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Larry Jordan's Monthly Newsletter

Editor: Larry Jordan

Issue #40 - November, 2007

Welcome to the latest edition of my monthly Final Cut Studio newsletter for November, 2007.

The goal of this newsletter is to provide information helpful to the professional user of Final Cut Pro. This newsletter publishes each month. Past issues are not archived. However, key articles are posted on my website for your reference. All software references are to Final Cut Studio 2 unless otherwise noted.

Please invite your friends to visit my website -- www.larryjordan.biz. We are approaching 200 tutorials to help you get the most out of Final Cut!

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Welcome

For those of you in the U.S., I hope you had a very Happy Thanksgiving. For everyone overseas, I hope that November has been treating you well. Things have been very busy here - we have several exciting announcements coming between now and the end of the year.

KRISTI: To get started, I'm delighted to announce that Kristi Prost has joined us as Marketing Director. Her job is to help get the word out about our seminars, newsletters, and other activities. More importantly, she's interested in hearing from you about what you'd like us to be doing - what you'd like to learn and how you'd like to learn it. You can reach her at kristi@larryjordan.biz.

Kristi has a strong background in marketing and video post-production, including work at CNN. I could not be happier to have her join us.

UK TOUR: Since last year, we've had a lot of requests, so to give you a heads up, we're bringing our seminars back to the UK; including presentations at Video Forum 08. We are finalizing dates now, but London, Birmingham, and Leeds are the cities we plan to visit. Expect details in the next couple of weeks — we will be traveling in early February.

FREE SHIPPING: The holidays are coming and you owe yourself a present. Take a minute and visit our store - the slow time over the holidays is the perfect time to polish your skills. To give you added incentive, we are offering **free shipping** anywhere in the world on all orders of $100 or more from now till Dec. 31.

I'm grateful for your emails and feedback - though the volume sometimes gets overwhelming, I learn something with every message. As I start to write this issue, I have a backlog of over 150 emails with questions for the newsletter. Thanks for your patience - I'm getting to them as fast as I can.

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Thoughts on Upgrading

Since the last issue, Leopard (OS X 10.5) has been released, and QuickTime and Final Cut Studio have been upgraded.

I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about upgrades, since I've gotten a lot of questions about this recently.

Here's the *basic* question you need to ask yourself: "When was the last time someone demanded that you edit their project using the latest version of any software?"

Right. It's never happened. People ask you to edit their projects - on budget and on deadline. You could use linear tape-to-tape, for all they care. Your clients don't care about the process, they care about the results.

So, you should ask yourself: "If my clients don't care when I upgrade, when *should* I upgrade?"

And the answer is: not immediately after the software is released. Wait a while. I tend to suggest waiting about three months after a major OS release, and at least a month after a Final Cut Studio release. QuickTime is a very special case, which we will talk about in a minute.

Final Cut Studio does not live in a vacuum. There is more than just an operating system involved. Hundreds of third-party plug-ins and hardware also need to make sure they work properly.

Because of how Apple develops OS X, developers don't have access to the final version of the code until it is released. Yes, there is lots of testing prior to release, but the software continues to evolve and Apple has been known to change things at the last minute to fix a bug or improve performance. For this reason, developers can't finish testing or certifying their products on the new OS until it has been released.

For example, when Leopard was released, there were problems with both AJA and Blackmagic Design capture cards. Without question, Apple, AJA, and Blackmagic immediately started working to figure out what the problems were and fix them. However, those fixes take time.

When Leopard was released, Final Cut also had a variety of problems, including issues with Motion templates. These, too, needed time to fix.

If your goal is to run the latest version of any software as soon as it's released, then you've already upgraded by now. However, I would contend that the goal of most editors is to edit. To deliver their projects on time. Deadlines, to us, are more important than version numbers.

Also, keep in mind that Leopard adds no (as in zero) new features to Final Cut Studio. Upgrading the OS does not make Final Cut run any differently.

Regarding upgrading, then, here are my recommendations:

- Wait 2 - 3 months after a new OS is released before upgrading
- Wait a month after a Final Cut release before upgrading, unless your system is currently dead, in which case, upgrade immediately
- NEVER upgrade in the middle of a project
- Make sure any third-party hardware and software that you rely on supports the new version

NEW FINAL CUT STUDIO UPGRADES

Apple has released two dot-release upgrades to Final Cut Studio. Both are substantial and both, from what I've been reading, seem stable. If you own Final Cut Studio 2, I would encourage you to upgrade to the latest versions as the initial release had significant stability issues; especially with Motion and SoundTrack Pro.

UPGRADING QUICKTIME

Apple has also released a new version of QuickTime - 7.3. QuickTime upgrades need to be treated VERY carefully, as upgrades to QuickTime are driven by many different demands within Apple.

QuickTime needs to support all the latest iPods and iPhones. It is the core technology behind iTunes and the iTunes store. It is also the foundation upon which Final Cut is built.

Because all these competing demands for QuickTime are not, necessarily, compatible, the best rule of thumb to follow is: if editing with Final Cut Studio is your principal reason for using that computer, then NEVER upgrade QuickTime beyond the version of QuicTime that is current at the time your version of Final Cut Studio was released.

Upgrading QuickTime out-of-sync with Final Cut is the surest way I know of to break Final Cut. Generally, you upgrade Final Cut and QuickTime together. When in doubt, don't upgrade QuickTime.

Final Cut was originally designed as a QuickTime editor -- QuickTime winds through Final Cut like blood winding through our arteries and veins. To upgrade one without upgrading the other is a recipe for system problems.

QuickTime upgrades frequently to meet the demands of all the other applications that depend upon it. However, if your current Final Cut system is working properly -- DON'T upgrade. Let a stable system remain stable, until that time when you buy the next version of Final Cut and upgrade everything, again, all the same time.

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Larry Co-Hosts Digital Production BuZZ

During the month of November, I've had the pleasure of co-hosting the Digital Production Buzz podcasts with Philip Hodgetts. These weekly live broadcasts are exclusively focused on digital production, post-production, and distribution; with an emphasis on the small- to intermediate-sized producer.

If you haven't heard this yet, join us every Thursday night, or visit the BuZZ website at: www. digitalproductionbuzz.com. Their are some great guests scheduled for December.

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Something New in Final Cut 6

A couple of new goodies were almost invisbily added in a recent update to Final Cut. You now have the ability to show, or hide, clip names in the Timeline.

Have you every tried to set keyframes in an audio clip, only to have trouble seeing the red rubber band because it's blocked by the name of the clip? Well, fret no more. You can make it disappear!
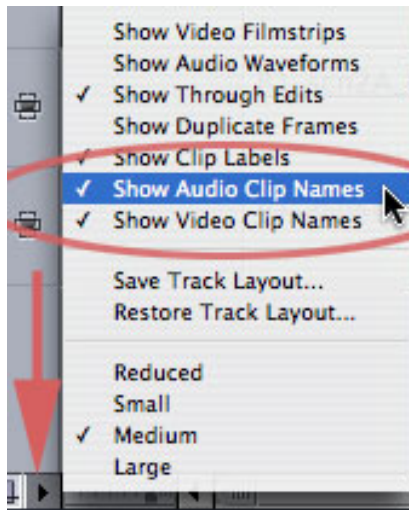
Here's how. Click the small right-pointing arrow at the bottom of the Timeline, next to the four bars that determine track height. Check, or uncheck, **Show Audio Clip Names**, and **Show Video Clip Names**.

Very simple and handy. And really, really tucked away.

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New Training Video Released - Final Cut Pro 6 - Essential Effects

The holidays are coming - which means you owe yourself a present! So, in conjunction with Lynda.com, I've created a new training video: **Final Cut Pro 6 - Essential Effects**.

Containing over ten hours of training, along with all the exercise files, this title shows you how to create professional-grade effects in Final Cut Pro 6. This title includes:

- Creating text
- Travel mattes
- Importing and getting still images to move
- Using video generators
- Changing clip speed
- Motion effects
- Picture-in-picture effects
- Keyframes and Bezier curves
- Rendering
- Filter effects
- Smoothcam and Chroma-keying
- Nesting
- Composite modes

- Integrating with other FCS applications

FREE SHIPPING! Just in time for the holidays (as the marketing folks like to say) we are offering free shipping on all orders of $100 or more. From now till Dec. 31, enter coupon code **FreeShipping** and your shipping is FREE!

