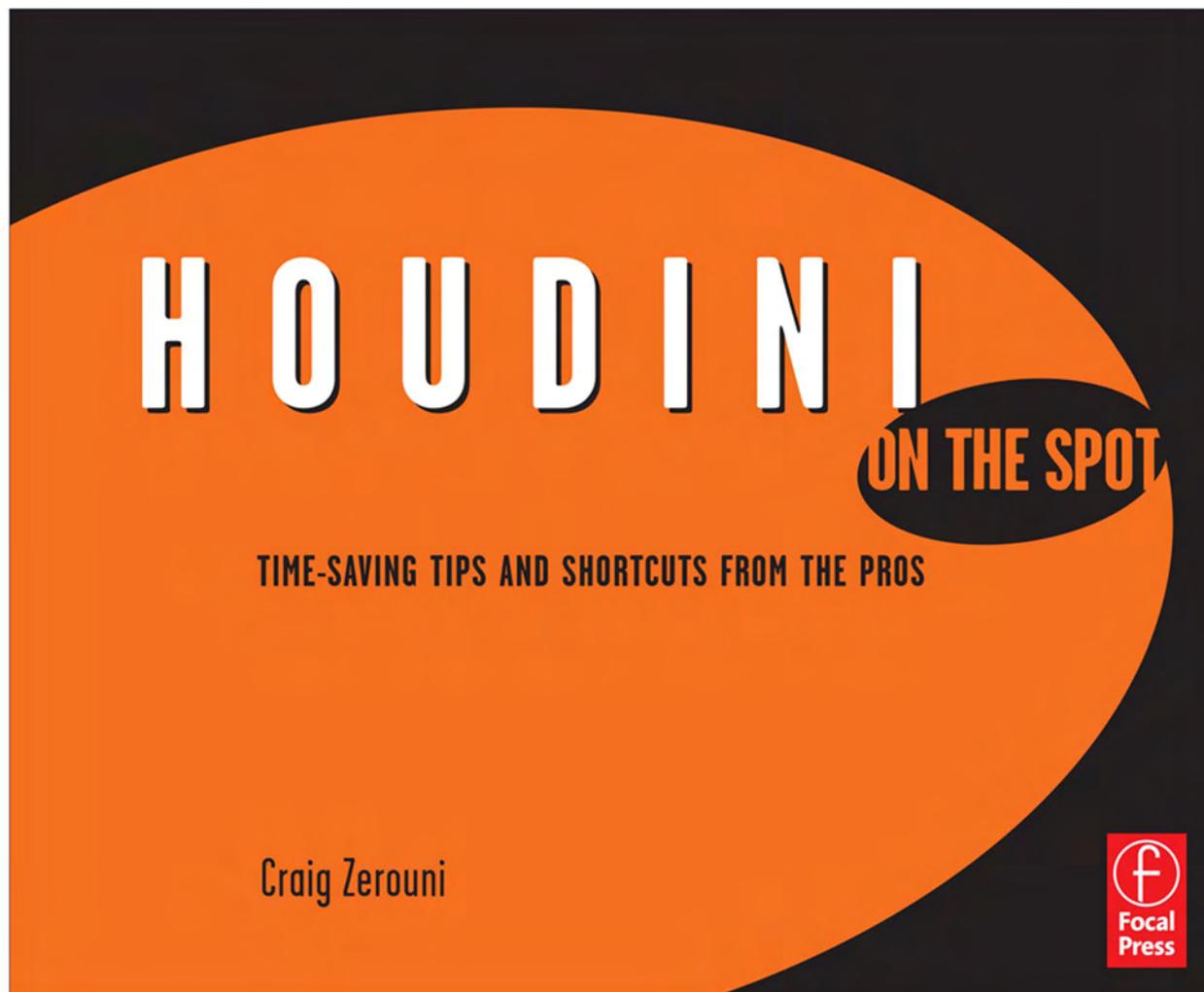




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Mastering Final Cut Pro's Interface

So you want to be fast? A virtuoso of the Final Cut Pro keyboard? A concert pianist doesn't see the piano as a tool, but as a conduit for the music. In the same way, Final Cut Pro is a conduit for your show and your creativity. Mastering the interface will keep you from stumbling in the dark, hitting the wrong keys, and making a lot of noise. You have to know what all your tools do, where to find them, and how to access their power instantly.

