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Monthly Newsletter!**

Larry Jordan's Monthly Newsletter

**Editor: Larry Jordan
Issue #53 -- February, 2009**

Welcome to the latest edition of my monthly Final Cut Studio newsletter for February, 2009.

The goal of this newsletter is to provide information helpful to the professional user of Final Cut Pro. This newsletter publishes each month. Key articles from past issues are posted on my website each month for your reference. At the end of each year, all newsletters for that year are bundled and 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, over 400 articles and tutorials to help you get the most out of Final Cut!

NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

- Welcome
- Last Call! Larry's PowerUP Seminars Start Soon!
- Technique: Benefits Of Makeup
- Larry Presents PowerUP Video Tutorials
- Technique: Customizing Keyboard Shortcuts
- Larry Is Writing A New Book And Needs Your Help
- Technique: World's Fastest Keyboard Shortcut Finder
- Don't Forget to Visit Larry's Blog
- Digital Production Buzz Is Now On wsRADIO
- Technique: Creating Custom-Sized Sequences
- Back Issues Of All Larry's 2008 Newsletters Now Available!
- Technique: Converting .M2T Files To .MOV Files

READER MAIL

- Thoughts on Audio Metering
- Blu-ray Rant
- Blu-ray Redux
- Nesting Follow-Up
- Monitoring Madness
- Compression Conundrum

WRAP-UP

WELCOME

Well, it looks like winter isn't ready to let go of us yet, Punxsutawney Phil says we have six more weeks of winter. So, here's a whole bunch of Final Cut Studio goodies to keep you warm on a cold night.

First, though, I want to take a minute to thank everyone that sends in questions and comments. Part of the fun of writing this newsletter is reading what you think and adding your comments to each issue. It is your feedback that makes this newsletter unique -- and especially valuable to everyone else.

I'm about to head out on another seminar tour -- though not as many cities this time. What I find especially exciting is that we have sold out one city and are close to selling out two more. It is a real treat to have a standing-room only event. I'm very honored that so many people are interested in our seminars. (More on that in a second.)

One other note. I know that the economy is hard on all of us. Partly its the slowdown in work, but even more is the uncertainty of not knowing how much worse things are going to get. Still, there are many reasons for optimism. I try not to get caught up in rumor and speculation. There are other writers and websites that do. But a number of different vendors have shared some of their up-coming product plans with me and I think we have a very interesting year ahead of us.

I'm looking forward to sharing it with you. If there is anything I can do to help, please let me know.

[Go to Top.]

LAST CALL! LARRY'S POWERUP SEMINARS START SOON!

February is "**International Seminar Travel Month**," so I'm packing an extra-large suitcase and hitting the road. We will be visiting:

* Feb. 5 - 6: **Orlando, Florida** - <u>Assn. of Video Professionals</u>

       Discover the Hidden Power in Final Cut Studio
       Integrating Adobe Software into a Final Cut Workflow

* Feb. 12: **Dundee, Scotland**

       Final Cut Pro Workflow Secrets - 4 hours -- <u>www.larryjordan.biz/ seminars</u>

* Feb. 13: **Glasgow, Scotland** -- **SOLD OUT!!**

       Final Cut Studio Pro Techniques - 8 hours -- <u>www.larryjordan.biz/ seminars</u>

* Feb. 17-19: **London, England** - Broadcast/Video Forum 2009

       A series of trade show seminars -- <u>www.broadcastvideoexpo.co.uk</u>

* Feb. 20: **London, England** -- **TEN SEATS LEFT!**

       Final Cut Studio Pro Techniques - 8 hours -- <u>www.larryjordan.biz/ seminars</u>

* Feb. 21 - 22: **Dublin, Ireland**

       Final Cut Pro Workflow Secrets - 8 hours
       Final Cut Studio Pro Techniques - 8 hours
       Contact: Adrian Brett -- <u>adobrett00@hotmail.com</u>

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, we are able to keep the price EXTREMELY low. Because of that, turnout is greater than we expected. **Please register quickly - as seats are filling fast.**

<u>Click here </u>to **learn more or to register**. I look forward to seeing you there!

[<u>Go to Top.</u>]

TECHNIQUE: BENEFITS OF MAKEUP

Over the years, I've done a lot of documentary producing and shooting. The talking-head interview is something I've done hundreds of times.

When dealing with non-professional talent, there are three challenges I always keep in mind:

- They are terrified of being on camera, so keeping them loose and relaxed is critical.
- They will unconsciously phrase their answer based upon how I ask the question, so I never ask a question that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'.
- They have no clue how to look good on camera, so I always bring makeup.

Most women are completely comfortable wearing and adjusting makeup. However, asking a guy to wear makeup is about the same as asking them to sing in front of a group of their friends. They are going to be very, very uncomfortable.

Also, most of the shoots I go on don't have the budget for a hair and makeup person. Which means I need to do the makeup myself.

We now have the worst of all situations: a very, very nervous amateur being made up by another guy. Sigh... The things I do for my craft.

Recently, I was in the studio doing some shooting for a book I'm writing -- I needed to create some video examples that I could use in screen shots. So, while I was there, I asked Andrew, one of our actors, to pose for a before and after makeup picture.

The "before" is on the left, the "after" is on the right. See the huge hot spot in the middle of his forehead? Notice how his whole face seems to be glowing, just sitting there he looks uncomfortable.

On the right is the same actor under the same lighting - this time wearing makeup.

A product I've used for the last fifteen years can quickly make people look good under lights. Its made by Lancolm and its called: **Pure Focus T-Zone Powder Gel.** It costs $25 - 30 and is worth every penny.

A tube provides coverage for dozens of interviews. I suggest you apply it from cheekbones up into the hairline. It is very thick and a little goes a long way. Rub it in well.

I've also learned that guys are most comfortable, when you want to put

makeup on them, if you distract them with a story. Anything to keep them from thinking about wearing makeup. I tend to talk about how great they are going to look walking around the office later in the day. I may, perhaps, exaggerate the effect a bit.

Nothing makes your lighting look great like a face that doesn't reflect it back to the camera like a mirror.

UPDATE - Feb. 3, 2009

Craig Sommerer sent in the following:

> Finally, you've addressed something very fundamental that few people seem to understand; the talent needs to look *good*, regardless of what they look *like*.
>
> I am a freelance video operator for live multi-camera events and my big TV cameras have a skin detail circuit, a selective de-focus, to help blur out the contours on talent.
>
> "Pro-sumer" cameras also have a very ineffective skin detail circuit which quite honestly, shouldn't be used, as the defocus parameters are not selectable.
>
> Your Lancome hint is great. Now take your talent's looks to the next level with Patrick Sheffield's "Electronic Makeup Artist" and "Digital Coverup" filters for Final Cut Pro. The "Electronic Makeup Artist" effects are astounding, in other words, a little bit goes a long way. http://www.sheffieldsoftworks.com/
>
> Full disclosure, while I'm listed in the sidebar on the website of Sheffield Softworks, I make no financial compensation from spreading the good word. I hope you give these filters, as well as Pat's free filters a try.

Larry replies: Thanks, Craig, for your comments.

[Go to Top.]

LARRY PRESENTS POWERUP TUTORIALS -- ON VIDEO

In my survey around the first of the year, one of the things you strongly requested were short, timely, focused video tutorials covering Final Cut Studio and new technology. So, in response, I've created almost two dozen on-line video tutorials -- each covering a very specific subject in depth.

In an effort not to repeat material that is available elsewhere, I try, in each tutorial, to either present material that I've not done before or present additional ways to accomplish each task. I also look for ways to present new technology so you can see whether it makes sense for you and your projects.

Recently, we've added new tutorials, and I'll be working more when I get back from the UK.

For a complete list of titles available, click here. (This list changes often, so please check back frequently.)

If you have specific training ideas, please click here and email me!

## TECHNIQUE: CUSTOMIZING KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

I read somewhere that Final Cut Pro has 650 menus. Sheesh! No wonder we sometimes get lost trying to find the menu to do something.

Final Cut 6 also has **392 keyboard shortcuts**. (I know -- I just counted them! I'll show you how to do the same a little later in this tutorial.) However, even with almost 400 shortcuts to choose from, sometimes, we just don't have the ones we need.
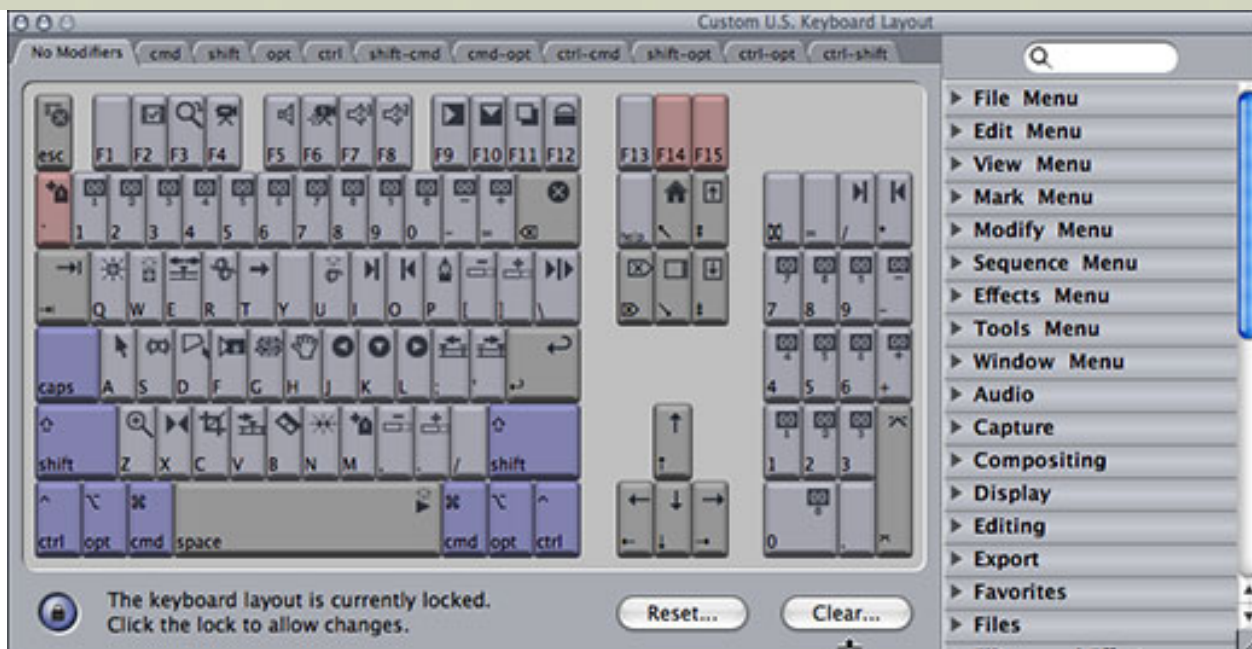
Wouldn't it be great if we could customize our own keyboard shortcuts?

Ta-DAH! We can. Even better, this process is the same for Final Cut Pro 4, HD, 5, and 6; though the default keyboard shortcuts differ between versions.