Click here to see a demo movie.

Click here to buy your own copy.

I'm back recording next week, so there will be more titles on FCP 6 coming soon!

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Scopes in Final Cut

Biagio Messina began this discussion by writing:

> My wife and I produce reality television. One issue we ran into in the past with FCP's software scopes is that they didn't register "super black" (I think) so that a couple eps we color corrected right in FCP using only software scopes had to be redone with hardware scopes....do you feel this would be the same problem with Color? Or do you feel the scopes in Color are more accurate and we could count on them? I know there's probably no substitute for a hardware scope, but we're a young company and just want to explore all our options.

Larry replies: I know that the video scopes (**Tools > Video Scopes**) in Final Cut Pro improved significantly with the release of Final Cut Pro 5.1.2. However, I am not an expert with Color, so I contacted **Alexis van Hurkman**. Not only has Alexis been writing an outstanding series of articles on Color for Edit Well, he is also the author of the Color User Manual for Apple.

Alexis replies:

> First, the FCP scopes at this point do show super-black (although it's true that they didn't used to). You have to crank up the scope graph intensity to see more detail (click the little button at the upper left of the window and drag the slider to the left), since the default graph intensity is a little faint, but all the detail will be there.
>
> Second, super-black levels in FCP usually get clipped as soon as you add a Color Corrector or Broadcast Safe filter to them (at least in version 5, I can't imagine they changed this in version 6). For more explanation, I discuss this in my "Encyclopedia of Color Correction."
>
> Third, the Color scopes show super-black as well, down to –20 percent, and the default Broadcast Safe settings clip these levels by default so long as they're activated. However, whereas the FCP scopes now analyze every single line of the image (so long as the playhead is paused), the Color scopes analyze the image by scaling the image down internally and analyzing a reduced frame version of the image (there are more details in the scopes chapter of the User Manual). Because of the math involved, every pixel of the scaled image does contribute to Color's final analysis (unlike FCP's old method of skipping lines completely), and as a result the Color scopes very closely approximate hardware scopes.
>
> However, I generally say that while the Color software scopes are great for making

creative decisions, for true QC work, you really should have a dedicated video scope that's monitoring the output of your broadcast video output card. The reason for this is that even though Color's legalizer (in 1.0.1 and now 1.0.2) is very good and the Color scopes are very clear, depending on the particular combination of elements in any given image, various mathematically complex things can happen to the video signal when it goes through the encoding hardware of your video card, and the results can sometimes unexpectedly produce transient levels above where they're supposed to be. If you're not looking at the output of your video card, you're not seeing the whole story (for QC purposes).

Lastly, I happen to have a training DVD-ROM if you're interested, done for Magnet Media. I'm very happy with how it came out, and I've been getting very positive feedback from folks who've picked it up.

Click here to learn more about Alexis' Color training.

Larry adds: Thanks, Alexis, for answering this!

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Picking a Codec for HD

A codec (video compressor/decompressor) is at the heart of non-linear video. It compresses the video to meet the specific needs of a camera, editing system, or playback device.

There is no one "best" codec, just as there is no one "best" camera -- each is designed to meet different needs. However, codecs these days seem to be proliferating like rabbits. And, sometimes, you can't tell your players without a program (to badly mangle an old baseball joke).

This was brought home by a question **Steve Denn**, from WJBK in Detroit, asked:

> My question is about using the Animation CODEC. Our Art Department uses the Animation CODEC for everything we use. It has proven to be the cleanest looking CODEC for our 720X486 videos.
>
> Now that we are moving into the big world of HD they made us an Open that is 1280 x 720 30 fps, using the Animation CODEC. I matched the sequence to the clip. It plays fine in the Canvas and displays on our 30-inch HD Samsung monitor via AJA's breakout box, but as a still image only. So I posted my question and got a response back from **Philip Hodgetts**, who wrote:
>
> > Use a codec FCP likes. Animation and Video are not all I-frame and will never play successfully in an FCP timeline even if the settings match. DVCPRO HD, ProRes 422, Uncompressed or Photo-JPEG will work. Animation, Cinepac, Video et al will not work and require rendering before playback.
>
> So what do I do?

Larry replies: Philip is correct. Some codecs are designed for data transfer at high quality, such as the Animation codec, while others are designed for real-time playback, such as ProRes 422 or Uncompressed video.

The easiest workflow for your organization is to have the art department continue creating

materials using the Animation codec. It has great quality, and a known workflow. Then, bring those Animation files into Final Cut and edit them to a ProRes 422 timeline. This workflow means that your art department doesn't need to do anything new, while ProRes provides you with real-time playback and great quality.

You'll need to experiment to decide whether you prefer the look of ProRes 422 or ProRes 422 HQ. My suspicion is that ProRes 422 will be sufficient.

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Faster Ways to Display Timecode

Robbert-Jan van der Does and **Nick Meyers** both wrote in with the same comment. (The following is from Robbert-Jan.)

> I'm always looking forward to read your newsletter and Edit Well. Good job!
>
> [Regarding your article on creating burned-in timecode for a sequence] I have a tip to suggest as well. If you add it to a slug, just as you described, but instead of changing the composite mode to screen, you can crop the slug in a way that you only see the timecode in a small rectangle. Then you can also change the opacity of the slug to have it semi transparent on top of the video. Most of the times it will save you a render.

Larry replies: Robbert-Jan, thanks for writing. Yes, cropping an image is almost always real-time, rather than using the composite mode. However, the composite mode will allow you to see the image under the numbers, while the black background will block it.

Both work, use the option that seems best for your project.

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New Filter from Spherico

Thinking about timecode, **Andreas Kiel**, of Spherico, wrote to tell me about a new filter he's created for Final Cut: **TCR Plus**.

It's a simple-to-use utility which allows a better and faster way for review and approval of cuts. It combines FCP's XML power and a FCP plugin filter to display timecode more efficiently with greater options, including labels, colors, and displaying reel IDs.

Here's a link to learn more: http://www.spherico.com/filmtools/

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## Having Problems Following Larry's Advice

While we are on the subject of timecode, **Eric Freudenburg**, of Norfolk, Nebraska, writes:

> Larry, i read your article on adding timecode with interest. So, I followed the steps just as you had mentioned and I got the timecode to show up over-laid fine and it counted correctly. It was all good but the length of the slug was too short for my 12 minute sequence. Ok I thought there is a fix for this. I went to the User Preferences and changed my Still/Freeze Duration. I made a new slug and dragged it to the timeline and it showed up, BUT it was the same length as the original 2 Minutes as originally marked in the User preferences menu. I double checked my Still/Freeze Duration and it was as I typed to the new length of the sequence. I tried dragging the the ends of the clip to increase the duration, I tried the "right click and change duration" neither one worked.
>
> So the problem I have is not with the timecode working but getting the slug to the correct duration. I don't know if there is a time limit on how long the sequence can be or if my FCP version just doesn't support it correctly. I am using FCP version 4.5. I don't know what to do. HELP!

Larry replies: Eric, the problem is you are using Final Cut HD. In FCP version 5 and later, the length of your slug is determined by the settings in **Final Cut Pro > User Preferences > Editing** tab. I just successfully created a 15 minute slug.
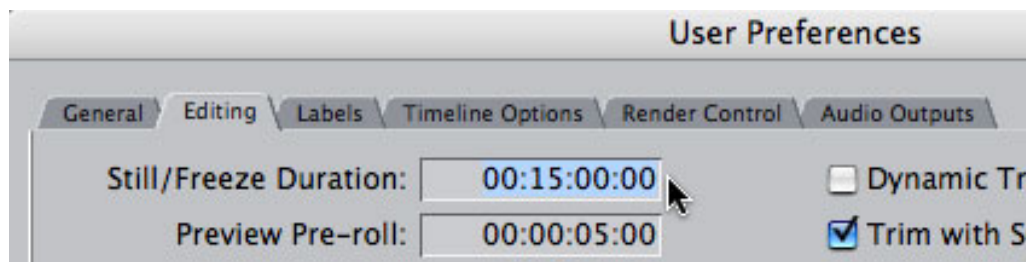
But, with FCP HD, you can't. You have to duplicate the clips to fill out the sequence. The problem is that FCP HD's timecode generator resets when the clip restarts. In other words, you can't get there from here....

