

NO MIRACLE

to Using Final Cut Pro X

by Steve Modica



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If you're on a post-production team, you've probably come across a variety of strong opinions about Final Cut Pro X (FCP X). It seems as if much of the post-production community is up in arms about changes to this critical application and how those changes have impacted workflow. Well, if you're one of the many editing environments looking to utilize FCP X to maximize productivity and efficiency, all is not lost.

Before looking at how you can use FCP X at your facility, let's take a brief look at shared elements of video workflow. As an editor, you know that people want to share files in order to make life easier and, often times, they spend a lot of money to do it. As such, IT contractors typically end up creating large, fully provisioned systems to handle the contingency that anyone might want to share anything at any time.

Going back to the early days of shared video editing, the number one priority in any shared environment is that the media not have to be copied. Media files, even when they are Pro Res or some other efficiently compressed

protocol, are still “large.” A one-hour show with lots of footage can be 5-7TB and can take an entire afternoon to copy. To further complicate things, that copy (going as fast as it can) eats up storage and networking bandwidth that also impacts other editors on the network.

The happy medium that most video apps (including Adobe, Final Cut [7] and Avid) have gravitated to is the ability to see media in a shared space and “link” to it via project files that are small and simply contain pointers to that media.

Provided everyone’s computer has a mount containing the same media in the same location, sending someone a copy of a project file was a simple way of “sharing” your work. They could see where you left off, make changes or copy important elements, and either hand back the project or move on with their own “fork” of the work. To move similar information between apps from different vendors, one could use XML export to export the important elements of the timeline and the project into a vendor agnostic file that other apps could ingest.

FCP X has certainly thrown a wrench into that workflow. Project files can only be stored to local drives and selecting “duplicate” only allows one to copy them to another local drive. So emailing a project file around is difficult. To make matters worse, common export proto-

cols like XML are also unavailable. Customers are confused and unwilling to take the leap when there’s no clear roadmap that these features will be added later on.

In discussing FCP X with customers, it’s clear that for independent editors with completely digital workflows, FCP X is a boon. It’s inexpensive and it’s fairly intuitive. Considering how menu-intensive some of the legacy editing apps are, it’s refreshing to see something start with a clean user interface that attempts to move more of this into the background.

Regardless of whether FCP X is conveniently priced or easy to use, we are faced with the question of sharing our work files. It’s true that we can share “media” over a network attached volume, but we still have to work out how to easily share our project files.

While it’s true that FCP X will not show mounted storage volumes in either the Event library or the Project library, they can still be shared between workstations. Here’s how:

First, go to the Utilities folder and open Apple’s Disk Utility. Under the File menu choose New>Blank Disk Image. Select the drive to save it to (the Desktop is the default) and give it a unique name. Under Size select Custom and make it as large as you can – it cannot be larger than the drive you’re saving it to. Now, under Image Format select Sparse Disk Image. Click Create and your new Disk Image automatically mounts.

Launch FCP X and the Disk Image will appear in both the Event and Project Libraries. Select the Disk Image in the Event Library and hit Option+N to create a new Event. Select the Disk Image in the Project Library and hit Command+N to create a New Project.

Now select File>Import>Files and locate the folder on the shared storage volume containing your media files. You want to Add them to Existing Event and choose the Event you just created. Uncheck Copy Files to Final Cut Events Folder; make sure Create Optimized Media and Create Proxy Media are also unchecked, and then click Import. If you open the Final Cut Events Folder on the Disk Image you’ll see that Final Cut has created an Alias to each of the media files on the shared storage - note the files have a Quicktime icon with a little arrow in the corner.

Edit your project and, when you’re done, use the Finder to copy the Disk Image to the shared storage.

When another editor in another edit suite wants to work on this project he/she simply copies the Disk Image to a local drive, mounts it, and then opens FCP X. The Events and Projects should be online and ready to edit. When finished, use the Finder to copy the Disk Image back to the shared storage again.

Follow the above instructions and you and your team will be using Final Cut Pro X and marveling at everything it has to offer. ♦

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