Recording Audio with the Voice Over Tool

The Voice Over tool is a nifty gadget designed to record synchronous audio as FCP plays back a selected portion of your sequence. Here's a brief rundown of its features:

◆ You can monitor your existing tracks through headphones as you record.

◆ Each completed audio take is automatically placed on a new Timeline track in the portion of the sequence you specified.

◆ When you record multiple takes, FCP automatically creates a new Timeline track for each take's clip.

◆ The Voice Over tool automatically records before and after your Mark In and Mark Out points, so your recorded track won't be cut off if your voiceover runs over.

◆ Once you complete your recording, you are free to reposition, trim, and polish your new voiceover tracks just as you would any other FCP clip.

Anatomy of the Voice Over tool

The Voice Over tool is a self-contained audio recording interface within FCP. When you set up for your recording session, use the Input controls to configure your audio input hardware settings and set audio recording levels, and the Headphones controls to set monitoring levels. When you're ready to record, use the transport controls for preview and capture. The status display helps you keep in step with FCP's playback without having to watch the picture.

To open the Voice Over tool:

◆ Choose Tools > Voice Over.
The Tool Bench appears with the Voice Over tool displayed (**Figure 12a.1**).

✔ Tip

■ The Tool Bench window is FCP's catchall drawer—in addition to showing the Voice Over tool and the Audio Mixer, the Tool Bench is the display window for a wide variety of other FCP features. All tools appearing on a tab in the Tool Bench share a single button bar, so you may see buttons appearing at the top of the Tool Bench that don't apply to the tool you're using at the moment.

Transport controls

◆ **Record/Stop button:** Click to start audio recording and Timeline playback. Once recording starts, this button changes to the Stop button. Click again (or press the Escape key) to stop recording. If you stop recording before your specified Out point, the audio you recorded is saved to disk, and the partial clip is placed in the Timeline.

◆ **Review button:** Click to play back the Timeline section you've specified, without recording. Use Review while you rehearse your voiceover.

◆ **Discard Last Recording button:** Click to delete the clip and media file from the previous take. The Discard Last Recording button is dimmed until you've recorded your first voiceover clip. *Using the Discard Last Recording button to delete a take is not undoable.*

Status display

◆ **Status area:** A progress bar indicates what proportion of your specified Timeline section has been recorded, along with a message indicating the Voice Over tool's current state.

Status messages include:

◆ **Ready to Record:** Indicates that the Voice Over tool is standing by to record.

◆ **Starting:** Displays during the 5-second countdown before Timeline playback reaches your specified In point. FCP records audio during this pre-roll period, to ensure that your performance is preserved even if you jump the gun and start speaking too soon.

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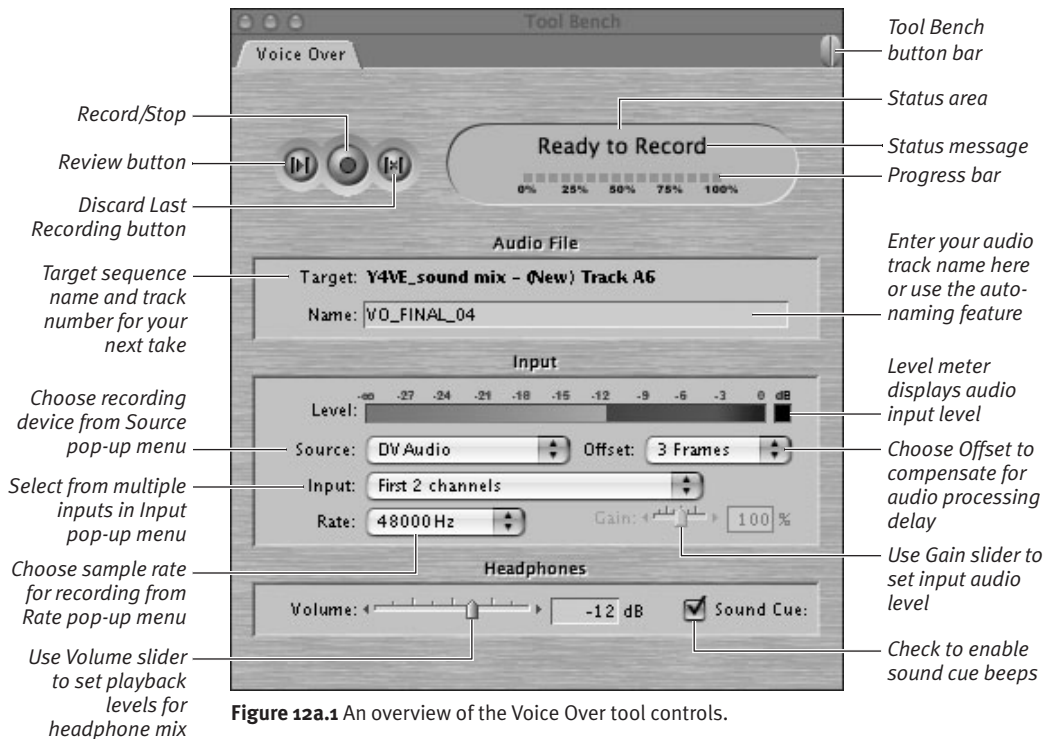

