

# The Video Editor's Guide to Soundtrack Pro

## Workflows, Tools, and Techniques

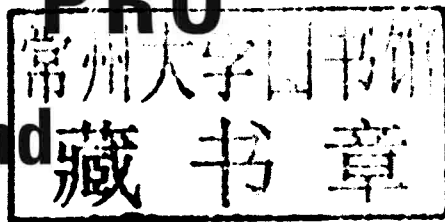


**Sam McGuire**  
**David Liban**



# THE VIDEO EDITOR'S GUIDE TO SOUNDTRACK PRO

Workflows, Tools, and  
Techniques



SAM MCGUIRE AND DAVID LIBAN



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# **THE VIDEO EDITOR'S GUIDE TO SOUNDTRACK PRO**

## **Dedications**

Thanks to my beautiful wife Jenny for putting up with long hours and late nights. I couldn't have done it without you! I'd also like to dedicate this to Adam, Jacob, and Hannah – the finest kids one could wish for.

—Sam McGuire

I'd like to dedicate the book to my wife Angela and son Caleb.

—David Liban

# INTRODUCTION

Audio post-production can be an intimidating process for a video editor. Hopefully the audio on your project will receive the appropriate attention from a skilled audio engineer, but that doesn't mean you won't be working with audio all along the way. This book is written for the video editor using the tools in Final Cut Studio. It makes no assumptions about your knowledge of the world of audio, but does assume that you know how to use Final Cut Pro. What we have done is collect a number of experts in the field and bring them together to provide you with real world examples and a resource that will help you understand the audio process and what you can do when using Soundtrack Pro 3.

As we progress through the text, you will notice that a good amount of emphasis is placed on explaining the process; this is not simply a glorified software manual. The goal is to inform your work as a video editor, enable you to do some basic audio editing, and allow the more adventurous among you to complete the entire audio mix. Not every project is going to have a big budget for audio, and more than once I have been asked to help a video editor learn enough to spend the hours required to complete the audio portion of the project. Well, this is the result of those requests. Instead of pushing you to a separate audio application, the text enables you to use Soundtrack Pro 3 for all of your audio tasks. Not only is it a powerful tool, but it will also be instantly familiar to you because it works a lot like Final Cut Pro.

In the text many topics are covered, but we have spent a lot of time narrowing them down to things you need to know. Some of the topics don't translate well to the written text, so we've also created a DVD with an example project that you can copy to your computer and video clips that you can view on your computer or any DVD player. The clips walk you through some of the functions that make more sense when learned visually. We've covered all of the bases and hope that you'll work with the example project as you read through the text. The project is an excerpt from a film by David Liban about an artist named Erik Rieger. Erik Rieger works in many mediums but is best known for working with his grinder as seen on the video. He is also a fine artist, a furniture and wood craftsman, and a musician. He has performed as an opening act for Santana and has done hundreds of shows as you will see on the video.

In addition to things related to the text, the DVD also includes sections on composing music with Apple Loops, mixing in surround, and demonstration of effects not listed in the text.



Each time there is a section of the text that relates to a sample on the DVD, you will see the DVD logo on the side of the page.

Another thing we've done is to include sidebars and extra boxes that provide alternate interpretations and insights from David Liban's personal experience. An Internet search on David Liban will show you just how much experience he has.

As an additional resource, I have made arrangements with VTC.com to open up several additional tutorials on effects from Soundtrack Pro 2 and 3. This is another project I worked on in the past, but the information remains relevant. Go to <http://www.vtc.com/products/Apple-SoundTrack-Pro-2-Effects-Tutorials.htm> to access these clips.

As you read this book, keep in mind that, although working on audio post-production is not an exercise in voodoo wizardry, it is a specialized skill that takes specific equipment and lots of practice. If you want to be able to work on both the audio and the video, then keep at it and learn what Soundtrack is capable of; it has a lot of tools that can make a huge difference to your project.

Most importantly, have fun with it.