First, start Final Cut, though you don't necessarily need to open any projects.
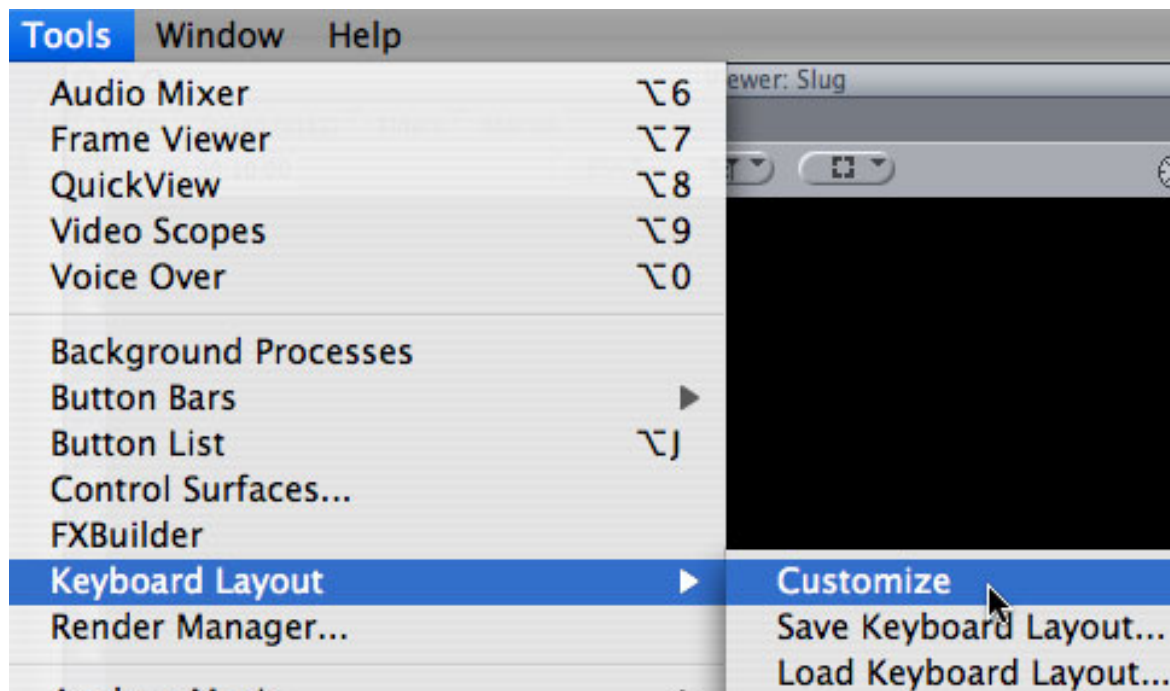
Select **Tools > Keyboard > Customize...**

The keyboard illustration depends upon what keyboard you have connected to your Mac. In this case, this shows a full-size keyboard. If you have a laptop, the keyboard will look like your laptop keyboard.

A very useful window layout, to me, is the Two-Up layout (**Windows > Arrange > Two-up**). It makes the Browser and Timeline smaller so that the Canvas and Viewer can be bigger. The problem is that it doesn't have a keyboard shortcut.

Hmmmm.... If the default window layout is **Control+U**, seems to me it would be really useful if this Two-up layout were **Shift+Control+U**. Here are the steps to create this shortcut.
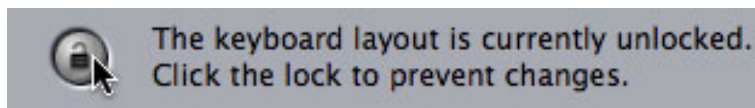

To prevent accidental changes to your keyboard shortcuts, the keyboard is locked. This is not for security, but simply to prevent accidental changes.

Unlock the keyboard by clicking the lock icon in the lower left corner.

Next, in the search box on the right, type a portion of the menu you want to turn into a shortcut. You need to type the text exactly as it appears in the menu, but you don't need to type the entire phrase. For instance, here I've just typed **Two** and it found the window menu I was looking for.

> **Note**: You can also type a keyboard shortcut and it will find the menu that the shortcut is assigned to. I use this a lot to figure out what various key combinations do.

| shift | opt | ctrl | shift-cmd | cmd-opt | ctrl-cmd | shift-opt | ctrl-opt | ctrl-shift |
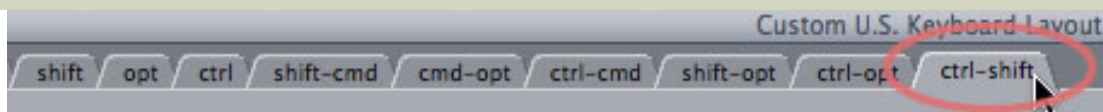
Across the top of the keyboard image are a series of tabs. These correspond to the various combinations of modifier keys that can be held while typing a shortcut. (It is interesting to me that these tabs don't allow any three key shortcuts -- probably because they had more than enough keys using the ten tab combinations that they have. Ten? Yes. Nine that use modifier keys and one that doesn't.)

Since we want to make Shift+Control+U our new keyboard shortcut to switch to the Two-up window layout, click the **Control+Shift** tab.

Then, from the search results box, where Two-up is displayed, drag the ICON on top of the letter **U**.

When you let go, you have a new keyboard shortcut.
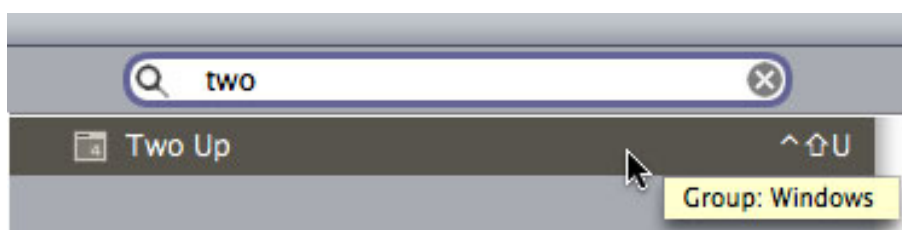
Notice that at the right side of the search results window, the new shortcut is listed next to the menu item.

Hmmm... remember at the beginning of this technique I mentioned that there are 392 default shortcuts in Final Cut 6? Well, here's how to get a complete list of them.
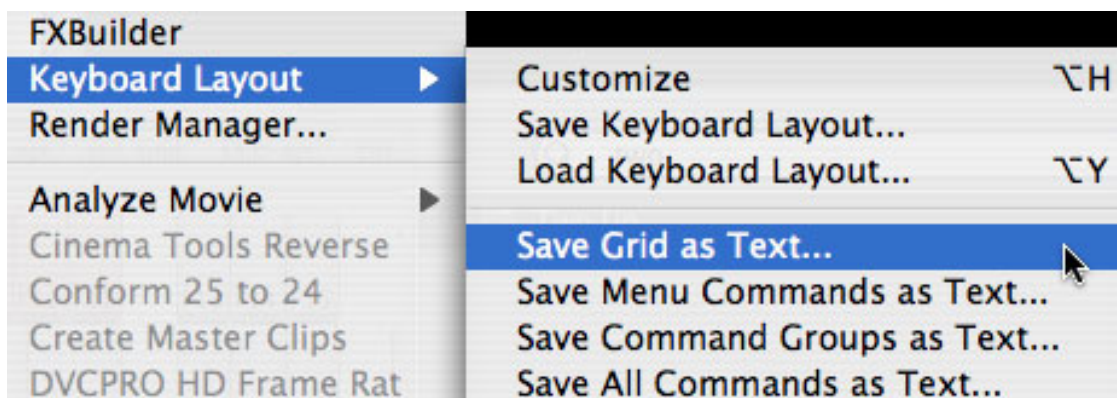
With the keyboard still displayed, go to **Tools > Keyboard Layout**.

If you want to export a list that is read best in Excel -- a tab-delimited table -- select **Save Grid as Text**. If you want a list that is more easily read in Word, select **Save All Commands as Text.** The other two choices allows you to group your shortcuts prior to export.

[<u>Go to Top.</u>]

LARRY IS WRITING A NEW BOOK AND NEEDS YOUR HELP

Based on the success of our Fall PowerUP Seminars, Focal Press has asked me to write a book titled: *Adobe Production Premium for Final Cut Editors.*

This will look at all the ways that Final Cut editors can use Adobe software to work faster or do things that just aren't possible with Final Cut Studio by itself.

And that's where I need your help -- I'm looking for stories on how editors are using BOTH Adobe and Apple software. I'm looking for more than just stories on After Effects or Photoshop. Fore example, if you regularly use Bridge, OnLocation, Soundbooth, Illustrator, Flash encoding, or other Adobe software, I'd like to hear from you.

If you would like to appear in the book, along with your photo, website and credits, drop me a note. I'm looking for 250-300 words describing how you use the software. There's no money in it, but I'll do what I can to provide world-wide fame!

The book is scheduled to come out in the late spring -- so please let me know immediately. I only have room for about eight more stories.
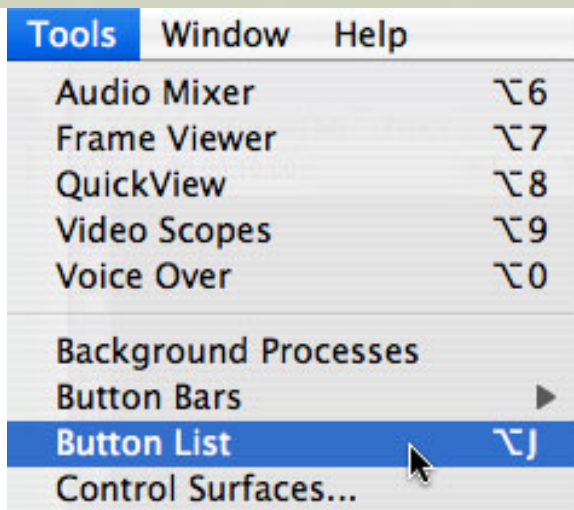
<u>Click here</u> to let me know you are interested. DON'T send your story until we chat.
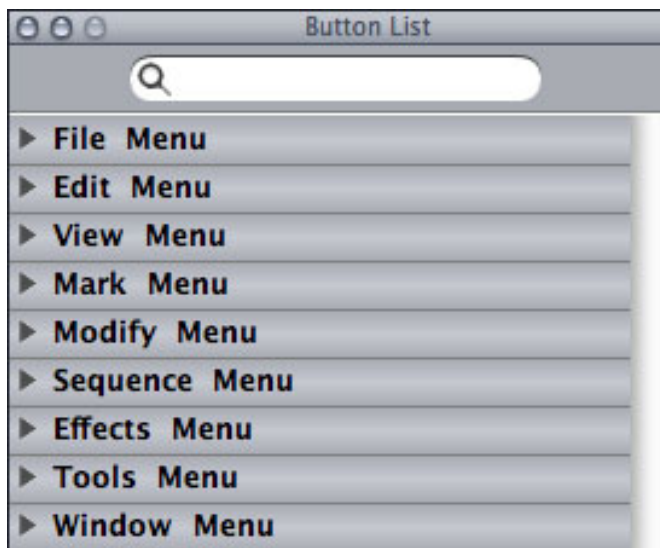
[<u>Go to Top.</u>]

TECHNIQUE: WORLD'S FASTEST KEYBOARD SHORTCUT FINDER

I was surprised to discover that I have not written about a technique that I use in almost every project: a very fast way to find a keyboard shortcut or menu.

Apple has hidden it in plain sight: its called the **Button List**.

To display it, choose **Tools > Button List**.