Figure 12a.1 An overview of the Voice Over tool controls.

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◆ **Recording:** Appears when Timeline playback reaches your specified In point. The Recording status message displays a countdown (accompanied by audio cue beeps in your headphones) during the last 5 seconds before your specified Out point.

◆ **Finishing:** Appears when FCP reaches your specified Out point. FCP continues to record 2 seconds past your specified Out point to ensure that your last word won't be cut off, preserving your take if you run a little over.

◆ **Saving:** Displays while FCP saves your voiceover recording from RAM to a file on your specified scratch disk.

Audio File area

◆ **Target:** This field shows the sequence name and track number where your next voiceover take will be placed. The target track updates automatically, moving down to the next available track for each subsequent take.

◆ **Name:** Enter a name for your voiceover recording here. The filename will automatically increment as you record subsequent takes. This name is used for both the clip and for the source media file on disk. If the name is already in use by another clip in the same capture folder, FCP automatically appends a number to the duplicate name.

Input controls

Use the Input controls to select the source, configure the format, and adjust the incoming audio signal that you're recording with the Voice Over tool. These settings are for the Voice Over tool only; they won't affect your capture preset settings.

◆ **Level:** This audio meter displays the input recording levels you set with the Gain slider, located at the bottom right of the Input controls section.

◆ **Source:** Choose your audio input device from this pop-up menu. The specific external recording equipment you have connected will determine your menu choices.

◆ **Input:** If your audio input device has multiple inputs, select which input you want FCP to record from this pop-up menu.

◆ **Rate:** Choose an audio sample rate for your recording from this pop-up menu. Only sample rates that your selected audio device supports should appear. If you can, select the rate that matches the audio sample rate of your sequence settings. If your audio device doesn't support your sequence's sample rate, choose the highest sample rate available.

◆ **Offset:** Choose an offset to compensate for any processing delay in your incoming audio signal.

◆ **Gain:** Use this slider to adjust the input levels from your microphone or other recording device.

✔ Tip

■ DV camcorders typically introduce a delay of 3 frames; an average USB capture device introduces a delay of 1 frame. If you use the Voice Over tool to record replacement dialogue, even a couple frames of delay can be a bother when you are trying to judge quickly whether the lip sync in a take is good enough.

Headphones controls

◆ **Volume:** Use this slider, or enter a value in decibels, to adjust the playback volume in your headphones.

◆ **Sound Cues:** Check this box to hear cue beeps in your headphones during recording. The beeps won't be recorded in your voiceover recording.

✔ Tip

■ If you don't plan to monitor your program's existing soundtrack during your voiceover recording, be sure to mute any speakers that are within range of your microphone or mute the playback here in the Headphones control panel. Set the Volume slider to –60 dB and disable the Sound Cues check box.

Voice Over tool setup checklist

The Voice Over tool may streamline your recording process, but remember: You're still setting up for a recording session. If you intend to use these tracks in a final product, you should plan on running a full test to check your audio quality before starting your recording session. Here's a list of setup tasks:

◆ **Set up your external recording device.** You can hook up any audio recording device that's compatible with the Apple Sound Manager; options include the built-in DV microphone on your DV camera, a PCI audio card, or a USB audio capture device. If your Mac has one (and you're not too picky), you can use the built-in microphone port on the back of the computer.

◆ **Set up headphones.** Plug headphones into your computer's built-in headphone jack. You may want to configure your setup to allow headphone monitoring for both the recordist and the voiceover talent.

