

Go... Go... Go! Working Faster with Final Cut Pro

With RICHARD M. HARRINGTON



Richard M. Harrington

Author's Bio/Description

A certified instructor for Adobe, Apple, and Avid, Rich is a practiced expert in motion graphic design and digital video. His producing skills were also recognized by AV Multimedia Producer Magazine who named him as one of the Top Producers of 2004.

Rich is a member of the National Association of Photoshop Professionals Instructor Dream Team, and a popular speaker on the digital video circuit. He is also an instructor at the Art Institute of Washington and the American University in Washington, D.C.

Rich is an internationally published author. His book, Photoshop CS for Nonlinear Editors, was the first of its kind to focus on Photoshop's application in the world of video. He is also a contributing author for Final Cut Pro On the Spot, After Effects On the Spot, Broadcast Graphics on the Spot, After Effects at Work, and The Photoshop World Dream Team Book, Volume 1.

A Masters Degree in Project Management fills out Rich's broad spectrum of experience.

RHED Pixel – www.rhedpixel.com

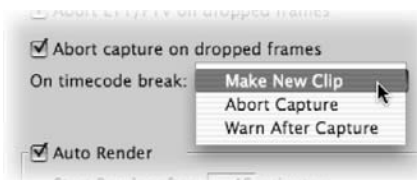
Photoshop for Video – www.PhotoshopforVideo.com

Customizing is King

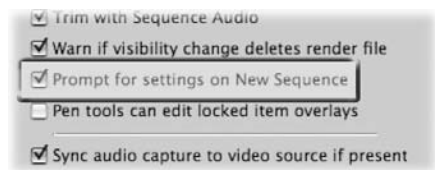
If you want to be fast, you need to 'own' your FCP system. I don't mean have all your ease payments or credit card issues resolved (although that helps). Rather, you need to tweak several settings and customize your workspaces so you can get the most performance from your editing setup.. This session will help you fill in the missing links that will greatly improve your speed.

Avoiding the Capture Blues

Nothing is more frustrating then having a clip abort capture, especially if that clip is a long performance piece that you are loading and it only bails after 16 minutes. Be sure to select Make New Clip from the On timecode break menu.



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Get it Right from the Start

If you working with multiple formats and resolutions this is a critical preferences. It is very easy to create a new sequence and have it set up improperly for the media you are working on. Check the Prompt for settings on New Sequence checkbox and Final Cut Pro will ask you to set your sequence settings each time you create a new sequence.

Sequence settings.

There are a few places to change sequence settings. The important detail to remember is which settings you want to change.

Final Cut Pro>User Preferences – Timeline Options tab

These settings allow you to modify all future sequences.

Sequence>Settings - Cmd + 0 or Timeline sub-menu

This setting modifies the current sequence only. You must have the Canvas or timeline selected for this command to work.



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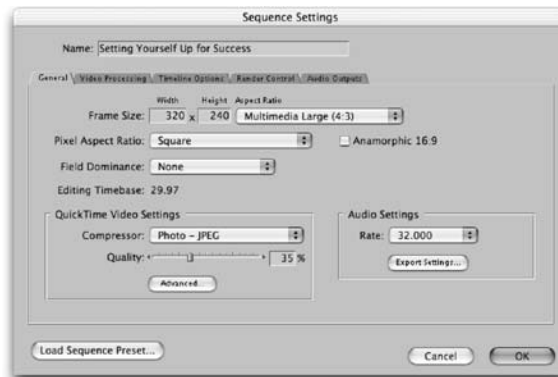
Move the Dock

The dock was not designed for use with Final Cut Pro. Seems like its always popping up and getting in the way. In its default position (bottom of the screen) it can eat away valuable monitor space that you could use for your timeline. But like most things in OSX, there's a preference that can be changed.

1. Go to the Apple menu and choose Dock>Dock Preferences or Contextual-clicking on the separator bar in the Dock.
2. Tell the system that you want to automatically hide and show the dock. This will put the dock away when it's not in use.
3. Change the dock's position. Placing the dock on the left or right side of the screen will allow you to have more screen real-estate for your timeline.

