecode is NOT preserved and instead starts in that clip at 00:00 - just like using File>Export>QuickTime Movie.
>
> But most importantly, a successful Batch Export means you'll be able to use Smoothcam on the resulting clips and they'll be analyzed much quicker.

Larry replies: Eric, thanks for taking the time to send this in. I don't use Batch Export, so I never think about it. I appreciate this detailed reponse.

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IMPROVING QUALITY FROM RIPPED DVDS

Ellie Whitcomb writes:

> I mostly edit sales reels for some shows that we sell. I get all different kinds of source material. Sometimes I'm lucky enough to have a master tape, sometimes I export the project myself from Final Cut, but mostly I deal with ripped DVDs. Probably, some of the older DVDs have undergone numerous rounds of compression. This is where my frustration comes in.
>
> I know once quality is lost, I'm never going to get it back, but what is more frustrating is I always end up with field issues. Lines in the video, or shifty transitions. And I can't ever see these problems until I put my final edited DVD on a TV screen. I don't see the problems when I play it on my computer. Is there any rule of thumb or manual that will help choose the correct export settings when I rip a DVD (I usually go through MPEG Streamclip)? When do I Deinterlace, how do I know whether to use Upper or Lower fields? Is it just trial and error?

Larry replies: Ellie, thanks for writing. All SD videos displayed on a TV - or burned to a DVD for that matter - are interlaced. Both NTSC and PAL are interlaced.

So, you don't want to deinterlace unless you are going to the web. This is because deinterlacing reduces the overall quality of the image.

NTSC and PAL video are both even (or lower) field dominant. This means that they display the even fields first, then the odd fields.

> **Note**: Here's an Apple tech support article that explains this in more detail: http://support.apple.com/kb/TA26010?viewlocale=en_US

Complicating this is that unless you set Final Cut to display your video at EXACTLY 100% in either the Viewer or the Canvas, you will never see interlacing in Final Cut, as it only shows you one field at a time.

So, set your export settings to DV NTSC (or DV PAL), since DV has higher quality than the DVD does, with field dominance set to Even. Set NTSC frame rate to 29.97 fps and PAL frame rate to 25 fps.

UPDATE - April 4, 2009

Eric Mittan adds:

> Working in a newsroom where a portion of our archive video is stored as video DVDs, and where we're often using footage brought to us by the public on DVD, I'll agree with Larry that you shouldn't be deinterlacing your footage to go back out to DVD.
>
> The one exception I will make is that if you are doing anything with the geometry of your video in the Motion tab, you MAY need to deinterlace. If, for example, you move your center on the **Y** axis (this is the second number in the Center attribute in the Motion tab) anything other than a WHOLE, EVEN number, you should deinterlace, as you could potentially end up aligning the odd numbered fields of your source footage with the even numbered fields of your output footage, and the even numbered
> fields of your source with the odds of your output.

Larry replies: Eric, I mostly agree. However, I don't think deinteracing should be the first choice. Instead, I strongly recommend that if you are compositing two interlaced images, both scaled to 100%, you **MUST** make sure the Y value, circled in red below, is an even whole number.
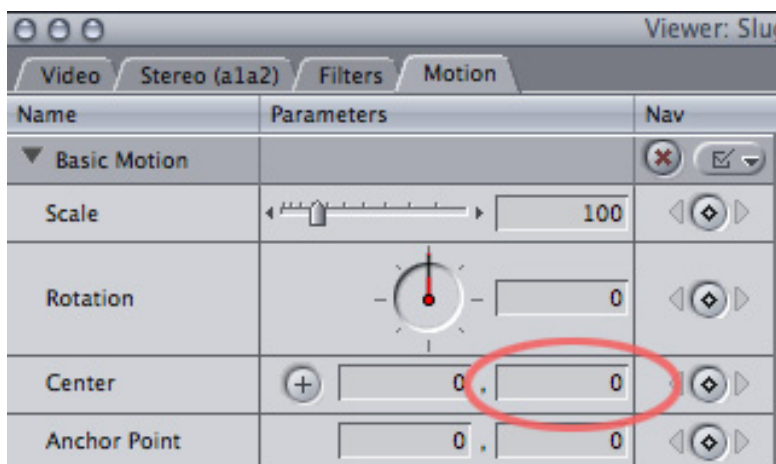
Otherwise, the foreground image will become very soft and blurry. If you absolutely can't set the second value to an even, whole number, then deinterlace.