An instant later, when it appears, it lists the 30 different groups of menus inside Final Cut Pro.
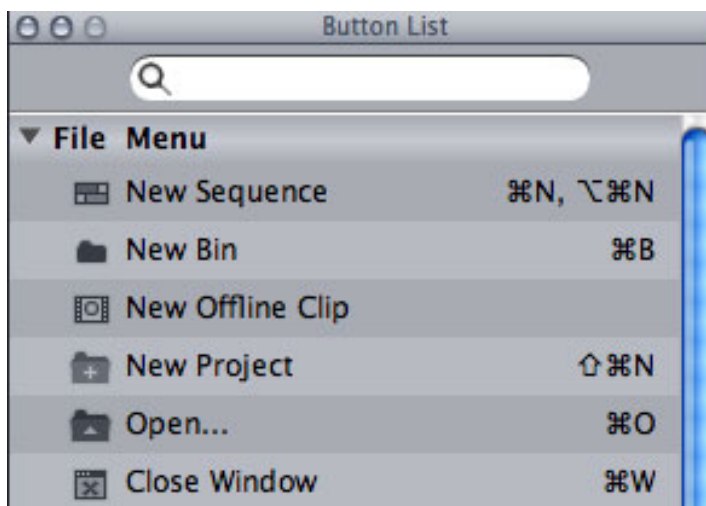
To see just how extensive this list is, twirl down any one of the categories. For instance, here is just a partial list of the menu choices in the **File** menu. The left side of the list is the menu name, on the right side is the keyboard shortcut assigned to it - if any.

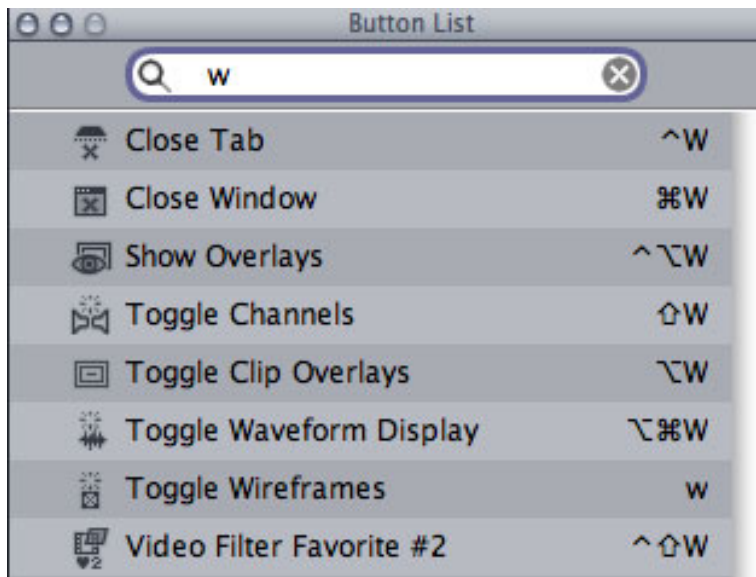**Note**: If you have created custom keyboard shortcuts, they will appear in this list as well. This does not distinguish between custom and default keyboard shortcuts.

Here is where the Button List gets REALLY helpful.

In the search box, type the first letter or two of what you are looking for. For instance, type the letter **W** and see all the keyboard shortcuts that contain the letter "W."

Or type just the first letters of a menu choice and see if there's a shortcut assigned to it.

This is just such a flat-out fast way to find shortcuts that I find myself using it on a regular basis.

[Go to Top.]

DON'T FORGET TO VISIT LARRY'S BLOG

If you haven't visited recently, take a couple of minutes and check out my blog. I use this as a way to update you between newsletters - or comment on what's going on in the industry.

For instance, **Bruce Nazarian** and I had a great time putting together the **Special Report - The State of Blu-ray** a couple weeks ago. I've posted an excerpt on creating Blu-ray Discs on a Mac that you need to listen to if you plan to move into this new technology.

http://www.larryjordan.biz/app_bin/wordpress/archives/414/trackback

Another good example of stories you'll find are extensions on the interviews I do for the weekly Digital Production Buzz. For instance, recently, we had **Chris Zapara** on the show talking about his Emmy Award-winning visual effects.

Chris shared some examples of his work and some of his software tools, which you can find here:

http://www.larryjordan.biz/app_bin/wordpress/archives/389/trackback

Here's where you can find my blog -- be sure to subscribe to the RSS feed to be notified when

something new shows up. Check back from time to time -- I'll also be doing reports during my seminar trip overseas.

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DIGITAL PRODUCTION BUZZ IS NOW ON WSRADIO

We are now broadcasting the highlights of Digital Production BuZZ each month on Video Production Radio -- syndicated by 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.

January's show featured:

- **Norman Hollyn** - USC Film School on editing
- **Charlie Paul** - world-class directon on shooting food
- **Brent Altomare** - on growing a production company
- **Philip Hodgetts** - technology trends to watch in 2009
- **Bruce Nazarian** - making sense of optical media

The **February** show, to be posted Feb. 12, features a summary of our *Special Report - The State of Blu-ray*, with myself and **Bruce Nazarian**.

You can learn more about the series here: feed://www.wsradio.com/podcasts/231.xml

[ ]

TECHNIQUE: CREATING CUSTOM-SIZED SEQUENCES

You may have heard that Final Cut sequences can be customized. But what you may not know is how significantly you can make changes -- as long as you don't want to play the results on a DVD or record them to video tape.

However, since more and more material is moving directly to the web, the ability to create eye-catching video using Final Cut in non-standard ways is worth exploring.

So, let's make a giant turn off the straight path to video output and see what we can do to make things more interesting.

First, keep in mind that in order for a video to play on the web, it needs to be compressed. Specifically, compressed using the H.264 codec. This means that all we need to do in Final Cut is to create the master file that will then be compressed for the web.

Also, within Final Cut, as soon as you move away from standard video image sizes, you'll need to render -- but, if you were to create a special effect in After Effects, you'd render there, too. Think of this as another of Final Cut's special effects and don't let the rendering deter you.

Let's create a long, horizontal clip of a train running through an entire valley. The shot we are going to use was shot on a misty morning along the Amtrak line near Pismo Beach in California.

Here is a standard DV clip. As we know, a DV image is 720 x 480. But, what happens if we change that.

Start by going to **Sequence > Settings**.
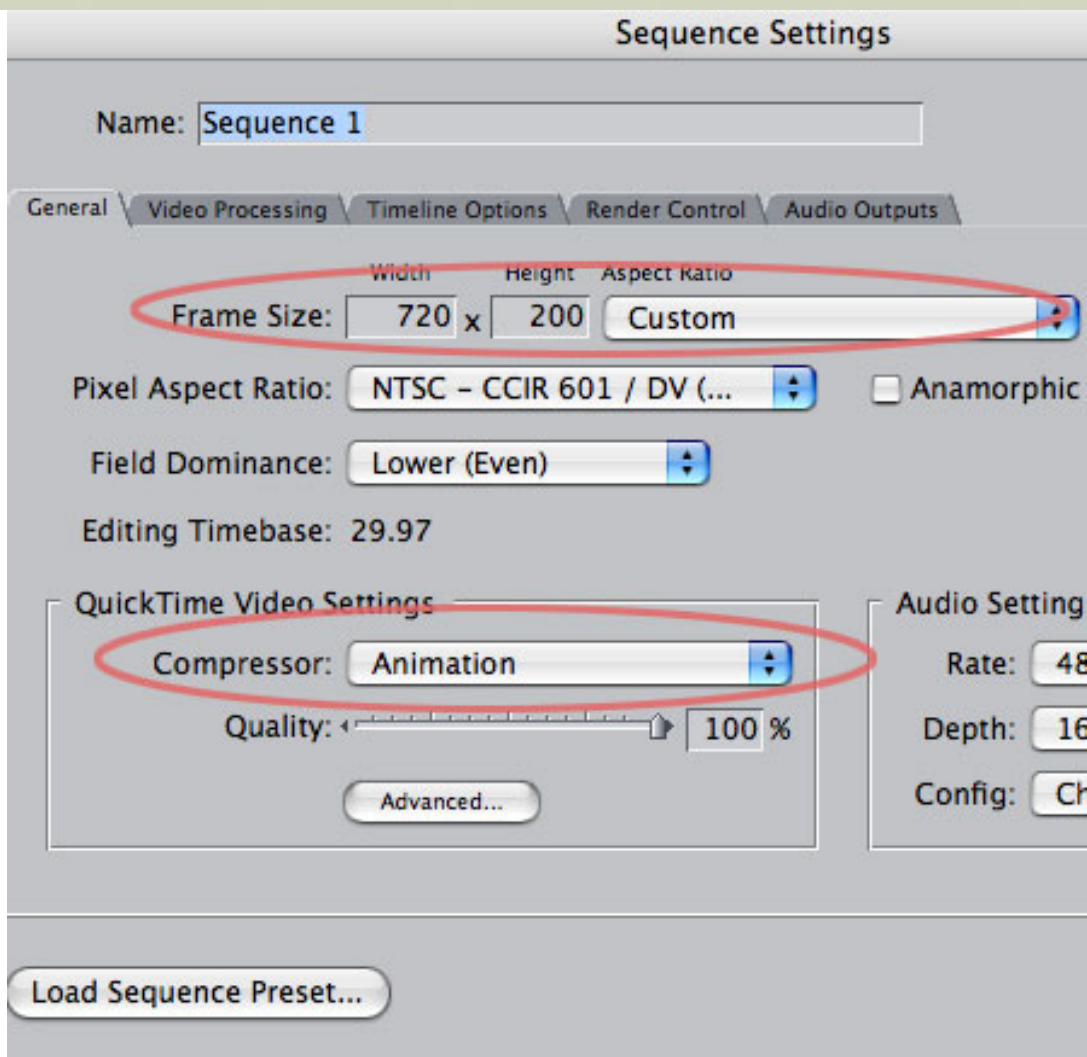
First, change the Aspect Ratio pop-up to **Custom** (*not* Custom 3:2).

Then, change the image size to something unusual -- in this case, I'll use 720 x 200. That keeps the horizontal part of the image, but severely crops the vertical.

> **Note**: Final Cut sequences have a maximum dimension of 4,000 pixels on a side.

Since I'm working with DV video, I'll leave the Pixel Aspect Ratio alone. I don't want to change the shape of the video pixels, merely the shape of the sequence it plays in.

Next, change the Compressor to **Animation**. This codec is the highest quality codec you can use in Final Cut. The only problem is that is generates HUGE file sizes and, in most cases, can't be played in real-time.

However, since this will be compressed for the web, which WILL allow the clip to play in real-time, we don't care about real-time playback in FCP.

