

## DIGITAL VIDEO SOFTWARE

# "Timothy Leary's dead" — but his vision of moviemaking for the masses lives on

## Apple Final Cut Pro

BY BOB CONNOLLY

IN THE LATE '60's, A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR NAMED TIMOTHY Leary promoted the use of drugs such as LSD to tune in and turn on a generation called hippies to a new way of viewing their world. Enhanced senses and expanded awareness, he believed, could be obtained by taking mind-altering drugs.

Well, that may have been true, but the CIA and other government agencies tended to frown upon promoting these ideas and after several warnings he found himself in prison. But Leary was given a second chance. If he agreed to cease his activities and redirect his attention to other academic endeavours, he would be pardoned and could continue teaching.

About eight years ago I attended one of his lectures. True to his word, drugs were out and now personal computers were in. Leary was proselytizing that the use of personal computers would quickly revolutionize the entertainment industry, where everyone could now become a movie producer.

I suspect that a great number of his early followers who lived near California's Silicon Valley were moved by his ideas and set out on a mission to make his vision a reality. Microsoft and Apple computer were born. Apple's founders created their logo based on the biblical story of Adam and Eve, who took an apple from the Tree of Knowledge so they could become independent and guide their own destinies. Software developers started to produce inexpensive paint and animation programs. Desktop publishing changed the print industry.

Comparing LSD to Apple

computers may be a stretch, but Leary *did* inspire many brilliant people to create tools to allow us all to communicate our ideas, be it in print or digital electronic media. Leary spoke of a wired world where inexpensive computers would make everybody a television producer. He predicted that for under \$10,000, a personal computer and a digital home video camera would be capable of producing broadcast quality TV programs. His futuristic visions are now a reality.



At \$1,500 for *Final Cut Pro*, \$3,500 for a new 400 MHz G4 loaded with RAM, and around \$5,000 for a good quality digital video camera, the \$10,000 home movie production studio appears to be finally here.

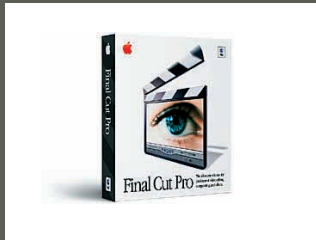
### LEARY'S DREAM NOW A REALITY

ADSL. Cable modems. Digital cable TV. Broadband Internet media. These terms are only a year old and we are now rushing to find a way to exploit their capabilities. Software for creating this media is now in the stores. But how do we spend our dollars? Do we need tried and true applications created by companies such as Avid for digital video solutions? Is Adobe *Premiere* good enough? Or can we bet on a new contender that has just entered the ring.

Apple has taken a bold step by deciding to compete with Avid, the largest producer of digital video editing software in the world. Its product is called *Final Cut Pro*.

*Final Cut Pro* is just what Timothy Leary had envisioned. Video editing, special effects, audio mixing, title generation — the whole digital video solution in one inexpensive package. In combination with a G3 or G4 Macintosh computer, it is being promoted as a TV studio in a box.

Let's do the math. *Final Cut Pro* is \$1,500. A new loaded G4 is \$3,500 and a good quality digital video camera sells for around \$5,000. Well, that's \$10,000 for the works. It fits Leary's \$10,000 home TV studio scenario. But is it a professional system? Can you broadcast the finished product? Is it as good as the tried and true Avid *Media Composer*?



### APPLE FINAL CUT PRO

#### System requirements:

266 MHz Power Macintosh G3 computer (300 MHz required for DV), or the new PowerBook G3 with 333 MHz and 400-MHz PowerPC G3 processors

Mac OS 8.5 or later

128MB of RAM

6GB hard disk (one or more separate Ultra2 LVD SCSI media drives recommended)

One of the following video capture systems (optional):

DV digital video source connected to a computer equipped with an Apple FireWire port (built in or on an Apple PCI card)

Analog video source and a certified QuickTime-compatible video capture card or device.