So, here's the workaround: create a separate sequence filled with black slugs that's slightly longer than your current sequence.

Output it as a self-contained quicktime movie, then reimport it into your FCP project. Use that instead of the black slugs and things should work fine.

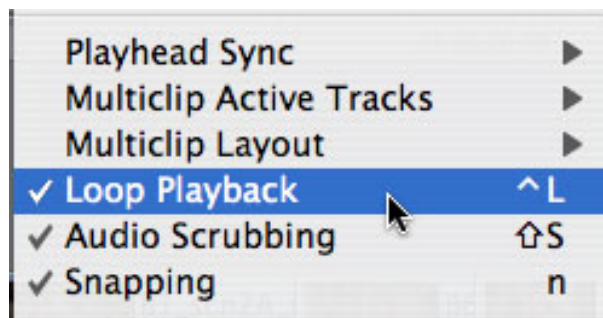[Eric reported back later that this worked perfectly.]

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Looping Playback - or Not

Chas Arthur, from Powell, Wyoming, writes:

> Have a question I was hoping you could help me out with. Final Cut automatically loops when we get to the end of the project starts back to the beginning of the timeline again. Can you set something up so it doesn't do this? We've looked all over.

Larry replies: Yup. The answer is **View > Loop playback**.

Playhead Sync	▶
Multiclip Active Tracks	▶
Multiclip Layout	▶
✓ Loop Playback	^L
✓ Audio Scrubbing	⇧S
✓ Snapping	n

If you want to turn looping off, uncheck it. To turn it on, check it. It will loop either from the In to the Out, or from beginning to end of a sequence.

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Linking Unrelated Audio and Video Clips

This subject came up recently in a Final Cut discussion group. Let's say you have an audio clip recorded on one device, and a video clip recorded on another - often the case in double-system film production or music video. The audio and video are in sync - but the clips, once captured, are not related to each other.

> Note: There are actually two ways to do this - see the update below.

Final Cut makes this easy with a process called merging clips. In fact, you don't even need the timecode of the two clips to match. What you DO need, however, is some method of aligning them in the timeline so they play in sync, then tying them together to make them act as though they were one clip.

This is actually a two-step process:

1. align the clips
2. then link the clips.

To align the video and audio, edit both to the timeline. Then, while playing back both clips, select the audio and press **comma** (,) or **period** (.) to move it one frame left, or right, in the timeline until they align.

Conform to Sequence	
✓ Clip Enable	^B
✓ Link	⌘L
✓ Stereo Pair	⌥L
Clip Settings...	
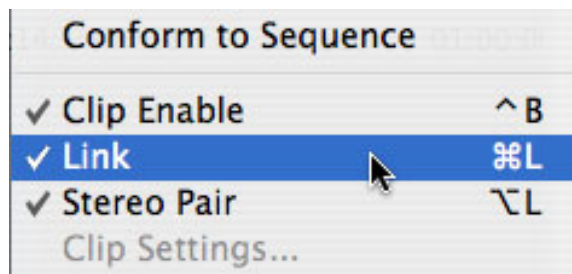
Then, select both clips and select **Modify > Link**. Both clips will now act as though they were captured together in sync.

You can either leave them on the Timeline, or, if you want to use them more than once, drag your linked clip back up to the Browser, where it will act link any other clip.

UPDATE - Nov. 27

Tom Wolsky writes:

> There are two separate functions. One called merging clips, which lets you merge video and audio based on TC or edit points, and there's a another function called linking, which lets you link video and audio of disparate files in the timeline.

Larry replies: My fault. You are correct. This describes linking clips. To merge a clip, you use **Modify > Merge clip**. Clips need to be synchronized using either a common In, Out, Timecode, Auxilliary Timecode 1, or Aux Timecode 2. Apple's manual goes into this in some detail starting on page 45 of volume two. You can merge clipes either in the Timeline or Browser.
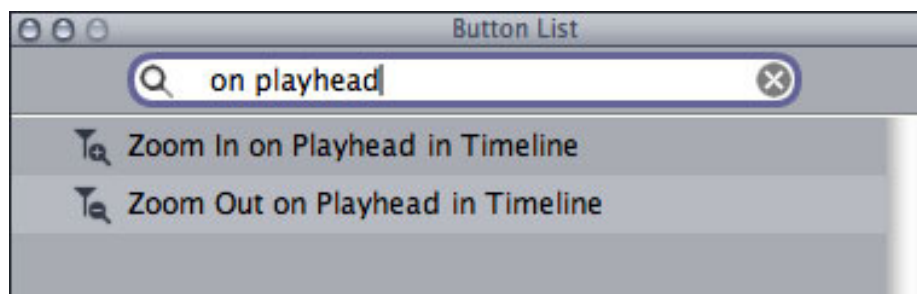
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Something Else New in Final Cut Pro 6

Two new zoom commands have been added to Final Cut Pro 6: **Zoom In on Playhead in Timeline**, and **Zoom Out on Playhead in Timeline**.

However, they were not assigned keyboard shortcuts.

You can find them by going to **Tools > Button List** and typing "on playhead" in the search box.

These are two really helpful functions, so I've added them to my standard keyboard shortcuts by assigned them Control+Shift+= (equal sign) to zoom in and Control+Shift+- (hyphen) to zoom out.

This allows my zoom keys to all be variations of hyphen and equals:

> Zoom in in active window: **Cmd + =**
> Zoom out in active window: **Cmd + -**
>
> Zoom into Timeline: **Option + =**
> Zoom out of Timeline: **Option + -**
>
> Zoom in on playhead: **Control + Option + =**
> Zoom out on playhead: **Control + Option + -**

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Saving Files for DVD Studio Pro

Dave Steward writes:

> I know how important it is to save only video files on the second drive and everything else on the system drive. But what about other apps? Should I save DVD Studio Pro projects and its materials on the system drive or the 2nd drive. Same thing with Livetype, After effects, Motion, etc...

Larry replies: Dave, it all depends upon whether the files play in real-time. If you need real-time playback, it is good practice to store the files to your second drive. If you don't need real-time playback, they can be stored anywhere.

In the case of your question, I make it a practice, though it is not required, to store all data files on my second drive. With DVD Studio Pro, I put group all similar assets in one folder, then store all the individual folders into a single folder for importing into DVD SP. This simplifies organization and importing.

I generally store project files in a DVD Project folder on my boot drive because project folders in DVD SP, like Final Cut, never contain any data; just pointers to the data.

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New Release of Veescope Lite

Brad Wright wrote to tell me about the latest release of Veescope Live:

> Veescope Live provides real-time chroma keying, high and low video brightness Zebra patterns all being performed on your graphics card of your computer from a live video source. In addition, Veescope Live works with any Quicktime video input source, such as a DV FireWire stream, or a high-definition capture card. In addition, Veescope Live can display a waveform or vector scope directly on top of the video.

You can learn more at: http://www.veescope.com. It retails for $100.

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More, Yes More, on Still Images

Of all the issues I get questions on, none are more frustrating than dealing with still images. So, returning us again to the issue that refuses to die, **Chris Roberts** writes:

> I wonder if you can assist with a bit of a discussion I've been involved with on our user group emailing list. I remember when you gave your seminars here at the beginning of the year, there was some discussion about videos sizes and using anamorphic video in iDVD. At the time you recommended the best way to

overcome this issue is to use QT Pro to resize the display size of the video, but changing the height not the width of the video, even though anamorphic images would normally be stretched horizontally. I hope I have this right.

Is it possible for you to just briefly describe why we should change the vertical size of the movies, rather than their width?