Seeing Red

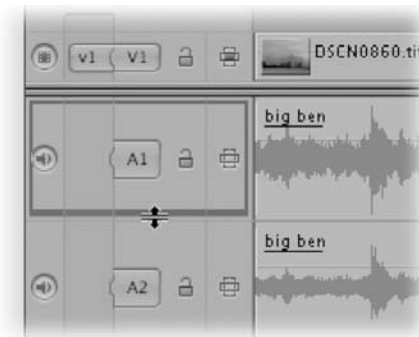
If you are getting red bars across all your footage as soon as you add to the timeline, you are probably not configured correctly. It is likely that the last project worked on used a different configuration (such as Widescreen or Offline RT). Check your sequence settings (Command + 0 (zero)).



Make it Big

Depending on your work style, you may like to make your tracks taller or shorter. Tall tracks are great when you are looking at your audio waveforms. Shorter tracks are helpful when you are trying to composite multiple layers. Previous versions of Final Cut shipped with four track height presets. But now they can all be changed individually.

Click on the thin gray line between tracks and grab. You can now drag and size the height of each track individually.



Keys to the Locks

If you find yourself needing to lock and unlock tracks often, remember you can customize your keyboard layout. We suggest mapping the Toggle track locks to a Function Key combo. For example, try mapping Toggle Track Lock V1-V8 to Option + F1 - F8. You can then map Toggle Track A1-A8 to Option + Cmd + F1 - F8. This will significantly speed up your timeline editing ability.



notes

Go... Go... Go! Working Faster with Final Cut Pro

With RICHARD M. HARRINGTON

Fly!

It is possible to trim on the fly. This way you can listen for an audio edit or look for a particular visual cue.

1. Enter trim mode and press the space bar to cycle your trim.
2. When you reach the desired edit point, press the I key to move your in-point.
3. Press the up or down arrow to move through the timeline to your next edit point.



Effects Mode

Avid Editors often complain the Final Cut Pro lacks an Effects mode. 'Why must I remember /have to double click on a clip every time to see its control?' Well, we agree that all that extra clicking can get tiresome. Good news so does Apple!

1. In the middle of your Canvas is the Playhead Sync menu. Simple pick Open.
2. In the Viewer choose the Filters tab.
3. Now every time you pause on a clip, the effect controls will pop open. Don't worry; Final Cut will not try to open tabs when you are playing your sequence, only when paused.

A/B Effect

Need to compare what a clip looks like with and without filters? Clients ALWAYS seem to ask this question, so you might as well know. You might think it's easy, just turn all the check boxes off next to each filter name. But it wouldn't be Final Cut Pro 4 if there weren't a better way.

One of the new items in the tool bench is a Frame Viewer (Option + 7) This tool has several purposes (especially for color correction). But when building effects, it is VERY useful.

1. Place the cursor over the clip you want to use. You may want to switch to the Color Correction workspace. When you do, you'll notice that the frame viewer is docked with the scopes in the upper-right corner.
2. At the bottom of the Frame Viewer choose what you'd like to see, in our case that is the current frame and the current frame w/o filters.
3. Select a V-Split or H-Split to view both states of the clip. You can grab the blue or green squares and customize your split.



notes

Go... Go... Go! Working Faster with Final Cut Pro

With RICHARD HARRINGTON



Dynamic Interfaces

One of the coolest features of Final Cut Pro is the dynamic resizing of the interface. You can now quickly adjust the size of windows using dynamic resizing. Clicking between two windows or at the intersection of multiple windows allows you to drag and resize all windows. You no longer have to resize one window at a time.