Click **OK** to save your changes.
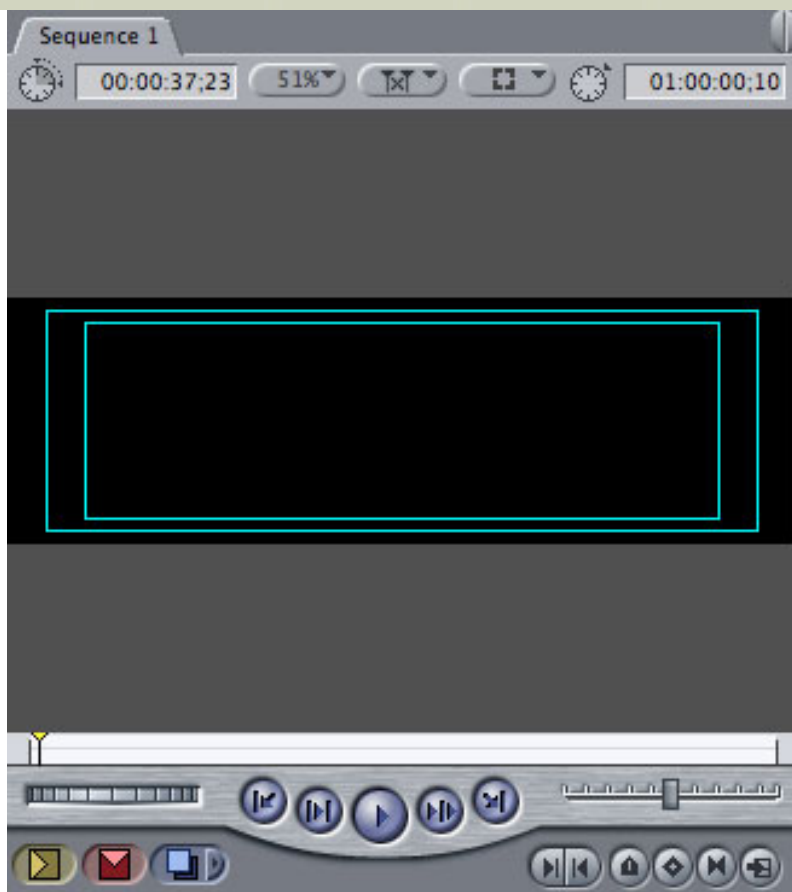
Note the entirely different look of the Canvas! Now, when we edit our video into the timeline, watch what happens.

For best performance your sequence and External Video should be set to the format of the clips you are editing.

Change sequence settings to match the clip settings?

No   Yes
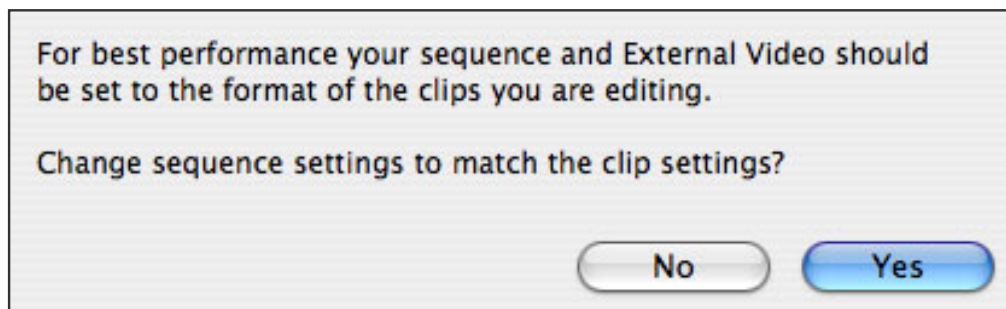
Hmm... we get a dialog. In this case, we do NOT want to change the sequence settings to match the video. Click **No**.
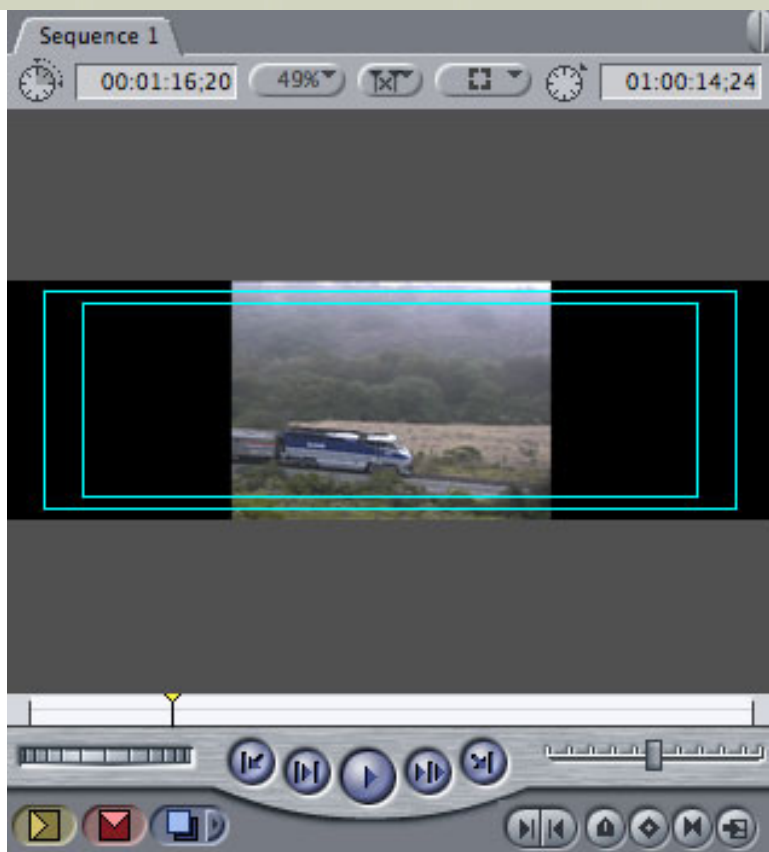
Hmmm..., again. Now our video looks severely pillar-boxed. That's because whenever the image size and sequence size don't match, Final Cut will *always* scale the image so that the entire image fits into the sequence.

In this case, we don't want that. We need to enlarge the image so that it completely fills the sequence.
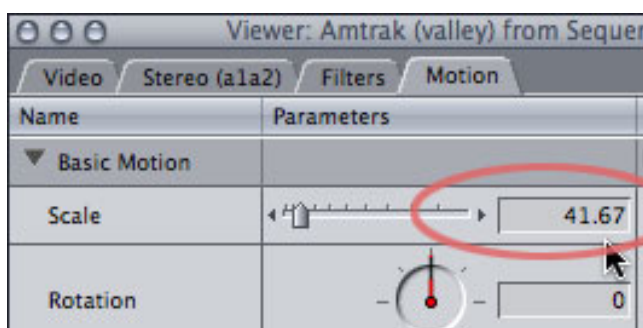
So, double-click the clip in the timeline to load it into the Viewer, click the **Motion** tab, and change the scale to **100**%. (In our case, the scale was reduced to 41.67% in order for the entire image to fit.
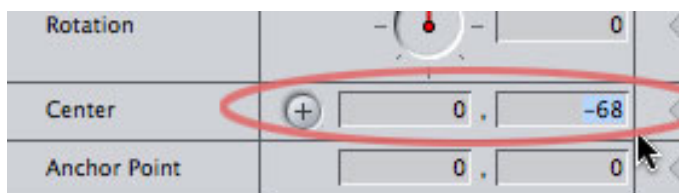
The last thing we need to adjust is the vertical position of the image. Because we don't see the entire image, we may need to tweak it so that the best part of the image fits into our new frame.

In this case, I need to the train a bit so that it doesn't disappear under the bottom of the frame.

Do this by changing the **Center** settings in the Motion tab. The left box controls horizontal position. Set this to **0** so that the image doesn't move horizontally. Change the right box to move the train up or down until it fits the best in the frame. In this example, I raised it **68** pixels.
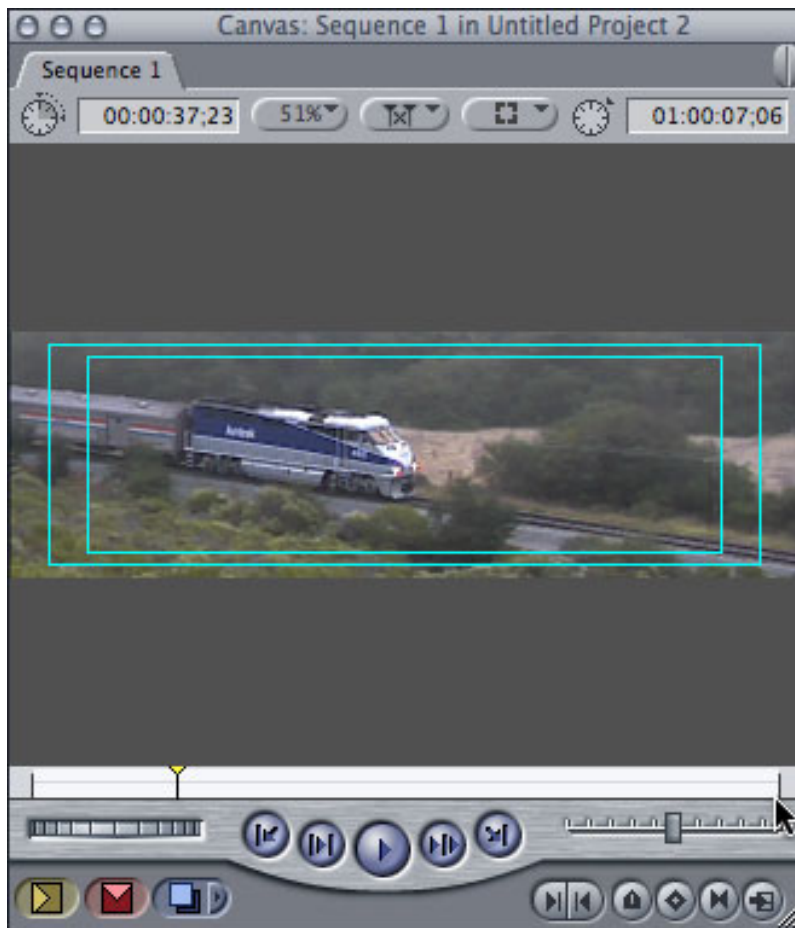
Here's our finished video in a custom-made sequence.

Cool!

If you want to see this in motion, you can either render it - which because we are using the Animation codec may, or may not, play on your system. Or, what I tend to do, is put the playhead where I want playback to start and press **Option+P**. This plays a sequence that requires rendering, without first rendering it. (It is slower than real-time, but it still plays!)
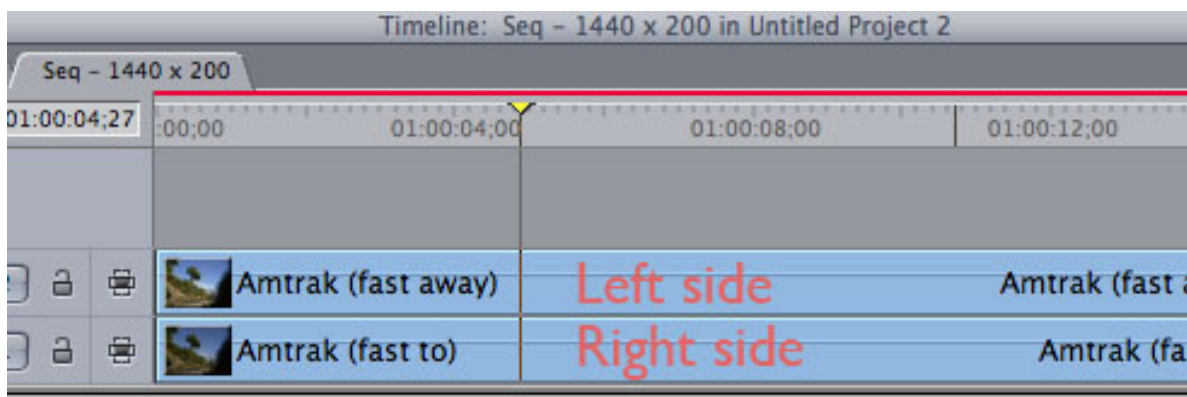
For instance, here is a sequence I created that is 1,440 x 200 pixels. In this case, I stacked two clips above each other, and moved the Center point of one to fill the left side of the sequence, while other clip's center point was moved to fill the right. I then adjusted the vertical position so the tracks matched.