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RETAINING CHAPTER MARKERS

Ben Balser writes:

> I'm trying to export videos to H.264, or MPEG-4 Video, or some format for download, that will retain chapter markers. I can export my original DVCPRO-HD 720 masters that retain chapter markers in QT Player. I can export for iPod with chapter markers, but the screen size is too small.
>
> Is there any listing that shows which codecs retain chapter markers from FCP and which don't? I'm running lots of tests right now, and the results don't always seem to be consistent, depending of it I export from FCP to self-contained QT, then recompress in QT Pro, or from FCP via Compressor.

Larry replies: Ben, this is a good question and I don't know the answer. If any reader does, please <u>drop me an email</u>.

UPDATE - April 2, 2009

Zach Mull adds:

> Regarding Ben Balser's question about chapter markers in H.264, I experimented for a minute and found a workaround, but I'm not sure if it has any bad side effects it causes.
>
> I can compress an H.264 file, bring that back into Final Cut Pro, edit it into a sequence and let FCP automatically adjust sequence settings to match the clip. Then I can add chapter markers, export it as a QuickTime movie, and and retain the chapter markers in QuickTime player. I don't believe that FCP has to recompress any of the frames if I don't apply filters or change anything in the motion tab, so I'm assuming there isn't any quality dropoff. I should note that bringing the clip back into FCP limits your audio options.
>
> I tried this with an H.264 QuickTime clip using AAC audio, and FCP brought it back to uncompressed PCM, I'm sure, since the file size increased significantly. So this method works, but I bet there's a way to add chapter markers directly in QuickTime Pro.

Larry replies: Zach, very cool! Thanks.

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CAPTURING LIVE VIDEO

Ted Cumpston writes:

I have a question for you to ponder. Our church is video taping our services. We want to be able to capture the video feed (SD) to a hard drive recording/playback device. Once captured, we then want to clean up the program in FCP and then transfer the edited program back to the drive for playback at another facility. So the question is, do you know of such a device that would allow this?

Larry replies: There are a number of products that do this. Here are three off the top of my head:

- Focus Enhancements makes the FireStore - a hard disk recorder.
- Final Cut allows you to capture a live camera using Capture Now.
- BlackMagic Design allows you to switch between two cameras and capture the switched feed.

As for transferring the edited version - the easiest way is to copy the finished, edited file back to your hard drive, or you could FTP the finished output to the receiving site. I regularly use Transmit as my FTP client.

UPDATE - April 3, 2009

Andy Mees adds:

Regarding Ted Cumpston who asks about streamlining the post production for his church. I thought he might like to look at **BoinxTV**, quite a new software that may not be on everyone's radar quite yet. Could be quite suitable for his needs: http://boinx.com/boinxtv/overview/

It works with any valid video input sources connected to his Mac.

(... and hey, its worth a visit to the products webpages if only to marvel at the beauty of their website design!)

Larry replies: Andy, thanks for this.

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FEEDING VIDEO TO A MONITOR WALL

Yoni Goldstein writes:

First of all, thank you for your excellent newsletter. My question is about finding the best strategy for editing multi-channel video. That is, a piece that runs on two or more screens / projections simultaneously (and hopefully, in sync). My method so far has been to shrink each clip to 50% (by copying and pasting attributes) and move everything in V1 to the left of the frame and everything in V2 to the right. Unfortunately, because I use effects. I have to re-render everything and the process is rather slow.