Over time, you'll gain confidence with all the controls. You want to be able to make the interface "disappear," which will allow you to reach "inside" the computer and create. Great editors know that the more brainpower they can put toward their edit session (not edit system), the better their show turns out.

Practice your scales. Don't skimp on learning Final Cut Pro's interface—after all, you paid good money for a Baby Grand, so learn to play it well.





Get Dynamic with Interfaces

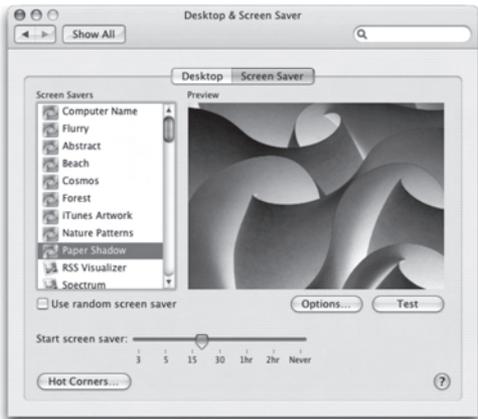
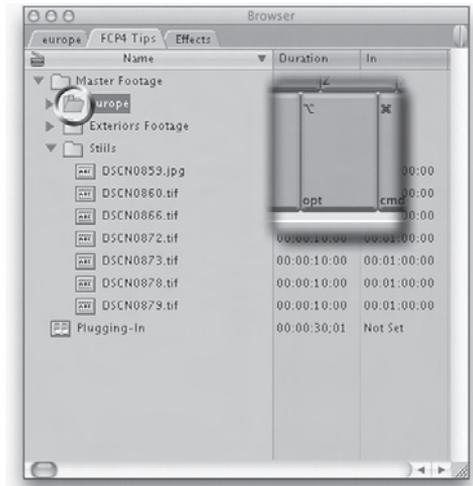
One of the coolest features of Final Cut Pro is the dynamic resizing of the interface. You can now quickly adjust the size of windows using dynamic resizing. Clicking between two windows or at the intersection of multiple windows allows you to drag and resize all windows. You no longer have to resize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



Better Bins

Want to open a bin, without eating up more window space? You can hold down the Option key and double-click a bin's icon to open it as a tab in its parent window. This helps keep your interface lean and clean.



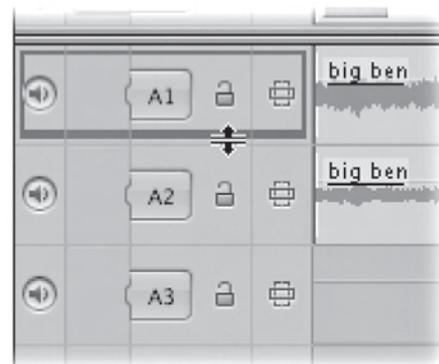
Save Your Monitors

This one comes from first-hand experience. Screensavers serve a greater good than entertainment (though we still see those Flying Toasters from time to time in our dreams). You'll want to set your screensavers to trigger automatically (30 minutes of inactivity is probably enough time to stare at the screen). Otherwise, you can get monitor burn that leaves a ghosted image on the screen.

Make It Big—Part 1

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're trying to composite multiple layers. Previous versions of Final Cut shipped with four preset track heights, but now you can change them individually.

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



Make It Big—Part 2

Hold down the Option key and you can size all of your video *or* audio tracks at once.

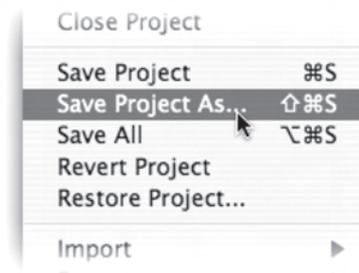
Hold down the Shift key, and you can size *all* tracks at once.