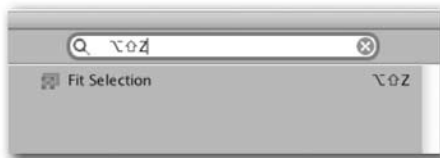
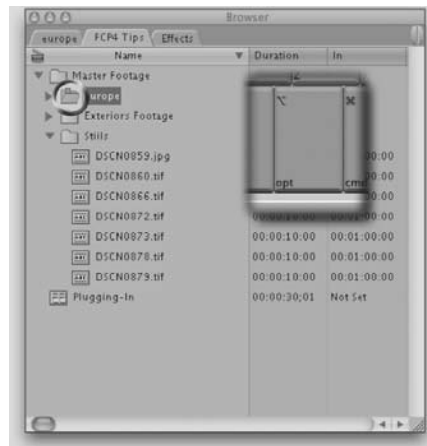
Need more space in the timeline, just grab the top edge and pull upward. Want to see more in the viewer, grab the edge and pull to the right. It's simple to quickly change the size of a window and view exactly what you need.

Button... Button

Want to create a button for your favorite keyboard shortcut, but you can't remember its name? No worries, you can search the button list by typing the keyboard shortcut into the search field. You can now simply drag the button to the button bar of your choice.

Better Bins

Want to Open a Bin, without eating up more window space. You can Option + Double-click a bin's icon to open it as a tab in its parent's window. This helps keep your interface lean and clean.

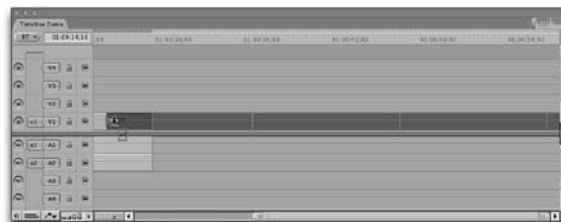


Selective Zoom

Suppose you want to zoom in to just a few clips. simply highlight them (shift select or lasso them.) now press the Option + Shift + Z and boom...you zoom into just those clips in your timeline.

DO NOT DRAG AND DROP.

Professional editors edit from the keyboard. Don't believe us? Ever see a concert pianist use a mouse?



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Place your hands 'here'

When editing on a desktop system, it's important to think ergonomically. Proper hand position improves your speed and cuts down on work-related pain. When editing, try placing your hands in the following position.

Step 1. Place the mouse in your preferred hand

Step 2. Offset the keyboard so they J-K-L keys fall directly under your opposite hand.

Why? Well 90% of the edit commands can be accessed from this position.

J – Play Reverse. Tap J to go faster.

K – Pause. Hold K down while using J or L to play in slow-motion.

L – Play Forward. Tap L to go faster.

I – In

O – Out

F9 – Insert

F10 – Overwrite



Add the Shift, Option, and Command keys for several additional options that speed up editing. In fact, the neighboring keys all hold key commands by default; this is definitely 'prime real estate' in the editing world.

The Dividing Line

When dragging tracks in the timeline, where you drag is as important as what you drag. Careless dragging may result in an unintended overwrite edit when an insert edit was intended.

If you look closely at the timeline, you'll notice that it is divided by a thin gray line. When dragging, look to see which region you enter to determine the edit type.

When dragging from the viewer or a bin:

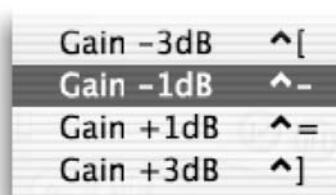
- Dragging to the upper-third of the track results in an insert edit.
- Dragging to the lower two-thirds of the track results in an overwrite edit.



A Little Louder Please...

Need to tweak the mix a little? You can quickly change the volume of a highlighted track from the keyboard. Use the following keyboard combinations to perfect the mix.

Gain -3db	Control [
Gain -1db	Control -
Gain +1db	Control +
Gain +3db	Control]



notes

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Stealing Effects

Thanks to Final Cut Pro's improved media management, you can now steal rendered effects from one sequence and place them in another. Perhaps you have a clip that has had several image effects applied to it, you can copy this to your clipboard and paste it into another sequence. As long as you do not composite anything on top of it, your render files should stick. Any transitions will just need the overlapping handles rendered.