Is there a better way to do this? Perhaps using the multiclip view? How do editors build sequences for those 2,3,4 screen displays at trade shows, for example?

Larry replies: The problem with your approach is that you are losing image quality when you shrink your image.

The way a monitor wall works is that you send it a full-screen feed for each camera or image you want it to display. It will then composite them into a single display. This gives you the highest image quality and the ability to zoom one of the images full-screen.

The only disadvantage to this is that you need four separate video sources that you can sync together. Currently, QuickTime only supports playback of one full-screen video image per computer. So you would need multiple computers, or tape decks, or DVD players, or... whatever.

UPDATE - April 2, 2009

Tom Maynor adds:

> I recently produced and displayed a 3-screen HD presentation for a trade show.
>
> Multiscreener software (free at www.zachpoff.com/site/software/software.html) controls multiple Macs running QuickTime movies and keeps them in sync.
>
> As the instructions pointed out I produced three same length videos in FCP and exported Quicktimes in Pro Res 422. I made them native to the display screen size of 1024x768. Running 3 mac pros (1 server and 2 clients) on a simple local network the 3 videos played nonstop for 3 days entirely in sync.
>
> Yes, we had to rent the 3 macs in a faraway city but I am finding them more available and affordable and the video looked spectacular!

*Larry replies:* Tom, very cool! Thanks for letting me know.

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FIXING A WHITE CANVAS

Daniel Milder writes:

> I'm working on my very first project, very exciting. I shot an interview with a scientist. Made the narration track to tell the story I want, and now am covering the visuals. I realize that my Canvas goes to white whenever the playhead is paused. If I'm playing in the Timeline, or Viewer it stays white. I'm pretty sure it shouldn't be like that. I'm trying to do some motion effects and I can't see what I'm doing if the Canvas is like that. But I can't figure out how to make it stop. I've quit and restarted FCP but it always comes back that way.

Larry replies: Daniel, I enjoyed having you in my class.
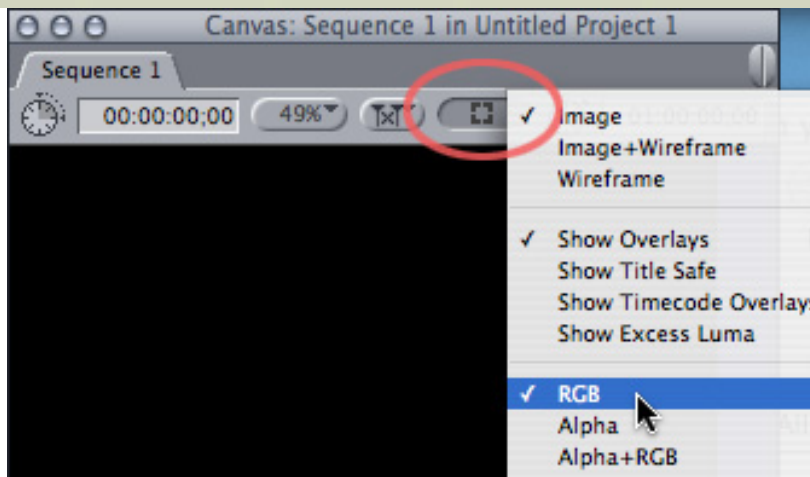
The white background is caused by a setting in the Canvas. Go to the top of the Canvas and click the third pop-up menu to the right and change the setting from **Alpha** to **RGB**.

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THE CASE OF THE APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING FILES

Lionel C. writes from Brazil:

> I started to edit the film on my G5. All files where captured and stocked on external disks. During the shooting, I was de-rushing and filing the clips on the ext. disks thru my MacBook Pro laptop. Now, I connected the disks to the G5 and I discovered that a lot of clips are missing...
>
> When I connect the external disks to the laptop again, all the files are there, when I connect them back to the G5, they disappear! And I can't find them on the disks.
>
> Also, when I move projects between computers, one of them says that it can't open the file because it was created with a more recent version of Final Cut!