Larry replies: Chris, both NTSC and PAL use rectangular pixels to describe their images. The computer uses a square image. The shape of the pixel is it's "aspect ratio," that is the ratio of the length compared to height.
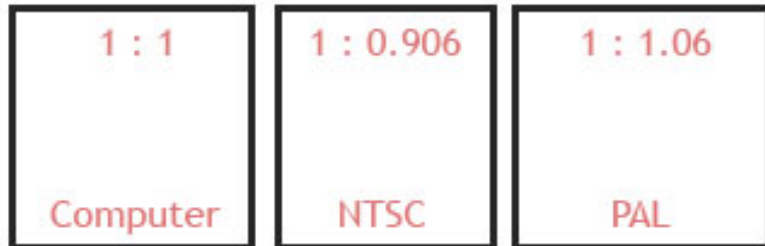
Computers have an aspect ratio of 1 (1:1), the length and the height of the pixel are identical.

By default, we describe the height of a pixel as being equal to one. That means that the width of the pixel varies, depending upon format. For example, NTSC has an aspect ratio of 1:0.906. PAL has an aspect ratio of 1:1.06. Neither format is square, and both use differently-shaped rectangles; NTSC is tall and thin, while PAL is short and fat. The picture above illustrates this.

To get these images to look good on a computer monitor, say, when we export them as still frames for print or web use, we need to convert the aspect ratio from rectangular to square. This means adjusting the width of an image, because the height is always, by default, set to the correct length.

Just in case you were hoping that this issue goes away with HD, disappointment looms in your future, DVCPRO-HD, HDV, XDCAM-HD, and HDCAM all use rectangular pixels.

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Video Business Advisor Newsletter

I've been talking with **Steve Yankee**, who runs *Video Business Advisor*, over the last several months and I just realized I've not mentioned him to you. His website is the place to learn low-cost money-making advertising, marketing and promotional strategies for your video production business that you can easily implement and maintain.

So, if you want to learn more about how to run your business, visit his website at: www. videobusinessadvisor.com. He also has a regular business newsletter that's absolutely worth subscribing to.

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HDV White Paper

Sony has published a very hard to find white paper on the HDV format. (Thanks to **Jonathan Tyrell** for tracking this down.) Note: This link downloadsa PDF, I found that it takes a while.

http://bssc.sel.sony.com/BroadcastandBusiness/minisites/HDV/images/HDV_whitepaper.pdf

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Motion Tracking

Karla Hutton writes:

> Help! Larry I need you to post a Motion 3 tutorial to Lynda.com! I need to use the Motion tracker feature and the online manual is greek to me. I am just not getting it. Any quick suggestions?

Larry replies: Thanks for writing, Karla. We're planning to cover the Motion Tracker in the next issue of Edit Well.

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Coming Up in Edit Well

Speaking of Edit Well, this next issue is jam-packed with interesting goodies!

- **Mark Spencer** returns with the first of a three-parter on understanding and using Motion 3's new 3D camera.
- **Alexis Van Hurkman** is unstoppable in his efforts to explain how mere mortals can use color, this time with a presentation on the Color FX room.
- **Chris Summers** has two articles on automating compression and file transfers as part of your approval workflow, along with a new perspective on how the web can improve your client review and approval process.
- I've got an article on why bit depth matters, along with a summary of what you need to know about Leopard and Final Cut Studio.

Plus, we have more audio interviews and video tutorials on Final Cut Pro 6.

To learn more, or subscribe, visit: www.peachpit.com/editwell.

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Interview Guests Needed

I'm looking for editors to interview for **Edit Well**.

One of the truly fascinating tasks in assembling Edit Well are our audio interviews with editors

around the world. Recently, I've spoken with a Canadian educator who teaches Final Cut to elementary school children, an musician/editor who assembles videos for their fans while traveling in their tour bus from one city to the next, and an editor who assembles documentaries for the History and Discovery channels.

What fascinates me is how all these folks are using Final Cut in such divergent ways, yet we all are wrestling with the same challenges; how do we capture and maintain the attention of an audience.

If you haven't listened to these Edit Well interviews yet, you are missing a treat.

If you would like to be interviewed, please <u>send us an email</u>. We create three new interviews a month and I'd love to share your story with the world.

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Organizing for a Massive Project

Tim Wilson writes:

> Please tell me where I can find your most complete advice about organizing a *massive* editing project -- close on 200 hours of material that has to be sugared down to 1 hour. I don't mean your excellent basic instructions on setting up media vs project/non-timecode files, but more detailed suggestions about what works for you when doing a project of this size, e.g. breaking reels down into subclips and organizing those.
>
> At present, we have the 200 HDV tapes captured in 10 min. segments and arranged by bins, each named according to the individual reels. My plan is to leave those 200 bins untouched, but to make subclips of selected material, and put those subclips into either or both of:
>
> 1. Another set of bins named by theme or type (principal interview/scenics/B-roll etc/), and
> 2. A *long* timeline that would rough-assemble all main sequences of the film
>
> Does this make sense?
>
> The Final Cut project file and all media would then be shipped to our Editor for her to screen only the Selects, and go from there.
>
> As usual, any help as usual is much appreciated!

Larry replies: Tim, your basic approach makes sense. However, keep two things in mind:

1. Final Cut tends to slow down when you have thousands of clips in the Browser. Minimizing the number of Browser clips you need is a good idea.
2. Final Cut allocates RAM memory based on the number of clips in the timeline. FCP 6 supports up to 12 hours of material in one sequence, but if that is made of lots of small clips, you will see a performance slow-down.

If anyone else has suggestions on how to manage large projects, <u>please let me know</u> and I'll share them with everyone.

UPDATE - Nov. 27

Tom Wolsky writes:

> I would recommend Shane Ross's DVD on organizing material in FCP projects.

Shane Ross wrote in to suggest the same thing:

> I have a tutorial DVD on this and many other organizational tips. I believe I gave you a copy. GETTING ORGANIZED WITH FINAL CUT PRO.
>
> http://training.creativecow.net/dvd_store/get_organized_fcp/get_organized_fcp.html

Brandon Klein writes:

> Great newsletter!
>
> We are in the final stages of editing down approx 320 hours to 80-90 minutes. The project file for all the footage- 25,000 clips is 138.3MB, and takes FCP 10 minutes just to open on the latest hardware. I feel the pain of your readers question.
>
> This may be a very simplistic answer, but working with sub clips turned out to be a nightmare for us and we stopped using them very quickly. (In out points- dragged to the timeline for the editor to watch real rough cuts worked considerably better)
>
> We divided the 25,000 clips by content type so that each file was between 10MB and 20MB. These were easily manageable.
>
> We then did rough cuts of each category and were able to bring those timelines over to a new project to create the final timeline. We would often have 2-3 projects open (the original content type projects) at a time so we could access some of the raw footage if needed- but always work on a timeline that was in a different project file all by itself.
>
> Having these smaller content project files also allowed more than one editor to work on different parts of the film simultaneously over the network.
>
> Perhaps too simple, but effective nonetheless.

Larry replies: Thanks for letting us know. Also, Russell Stiggants sent in a long reply, which I'll put in the next issue.

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Overwrite Editing Directly to Tape

Bob Lutjen, of the City of Port St. Lucie, Florida, writes:

> I have to record long meetings at City Hall. Quite often i will have a DVCAM tape with a 3 hour meeting on it and i will need to insert a couple of seconds of video at

different spots throughout the meeting.

Does anyone know the steps to do this? The deck I am using is a Sony DSR-25. I have tried following the steps in the FCP manual but it has proved to be absolutely useless.

Larry replies: Bob, do you "insert" in Final Cut terms, or "insert" in videotape terms. To insert as Final Cut defines it means to insert new video and slide everything that follows it later on the tape. That is not possible.

If you mean to add a new shot to the tape, thereby replacing what was on the tape at that point previously, then it is possible.

Bob replies:

Sorry for the miscommunication. I'm trying to avoid having to spend many hours digitizing footage and then dumping it back to tape. What I'm trying to do is a three point edit by setting an IN point in the timeline and an IN & OUT point on my deck.

Larry replies: Oh! This is possible, but deck-specific. You would use the Edit-to-Tape function in Final Cut to set an In and Out on the tape, then do an Insert edit to put whatever you have on Final Cut's timeline into that portion of the tape.