Dual-monitor support (optional)

Street price \$US 999

Apple Computer

Telephone 905-513-5800

Web: [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)

## AVID MEDIA COMPOSER VS. FINAL CUT PRO

I own an Avid MC Express digital video editing system. Several years ago I forked out almost \$20,000 just for the software. Now *Final Cut Pro* hits the market for about \$1,500. Big difference in price with the same performance and features. Even better, *Final Cut Pro* uses Firewire DV and Truevision's Targa 2000 DTX for image capture.

My Avid system runs comparable Truevision hardware and produces identical image quality, but it will not edit DV. I have to transfer the DVCAM material I shoot to component video and re-compress the video to Motion-JPEG. That adds lots of noise and compression artifacts. I wish Avid would come out with a Firewire solution so I could input native DVCAM.

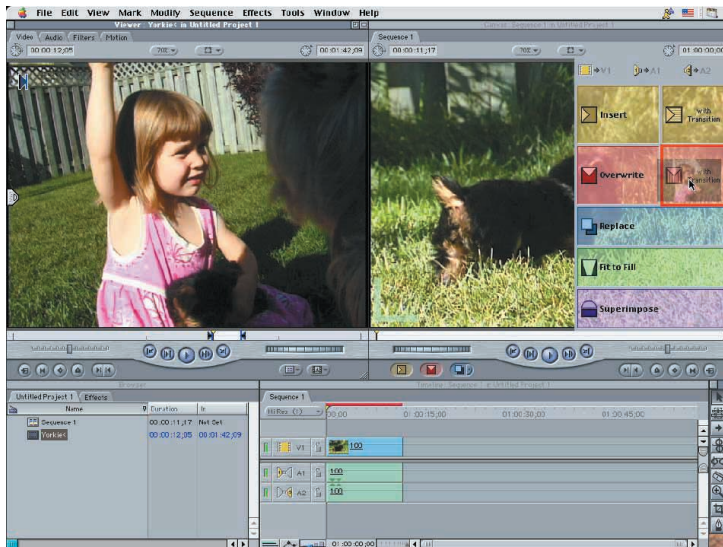
So *Final Cut Pro* is a great leap ahead of Avid with the addition of the Sony DVCAM, Panasonic DVPRO and the industry standard consumer DV compression codecs.

### Special effects

Beyond the standard dissolves and wipes, Avid now allows third party filters for special effects — but they are expensive and scarce! *Final Cut Pro* comes equipped with tons of 3D effects and best of all, it accepts Adobe *AfterEffects* third party filters. There is no shortage of *AfterEffects* filters and you can use them with *Final Cut Pro* without having to pay for a *Final Cut* version. That, I believe is the best feature of this software. Apple got that right.

### Interfacing with video equipment

Avid was a real winner with deck control, allowing batch capture and insert editing to tape. Adobe *Premiere* was a real stinker and you were forced to manually grab and video print to tape unless you purchased optional third party unsupported deck control software. *Final Cut Pro* shines in this category with drivers to match almost any video ma-



Final Cut Pro's user interface is well thought out and simple to use.

LIFESTYLES • EDUCATION I • BUSINESS II • BUSINESS I

• TECHNOLOGY • MEDICAL • SCENIC OVERLOOKS

5 years ago

• LIFESTYLES • KIDS • LIFESTYLES-AGE 30'S

we said we

• LIFESTYLES-AGE 50'S & 60'S • FACE-IT

would NEVER sell

EMERGENCY • MIMICRY • MIMICRY • MIMICRY &

ROYALTY-FREE images

CELEBRITY • BUSINESS • CASH, COINS

• EDUCATION TROPICAL

• WILDLIFE • FLAGS

• WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.

• BUSINESS • WWW.WEB.



ORDER ONLINE ▾

93 Discs & thousands of single images...

ALL ROYALTY-FREE.

- Business, Technology, Finance
- Lifestyles, Families, Couples, Kids
- Sports, Fitness, Health
- Medical, R&D, BUSINESS • ETH
- Background Graphics
- Objects with clipping paths
- Scenics, Travel, Animals



• RUSTY RELICS • BUSINESS BACKGROUNDS • MON

[www.comstock.ca/95Lies](http://www.comstock.ca/95Lies)

• EY BACKGROUNDS • SUNS-CLOUDS • KIES • PATER

• NS

• ..with ALL prices in Canadian currency!