Larry replies: Lionel, thanks for writing, it is good to hear from you again. Sounds like you did not set your scratch disks properly during capture.

If files appear on one computer, but not on another, it means that some files are stored on the first computer. To check, go to **[Home directory] > Documents > Final Cut Pro Documents**. Anything in the Capture Scratch folder in your Home Directory should move to your external drive.

Also, you can share files between FCP 6.0.3, 6.0.4 and 6.0.5 -- but nothing earlier. Your laptop is running 6.0.1 and your G-5 is running 6.0.3. Fortunately, upgrading 6.0.1 is free and available on-line from Apple.

My recommended versions for the current Final Cut are 6.0.4, or 6.0.5.

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TRACKING MY TIME

Nicholas Bongianni writes:

I'm a long-time lover of your newsletter. Here's my quandary:

I'm getting tired of eyeballing time spent on clients' projects and giving them general time estimates of how long I've worked on their project. What I'd like to do is be able to tell them exactly how long I worked. I'm thinking of how chess players have their timer; push the button and your clock runs until you move, push the button and it stops.

I'm wondering if anyone has developed an application that works like a stopwatch, but has a little more options. Specifically I often work on more than one client's project at a time, bouncing between FCP and say After Effects, it would be nice to track multiple projects at once, and if there were a way to qualify those chunks of time, categorize(capturing, rough cut, sound, color, graphics, etc.) well that would be just about perfect.

I imagine I'm not the only person out there that would see some sort of benefit in a product like this, or barring that, perhaps someone out there has got a solution that's so obvious it's no wonder I haven't thought of it by now already.

Larry replies: There are a number of applications like this out there - but I don't use any of them. Perhaps a reader can suggest a favorite.

UPDATE - April 2, 2009

Tom Wolsky adds:

For tracking time, I've used <u>TimeSlice</u> for years and have been happy with its versitility.

Larry replies: Thanks, Tom, I added a link to this as well.

Micaajah Smithson adds:

I use **TimeBanditX** - it does everything that Nicholas wants to do - tracking time by client/ project/ function, and has a "time-out" function that watches mouse movements and stops timing the task based on your preferences. There's a try for free version and the full version is only $18.00

Here's the developers link: www.space-net.co.uk/projects.html

Larry replies: Thanks, I love choices!

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A DIFFERENT WAY TO TRANSITION

Philip Roy writes:

This is Phil from Vermont. Every time your seminar comes to Boston I'm a heartbeat away from going until my wife pulls the plug. (She likes HELP with our 3 kids, I guess) Great newsletter, I've told all my editing friends about it.

I was wondering about custom transitions. Whenever I need something more than a page peel or cross fade, I look in the filters tab. I razor blade 10 frames on both sides of the cut, apply the filter to both new clips and then dig into the keyframes to set the filter from invisible to overblown, and then reversed on the next clip.

Is there a faster way to do this? Better yet, a way to save these custom transitions, or at least the keyframing part?