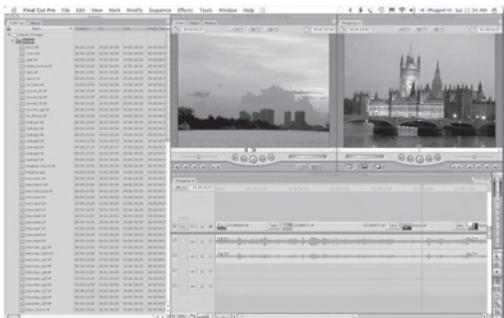


The First Thing You Should Do: Save ... No, Save As

We admit, sometimes we get a little excited when we sit down to edit. It's time for the magic to happen; all of the preproduction and production is about to come together into our latest masterpiece. New project, check. Tapes loaded and labeled, check. Start to capture—WAIT!

The problem is that Final Cut Pro assigns clips to a folder on your drive based on the project name. Without a project name your clips will get stored in the ever deadly, "Untitled" folder. ALWAYS choose Save As from the File menu as soon as you create a new project. This way your clips will have a project association and get stored in the right place.





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.

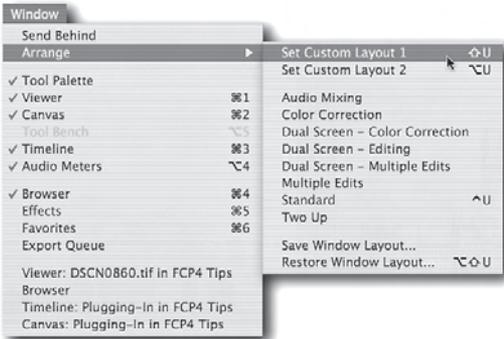
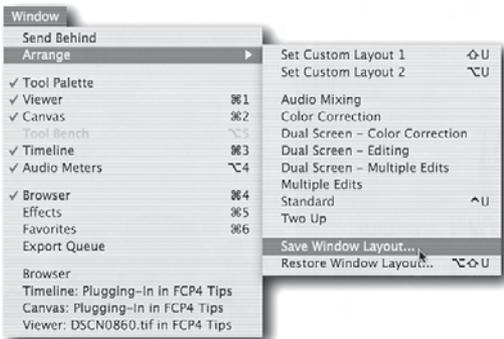
Long-term storage

- ❶ Choose Window > Arrange > Save Layout. This setting is stored by default in your Window Layouts folder.
- ❷ Final Cut Pro also has custom layouts at the bottom of the list with a new keyboard shortcut automatically assigned.
- ❸ 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. Editing 1. Effects, 2. Compositing, and so on.

Short-term storage

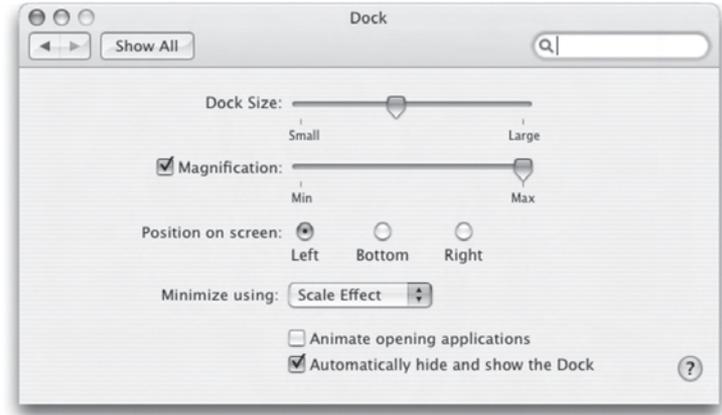
Still testing the layout to make sure you like it? You can save it temporarily in one of two custom positions. Hold down the Option key, and choose Window > Arrange > Set Custom Layout. Now when you return, you will find the Custom Layouts have been set.



Move the Dock

The Dock was not designed for use with Final Cut Pro. Seems like it's 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 OS X, there's a preference that can be changed.

- 1 Go to the Apple menu and choose System Preferences and click the Dock button.
- 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.

