

I'll Have HD with My Mac

By Douglas I. Sheer

It wasn't enough that Apple began to control the editing space over the past few years, clobbering "A"-list rivals with its Final Cut Pro Studio and other programs, and gobbling up market share, because now they are setting their sights on nothing less than global dominance of the entire pro marketplace. The entryway to that strong position is paved with HD-centric applications and third-party partners as well as by the general file based video trend that the whole market has taken since the early part of the decade. The result is another bumper crop year for Apples of all flavors.

Meanwhile the market has not just stood still. It marches on. As many TV professionals have already transitioned to high definition in the past several years – particularly for production -- and the requisite HD tools have followed after them, Apple's strategy of deploying their suite of Final Cut Pro products in HD-capable versions has been singularly successful as well. And, also farsighted by design.

Further helping to drive the trend was the wide acceptance of small format DV-based camcorders. From the early mini-DV, DV-CAM and DVC-Pro then to HDV and other HD capable formats, all becoming so pervasive so quickly, Final Cut Pro sales have expanded similarly. Of course, HDV editing was not as easily smoothed out as normal DV-based formats were, but manufacturers did their best to cope and supplied a number of clever codec solutions.

Apple also tends to be the winner as more and more consumer level products keep finding their way into the professional market. The earliest DV-based camcorders were certainly affordable enough, but now the newer solid state, hard drive and removable media recording options are driving those costs even lower. What's more, the concomitant video storage media are ready made to work with Apple files and that factor also plays to their favor.

Apple HD-oriented solutions range from the most basic Final Cut Pro HD introduced several years ago and widely proliferating, to Final Cut Studio HD and Final Cut Express HD and Final Cut Studio 2, which accommodates HD and virtually the entire range of newest recording formats. Many of the features of the FCP2 series are directly targeted at the other A-team members and particularly the Pro Res 4: 2: 2: product targets Avid's Symphony editing system and other high end Avid systems, once considered sacrosanct and safe territory for the folks from Tewksbury. Thus, making it a no holds barred contest between the two competitors.

Final Cut Studio 2 is the must-have upgrade to Apple's award-winning video and audio production suite. With six powerful applications included, each designed

specifically for editors, Final Cut Studio 2 puts everything an editor would need in a single box. Final Cut Pro (version) 6 for video and film editing, Motion 3 for graphics and animation in 3D, Soundtrack Pro 2 for professional audio post-production, Color, a new application for professional color grading and finishing, Compressor 3 and DVD Studio Pro 4 for digital delivery virtually anywhere — a disc, the web, Apple TV, iPod, or cell phone. What a concept! And, at less than \$1,300 USD represents a real bargain no matter how and what it is compared to. Let's face it, the new Color application alone replaces far more expensive gear that formerly would have been required in any serious post operation.

Douglas I. Sheer is CEO and chief analyst of DIS Consulting Corporation in New York, publishers of *Video Editing World tm 2007*. Go to dougsheer@aol.com or www.disconsultingcorporation.com for more details.

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