Larry replies: Phil, remind your wife that your kids are always there, while my seminars only come around once a year. (Ah, I'm SURE that will work...)
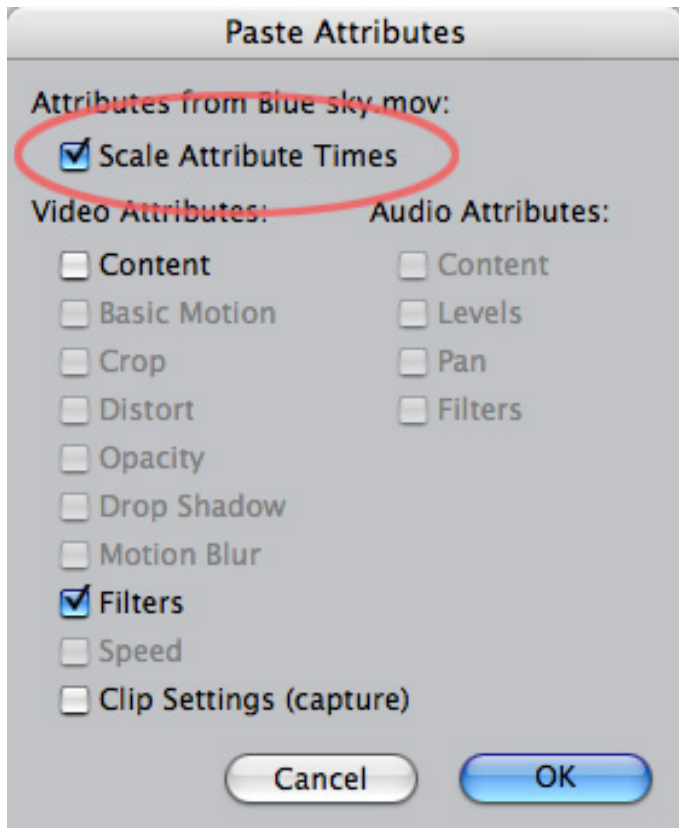
As for saving your effect, grab the short clip that has your modified filter on it and drag it into the Browser. Then, when you want to apply the effect to a new clip:

- Select the clip in the Browser that has the effect you want to copy
- Choose **Edit > Copy**
- Select the clip you want to apply your settings to and choose **Edit > Paste Attributes**.
- Check filters **on** and be sure the content checkbox is **not** checked.

  Note: If the old and new clips are not the same length, the placement of keyframes will be adjusted based on the length of the new clip. If you don't want the keyframes to scale, **uncheck** Scale Attribute Times.

UPDATE - April 3, 2009

Andy Mees sent in one more comment:

Shameless self promotion this one, but about creating and saving custom filter stacks as transition, I have a old blog post on exactly that subject. I'm not exactly a prolific blogger, but you might want to pass the link on to Philip ... web.me.com/andymees/Free_and_Easy/blog/Entries/2009/1/ 29_Custom_Filter_Stacks_as_Transitions.html

Larry replies: Thanks, Andy.

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TROUBLE-SHOOTING MOTION

Mark Spencer, who runs the excellent website AppleMotion.net, sent me the following trouble-shooting link for Apple Motion.

> http://www.applemotion.net/Troubleshooting/Troubleshooting.html

By the way, if you are looking for trouble-shooting tips for Final Cut Pro, check out my own guide:

> http://www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_trouble.html

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WORKING WITH MULTIPLE HD FORMATS

Sean writes:

> Hey Larry, I just got footage from a music video that was shot with two different cameras (A2 and DVX 100b) - both using 60i. They also have some standard DV footage. I only have the DVX 100b as a deck. I was wondering what would be the best capture preset so I wouldn't lose any information, and what would be the best sequence preset, knowing that I will be importing the standard def?
>
> I have FCP6. There is no capture preset for 720 x 480 60i. I tried the different HDVs, but they would not recognize the camera, and I am afraid that DV NTSC might take away some of the quality from the 60i. Can you please recommend audio video settings?
>
> The only research specific to this camera I can find is 24p related, not 60i. I'm sure the solution is something simple, but it's my first time with 60i, and I want to make sure I can keep the better quality.

Larry replies: HDV is High-def only. Neither the DVX-100 nor standard-def footage will capture with that setting.

If you shot HD on the A2, then you will lose resolution when you bring it into standard-def -- since HD and SD image sizes are not the same.

Your highest-quality SD preset is Uncompressed 10-bit. But DV doesn't have that kind of quality.

So, if by 60i you mean high-def, then capture JUST the A2 camera using HDV 1080i/60. Then, change your sequence settings to DV NTSC to capture your SD footage. Then, edit everything in a single DV NTSC timeline. In doing so, however, you will lose all the additional image quality HD provides.

You can not switch between HD and SD quality in the same timeline. You can combine different formats on the same timeline, but they will all be rendered into the same format - either HD or SD.