However, low-end decks (both DV and Beta) do not support insert editing. This is something manufacturers do to differentiate their decks.

What you need to do is find a deck that supports inserting. For instance, in DV, the Sony DSR-1500 does, but the DSR-25 does not. In Betacam, the UVW series does not, but the PVW series does.

You many need to take your project to a post-house that has the necessary hardware.

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8 mm Follow-up

A couple newsletters ago I presented a question from a reader about capturing 8 mm film. Thad **Mack** wrote in with a better suggestion than mine:

There is another solution to the 8 mm/Super8 mm film transfer question. Reel Transfers, LLP, a sister company of ours (www.reeltransfershome.com) transfers this film all the time. They use a Bosch FDL 60 Digital scanner custom-modified for 8 mm and Super8 (one of only two in the country, if not the world). The FDL 60 has exposure and color-correction controls that are manned by a colorist who transfers the material to DVD, DV or (very rarely anymore) VHS and other tape formats, with or without music.

Depending on format, the Bosch handles optical or mag track audio. Since it scans the film instead of using a film gate, film with damaged sprocket holes can be transferred. The film is cleaned, if necessary, using a Lipsner-Smith cleaner like that used for feature films. They handle film from all over the country. And the Bosch FDL 60 can be configured for 16mm and 35 mm, as well.

Contact Carl Strahl at 215-953-9499 or reeltransfers@verizon.net. Web site: www. reeltransfershome.com

Larry replies: Thad, thanks for letting us know.

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More on MS Microphones

Recently, this newsletter carried a discussion on Final Cut's support for MS microphones. **Alain Pelchat** sent in the following:

> I just went through the news letter and reading about MS recording. Being a Logic user I found it surprising that there would be no support for it in Soundtrack pro since there it exists in Logic. So I checked it out, and Soundtrack pro had supported MS decoding from the beginning. Just add a "Direction mixer" in the inserts from the "Imaging" group. In the upper right corner, the little check box with MS is right there :)

Larry replies: Alain, thanks for sending this!

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Thoughts on Shooting 24 fps

Recently, I wrote an editorial on shooting 24 fps material. Basically, I said that shooting 24 fps has less an effect on the look of your video than the lighting and lens filters you use.

Martin Corley responded:

> Too true! 24p is a fashion statement.

Film and Video each have a unique look. Make your selection based on your budget, or whatever yardstick you choose. And then light it!...

The ProMist filter is a good idea too.

Larry replies: Martin, thanks for writing!

Since we were talking about 24 fps, **Andrew Wilson**, of Westview Digital Video & Design, added:

I completely agree with your opinion on shooting 24p 'because someone told you it looks better'. Go buy a filter and do better lighting. Right on!

One question, since 99% of my production work is seen on SD TV's, I still use all SD settings and shoot with an XL2. The only reason I would think of upgrading now to HD is to future-proof my productions (I've been thinking of Panasonic's P2 500 camera).

I hear a lot about the different standards of HD; 720p vs 1080i vs 1080p but I can't think of what the proposed frame rates are of those standards. So I agree with you about shooting in the format that most people are watching but what are your thoughts on shooting in HD to future proof your footage - and what settings do you think will do the best job at that?

Larry replies: "Future-proofing" is a VERY slippery concept. If I had the choice, I'd shoot 1080p/60. That gives you a progressive frame with the flexibility to downconvert to any frame size and frame rate.

However, those cameras are not cheap.

Current HD frame rates are variations of 23.98, 24, 25 29.97, 30, 59.94, and 60. Sheesh...! It was easier when we just cranked film cameras by hand!

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Reader Mail

Contents

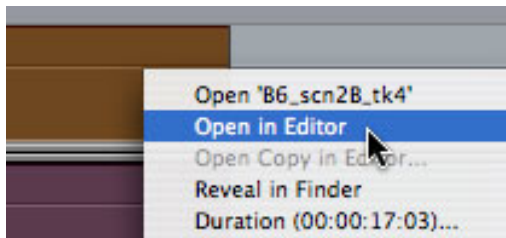- Looking to Make a Transition
- Problems with Video Tapes

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QUICK PHOTOSHOP TIP

Billy Miller provides the following PhotoShop/FCP tip:

> I don't know if this has been mentioned...

> Open an image from the Timeline into Photoshop by control+clicking a clip and selecting **Open in Editor**. (I often do this to add Gaussian Blur to remove moiré.)
>
> Save the image to move it back into Final Cut, but keep the image open in Photoshop.
>
> Return to Final Cut to look at the changes and if you don't like them, move the clip back to Photoshop using **Open in Editor**. To remove your changes in Photoshop go back in time in the History palette.
>
> Save again and look at the results. Repeat until you are happy.

Larry replies: Billy, Apple calls this technique "round-tripping," and it's excellent. Keep in mind that you MUST always use **Open in Editor** each time you send a file to Photoshop. Otherwise, when you save the file in Photoshop, it will break the link and Final Cut will display the file as off-line.

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MEASURING DURATIONS

Robert Rhines writes:

> I frequently find myself trying to figure out how long a blank space is between clips on the time line and also how long a clip is in the time line I need to replace. I thought I saw you do this a time or two in your training, but can't seem to find it. What's the quick secret?

Larry replies: Robert, to determine the duration of a clip, select it and type **Control+D**.
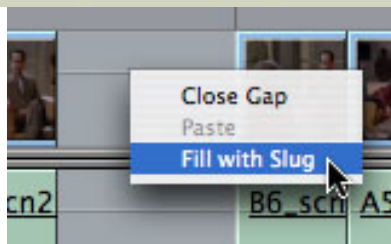
To determine the duration of a gap, control+click it and select **Fill with Slug**.
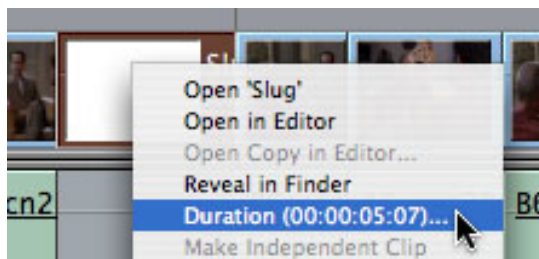
Then, control+click the slug and read the Duration on the fifth line down. (You can also control+click a clip to read the duration, but then, I wouldn't have been able to tell you about Control+D.)

Another way to find the duration of a clip is to put your playhead in the middle of the clip you want to measure and press **X**. This sets an In and an Out for that clip. You can then see the duration in the timecode box in the upper-left of the Canvas.

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PICKING THE BEST FORMAT

Kim Barry Brunhuber, somewhere in Sierra Leone, writes:

My question is a basic one.

I'm a news reporter by trade, and I make low-budget independent documentaries by night. For years I've been shooting with my Panasonic DVX100 at 24p. Right now I'm in Sierra Leone, and this is my problem:

I'm shooting two "projects" simultaneously; I'm shooting individual news pieces to be played on the national news, and I'm also shooting a doc about some journalists in Sierra Leone. Now I had been shooting everything at 24p Advanced... this is what I've been doing for years. But the news folks think (quite rightly) my footage looks a bit funny, as news is normally not shot at 24p. The obvious solution would be to shoot news at 29.97 and shoot the doc at 24pA. The problem is, I'm shooting b-roll for both projects and I don't want to shoot everything twice!

This is the basic question. Is there a way to shoot the project in one format, let's say, shoot everything 24 Advanced, then capturing that footage with either the Advanced pull-down removal for the doc or using normal NTSC capture for the doc, OR shoot everything at 24 fps Normal and then capture at normal NTSC, or is there another solution?

Larry replies: Kim, thanks for writing. If there was one "magic format" we would all be shooting in

it. Unfortunately, as many of us are discovering as we move to HD, the world is a highly incompatible place.

Since it is easier to go from 24 fps to 29.97 fps than it is to go from 29.97 to 24, I would recommend you shoot everything at 24 fps Advanced.

Then, for your documentary, capture the footage using Final Cut's pull-down removal into a 24 fps sequence. For the news, RE-capture the same footage at 29.97. This way, while you will need to capture twice, you'll only need to shoot once.