◆ **Calculate the offset of your audio recording device.** Digital recording devices typically introduce a short delay while the device processes the analog audio signal from your microphone. This delay can offset your voiceover clips from your performer's original timing. You could go back and adjust all your clips by hand, but the Voice Over tool allows you to set a compensating offset that will put your tracks right back in sync. See "Using the Voice Over Tool" on page III-137 of Apple's *Final Cut Pro User Manual* PDF for details on the offset calibration process.

◆ **Test your setup.** Listen to playback of your audio away from the whir and whine of your editing workstation. Better yet, set up an external video monitor away from your computer and drives and isolate your voiceover talent from the sound of your CPU and drives when recording voiceover.

✔ Tip

■ If you select your DV camera's microphone as your audio recording device, you won't be able to record until you turn off your external video feed by choosing View > External Video > Off.

RECORDING AUDIO WITH THE VOICE OVER TOOL

To record synchronous audio with the Voice Over tool:

1. Follow the Voice Over tool setup procedure outlined earlier.

2. In the Timeline, mark In and Out points to specify the duration of your recording by defining the section of your sequence you want to record over (**Figure 12a.2**). If you do not set In and Out points, recording will start at the playhead position and stop at the end of the last clip in the Timeline.

3. Specify the target location of your new voiceover audio clip by choosing the Timeline audio track immediately *above* your desired voiceover track position, and set that track as the channel 2 target track (**Figure 12a.3**).

4. Choose Tools > Voice Over.
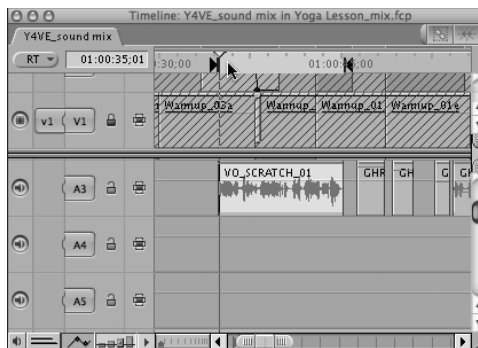   The Tool Bench appears with the Voice Over tab displayed.

Figure 12a.2 Define the section of your sequence you want to record over by marking In and Out points in the Timeline.
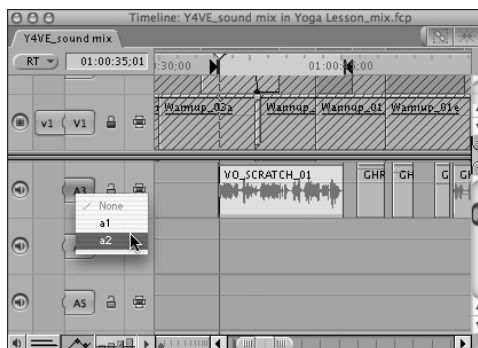

Figure 12a.3 FCP will place your new audio on a new track immediately below the track you set as the a2 target track.

Cue Beep Choreography

The Voice Over tool offers the option of hearing cue beeps along with the audio track playback in your headphones. These beeps are invaluable if you can't watch the screen because your eyes are glued to the script you're about to read. Unfortunately, you can't easily adjust the beep level independently of the rest of the headphone playback mix, and a little beep goes a long way.

Here's the sequence and timing of the cue beeps:

1. Three beeps mark off the first 3 seconds at the start of the 5 second pre-roll. The last 2 seconds before playback reaches your In point are beepless.

2. Exactly 15 seconds before playback reaches your Out point, you'll be cued with a single warning beep.

3. During the last 5 seconds of recording, you'll hear five beeps—the last beep is longer and has a lower pitch. Try not to panic. Remember—you still have those 2 seconds of post-roll recording as protection.

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Figure 12a.4 Click the Record button or press Shift-C to start recording and playback.

Figure 12a.5 When playback reaches your specified In point, the Voice Over tool status display turns red, and the message switches to "Recording."
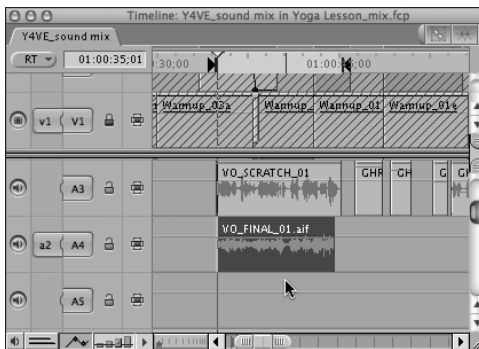
5. On the Voice Over tab, click the Record button (**Figure 12a.4**).