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CAPTURING LARGE CHUNKS OF HDV

Anthony writes:

> Can you help me with the following?
>
> I have been using capture now in FCP DV format and it captures every thing OK. I switched to HDV and using capture now, it captures but it puts every thing in small packages. What can I do to set it to make it capture multiple shots in one segment?
>
> I had a similar problem in DV and after I set limit capture now to 62 min it captured every thing OK.

Larry replies: Well, Anthony, as FCP moves to tapeless acquisition, it will capture each individual shot as a separate file. The days of capturing an entire tape as a single clip filled with different shots will disappear.
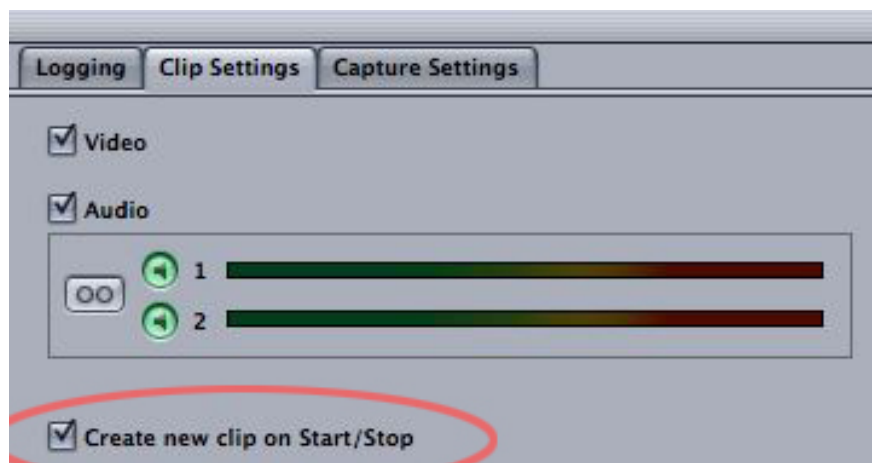
By default, HDV captures every shot as an individual clip. However, you can change this. In the **Log and Capture window > Clip settings** tab, uncheck the "Create new clip on Start/Stop" check box. Now, FCP will capture your HDV material as one long clip from In to Out.

Keep in mind, however, that if there is a timecode break, FCP will break the clip into separate clips -- and timecode in HDV is notoriously unreliable.

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WHO IS LARRY JORDAN?

John Craske writes:

> Given that I have been spending many hours in your company, I was curious to find out more about you. So I clicked on Wikipedia which said you had been a film-maker since 1952. Which, if correct, means you've been doing it for 57 years. Hence I assumed that you'd now be well into your 70s.
>
> Yet when you showed up on one of the Lynda training videos, you looked comparatively youthful. Certainly not someone who was in the twilight years.
>
> How come? The only possibilities are that you have had some serious cosmetic work done, Wikipedia is wrong or I'm reading about a different Larry Jordan. Alternatively, you have applied some nifty video effects to enhance your appearance. The only other option I can think of is that you've quietly found the Secret of Eternal Youth.

Larry replies: Sigh.... If I HAD found the Fountain of Youth, why would I spend my time editing?

Actually, there are **five** Larry Jordan's working in media that I am often confused with:

- The *Larry Jordan* that started 2-POP and currently runs HDFilmTools. To reduce confusion, he's started calling himself Lawrence Jordan.
- The *Larry Jordan* based in the Bay area that creates high-end music videos for the likes of Maria Carey and many others.
- The *Larry Jordan* doing video production in Detroit.
- The *Larry Jordan* who is a long-time independent film director who's been working in films since 1952 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_Jordan)
- And the *Larry Jordan* who is a male model doing advertising photo shoots around LA.

I am none of these fine folks.

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WRAP-UP

Well, that's about it for this month.

For current news and in-depth interviews on what's happening in our industry, be sure to listen to the Digital Production BuZZ every week.

- Please check out my latest video tutorials about HD .
- Visit our store and buy something nice for yourself.

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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