Sam McGuire

# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Chapter 1 The Video Editor</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Know Your Material. ....	2
Workflow. ....	3
Picture Lock .....	4
Sound Editing with Final Cut Pro and Sound Editors. ....	6
The Audio Post Personnel .....	12
<b>Chapter 2 What is Audio Post?</b> .....	<b>15</b>
David Bondelevitch .....	16
Dialog Editing. ....	16
Music Editing .....	20
Musical Sequences .....	20
Music-driven Sequences .....	21
Sequences that Benefit from Music .....	21
Test Screenings .....	21
The Music Crew .....	21
Sound Effects Editing .....	23
Background Effects (Ambiences) .....	24
Synch Effects (Also Called 'Hard Effects' or 'Cut Effects') .....	26
Foley .....	27
Re-Recording Mixing .....	29
Deliverables .....	33
<b>Chapter 3 Expectations of the Video Editor</b> .....	<b>35</b>
Installation .....	35
Install Location .....	36
Surround Impulse Response Files .....	37
Sound Effects .....	37
Music Beds .....	37
Music Loops .....	38
Sending Sequences to Soundtrack. ....	38
Explanation of Send to Soundtrack Options .....	38
Send to Soundtrack Pro Audio File Project .....	39



Send to Soundtrack Pro Multitrack Project . . . . .	44
Send to Soundtrack Pro Script . . . . .	49
The Conform Process . . . . .	51
Other Thoughts on the Video Editor Role . . . . .	54

## **Chapter 4 Basic Audio Editing. . . . . 57**

Project Types. . . . .	57
General Interface . . . . .	59
Default Panes . . . . .	60
The Center Section. . . . .	61
The Bottom Pane . . . . .	72
The Right Pane . . . . .	78
Audio Editing . . . . .	82
The Basics. . . . .	83
The Process Menu . . . . .	83
Editing in the Timeline and Using Menu Options . . . . .	89
Heads Up Displays. . . . .	94
Summary . . . . .	94

## **Chapter 5 Introduction to Dynamics. . . . . 95**

Defining Dynamics. . . . .	95
Dynamics Processors . . . . .	95
Dynamics Concepts . . . . .	96
Soundtrack's Dynamics Processors . . . . .	97
The Compressor. . . . .	98
The Limiter Plug-in. . . . .	101
The Expander . . . . .	102
The Noise Gate. . . . .	103
Advanced Dynamics Plug-ins. . . . .	104
The Adaptive Limiter . . . . .	105
The Multipressor . . . . .	105
The Surround Compressor . . . . .	106
The Enveloper . . . . .	107
General Application of Dynamics. . . . .	107
Audio Preparation . . . . .	108
Micro-dynamics . . . . .	109
General Dynamics . . . . .	111

---

<b>Chapter 6 Dynamics Standards</b>	<b>113</b>
Soundtrack as the Right Tool for the Job	113
Theatrical Mixing	113
Broadcast Mixing	114
Mixing for DVD	120
Mixing for the Web	120
The Goniometer and Correlation Meter	121
Other Thoughts	123
<b>Chapter 7 Spectral Tools</b>	<b>125</b>
Equalizers	125
Filters	126
The Analyzer	130
The Interface	133
The Fat Equalizer	134
Single Band Filters	135
Using the Equalizers	135
Reducing Rumble	136
Reducing Hissing Noise	138
Boosting Diction	138
Removing the Sound of a Room	138
Carving the Music to Make Room for Other Audio	139
The Telephone Effect	140
Adding Fullness	140
Matching Another Sound	140
Helping a Sound Effect to Fit Properly	140
Using the Analyzer Tool	141
Matching the Sound of Audio Clips	142
The Lift Equalization Tool	143
What Can/Can't the Matching Process Accomplish?	144
SubBass	145
Explanation of SubBass	145
SubBass Warning	145
Using SubBass	146
<b>Chapter 8 Time Effects</b>	<b>147</b>
Reverb	147
A Brief History of Reverbs	147