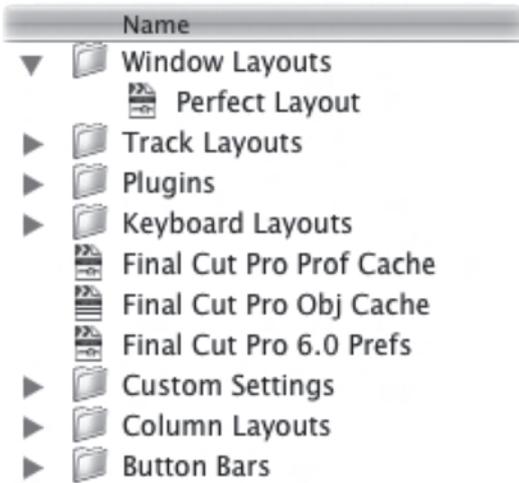


When the OS Guys Don't Talk to the Pro App Guys

A great feature in OS X called Exposé allows you to quickly see all of your open windows or hide everything to get to the desktop. We find this feature very useful in applications like Photoshop or Word when we have a bunch of documents open, but it's a bear in FCP when all of your windows start flying around the screen. To make things worse, Exposé uses F9, F10, and F11, which Final Cut Pro uses for Insert, Overwrite, and Replace Edit.

- 1 Launch the System Preferences from under the Apple menu. Click on the Exposé icon in the first row.
- 2 Hold down the Control key and click on the drop-down menus under Keyboard.
- 3 Change All windows to Control F9 (^ F9), Application windows to Control F10 (^ F10), Desktop: to Control F11 (^ F11), and Dashboard to Control F12 (^F12).
- 4 Edit away like you used to—the feature is there when you need it.





Bring It With You

One issue that freelance editors come across all the time is making the machine they're using on any given day feel like theirs. We're not talking about a dirty keyboard, we're talking about Final Cut Pro settings!

Many people realize that in FCP you can create custom keyboard layouts, window layouts, column layouts, Timeline track layouts, and button bars, but many people don't realize how easy it is to take these custom settings from place to place. The first step is knowing where these files are stored.

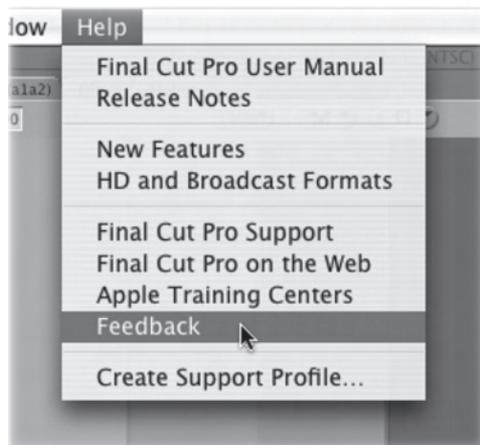
- By default, FCP stores custom settings in User > Library > Preferences > Final Cut Pro User Data. In this folder you'll find subfolders for window layouts, etc.
- To take these layouts with you, simply attach a drive (a USB thumb drive works well) and copy the subfolders onto your drive.
- When you arrive at your next editing gig, simply load your custom settings by choosing the appropriate window to load them, i.e. Window > Arrange > Load Window Layout. Navigate to your thumb drive and choose that the file that matches what you want.

One thing to note is that even though FCP likes to save these files by default in the folder listed above, you don't have to save your settings there. When you create a custom setting, you can choose any location to save the new file, including in this example, the USB thumb drive. If you do that, it eliminates the copy to the drive step and eliminating steps is good!

Gee, I Really Wish ...

Something about Final Cut Pro bother you? Really wish something were different? Well, Apple does listen ... you just need to know the secret knock.

- 1 Choose Help > Feedback.
- 2 Fill in your comments and submit (don't expect a phone call, but the comments DO get read).



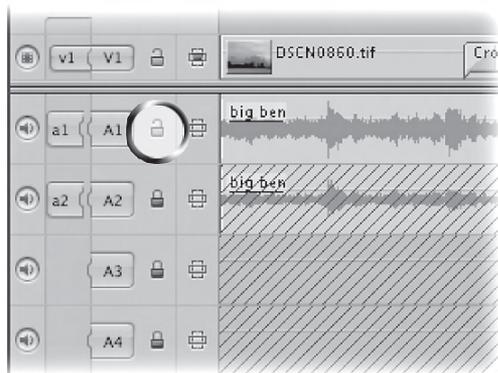
Lock Down—Part 1

Want to preserve a video track? Then lock it. Hold down F4 and then type a track number using the top row of number keys. You can lock tracks V1–V9. For audio locking, use F5 and a number key. This is a great way to avoid “accidental” edits.