The Timeline playhead jumps back 5 seconds before your specified In point. FCP starts playback and recording and displays the "Starting" status message during this 5-second pre-roll countdown. When FCP reaches your specified In point, the status message area displays "Recording" (**Figure 12a.5**).

6. Start speaking, or cue your voiceover talent.

FCP continues recording for 2 seconds after the playback reaches your specified Out point, and the Status message area displays "Finishing." FCP saves your new audio clip in the capture folder specified in your Scratch Disk preferences. Your new audio clip appears in the Timeline (**Figure 12a.6**), and the Voice Over tool is reset so that it displays the "Ready to Record" status message.

7. If you want to record additional takes, mute the previous take by turning off its Timeline track before you record (**Figure 12a.7**).
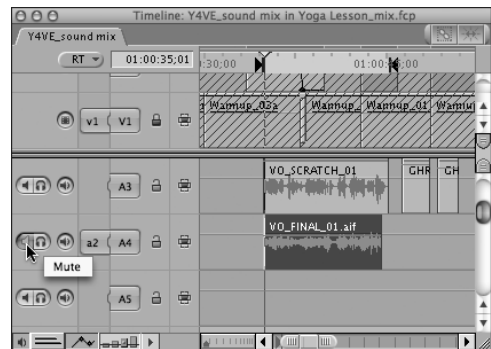
<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl">**RECORDING AUDIO WITH THE VOICE OVER TOOL**</div>

Figure 12a.6 Your new audio clip appears in the Timeline.

Figure 12a.7 Click the Audio Mute button to silence the Timeline track of the previous take before you record a second take.

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8. Repeat steps 5 and 6 to record additional takes in the same Timeline location.

Your additional takes appear as audio clips on new Timeline tracks that appear below your first take (**Figure 12a.8**). The a2 track target automatically moves down one track, and you're ready to record another take on the newly created track.

✔ Tips

- Did your voiceover take get cut off at the head or tail of the clip? Never fear. FCP was recording during the entire pre- and post-roll. You can adjust the In and Out points of your truncated take's audio clip (**Figure 12a.9**) and retrieve your first consonant or your last gasp.

- Does this sound familiar? You got tongue-tied when you recorded "VO Take 1," so you deleted that take from your Timeline and you're ready to record a new take 1. Maybe you're wondering why the Voice Over tool stubbornly refuses to let you reuse the name "VO Take 1." Here's why—you deleted the clip reference to "VO Take 1" from the Timeline, but the audio file created when you recorded the first "VO Take 1" remains in your capture folder. FCP wisely forbids two files having the same name to exist in the same folder. If you want to reuse the name "VO Take 1," delete the audio file with that name from your capture folder.
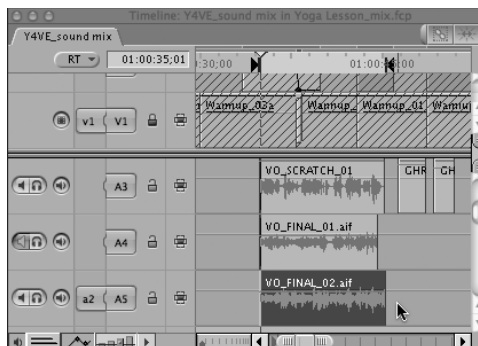

Figure 12a.8 Additional takes appear as audio clips on new Timeline tracks inserted below your first take.
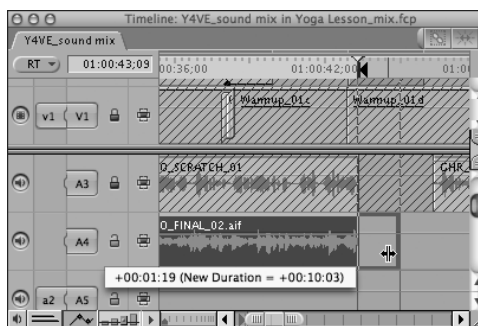

Figure 12a.9 Adjusting the Out point of an audio clip to restore the end of the take that extended past the specified Out point during recording.

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