> **Note**: This was actually two different trains, shot at different times, which you can tell because the train on the right ends before the train on the left.

So you can see the results for yourself, here's a movie of our 720 x 200 sequence. (**Silent** -- TRT: 0:37 4 MB -- this may take a few moments to load.)
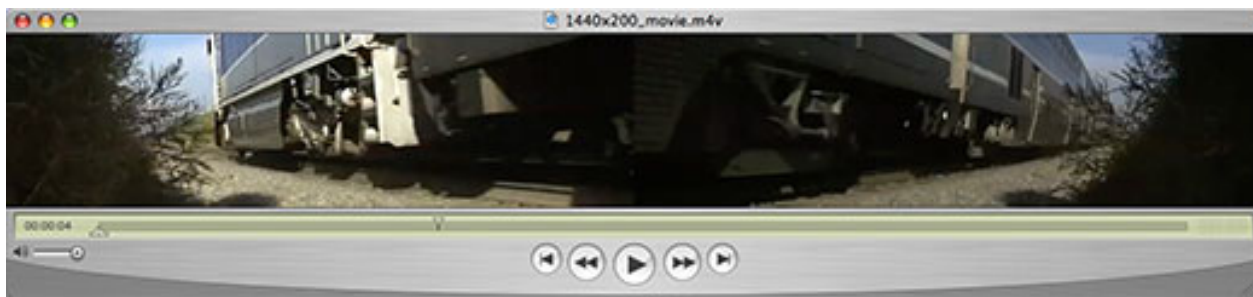
Even more dramatic, here's a movie of our 1440 x 200 sequence. (**Silent** -- TRT: 0:15 1.8 MB)

Both movies were compressed exporting out of QuickTime using the H.264 codec.

Imagine what you could do with movies shaped like this -- or any other size -- on your website - or in digital signage - or on any computer monitor! Just remember, you can't play movies like this on a TV set.

This is fun!

[Go to Top.]

**BACK ISSUES OF ALL LARRY'S 2008 NEWSLETTERS --
NOW AVAILABLE!**

I've been getting a lot of requests for newsletter back issues. So, as we do each year, I've created PDFs of the updated versions of each issue and gathered them all together so you can have the complete 2008 collection.

Even better, all these issues are available today for immediate download!

My 2008 newsletters provided 327 pages of Final Cut Studio techniques, tips, and secrets. Everything from the simple tips to complex -- with step-by-step procedures to show you the way. They are stored in PDF format which makes searching and storage easy.

Even better, due to the increased demand, we've reduced the price on all our newsletter collections.

Click here to **order your download today**!

[Go to Top.]

TECHNIQUE: CONVERTING .M2T FILES TO .MOV FILES

The native format of HDV isn't QuickTime, its .M2T.

M2T, otherwise called an MPEG-2 Transport stream, is not the same thing as the standard MPEG-2 file that we create in Compressor to use in DVD Studio Pro. I was told recently that there are 14 different versions of MPEG-2, which I find strangely reassuring. Why should there be any more standardization in compressed files than there is in video formats?

Sigh... the world is perverse.

Anyway, while working on my latest book, I needed to convert .M2T files into something that Final Cut can edit. Final Cut likes lots and lots of different files - but not .M2T.

This means that if someone captures an HDV file in another application, such as Adobe OnLocation or Adobe Premiere, then sends it to you, you'll need to transcode it to QuickTime before bringing it into Final Cut.

> **Note**: You can not use QuickTime Player to preview an M2T file. The Finder displays it as a generic document icon.

There are a variety of ways of doing this, but the two easiest are:

* Compressor
* MPEG Streamclip

The benefits to using Compressor is that you already own the software, its fully integrated with Final Cut Pro, it supports batch processing, and it works.

The benefit to using MPEG Streamclip is that it is free, which means you can use it on a system which doesn't have Final Cut installed, and it supports transcoding into far more formats than Compressor.

Both are good choices.

USING COMPRESSOR
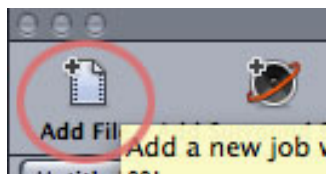
To convert a clip in Compressor, click the Add Clip icon in the top left corner to import your file.

From the Settings tab twirl down **Apple**, twirl down **Advanced Conversions**, and select the HDV option that most closely resembles the footage that you shot. In this case, I'm using HDV 1080i/60.

> **Note**: You can also transcode the .M2T file into another format for editing. For my projects, I would probably transcode into ProRes 422. (Not the HQ version because HDV doesn't have a high enough quality to justify the increased file size.) However, as our goal was to create an HDV file compatible with Final Cut, we will transcode into HDV for this example.

Drag the setting on top of the file we just imported into the Task window. With Compressor, you only need to set the OUTPUT. Compressor will automatically determine the file type of the source file.
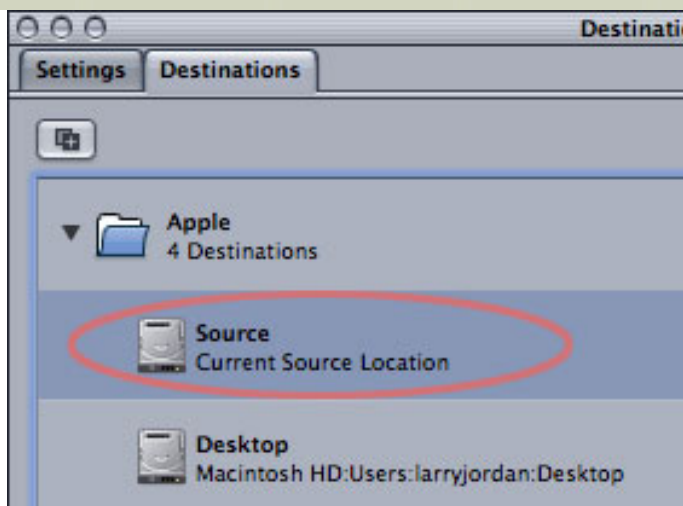
From the Destination tab, select where you want the compressed file to appear.

In this case, we want the compressed file to be stored at the same location as the source file, so we select **Source** and drag this destination on top of the file we just added the Setting in the Task window.

> **Note**: In real-life, I create a custom Destination, called "Compressed Files" on my second drive, which is where all my compressed files get stored. This makes finding compressed files a lot easier because I don't need to remember where the source file was stored.

Once you've applied a Setting and a Destination, click **Submit** in the lower right corner of the Task window to begin the compression.

At this point, you can quit Compressor, as it is only used to set up a file for compression. Other software does the actual compression.

USING MPEG STREAMCLIP

MPEG Streamclip, by <u>Squared 5 Software</u>, is designed as a general purpose video converter.

This free utility is like the Swiss Army knife of video - it converts almost anything to almost anything.

Here's a quick look at how it works.
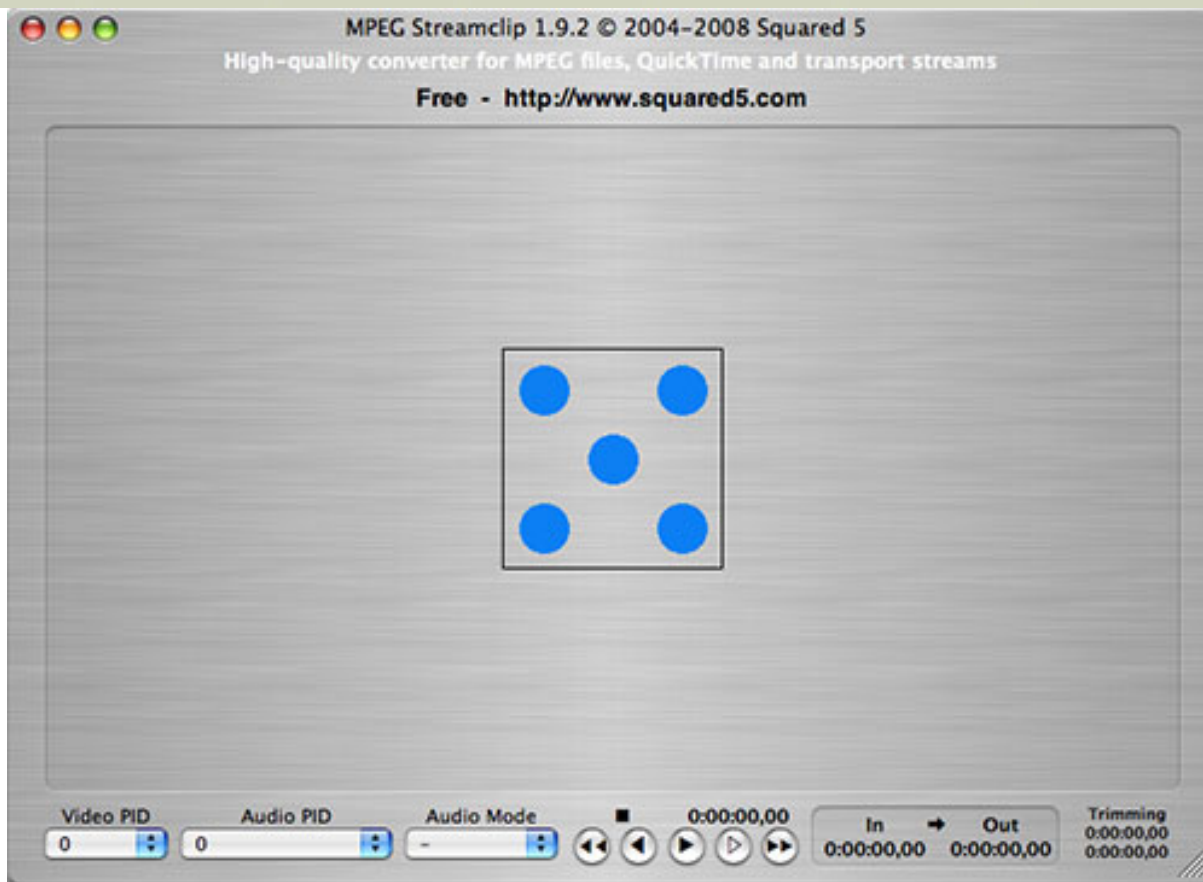
Start MPEG Streamclip and drag the file you want to convert on top of the five blue dots. (Normally, I would say "into the center of the window." But, how many other applications have very kindly put five blue dots in the center of their application? It makes my life easier.)