Lock Down—Part 2

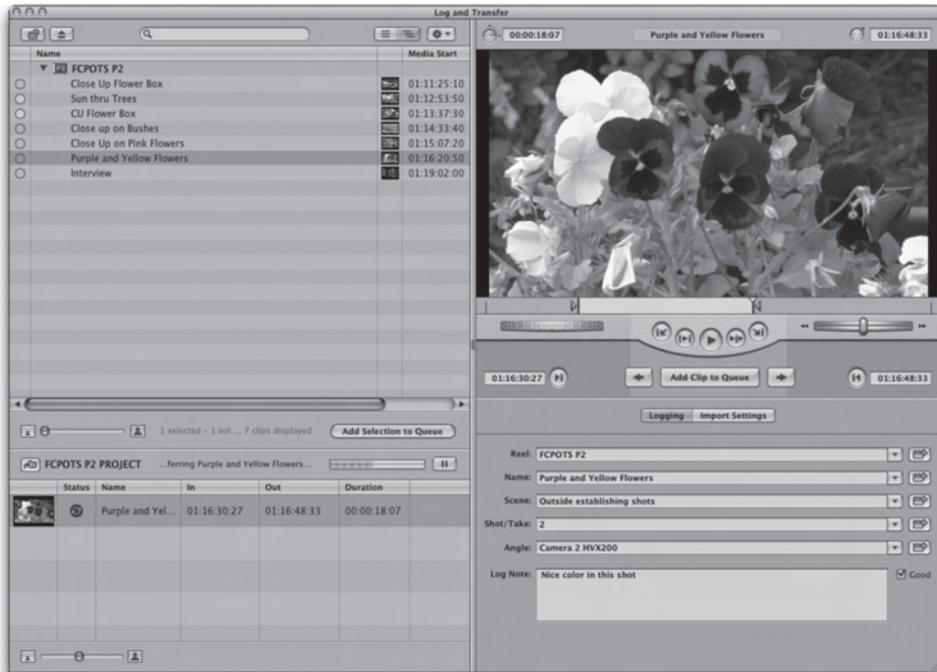
Need to work on one video track without affecting any others? Hold down the Option key and click on your desired track’s lock icon. All other video tracks will be locked. To unlock all tracks, simply hold down Option and click the lock icon again. This trick also works on audio tracks.



Global Lock Down

Need to lock all your video or audio tracks? Simply press Shift + F4 to lock video tracks or Shift + F5 to lock all audio tracks. Repeat the key combo to unlock all tracks.





A New Way to Ingest

In the past few years, tapeless acquisition and post-production have really taken off. One really popular tapeless format is Panasonic's P2. Capable of shooting DV all the way up to 1080p, it's one cool format! Apple recognized this format and built the Log and Transfer window (although Log and Transfer does support other tapeless formats).

It's called Log and Transfer because you're simply just transferring digital files from disk to disk. This is unlike tape-based media that you have to capture into a file on disk, i.e. Log and Capture. To launch Log and Transfer choose File > Log and Transfer or Shift+Cmd+8.

Overall, the Log and Transfer window operates like the Log and Capture window. The big difference, of course is how it ingests the media. Unlike Log and Capture where you have a few options for how to get the footage on to disk, with Log and Transfer you simply log your clip and then click Add Clip/Selection to the Queue to begin the transfer to your scratch disk.



A Bit of Scale

Maybe you get stuck bringing a lot of work home on the weekends (Never happened to us! Yeah, right!). At work, perhaps you use a big 30" Cinema Display, but at home you're working off your laptop.