Soundtrack Pro Reverb .....	149
PlatinumVerb .....	150
Space Designer .....	154
Reverb Usage .....	162
Delay Effects .....	162
Echo Effect .....	162
Special Warped Sound Effect .....	165
Doubling .....	167
Other Delays .....	168
<b>Chapter 9   Mixing .....</b>	<b>169</b>
Tools for Mixing .....	170
Automation .....	172
Control Surfaces .....	175
Mixing .....	177
Levels .....	178
Panning .....	179
Processing .....	182
Master Levels – Submixes .....	183
Surround Sound Options .....	183
Mixing Advice .....	185
Summary .....	186
<b>Chapter 10   Exporting Features of Soundtrack Pro 3 .....</b>	<b>187</b>
Overview .....	187
Exporting Multitrack Session Data .....	188
Exporting Single Audio Files .....	190
Exporting Multitrack Session Mixes (Stereo) .....	192
The Exported Items Menu .....	192
The FileType Menu .....	194
Exporting Video Only (Compressor) .....	200
Video Format .....	204
Quality .....	205
Filters .....	206
Geometry .....	206
Exporting Audio with Video (Compressor and Soundtrack Pro) .....	207
Exporting Audio/Video from the Single-file Editor .....	207
Exporting Audio/Video Using Compressor .....	208
The QuickTime Compatible Tab .....	208

The Apple Devices Tab .....	209
The Standard Definition Tab .....	210
Exporting Surround Sound Using Soundtrack Pro and Compressor ....	211
Exporting Dolby Digital Multichannel Audio .....	211
Exporting Uncompressed Multichannel Audio .....	215
Exporting Interleaved Video and Surround Sound Audio .....	216
Exporting Examples. ....	218
Exporting a Compressed Stereo Mix Master From Soundtrack Pro ...	218
Exporting Uncompressed Surround Sound Stems From Soundtrack Pro .....	218
Exporting a QuickTime Audio/Video Interleaved File with Surround Sound .....	219
Things to Remember When Exporting. ....	220
Special Thanks .....	220
<b>Chapter 11 Acoustical Design and Configuration .....</b>	<b>221</b>
Sound Development .....	221
The Waveform .....	222
Sound Levels .....	223
Sound Reacting to the Room .....	225
Sound and Materials .....	226
Optimizing a Room .....	227
Room Size .....	229
Construction .....	229
Checklist for Audio Setup Issues .....	230
Special Thanks .....	231
<b>Chapter 12 Shortcuts and Additional Materials. ....</b>	<b>233</b>
Keyboard Shortcuts .....	233
Apple Loops .....	248
Selected Feature Comparison with Pro Tools and Nuendo .....	251
<b>Chapter 13 Scenarios and Practical Tutorials .....</b>	<b>253</b>
The Functions. ....	253
Chapter Order .....	253
Alphabetical Order by Function Name .....	254
1. Recording Audio .....	255
Introduction .....	255
Steps .....	255

2. Sharing Files Between Projects .....	257
Introduction .....	257
Steps .....	257
3. The Actions List .....	259
Introduction .....	259
Steps .....	259
4. Copy/Paste Clip Effects .....	261
Introduction .....	261
Steps .....	261
5. Leveling Clean Dialog .....	263
Introduction .....	263
Steps .....	264
6. Leveling Noisy Dialog .....	265
Introduction .....	265
Steps .....	265
7. Recording Automated Dialog Replacement (ADR) .....	267
Introduction .....	267
Steps .....	267
8. The Multitake Editor .....	269
Introduction .....	269
Steps .....	269
9. Placing Sound Effects .....	271
Introduction .....	271
Steps .....	272
10. The Audio Stretch Tool .....	273
Introduction .....	273
Steps .....	273
11. Adding Ambient Noise .....	275
Introduction .....	275
Steps .....	275
12. The Spectrum Selection Tool .....	277
Introduction .....	277
Steps .....	277
13. The Restoration Tools .....	279
Introduction .....	279
Steps .....	279
14. Noise Reduction .....	281
Introduction .....	281
Steps .....	281

---

15. Stem Routing . . . . .	283
Introduction . . . . .	283
Steps. . . . .	284
16. Using the Surround Panner . . . . .	285
Introduction . . . . .	285
Steps. . . . .	285
17. Adding Reverb on a Bus . . . . .	287
Introduction . . . . .	287
Steps. . . . .	288
18. Automating Effects Plug-ins . . . . .	289
Introduction . . . . .	289
Steps. . . . .	289
19. Project Music Settings. . . . .	290
Introduction . . . . .	290
Steps. . . . .	290
20. Exploring Music Loops . . . . .	292
Introduction . . . . .	292
Steps. . . . .	292
<b>Index . . . . .</b>	<b>295</b>

## THE VIDEO EDITOR

What does it mean to be a video editor? It means finding order amongst the chaos. There are infinite possibilities to every edit you make and, while there are accepted practices, there is no right and wrong, just subjective interpretation. This is why editing is an art form most analogous to writing music mixed with writing fiction. The viewer knows if they like it or not, but it is up to the editor to guide them to a particular thought or emotion. Do you want them to be jolted into a perception or eased into a realization? Do you want them to feel uncomfortable or do you want them to feel content? The editor has this power to manipulate. Film as we know it is editing. The reason we love films and are engaged in the storytelling is because of the editing. A film that is not edited well and crafted with care is a film we may disregard or simply dislike.



