the finishing suite

TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR A SMOOTH HANDOVER

May 2019

The following is a guide to preparing the editorial deliverables required for handing your timeline over to The Finishing Suite for colour grading and online editing. If something is unclear, please let me know so that I can make it more explicit.

Of course, the specific steps to generate these deliverables will differ from NLE to NLE, and rather than go step by step through each and every one of them, I've included screenshots only from Avid Media Composer, from which the vast majority of projects that I receive are cut. If you're editing in Premiere, FCPX, or any other NLE, please get in touch if you're having trouble relating any of this info to whichever software you're using.

There will be exceptions to these guidelines — times when another handover method is more appropriate. If you think that might be the case for your job, please get in touch so that we can discuss it further.

Summary of requirements for DaVinci Resolve conforms

As a general rule, the following deliverables are required by The Finishing Suite, regardless of the NLE in which the timeline has been cut:

- All original camera media (OCN) with any camera-created directory structure left intact

- Meta-only exchange file of video tracks (AAF, XML, EDL etc)

- Reference MOV of offline pictures with burned in TCIP

- Reference WAV of offline audio guide stereo mix

If relevant, please also include:

- Any fonts that have been used

- Source files for any motion graphics that are in the timeline

- High res copies of any archive material in the timeline

- High res copies of any still photographs that are in the timeline

- Graphics list document with timecodes and copy of any graphics or titles

It never hurts to put the offline project file on the drive as well. In Avid's case, that could just be a bin holding the final sequence.


External hard drives

Where possible, please deliver your project on a single external hard drive, ideally with USB type A 3.1 gen 2 interface, and not requiring an external power supply. Please do not send USB cables, however, if you have no choice other than to send a drive with an external power supply, absolutely do send the power supply along with the drive!

Timeline hygiene

Before exporting the AAF/XML, please make sure that all video tracks have been collapsed to one single video track, with the only exception being where multiple video tracks are explicitly required for superimpositions or other composite effects like split screens or graphics layers. No video track should contain a mixture of video and graphics.
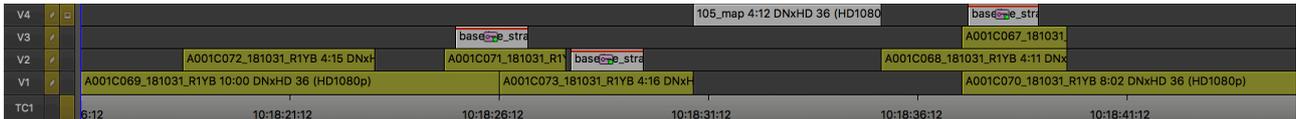
Poor timeline hygiene
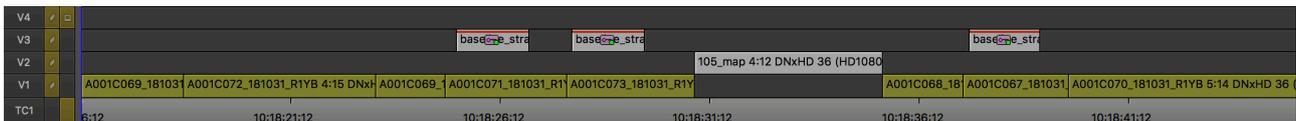
Clean timeline

Do not include any audio tracks in the AAF, as they are unnecessary and can greatly increase the time it takes to conform the sequence.

If you've used Avid's multicam tools in your edit, right click on your sequence and select "Commit Multicam Edits" before exporting the AAF.

In Avid, please don't use the Picture In Picture effect for resizes. Parameters from Avid's Picture in Picture effect do not translate into Resolve, which requires them to be painstakingly recreated one by one. If you use the standard Resize effect to do resizes and repos, those parameters will come through automatically and all the scaling will match without any manual intervention. This saves a huge amount of time, especially in doco and factual content where it is common to have a lot of resizes.

If you're working in Premiere, it is imperative that there are no nested clips anywhere in the sequence. If you've used a "selects reel" timeline in your editing process, it's possible that you may have inadvertently cut nested clips into your timeline. Please check and make sure that any nested clips are matched back to their original source clips before exporting the XML.

Also in Premiere, if you are cutting 4K or higher resolution material inside of an HD timeline, it is important to never use "Scale to Frame Size." Instead, only ever use "Set to Frame Size."

Offline Reference

For the offline picture reference, ProRes LT or DNXHD 36 are the preferred codecs. Please do not use any long-GOP codecs such as h.264.

Ideally, the TCIP will contain record timecode top right, as well as source timecode and clip name top left. Make the windows large enough to be legible but small enough so as to cover as little of the picture as possible.

If it would be helpful, I can email you an Avid bin that contains a custom "Timecode Burn-In" effect preset that will do this automatically. Just ask :)

the finishing suite

Directory structure

If there is any unrelated content on the drive which cannot be removed prior to delivery, please make sure that the drive has a clear and obvious directory structure. The benefits of keeping your files in this tidy structure cannot be overstated. It greatly speeds things up at this end, which means more time is being spent making your project look the best it can!

You can't go wrong with the following, or similar…

```
/
/projects/
        /project_name/
                    /camera_originals/
                    /aaf/
                    /offline_reference/
                    /graphics/
                    /fonts/
                    /documents/
                    /mix/
                    /stills/
                    /vfx/
```

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Alastair Tye Samson
alastair@thefinishingsuite.co.nz
+64 21 369 544