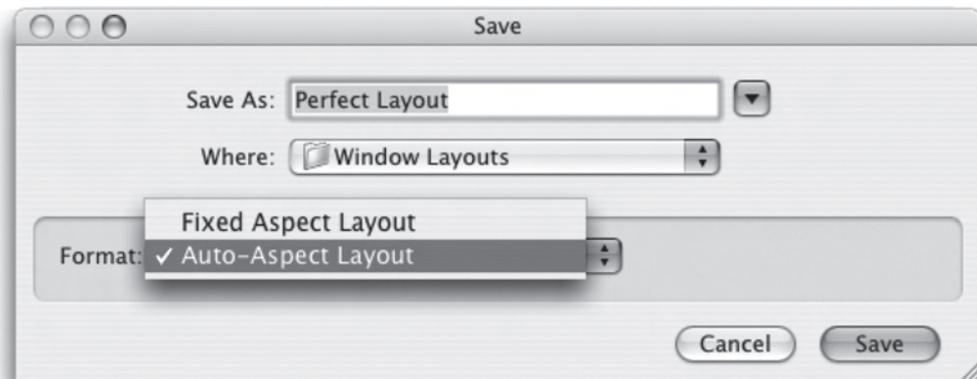
You're already hip to saving custom window layouts, but when you get on your laptop and load your favorite layout, it's gigantic and set up for your work monitor.

The one thing you might be missing is changing the format of your custom window layouts. Here's how to do it:

- ❶ Arrange your windows as you see fit.
- ❷ Choose Window > Arrange > Save Window Layout.
- ❸ Choose a location for the layout (maybe a USB thumb drive discussed in a previous tip).
- ❹ Before you click OK, notice the format pull-down at the bottom of the dialog box.

When it says Fixed Aspect Layout, FCP will remember the exact size of the layout when you save it. If you open a Fixed Aspect Layout on your laptop it will be HUGE!

If you change this pull-down to Auto-Aspect Layout, FCP will attempt to keep the window arrangement the same as it is now when opened on screens with different resolutions by changing the size of windows. This is the option to choose if you find yourself opening up window layouts on different monitors all the time.





Custom Views in the Audio Mixer

If you're using the Audio Mixer, you know that it can be a pretty powerful tool. Like many things in Final Cut Pro, the Audio Mixer is customizable. Let's see how.

Launch the Audio Mixer by choosing Tools > Audio Mixer or Option + 6.

The Audio Mixer shows you the controls for all the tracks you have in your project, but if you take a closer look, on the top of the bar of the Audio Mixer there are four view buttons. Using these buttons you can create up to four custom views. Why do this?

Well, maybe in view 1 you want to see all of your tracks, in view 2 just your dialog tracks, in view 3 just natural sound tracks, and in view 4 music and effects.

That sounds great, but how do you actually choose which tracks get assigned to each view?

The trick is the black circles next to each track in the track visibility area. Note: If your track visibility area is not being shown, click the disclosure triangle next the top of the first track strip.

- ❶ First select the view you'd like to edit.
- ❷ Next, using the black circles next to each track in the track visibility area select which tracks you want in this view. A black filled in circle will include that track in the view, while an empty circle indicates that track will not be part of the view.

A Window to the World

One window layout that many find confusing is the Multiple Edits layout. While we agree that at first it can be a little hard to figure out which window is which, this layout is really powerful for comparing edits to your current playhead position, as well as to what you have loaded in the Viewer.

To load this view, choose **Window > Arrange > Multiple Edits**. Oh, boy! What did we get into here? There are all sorts of windows displaying things. Take a deep breath—lets break it down.

- The window layouts from left to right (excluding Timeline and Browser) are the Viewer, a Frame Viewer that shows the previous edit relative to the current location of our playhead in the Timeline, the Canvas which shows our current playhead location, and a Frame Viewer that shows the next edit relative to the current location of our playhead in the Timeline.
- As you navigate the Timeline you'll notice that the Canvas window updates as it normally would, and the Frame Viewers on either side of the Canvas window update automatically, showing the previous and next edits respectively.
- If you find yourself doing a lot of color correction, this is one of the best views you can use. It is also particularly useful for trying to match the flow of action between a group of shots.



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 + Command + F1–F8. This will significantly speed up your Timeline editing ability.



Here or There?

It's important to realize the difference between working with Browser clips and Timeline clips. This is critical when creating titles. When you generate a title, you should immediately cut it into the Timeline and then reload it into the Viewer (by double-clicking it in the Timeline). That way you can see how your modifications look against the final image. You can do the same with filters. Conversely, if you drop a filter on an item in the Browser, it's available in all future uses of the clip.