COMSTOCK Photofile Limited  
401-49 Bathurst St.  
Toronto, Ontario M5V 2P2  
1-800-387-0640 • fax: 416-504-6619  
e-mail: toronto@comstock.ca

COMSTOCK RF  
STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY  
ROYALTY-FREE DIVISION

chine that supports RS-232 and RS-422 serial interfaces. And of course, Firewire deck control is standard because Apple invented it.

### Hard drives

With Avid, you're forced to buy their fast and wide ultra SCSI drives which must be stripped into an array for performance issues — big bucks to purchase 20 gigs or more.

With *Final Cut Pro*, if you intend to use DV via FireWire you don't need to run array drives. Inexpensive 20 gig IDE drives for around 500 bucks are the way to go. If you plan to run a Targa 2000 capture card you'll still need to purchase Fast and Wide drives because compression is based on M-JPEG compression and it needs fast drives capable of processing 8 megs per second for broadcast video.

### Software user interface

Features that are upgrades on the Avid, such as slipping and sliding tracks, are standard on *Final Cut Pro*. I found the *Final Cut Pro* interface much easier to use — and this is an important point for the new user. Avid was designed for the film editor and the interface took me weeks to get used to (and that was *after* I paid extra money for a manual!).

*Final Cut Pro* has a little bit of *Premiere* and the best features of Avid in its user interface. The inside story is that Macromedia hired away *Premiere* developers from Adobe to create the initial version of *Final Cut Pro*. Apple then bought and refined the product from Macromedia, adding QuickTime 4 drivers and advanced features.

### RISKY BUSINESS

Apple's competitive venture into the software business is a risky move but Apple intends to be a major contender in the future digital video business industry. The hardware/software all-in-one solution is a solid foundation to build on. To be quite frank, Avid is pissed. In a lesser way, so am I.

Avid has some great high end digital video software for editing 35mm films but for the entry level market they are doomed. You can see the signs.

Now Avid has distanced itself from Apple and has formed alliances with Intel. The company is currently pushing an NT solution, but most Avid users are on Macs and are hesitant to move to the Windows platform. Avid is still resisting the new Firewire solution. Will my Avid software become obsolete?

I've invested thousands of dollars on digital video editing equipment, only to discover that my envious neighbour has bought *Final Cut* and a G3 to produce his own home movies.

His videos still have too many zooms and panning camera shots but the images are crystal clear. His special effects look like MTV promos, with slow-mos and wild LSD colors. But his son is the one who really impresses me. He's making extreme sport videos — skateboarding, mountain biking,



In addition to a large variety of special effect native filters, Final Cut Pro can accept third party AfterEffect filters.

etc. Just like the stuff you see on *Outdoor Life TV*.

If you're new to the digital video business and want to start producing TV for the new cable channels, *Final Cut Pro* is the way to go.

Here's a shopping list to get you started:

- *Final Cut Pro*
- a Macintosh G4 computer
- 19" Apple RGB monitor
- 12" Sony NTSC monitor
- Canon XL1 or Sony PD100 DV camera
- the new Sony-20 DVCAM recorder/player.

It's Timothy Leary's vision of the future.

And in that future DV cameras will be used to produce movies like *The Blair Witch Project*. Your 17 year old next door neighbour will be shooting and editing TV shows for the cable sports channel.

And what about the Internet? Internet video stations are starting to pop up, thanks to cable modems and ADSL. *Final Cut Pro* can render your finished video to any one of the popular QuickTime compression codecs that are perfect for the Internet.

The living room was once a place where television and home videos were viewed after a hard day at work. Soon, via cable modems and ADSL, Internet TV stations will broadcast to the wired world from that same living room. \*

BOB CONNOLLY IS A VETERAN MULTIMEDIA AND TV PRODUCER (LIFE NETWORK, PBS, VISION) FOR BC PICTURES AND CAN BE REACHED AT B.CONNOLLY@SYMPATICO.CA OR (416) 521-7462.