Figure 1-1 The video editor (photograph by David Liban).

But to have this sort of control and awareness of your audience means you must have control and awareness of the media at hand. The editor is usually given the material they are editing, so they must work within this world. I believe those people who have edited projects with mediocre or poor footage will be better directors and better editors because they have seen the problems and hope not to have to revisit them.

## **Know Your Material**

Not only do you need an awareness of your audience, but you must really know your footage. I don't mean that you recall it when you see it, I mean you *know* your footage. The nuances of a moment; a meaningful glance; a train in the background. Having this sort of awareness is the difference between the good and bad editor. And, if you are like me, you don't have a photographic memory, so you must find a way to organize your media so that you can instantly access it. Spending time scanning the same footage over and over is also the mark of an inexperienced editor. Some of this practice is hard to avoid, but if you sift through your media and segment it into small bits, and categorize those bits into ideas that you place in folders with appropriate labels, you are on your way to a thorough edit. Even the most creative of filmmakers cannot imagine what they might have missed by not going through this task. It's this organization that provides for magical juxtapositions in the editing room. The script might have called for a particular edit from one shot to another, but because you know that one shot has the essence of a particular sound or image you can make connections far beyond what can be found in the script. This is why the edit is often called the 'third rewrite,' meaning the final delivery of the shooting script, then the result of what is actually shot, and finally the result when the editor has pieced together the story with those bits. This is what it means to be an editor.

Unfortunately, very little of the actual time an editor is working is pure creative work – there are loads of tedious and busy tasks to be carried out. The aforementioned organization, the client/director relationship, the cleaning of the image, and the sweetening of the sound are all aspects of the job. This is not a bad thing – it is just how it is, and I believe that it is all integral to obtaining the most effective final product. You need to know your footage and organize it; you need to know what the director/producer wants; you need to have the awareness of what constitutes



a good image and a bad image, and what can be used or not; and of course you need good quality sound. The audience will forgive a poor quality picture before they forgive poor quality sound, so you as an editor must be able to identify these problems. Then you need to address them either by collaborating with an audio specialist or learning the tools and doing the work yourself. We as filmmakers are really quite fortunate to have these wonderful tools at our fingertips. Just 15 years ago it was unthinkable to have a full editing system in your home.

So in short, you, the editor, are an artist, a manipulator, a technician, and a magician. It's all done with slight of hand, or a keyboard shortcut.

## Workflow

The editor's usual workflow may vary slightly according to whether they are acquiring footage on tape or a media card. You will need to refer to your camera's manual in order to properly digitize and store its media on your computer's hard drive. But, assuming that you have done that, the workflow is as follows. Capture; organize; reorganize; subclip; identify theme; identify easy scenes to work on and work on those first. I would always suggest avoiding starting at the beginning of your story, because that is always the first thing to change. Start with the easy things first because often we need to get into the flow of editing. If you start at the beginning, it seems like a monster that you simply cannot handle. Just think in little increments, and you'll gain momentum and make natural transitions from scene to scene, given that you know your footage well. Do not get into trying to finish your film the first time around – that is not possible. Also, if you find yourself stuck on an edit for more than five minutes, move on. Come back to it with fresh eyes and you'll see obvious answers reveal themselves. Just lay down shots at a reasonable pace knowing that you are going to clean the sequence up later. There may be times when you'll have to focus on a cut to see if it will work, but most of the time make it quick and dirty. Do this with the notion of creating your 'first assembly.' This is not a cut you really want to show anyone, it's just the framework or outline of the project. From here you can start to fine-tune and begin to make it slick.

The next milestone of your edit would be the rough cut. This means the edit's more-or-less in place, but with little or no attention given yet to audio mix or color correction. It's the cut you'll show people for feedback. This is where you get ideas from others