Exposé: Part Deux

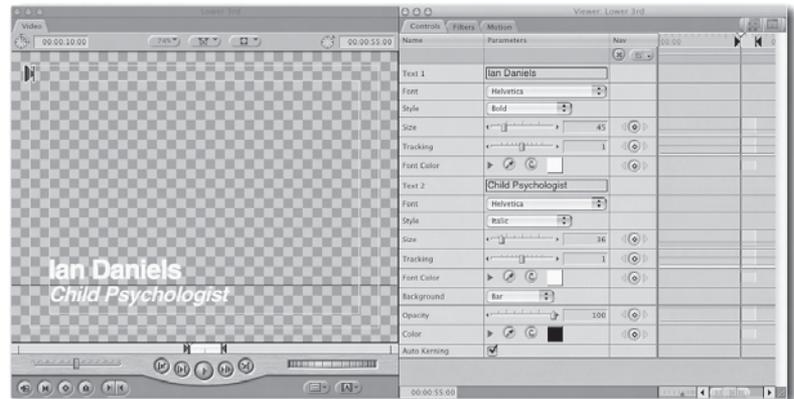
If you have a mouse with more than three buttons, such as Logitech, Keyspan, etc., you can map these new Exposé keyboard shortcuts right to your mouse. Simply open the control panel that you installed when you got your mouse and assign it to, say, your thumb button.

Wow, now if you need to grab a clip, image, or project file off your desktop, you can Exposé your desktop from your mouse, grab that file and drop it directly into your browser ... all without touching your keyboard!



Clean Your Room

Creative people are often messy; it's much more fun to create than it is to clean. While building an effect or tweaking an audio filter, it's not uncommon to tear the Audio, Filters, or Motion tab off to have greater access to controls. But what about when it's time to go on to the next challenge? Not to worry—just double-click to load the next clip into the Viewer. All of your tabs restore themselves into their default position. Now if our desks could only stay so clean.





OS X: Child-Proof Windows No More

Miss the ability to roll a window up? The window shade feature of OS 9 was a nice way to keep a window open but out of the way (allowing you to quickly jump into your Finder without having to hide Final Cut Pro or minimize a window). Until Apple decides to put this feature back, there's a great alternative. WindowShade X from Unsanity.com is a reasonably priced option that allows you to collapse windows. As a bonus, it also can make windows transparent or minimize them in place. Our favorite feature is the ability to disable the Minimize to Dock option. This will prevent you from accidentally banishing a bin or window when you click its title bar.



Time on Your Side

Are you the decisive type? Know exactly what you want? Then this shortcut is for you. It's possible to specify the exact duration for a shot, quickly.

- ❶ Mark an In point by pressing I in the Viewer.
- ❷ Press Tab; the duration field is now highlighted.
- ❸ Type in the desired duration, but omit any colons or semicolons (for example, type 315 for a duration of 3:15).
- ❹ Press Enter. The new Out point is marked.

Note: You can reverse this tip by marking the Out point first if its more to your liking.

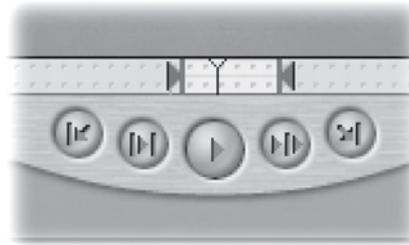
What's Your Destination?

Need to define on which track your video edit will occur? Then you need to set its destination. Hold down F6 and then type a track number using the top row of number keys. You can set tracks V1–V9. For setting an audio's destination, use F7 to patch A1 and F8 to patch A2. If you want to switch tracks again, you will need to press the F key again. Laptop users will need to use the fn + the F key to get the same results.



Am I Loaded?

You're working on a clip in the Viewer, but you can't remember if you loaded it from your Browser or the Timeline—not a problem. Final Cut Pro distinguishes between clips opened from the Browser and clips opened from the Timeline. Clips opened from the Browser have a plain scrubber bar; those loaded from the Timeline have two rows of dots in the scrubber bar, similar to the sprocket holes in a strip of film.



Gear Down

When using filters, you'll often want to make "fine" adjustments. You can always switch to numeric entry, but most users find the graphic interfaces more intuitive. Simply hold down the Command key to "gear down." The sliders or control points will move much more slowly. This tip works in several places, including audio.