Here, for example, is a green screen shot that I want to convert from M2T to HDV to illustration problems with shadows in keys. (This is Andrew, by the way.)
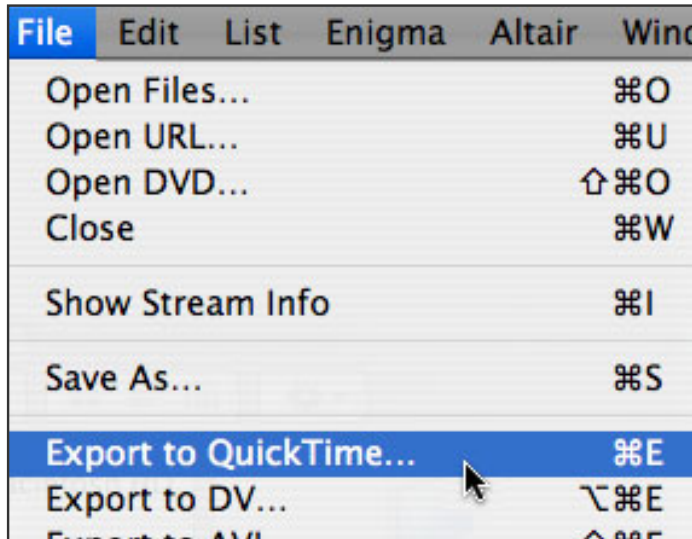
From the **File** menu, select **Export to QuickTime**. Just as with Compressor, you only need to tell the application how you want the file output. It will figure out what kind of file the source is.
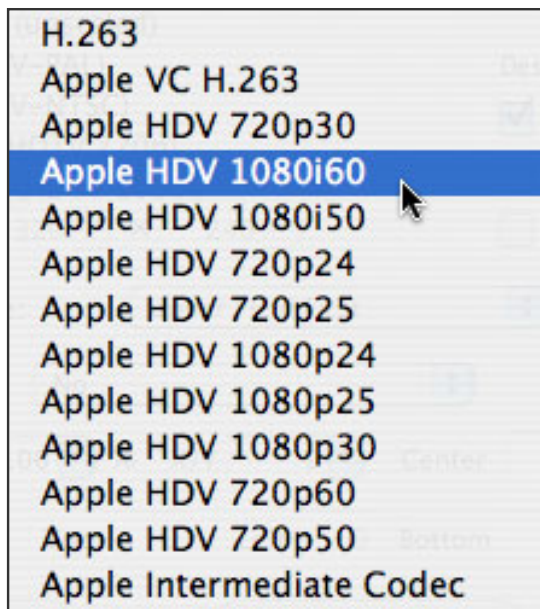
With dozens and dozens of different video formats to choose from, I selected HDV 1080i/60. Again, we could just as easily transcode this to ProRes, or some other format.

> **Note**: In talking with Graeme Nattress, I learned that converting HDV to DVCPRO HD is not a good option as both are compressed formats and tend to degrade the image more than necessary.

MPEG Streamclip – Movie Exporter

Compression: Apple HDV 1080i60   Options...

Quality: 100 %   2-Pass   B-Frames

Limit Data Rate: Kbps

Sound: Uncompressed   Stereo   Auto   256 kbps

Frame Size: A professional 2D-FIR scaler will be used for scaling
○ 1440 × 1080 (4:3)
○ 1920 × 1080 (16:9)
● 1440 × 1080 (unscaled)
○ 720 × 576 (DV-PAL)
○ 720 × 480 (DV-NTSC)
○ 1280 × 720 (HDTV 720p)
○ 1920 × 1080 (HDTV 1080i)
○ Other: 320 × 240

Frame Rate:
☐ Frame Blending
☐ Better Downscaling

Deselect for progressive movies:
☑ Interlaced Scaling
☑ Reinterlace Chroma
☐ Deinterlace Video

Field Dominance: Upper Field First   Use "Upper Field First" for all codecs except DV

Rotation: No

Zoom: 100 %   X/Y   1   Center   0 ,   0

☐ Cropping: Top 0   Left 0 Bottom 0   Right 0   Destina...

Presets...   Reset All   Adjustments...

Preview   ☐ Fast Start   Cancel   Make Movie

This screen looks more frightening than it is. Mainly because almost all the defaults are fine. Once you've selected the codec (HDV), slide the Quality slider to 100%, then...
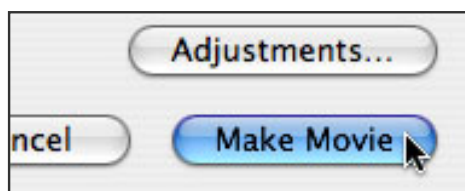
.. click the Make Movie button.

Your video immediately starts to export.

Cool.

UPDATE - Feb. 3, 2009

Tom Wolsky points out:

> If you don't have Final Cut Pro installed, or some other pro app, you will probably need to purchase from Apple the MPEG Playback Component, which is I think about $20.

Larry replies: Thanks, Tom, for the update. (I also fixed the graphic.)

UPDATE - Feb. 7, 2009

As soon as I released my newsletter, I had several people tell me about ClipWrap, a new piece of software. **Dave Barnard's** comments were similar to what others wrote:

> An alternative to re-compressing HDV .M2T files is to use Divergent Media's **Clipwrap** software, which re-wraps the files to an FCP compatible Quicktime format much faster than transcoding. It also doesn't need the extra disk space transcoding requires, very useful when you have several hours of material.
>
> I used Clipwrap very successfully recently for a direct-to-disk multi-camera recording system for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. A few minutes after a performance, over 4 hours of HD footage was ready for multicam editing in Final Cut - everyone was amazed!
>
> Great work on the newsletter, always good to read - including the make-up tips! :)
>
> The Powder Gel looks well worth having around for any studio shoot situation - thanks for the heads-up
>
> Good to see you are doing the Pro Techniques seminar in London, see you then

Larry replies: Thanks, Dave. I always like hearing from people that are using the product. See you in London!

[Go to Top.]

READER MAIL

THOUGHTS ON AUDIO METERING

Here is a dialog between Rich Roddman and Woody Woodhall about last month's article on audio levels. Woody is a professional audio engineer, president of Allied Post, and president of the LA Post-Production User Group.

Rich Roddman writes:

> Thanks for another great newsletter. I always learn something new.
>
> I just want to be sure I understood your article on the audio measuring formula you received from Woody Woodhall.
>
> If I have the tone in my Edit to Tape set at -18 and I am recording to a analog deck such as a Beta SP, if I read this right I should set the deck's VU input levels to -4

for correct calibration?

I have always found setting meters in FCP or Pro Tools out to analog meters confusing. I ALWAYS check playback for distortion or over-modulation. And it seems when ever I try to find a correct ratio I get different answers from the station engineers where I send my spots.

Any clarity in this area would be grateful.

So, I sent Rich's questions over to **Woody Woodhall** who wrote back:

Rich - Just curious why you are using -18 as a ref tone. We have found that in the crazy world of audio specs (which seem to have no rhyme or reason) that -20 in the US is the standard. Are you submitting to Europe or is this for the US? I will sheepishly admit that I haven't looked at a VU meter in years but in times of yore (OK a few years back..) we would calibrate -20 dbfs tone to 0 on the VU meter.

If this is for broadcast my experience is that the "peak" levels delivery specs are either all over the place or non-existent. In Dec I delivered a commercial to Time Warner cable, I asked for their audio specs. They sent me a very nice sheet that had a lot of information regarding the video and a sentence that said "Program Left should be Channel 1 and Program Right should be Channel 2. " I then called, found a master control operator who told me to "do whatever you usually do." So much for standards...

Rich writes back:

Thank you for your time in this matter. To answer your question over a year ago we (the post house I work for) switched to send our broadcast and cable spots via DG Fastchannel. To do so you first have to be approved by there engineers for quality control. The video was fine but we were failing for audio. Their engineer told me that their rules are the baseline of the file should playback at -18 db with the peeks being no more that +6 db over that. So I remixed the test spot in Sound Track Pro using the method I learned from one of Larry's seminars using normalization and limiters. Then in Final Cut I need to drop the timeline -6 db before exporting the file and compressing in Encore. That was the formula that got me approved for DG. Thinking consistency would be a good thing I reset the output of my Final Cut system to -18. The broadcast stations here in the Tampa area still want spots on beta sp and it is more cost effective send an intern that via DG.

I will set my system to -20 since that won't effect what I do for DG.

Woody concludes:

The crazy thing here is that we are three working, experienced professionals and still here we are scratching our heads! Europe uses -18 as a ref, US -20 as a ref, some gear comes with a default -12 as a ref... and then the frame rates craziness... so much for our technological improvements... All the best,

Larry wraps up: And who says that video engineers should be the only ones confused about standards?

[Go to Top.]

BLU-RAY RANT

Jason Chong sent me the following:

> I love listening to <u>The Buzz</u>, it keeps me entertained, informed and most of all inspired about the industry.
>
> I wanted to put my thoughts into the debate as to the distribution war between blu ray and the internet.
>
> We all hear the phrase "content is king" ad nauseam, but I think it's an ideology that has been forgotten in this debate.
>
> As a consumer, when I buy or hire a movie, I don't just want to see the film, I also want to see the special features. I think for a lot of consumers, the decision to upgrade from VHS to DVD was less to do with quality, and more to do with extra content. There will always be early adopters who want to show off their big TV's and latest sound systems, but for the mass market who plug their DVD player into their 4:3 TV, the quality isn't nearly as important as the experience being offered around the feature.
>
> And I think the same can be said about the format that will replace DVD. My problem with online distribution is that you get the movie, but you get nothing else in terms of commentaries, behind the scenes featurettes or interactivity. And it seems that if one of the formats was perfectly suited to give consumers not just their feature, but also extra goodies, it would be online.
>
> Blu Ray offers extra content, but it is usually the content is just HD versions of what you get on the standard DVD. I believe that for the average consumer, while the experience change from VHS to DVD was a massive step up, DVD to Blu Ray is just StepHD. And therefore, why do we expect them to upgrade their existing home theatre equipment (in the meantime relegating all their current DVDs to the "old technology" pile) if we're not offering them anything else apart from more pixels?
>
> For an industry that stresses that it's not simply that we have the technology to create amazing monsters, but what we make those monsters do that's important, Hollywood has got caught up in it's own hype, and forgotten that advancements in technology don't equate to happier customers and therefore don't equate to profit. If it doesn't benefit the average viewer, why should they buy it?
>
> At this stage, I have no intention to buy a blu ray player, or rent movies from iTunes as I don't believe either of them offer me more value than a DVD with extra content.
>
> What would make me want to jump on either wagon? That's the billion dollar question. Back in the day, people could buy movies, then they could buy movies with supporting stuff about the movie. What's next? A behind the scenes of the making of? I hope not, but I'd certainly be curious! Perhaps it utilizes the trend for people to combine all their entertainments onto a singular media centre (PC/ AppleTV/PS3). Could they offer game demos? A movie/extra features/soundtrack/ video game package? Access to Q&A sessions with the cast and crew? Social networking benefits?
>
> I guess that's up to content producers to figure out, see what works and what will disappear. I'm pretty excited by what's coming next, but I think we're still a fair way off.

Thanks for letting me rant, I'd love to hear your comments if you have any.

Larry replies: Jason, thanks for writing. Our Blu-ray Special Report turned up a lot of interesting facts. To listen to our complete Blu-ray Special Report, <u>click here</u>.

[<u>Go to Top.</u>]

BLU-RAY REDUX

Robert Dennis writes:

> You may have answered this question many times before and I have not seen the subject discussed.
>
> My Question...Is there a way to author and burn HD Blue Ray DVD's with Final Cut Studio and DVD Studio Pro? I am an old school video producer that started back in the 3/4 U-matic days and have been trying to catch up ever since.
>
> I purchased a Final Cut Studio 2 system on a medium speed Pro Mac and am gradually learning how to edit on this system. I currently do not shoot any HD and want to upgrade to HD but am not sure if I can deliver a finished product in HD.
>
> So therefore my question about can Final Cut Studio 2 and DVD studio Pro create and burn Blue Ray HD discs. I shoot events and use 2 or 3 cameras so moving to HD would require the purchase of not one but three HD cameras and I do not want to switch to HD until land can deliver a finished video or disc in HD to my event clients. Thanks.