Steal from Yourself

It's okay to save time by lifting Keyframes or parameters from one clip and pasting them to another. We use this all the time while editing audio or creating title effects. The simple truth is this is one of the biggest time savers out there.

1. Select a clip that has the properties you want to access with the Select tool.
2. Contextual click on the clip and choose Copy.
3. Select the target clip and contextual click on it.
4. Choose Paste Attributes and select the desired parameters from the pop-up dialog box.

How much is that Preview in the Window?

When using QuickView you must specify how much area to preview. Only preview what you need, as the rest is just wasted time. There are four ways to set a preview duration.

- Both In and Out points: Set a specific range in your timeline for QuickView to use.
- Using an In point: QuickView will preview the number of seconds specified with range slider, beginning at the In point.
- Using an Out point: QuickView will preview the number of seconds specified with range slider, ending at the Out point.
- No marks set: Quick View will cache the duration set with the range slider. The preview will be split in half using the playhead, half occurring before, half after.



A Dupious Achievement

Dupe detection has its origins in film editing. If you repeated a shot, you would need to get that clip duplicated because the physical film could not be in two places at once. Dupe detection is designed to warn film editors of this problem.

Video editors can benefit as well. We think of this as a dummy switch. When enabled, dupe detection alerts you if you have used a particular shot already in your timeline. This can be useful when cutting in B-Roll into a long format show.

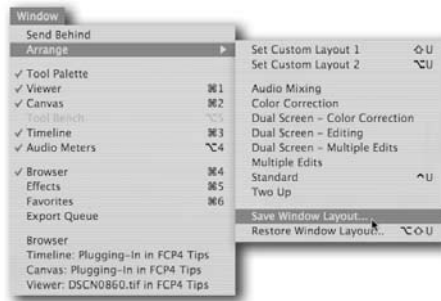
notes

Go... Go... Go! Working Faster with Final Cut Pro

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That's the spot!

You've perfectly configured your windows. Every palette is exactly where you want it. The timeline has just enough room and you've got the audio meter exactly where it should be. Now save that window arrangement.



Long-term storage

1. Choose Window>Arrange> Save Layout. This setting is stored by default in your Window Layouts folder.
 2. Under FCP4 also adds custom layouts to the bottom of the list with a new keyboard shortcut automatically assigned.
 3. Now call up your Button List (Tools>Button List) or Option + J and type the word window. Grab the Window Layout button and drag it to a convenient button well.
- *** Note that the Custom layout is an alphabetized list. Number your layouts when saving them. Example 1. Effects, 2. Compositing, and so on.)

Short-term storage

Still testing the layout to make sure you like it? You can save it temporarily in one of two custom positions.

1. Hold down the Option key and Choose Window>Arrange> Set Custom Layout.
2. The setting is stored into 1 of 2 temporary spots.

Transitions...line up here.

Here a neat trick. You have a series of clips in your timeline and you want to add the same transition effect between all of them. Well if you highlight all the edit points between clips and drop your transition on them...you'll soon discover that FCP only puts the transition on the first clip. Not good. Most people I've talked to say this feature is impossible in FCP. I disagree.



Create the transitions that you want for all these clips, make it a favorite (in case you want to use it in another show). Then contextual click on its icon in the bin and make it your default transition. Now place the playhead at the beginning of your sequence. Highlight the group of clips in the timeline that you want and drag them up into the canvas window. Drop them on the "overwrite with transition" box. Bam...the clips fall back into the timeline with your default transition between each clip.

Go... Go... Go! Working Faster with Final Cut Pro

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Gone Button crazy...crazy no more

You can contextual click on any button and change its color and even put spacers between them. (Psst...you can even give a color label to the spacers.)



Here's the kicker...you can save and reload button sets. This allows you to create one set for basic editing, one for finessing your edit, one for color correction, one for audio mixing, one for...well you get the picture.

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Acknowledgments: Abba Shapiro, Gary Adcock

Web site Info: www.rhedpixel.com, www.photoshopforvideo.com

Contact Info: RHED Pixel for production services, Creative Cow for technical questions.

For more - check out Final Cut Pro on the Spot