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SELF-CONTAINED VERSUS REFERENCE QUICKTIME MOVIES

Alex Pushkin writes:

> Larry, I have a bunch of .mov files that I exported from Final Cut. How can I determine if they're self-contained or not?

Larry replies: Alex, a self-contained DV movie is about 200 MB per minute, a reference movie is about 10 MB per minute. Checking file size will tell you immediately.

UPDATE - Nov. 27

Michael Grenadier and

strong>Tom Wolsky both wrote into to say:

> Michael: Kinda wrong, Larry. A reference movie will contain renders of any unrendered material and so a reference movie can be as large as a selfcontained qt, if it the entire sequence requires rendering and is unrendered at the time of export.
>
> Tom: This only works if you render before exporting.

Larry replies: Sigh... OK, well, you're both right. It was an elegant solution, just not a sufficient one. Thanks
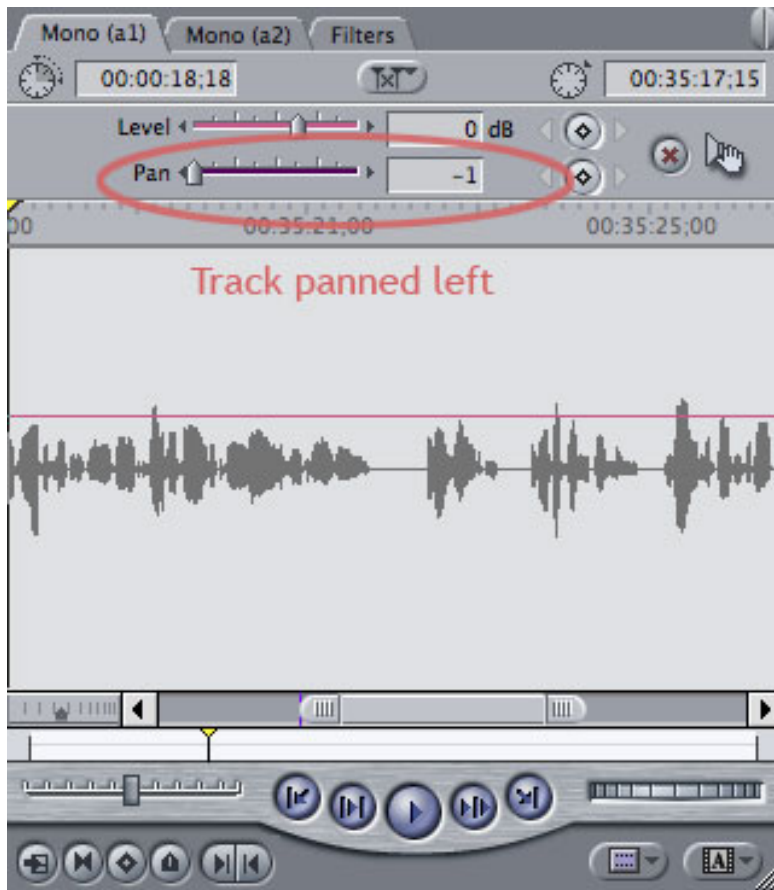
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SO MANY QUESTIONS, SO LITTLE TIME

Glen Miller writes:

> OK, so I've got about a zillion questions, but here's the one I need right now:
>
> Within Final Cut - I've been given a project where some of the narration tracks were recorded mono. Some were on the left channel of a stereo track. How do I turn the left track into a mono track?

Larry replies: Piece of cake.

If it's a stereo clip, with the audio on the left channel and the right channel is blank, you could just adjust the panning for the clip in the Viewer.

What I would do, however, is first delete the unnecessary audio channel:

1. Edit the clip from the Browser to the Timeline
2. Select the clip
3. Uncheck **Modify > Stereo Pair** (or press **Option + L**)
4. Click the unneeded track to select it in the Timeline
5. Delete the selected track
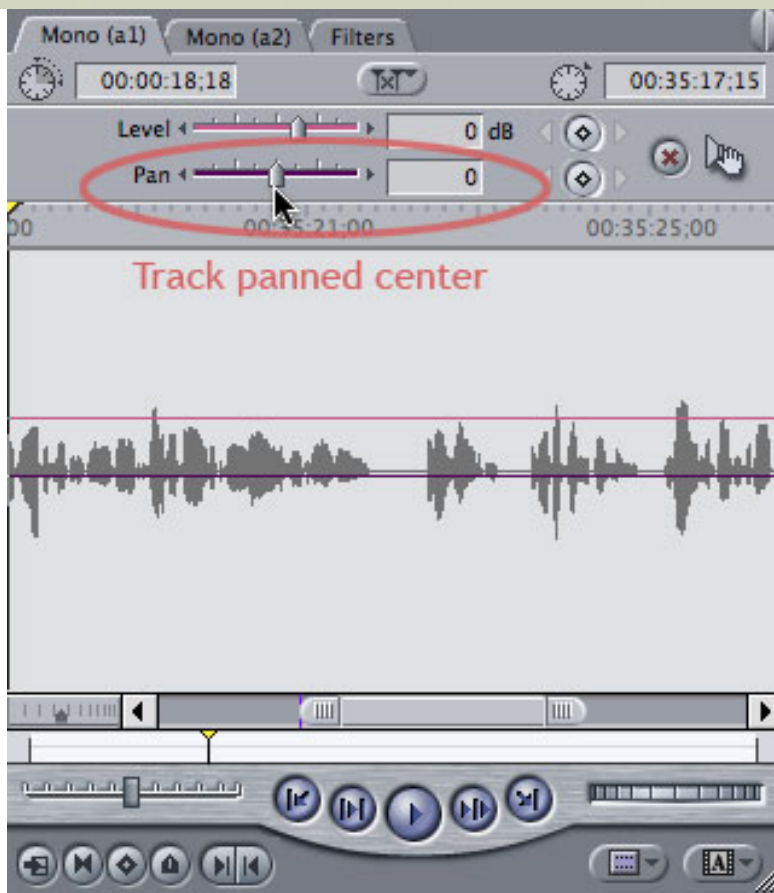
Then, double-click the remaining track to load it to the Viewer and drag the Pan control to **0**, which centers the audio for the clip. (You could also just type "0" into the Pan entry box, but how much fun is that?)

Drag the small hand from the upper right corner of the Viewer to the Browser to store your corrected clip in the Browser, then edit normally as needed.

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PLAYING HD VIDEO IN iDVD

Gary Schwartz writes:

> I've been trying for the past four hours to get HD video to play full size in IDVD. I export from Final Cut as a QuickTime Video using current settings as you suggested, but it didn't work when I dropped the video into IDVD!
>
> Any suggestion isappreciated.

Larry replies: Gary, the problem is that iDVD doesn't support HD video. It needs to convert it from HD to SD, which means you don't get to see the HD picture you created. This is not necessarily the fault of iDVD - it's the fault of two incompatible DVD standards for HD: HD-DVD and Blu-Ray.

These two standards each require different DVD burners and, generally, different software. Currently, DVD Studio Pro supports creating DVDs using HD-DVD, but the default Macintosh DVD burner does not support burning either Blu-Ray or HD-DVD disks.

Unless you are creating DVDs that will be replicated in the tens of thousands, DVDs are not yet ready for HD.

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## UPDATING AND MAINTAINING

Michael D. writes:

> I have a question. I just updated my friend's father's computer from 10.3.9 to 10.4.3 but now when the computer boots up it makes you login and it didn't do that before. I went through the preferences and couldn't find anything to set it to auto login without password.
>
> One other thing, I was trying to remember what it was that you were suppose to do to maximize performance. I held down the option key as the computer was starting up just as the grey screen began, but it didn't do anything and I'm just afraid to try it over since I don't know if it's the correct thing to do.

Larry replies: Michael, first, the current version of OS X is 10.4.11. You've updated the computer to a fairly old version of the OS. I'd suggest bringing it even more up-to-date. (As a note, I recommend always downloading operating system updates directly from Apple's **Support > Downloads** web page, rather than using Software Update. Software Update is more convenient, but downloading the entire file is more reliable/effective.)