Larry replies: Final Cut Studio can not. And the current version of Mac OS can not play Blu-ray discs on your computer. However, all is not lost. But there are workarounds using other software like Roxio Toast and Adobe Encore.

Here's a <u>blog posting</u> that can tell you more.

[<u>Go to Top.</u>]

NESTING FOLLOW-UP

Bill Sitkin writes:

> Read your nesting article and thought I would share one way I use nesting. When I complete a project and have made sure that it is exactly the way I want it I select the entire project and nest all the clips into one clip. I am not sure why but when I take it to Compressor 2 my process time is shorter.

Larry replies: Interesting. Thanks for letting me know.

[<u>Go to Top.</u>]

MONITORING MADNESS

Maly Gabor writes:

> There is a lot of talk about using calibrated HD monitors for monitoring your work out of FCP or Color.
>
> If I do not use an HD monitor I risk having inaccurate color and contrast. I am OK with the color piece, you would truly see it in action on an HD LCD but as long as I keep my waveforms in the range (monitoring it in Color on the waveform window) making sure blacks do not go below 0 and whites above 100 would I not ensure they look perfect on all LCDs/TVs for final output even without monitoring during post process? Why would I need an HD monitor for monitoring contrast?

Larry replies: Gabor, thanks for asking!

The answer for HD is the same as for SD. The reason we use a monitor is to assure ourselves that the color we see is accurate. Especially when we are doing work for clients, we need to assure them that the color they sign off on in our edit suite is the same color they will see anywhere else in the world they play your project.

The need for monitors does not diminish as we move to HD, its just that the cost of monitors has sky-rocketed due to the greater resolution they need to support.

UPDATE - Feb. 3, 2009

Ben Balser writes:

> To Maly Gabor I would say, in addition to your own comment, to think of those scopes as a "technical" control, making sure you're broadcast safe. Think of the HD Production Monitor as an "artistic" control. Just because something is broadcast safe, doesn't mean it looks pretty. Scopes don't tell you the look and feel of what you're producing, only that it is within engineering standards.

Larry replies: Thanks, Ben.

[Go to Top.]

COMPRESSION CONUNDRUM

Herb Isaacs writes:

> I have a 1 minute clip I want to make a streaming video on my website. The master is 720x480 NTSC. I would like the final product to be sized at 480x320. I have tried several methods of export including using Compressor at the highest bit rate, but it always comes out smaller...I think 320x240. Is there any way I can control the size of display on the site?

Larry replies: Herb, it isn't the data rate that determines image size. Its the geometry tab in Compressor.
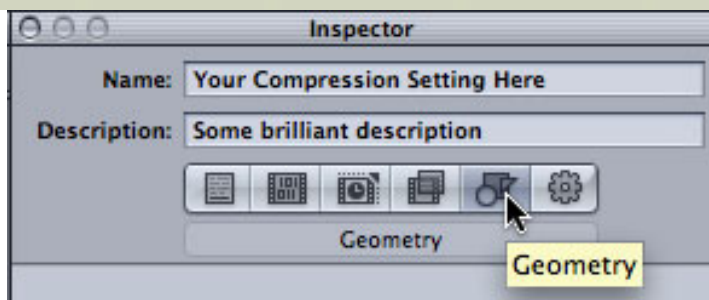
By default, it is set to make all web video at 320 x 240. You change this by loading your setting into the Inspector...
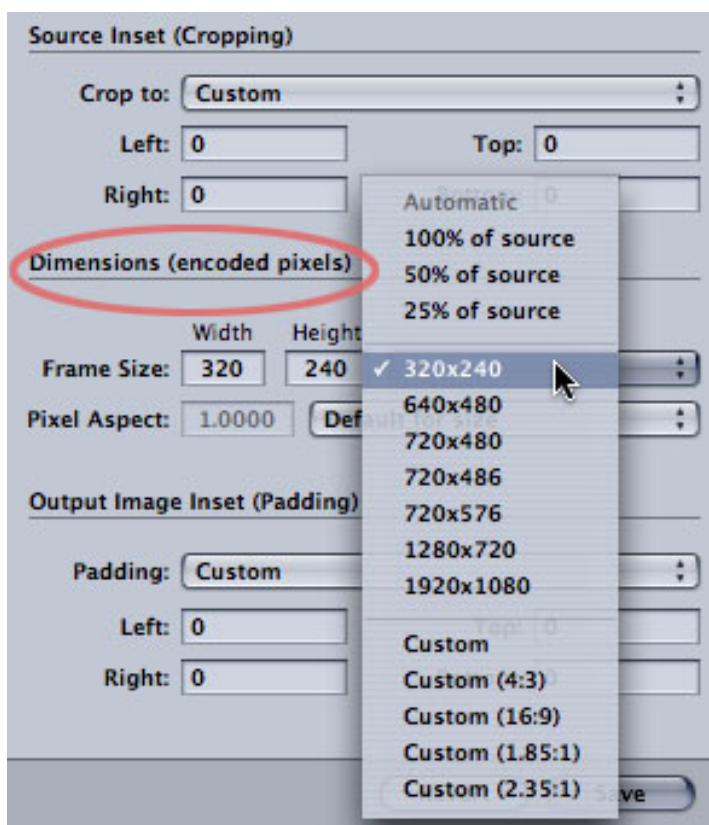
... clicking the Geometry tab, and changing the Dimensions of the encoded pixels to the size you want.

[Go to Top.]

MORE QUESTIONS ON COMPRESSION

Chris Driscoll writes:

> On your lynda.com Compressor 3 tutorial you discuss chaining. You show a two step process to convert an HD video into MPEG-2 for a SD DVD, first using an animation codec. You are demonstrating chaining, so the exact settings of the conversion to the animation codec are not discussed. (I tried the Compressor manual, but he word "animation" is not even mentioned).
>
> 1. What are the proper settings and which animation codec should I use if I am

going 16x9 HD into 720x480 16x9 SD (with the intent of following this with a MPEG-2 compression for SD DVD)?

I will be working primarily with 60i. Is there a way to use a similar two step workflow for compressing to SD MPEG-2 in 24P also (I noticed that the animation codecs in Compressor are all NTSC or PAL)?

2. I know you recommend an average bit rate of 5.5 and a max bit rate of 7.2 for compressing to MPEG-2 for SD DVD's. Compressor defaults to an average bit rate of 6.2 and max bit rate of 7.7, which you said is also fine. If I'm making shorter DVD's and space is not an issue for me, is this the highest average and max bit rates you would recommend to insure compatibility with any DVD player?

Larry replies: Thanks for writing, Chris!

There is only one Animation codec. Think of it as totally uncompressed video. HUGE file sizes, but no loss in quality. It will exactly mimic whatever image size, frame rate, and scanning (progressive vs interlacing) you are using. It is an intermediate codec - it is designed to move files from one format to another. It is not designed for real-time playback and definitely not for distribution.

For the answer to your second question, see the next story.

[Go to Top.]

STILL MORE QUESTIONS ON COMPRESSION

Catherine writes:

If I have a 10 minute show and take it through Compressor, the only (best) choice I have for compression is using the "90 minute best quality" selection. It seems like an awful waste. Is there another way that could make the show look better, even though it looks good with the "90 minute" selection. I'm thinking there might be a way of compressing less than for a 90 minute show.

Larry replies: Thanks for writing, Catherine. It is always good to hear from you. MPEG-2 doesn't work the way you are asking.

You can leave the settings as is for even very short videos. Boosting the data rate causes stuttery playback on most set-top boxes. Don't raise the average bit rate above 6.5 and don't rate the maximum bit rate over 7.5.

Lower is actually better.

[Go to Top.]

LOST...

Michael Crosswhite writes:

Larry, I've been through your Lynda.com training in FCP (huge help!), but I ran

across something that I've never seen before. I can't figure out how I did it, and I don't even know what to search for on the internet. If you notice, below my video clip, and each of my audio channels is a section. When I right click on it, it appears that it will let me set some sort of key framing for the clip(?). I sat here thinking of how I could undo it, but I didn't even know what to search for. If it helps, I was using the option/command/T to put the default audio transition. I must've hit a wrong key somewhere, but I don't know which. I would greatly appreciate your help!

Larry replies: Yup, you hit the wrong key.

What you are seeing is the ability Final Cut Pro provides to set, edit, and remove keyframes in the Timeline. I'm of two minds about the feature and haven't written about it. (Though it is discussed in most Final Cut books.)
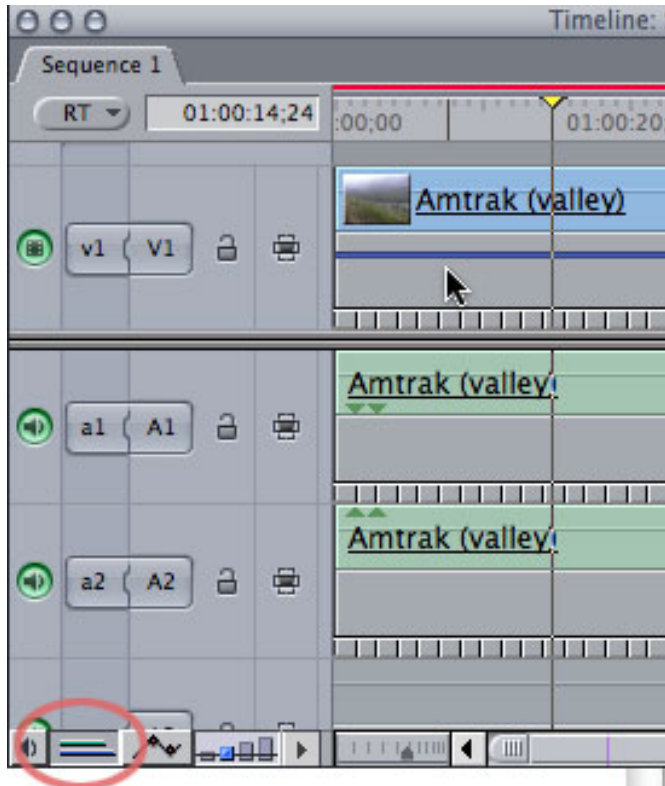
You toggle this timeline display on or off by either clicking the button with the red circle around it in the lower left corner, (I added the circle, by the way) or typing **Option+T** - which is what got you into this mess in the first place.

By the way, the blue line the cursor is pointing to indicates that a motion effect has been applied to the clip. If the line is green, it means a filter has been applied to the clip.

The good news is that toggling this on or off doesn't hurt anything -- its just confusing.

[Go to Top.]

TEMPLATES BY A DIFFERENT NAME

Rich Bowers writes:

I work for a university and have shot a couple of dozen interviews with key faculty – we are creating a series of "Profiles." The Profile has a standard look – a template, if you will – that certain standard shots fit into. Some of the unique footage needs to be integrated with the stock footage, and there needs to be some audio tweaking with each one as well. So I can't just create a piece of stock footage I can use to lead in and lead out of each piece.

So the question: Is there a way to create a sort of a template that contains certain video and audio elements roughly in place, so that I can have a quick base sequence to work with? As it stands now, I am recreating each opening and closing bit for each of these productions.