Second, you set auto-login in **Blue Apple > Auto-login > Accounts**:

- In the Accounts, click the lock in the lower left to unlock the account.
- Click the **Login options** just above the lock
- Check the **Automatically log-in** check box
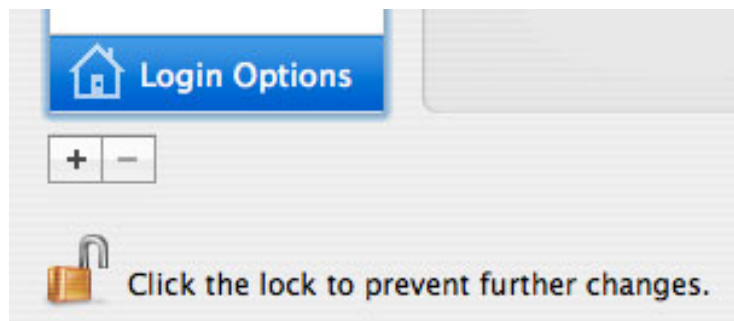
Regarding the secret start-up key, once you've installed the update and restarted the computer, restart it again holding the **SHIFT** key down for 30 seconds after the spinning gear first appears. Then, when your computer finishes starting up, restart it again holding no keys down.

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WORKING WITH AVCHD

Ted Petit, of Video West Productions, writes:

> I have recently stumbled onto a program called "Voltaic". This allows the user to take AVCHD footage and convert it to a Quick Time movie. From what I can tell it uses the Apple Intermediate Codec. The cost is $30.00.
>
> I have purchased this program and have used it to convert .mts files that were produced by a Sony HDR-SR5 camcorder.
>
> I have read various Blogs comparing the conversion of .mts files with FCP 6 and it was stated that the entire file structure of the [AVCHD] footage has to be provided in order for FCP 6 to work with it. With Voltaic only the .mts file is necessary.
>
> Of course you are taking a hit with the 4:2:0 vs 4:2:2 sampling...but for an intermediate step what is your opinion? .... and have you used/tested this program?

Larry replies: Ted, Final Cut only started supporting AVCHD with the 6.0.1 release and it, like Voltaic, converts it into the Apple Intermediate Codec.

AVCHD, like HDV, uses very limited color sampling (4:2:0) combined with a highly compressed file format (GOP-based H.264). However, I have not worked with this format and would be interested in comments on this format from other readers...

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CREATING A TELEPHONE AUDIO EFFECT

Trent Anderson writes:

> In FCP or Soundtrack, how might I make a voice sound like it is on a telephone call, what filter might work?

Larry replies: Trent, thanks for writing, it was good meeting you at our seminar in San Francisco!

This effect is simple, and can be done in either Final Cut or Soundtrack. It requires using two filters:

- Apply a Low-pass filter to your audio clip, set the frequency to 2500 and Q = 1
- Apply a High-pass filter to the same clip with the frequency set to 500 and Q = 1

It will play in real-time and sounds perfectly convincing.

UPDATE - Nov. 27

Ben Balser writes:

Your current issue (I love this newsletter) has a letter from Trent Anderson about how to get the telephone effect.

In STP 2, if you apply **Process > Effects > EQ > Channel EQ**, there are several presets that will get you started on very nice telephone (or 2-way radio) sound effects. In the control window of that effect go to **Show Presets > 07 EQ Tools**. In that category there are: Megaphone EQ, Phone Filter Notch, Phone Filter Wide Band, and Telephone EQ.

I've been finding these very good places to get that effect from. If any is not perfect for what you personally want, simply apply the one that is a closest match, tweak the controls (never be afraid to experiment with these filter controls), once you have what you want, you can add it as your own User Preset for future reference, or to apply to other sound clips in the same FCP project. It makes getting the telephone/radio effect much faster and easier and better sounding. Even for an old sound guy like me who can do it manually in my sleep. Gotta love them Presets in STP!

Larry replies: Thanks, this is another way to do the same thing.

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MISSING SOUNDTRACK PRO FILES

Tomas Lovén, from Sweden, write:

We recorded 3h 30 min audio into Soundtrack Pro, version 2.01. The file was about 3.6 Gb before it disappeared. My Mac Book Pro has 2 GB RAM.

Before I started the recording I saved the project using Version 1. When I tried to save the file after after the recording, the computer crashed after about saving 50% of the file. I tried various ways to save this, but, at the end, I only had an empty file.

Is there any chance to bring back that file. What should I have done instead?

Larry replies: Tomas, I'm very sorry about the crash. Here are a couple of ideas. First, create the initial project file using Version 2, rather than Version 1 of STP. There are major differences between the two versions.

Second, be sure you have the latest version of Soundtrack Pro (2.0.2 as of this writing). The initial release was not particularly stable.

Third, and perhaps best, when ever Soundtrack Pro records a file it automatically saves it to disk during the recording process. Perhaps all you lost was the project file, not the actual audio itself.
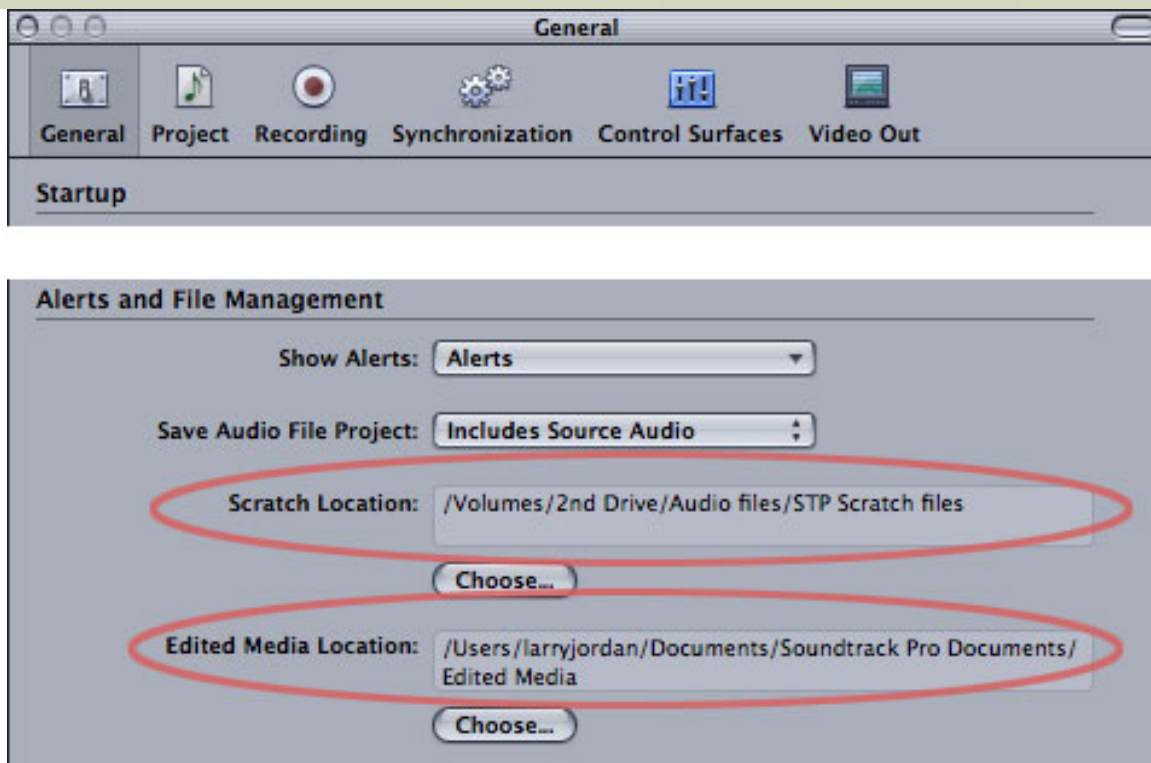
There are two types of work files: scratch/record files and edited media. To see where these are stored, go to the **Soundtrack Pro > Preferences > General tab**. In the bottom of the dialog, are the path names indicating where these files are stored.

Open every file there, as they often have quite cryptic file names, and see what's there. With luck, you'll find the file you lost.

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AUDIO SPEED CHANGES IN SOUNDTRACK PRO

Carl Whitney writes:

> I have a problem recording analog and digital audio into Soundtrack Pro. When I do this the Timeline plays back at a different speed. I tried doing this back in February for an Indie Movie I edited. I ended up using Pro Tools.

Larry replies: First, make sure you are using the latest version of Soundtrack Pro.

Second, Soundtrack Pro allows you to set the sample rate of the timeline between a variety of settings. Without knowing more about your problem, my first guess is that you have a sample rate mismatch.
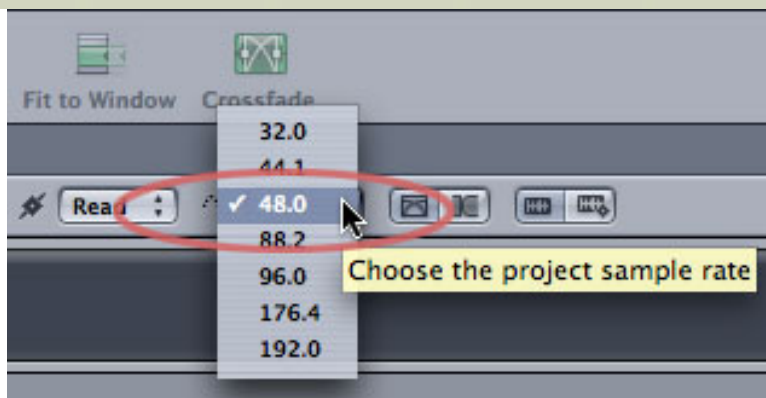
There are two places to set sample rates: in the Timeline and Preferences.

The Timeline controls what sample rate is used for playback of all Timeline clips. It is initially set based upon Preferences but can be changed at will.
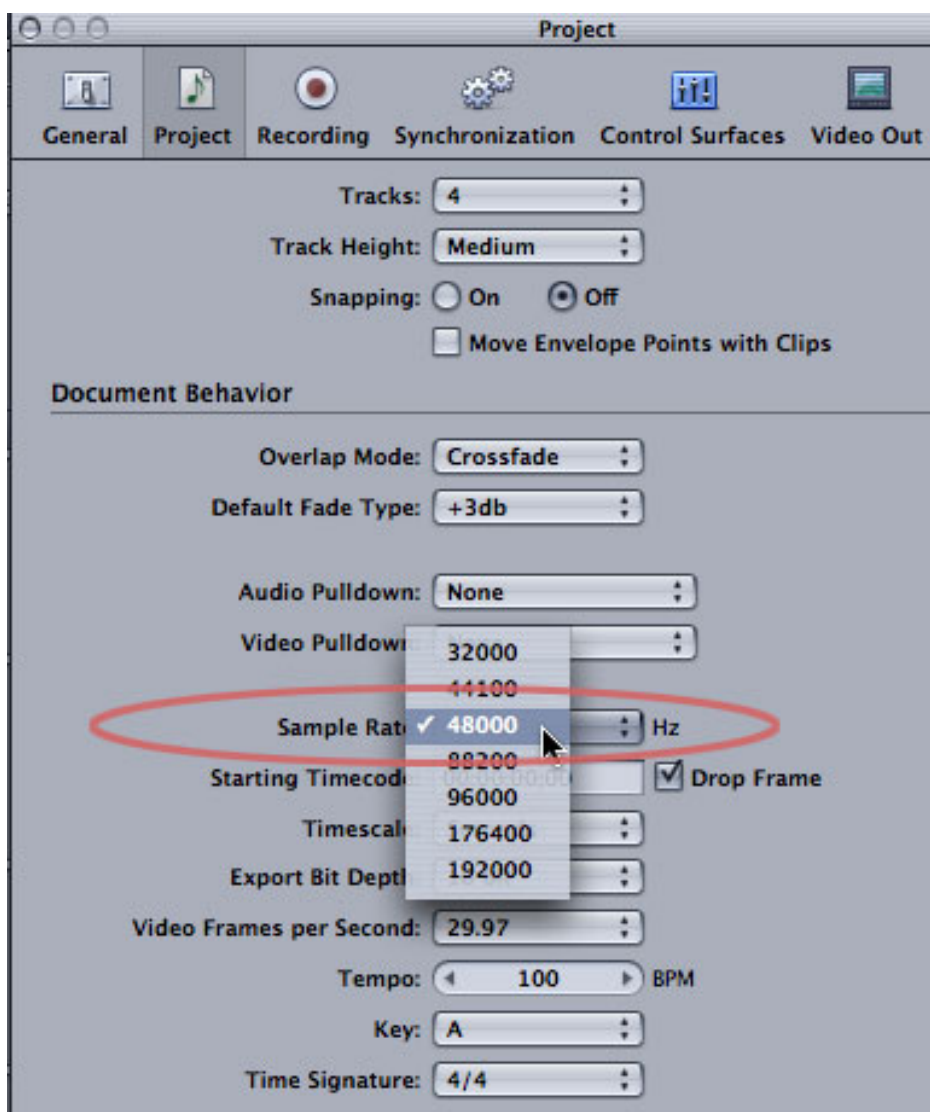
The **Soundtrack Pro > Preferences > Project** tab controls the presets for a Timeline.

By default, STP sets everything to a 48 kHz sample rate. My guess is that your two clips used wildly divergent sample rates which caused the problem.

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A REALLY HARD QUESTION

Erik Scheel, from Tanglewood Productions, writes:

> The owner of the studio has a customized bars and tone and, of course, wants to use them.
>
> So what I want to know: Can you somehow change the preferences in FCP to set the bars and tone, as ours, in the print-to-video dialog box? I know you can manually set the black, slate, countdown but you cannot set the bars and tone FCP just puts it there for you.
>
> If you have any ideas I would love to here them!

Larry replies: Erik, you can't change Final Cut's default settings for color bars. Nor can you have it point to a different set of bars instead of what it creates internally for the Print-to-Video dialog.

However, it is easy to import whatever bars you want to use and edit them to the timeline prior to output.

Just be sure the bars you are importing are accurate - otherwise, it sort of spoils why you put bars at the beginning of the sequence in the first place.

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ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE

MJ Godges writes:

> Is there an anti-virus software you prefer on the Mac?

Larry replies: No. In fact, if you are doing video editing, anti-virus software will make things much worse. I have mine turned off.

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LOOKING TO MAKE A TRANSITION

Charlie Wilson, from the BBC - Washington, writes:

> What would be a good plug-in set for transitions that are neat but not over the top. I am not interested in treating the video, so I don't need Magic Bullet, but just something to extend the set built into Final Cut.

Larry replies: There are lots of good choices - it all depends upon your definition of "not over the

top." Check into:

- FX Factory
- GenArts
- Digital Film Tools
- Boris Continuum

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PROBLEMS WITH VIDEO TAPES

Joan York sent in the following:

> The yellow "clean cassette" icon started flashing with my old Sony VX2000. After getting it repaired, twice, I finally gave up and bought a new Sony PD-170. Very nice! Except, starting with the second shoot, the yellow "clean cassette" icon started flashing, again! Holly mackerel!!!
>
> I then started to think it was the tapes. I am using the Panasonic MQ's. When I think of it, it wasn't long after I changed tapes that I started to have this problem. I got in touch with my supplier and ordered the older Panasonic PQ's because the MQ's were discontinued. I shot with them the next wedding and didn't have a problem.
>
> I have been talking with the Panasonic rep. I will be sending him the tapes I've had problems with for inspection. Have you heard this from anyone else?

Larry replies: What I've learned is that you want to stick with one brand of tape. All tape wears heads. However, different tape wears heads differently. Especially with older cameras, changing tape stock no longer matches the existing wear patterns and you start to get errors and drop outs.

Once you find a tape you like - stay with it. Both you and your camera will be happier.

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Wrap-up

Well, I still have over 40 emails in the backlog list, but we are getting closer to getting caught up...

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.

Also, please take a few minutes, visit our store and buy something. The holidays are coming and you owe yourself a present. Your support for our seminars and products keeps our website, and this newsletter, free.

Thanks for all your comments and questions. I love hearing from you because when you share your ideas and suggestions, we all learn.

Until next month, take care, and edit well.

Larry

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