Can a standard sequence be created, and then copied from project to project? Without losing links to the content they point to? Or is there another technique?

Larry replies: The answer is yes, but they aren't called templates.

Create a sequence that contains your common elements. You can easily duplicate this in your project (**Option+D**) or copy and paste this from one project to another and all links will be intact.

UPDATE - Feb. 3, 2009

Ben Balser writes:

For Rich Bowers, I recommend what I do, as I use several templates for my digital signage projects. I create my templates, save them all in one single project called "DS Project Templates". When I start a new job for a client, I open it, immediately Save As to the client folder with client/project name, and then delete the Sequence templates I don't need on this specific job.

I also have my own media management style, so all of my Bins are already made and ready to populate. You could also set up several Projects as templates, if that fills a need better, and keep those template projects in a "Project Templates" folder, using the Save As function in the same way. I do this as sometimes I am given all HDV footage, sometimes all SD footage, and sometimes mixed format footage, so I have project templates all set up with those formats (Pro Res for mixed format), as the defaults.

Larry replies: Thanks, Ben.

[Go to Top.]

ARCHIVING IS A MESS

Lauren Dunbar writes:

After spending a million hours going through the lynda.com tutorials (FCP 6 + Compressor) and then your edit library articles, I now realize that 1) I'm not crazy (yet); and 2) "archiving" my client's movie (shot and edited in DVCPro HD, 720p24) onto mini-DV tape, either SD or HD, may be a hopeless "over the rainbow" dream.

Choosing the correct method to "transcode" the final nested sequence in Compressor, then export to QT movie with correct settings may be the secret. But in my tests, I haven't yet been able to Print to Tape.

I am now testing your "Technique: Exporting DVCPROHD to HDV, pub. Aug. 2006" because I may be able to preserve some quality by printing to video using my Canon HDV20 camcorder (uses standard mini-DV tapes) rather than the SD Canon GL.

Here's what I'm doing:

1) Bring into a new sequence the final QuickTime movie (self-contained) which was exported using orig. AV Settings for DVCPro HD 720p24. Note: Actually, the "file properties" say it's DVCPro HD 720p60.
2) Export to QuickTime Movie, but changed the settings to HDV 1080p24
3) CHECK Recompress all frames
4) CHECK Make movie self-contained

Is it possible or impossible to print to a mini-DV tape (HDV or SD) from a (DVCPRO HD) FCP final nested sequence?

And yes, I know all of this archiving to tape from FCP is a colossal mess, but somebody must have found a work-around. I've given my best trial and error shot at this and getting nowhere. Any suggestions?

Larry replies: Lauren, my sympathy goes out to you. This is NOT easy stuff.

First, you can NOT archive ANY HD material to Mini-DV tape EXCEPT HDV -- and then only if you have an HDV camera. DVCPRO-HD is impossible to record to MiniDV.

So you are not going nuts. It can't be done.

However, you can transcode (convert) your HD material to SD, then save the SD material to MiniDV tape -- the problem is that you will lose all that wonderful High-Def imaging, because you are converting it to SD.

The procedure you outline will work and it will be HD. However, bar fights break out when people discuss the relative merits of DVCPRO-HD vs HDV.

Will it work? Yes.

Will you like the quality? That's up to you and your clients.

Is it better than nothing? Yes.

Is it ideal? No.

Do we have a better idea? Nothing for less than $2,500.

Here's an article that may help: http://www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_backup_test.html

[Go to Top.]

BEST WAY TO EXPORT

Paolo Raho writes:

I had a quick question about exporting in FCP.

I'm very familiar with all of your tutorials, and I know for the highest quality it is always recommended to export the sequence under the settings in which the footage was shot and captured. I was reading a couple of forums lately and they were discussing the idea of exporting a DV sequence as 8 or 10 bit uncompressed; a process that would yield a higher quality image, specifically for text and graphics.

I wanted to get your opinion on this, whether there was any truth to it. And one other question along the same lines, let's say I have shot and captured in DVCPRO HD, and exported a sequence under the same settings, has my exported movie suffered any quality loss, or has it remained identical to the captured footage? That is to say, does exporting, even under the correct settings, result in an quality loss?

Larry replies: Paolo, thanks for writing!

These are excellent questions, but not easy to answer in less than a book.

Here are the short answers - less than book length.

1. Is it better to export as 8 or 10 bit uncompressed? My feeling is that if you are shooting DV, no. If you are working with 8-bit or 10-bit source material - yes. The problem is that DV does not display at high quality on a Mac monitor. For this reason, people assume that the video is poor quality. This is a display issue, not a video quality issue.

I've done a test where I export DV footage using the Animation codec - the highest quality SD codec on the Mac - and the DV codec. I compressed both and compared them. To the eye, the compressed versions were identical. The intermediate versions looked significantly different - DV looked far poorer than the Animation codec. But after compression they looked the same.

Here's an article that explains why: http://www.larryjordan.biz/articles/lj_dv_look_bad.html

2. Does DVCPRO HD change? Well, that depends. If you are adding effects, transitions, or something requiring rendering, then, yes, the video is being altered from its original state. On the other hand, that's why you applied the filter in the first place. As to whether that's a quality "loss" that depends on the filter you added - I would suggest that a color correction filter, properly applied, will make the clip look better.

If you are simply putting the video to the timeline and not adding effects what you get out is the same as what went in.

[Go to Top.]

TRACKING THE MISSING FONT

Stanley Kolk writes:

I've got a really dumb problem. I've imported an old EDL and am working some more on that edit. Everything works fine except that I can't get the old titles to recreate... Is there a way to do this? Now there's no way to find out which font, size etc has been used before...

Larry replies: If it truly is an EDL, then, no. Because EDLs don't track font or design issues.

If it is an older FCP project, loading the clip into the Viewer and clicking the **Controls** tab should show text and size info. However, if the font is no longer installed on your system, it will show the first font alphabetically on your computer, rather than the font you used.

[Go to Top.]

THE WORLD IS GOING TAPELESS

Adam Lloyd Connell writes from Australia:

> Quick questions for you: In Australia, there has been a big uptake of HD, particularly in the XDCAM, and HDV. What is it like in the US? Is a lot of TV work still filmed, and edited on MiniDV/DVCAM/SD DigiBeta?
>
> Also, with the advent of many tapeless formats, such as Panasonic's now professional versions of AVCHD, the XDCAM and XDCAM EX, what do you think is the future for tape based formats such as HDV or DVCAM. I ask as although currently I have been working as a an editor (one feature film, and other people's TVCs/documentaries) I am looking at expanding into creating a business filming and editing, and being mechanically minded prefer the idea of tape based HDV for my needs, but don;t want to suddenly not be able to buy 6mm digital tapes.

Larry replies: Adam, the broadcast world in the US is going HD as fast as it can. While a lot of material is still shot SD -- especially news -- the handwriting is on the wall and it says "HD."

As well, tape is quickly falling by the wayside. I wish this weren't true, because we have not yet solved the archiving problem, but it is. The problem is that there is a VAST panoply of totally incompatible video formats out there and no signs the industry is standardizing on anything. So whatever you buy, expect it to be obsolete in two years.

Sorry...

UPDATE - Feb. 3, 2009

Ben Balser writes:

> As for the tapeless issue, I get asked this as a trainer/consultant all the time. And I have mixed feelings about it. My standard answer is, "tapless is not for everyone!" I have a few students who've gone tapeless only because they've seen myself and a few others go that route, only to batter me with calls about using it, and archiving it. There are certain folks I've out right told, knowing them and their work well, "stay away from tapeless!" There are those who do quick promos, trash all footage and such when the project is done, and move on. Great, go tapeless.
>
> I use tapeless because I love the DVCPRO-HD format, and without tapeless, I would not be able to afford it (price tapes and decks for this format). But for anyone who needs to archive everything, I'd say stay the heck away from tapeless unless you want to invest in a DLT drive, or a ton of hard drives, and take major risks. I'm a huge fan of the Firestore FS-4 (a proven workhorse) for wedding videographers and such, as you get the speed of tapeless, with the convenience of tape archives.

On the plus size of tapeless, and this is not about acquisition, I've found more and more television stations here in southeast Louisiana are not only able to, but prefer me to give them an FTP URL to download the Quicktime file for broadcast. Interestingly, New Orleans TV stations are far behind the rest of the world on the technology curve and using no FCP, Lafayette is mostly totally tapeless, on the very front of the front lines of technology, and almost 100% FCP. As a producer, I find it really nice to be able to upload a QT file to my FTP site, email a program manager, know I've delivered in the highest quality possible, and be done with the project. I save on gas, tape, time, etc, etc, etc. Also, more and more of my work is now digital signage, thus those deliveries are all on-line to signage player computers (mostly Mac Minis). Even the units that have no Internet connections, I'm delivering content on DVD or USB sneaker net, tapeless! Tapeless is the best method of delivery for me. Acquisition is still a major issue, though, and the single reason I do not recommend it to everyone. Acquisition means you have to become more IT savvy than you were, and have the archive issues.

So, I don't hate tapeless, I see it as a wonderful way to work, I see it demanding pr-editors to become better educated in IT, but it's a wonderful way to work. Archiving, that's the one big issue here, archiving. Fortunately, some of us have no need to archive. But for those who do, yes, it is an issue to be dealt with but not impossible, and admittedly not for everyone.

It would be interesting for you to do a survey to see how many of your readers and students are able to deliver on-line or by sneaker net, tapless products, versus tape, and in what cities they are able to do this in.

Larry replies: Thanks, Ben. The survey idea is a good one and I'm hoping to run one in next month's issue.

[Go to Top.]

MIXING AUDIO

Kelly Coleman writes:

The Time Warner specs say, the sound must be mixed on channel 1 or 2. I am using A1 - A4 for voice over and music. Will our export automatically spit out 2 audio channels or do I need to some how mix down to two tracks before I export?

> **From Time Warner:**
> All spots must be complete. Any editing, tagging, or audio mixing is your producer's responsibility. All audio should be mixed on channel 1 or 2 including any voice over and any music that is to be included with the finalized version of the commercial. We do not have the facilities or permission to perform any post-production work on client spots. Mixing audio is post-production work that is part of the creative process.

Larry replies: Final Cut is, by default, two tracks of audio out. In general, that means stereo. Regardless of how many tracks are in your timeline, unless you change the audio outputs (**Sequence > Settings > Audio Outputs**) to multi-channel, all your exports will be two-track stereo.

[Go to Top.]

JOURNALING A HARD DISK

Cesar Ramirez writes:

> Hello my name is Cesar and I do post production too, I work in audio with ProTools I'm also a DJ and I use FireWire drives for data storage, but also to run sessions from it ,and also use FCP ..... I recently bought a second firewire drive for back-up and I did formatted with OSX 10.4 with journaled option ON.... So you think I should reformatted this drive?, my other drive I formatted off (I didn't know)

Larry replies: Thanks for writing!

Journaling should be **ON** for your boot drive. Journaling speeds up recovery after a crash -- very well advised for your boot drive.

Journaling should be **OFF** for all data drives. Journaling takes extra write time, slowing down capture. Turning it off on all drives used for video speeds capture and rendering. Apple recommends doing this.

You change journaling settings in Disk Utility. Sometimes you can change journaling without reformatting. Remember, reformatting will erase all the data that is currently on the drive - so be sure to back up the data first.

[Go to Top.]

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.
- Visit our store and buy something nice.

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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