

Final Cut Pro and AlphaTrack v1.1

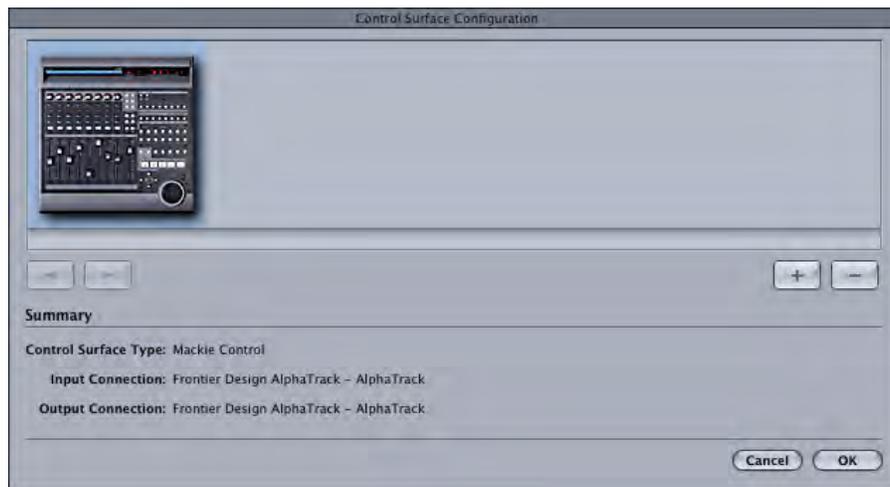
Introduction

This document assumes you have already installed the AlphaTrack v1.1 driver. If not, see the AlphaTrack Users Guide or Quick Start Guide for installation details. It is based on using AlphaTrack v1.1 drivers with Final Cut Pro 5 or later.

Final Cut Pro Set-up (FCP)

Before starting FCP, open the AlphaTrack Manager and set the control mode to “Final Cut Pro (MCU).” This will configure the AlphaTrack to emulate a version of the Mackie Control protocol optimized for use with FCP. For more information on Control Modes see the AlphaTrack Users Guide.doc.

Open FCP and select the Tools>Control Surfaces menu. Click the ‘+’ button to open a configuration window. Select ‘Mackie Control’ as surface type, and ‘Frontier Design AlphaTrack’ for Input and Output connection. Click OK to close this panel and the Control Surface panel. Next, go to the Tools menu and open the Audio Mixer. This needs to be open for AlphaTrack to maintain control of FCP. Finally, be sure to unlock each of your audio tracks on the left side of the Timeline display. Locked tracks will be displayed as shadowed and are not available for control.



General

Although Final Cut Pro is not a conventional DAW platform AlphaTrack can perform many basic transport functions as well as 40 user-definable options.

The AlphaTrack features a high-resolution, 100mm, touch-sensitive, motorized fader with channel dependent backlit Rec, Solo, and Mute buttons, 3 touch-sensitive encoders, and 5 modes select buttons that are used as modifier keys for the 4 programmable function buttons immediately below them. 4 additional function buttons, standard 5-button transport controls, SHIFT key, touch-sensitive scroll strip, and a 32 character LCD display round out the control set. There are also 17 LED indicators. Silk-screened labels

indicate the basic functions of many of the buttons. On the back next to the USB connection is a ¼" jack for a standard momentary foot-switch.

Pressing play will cause the project to begin playback just as if you had clicked the play button on the screen. Likewise many controls function just like their on-screen equivalents. While the AlphaTrack employs many advanced features, it is designed for easy of use right out of the box.

Operation

Note – The Audio Mixer panel **MUST** be open, and all audio tracks **UNLOCKED** for correct AlphaTrack operation. The Audio Mixer can be opened from under the Tools menu. Track locks are found on the left side of the Timeline panel next to each track.

Fader Section

The high-resolution, 100mm motorized fader is also touch-sensitive to provide smooth level control. When the fader is touched, the LCD updates to show a bar graph of the current level. A thin vertical line through the bar indicates the position of unity gain.

There are also illuminated buttons next to the fader for setting the current track's solo and mute status. And in this case the REC button is used to turn the fader motor on and off. For instance, you may wish to turn the motor off during playback of a completed track or project to prevent it from tracking volume envelopes and making any noise. The LED's that would normally show the track's automation status are not active in FCP. The REC button is lit when the motor is disabled.

Encoders and the LCD

When you open a FCP project the AlphaTrack LCD displays a track name and its pan position on the top line and the current time on the lower line. In FCP the encoder functions are always Track, Scene, and Pan selection. Turning the left or middle encoder will select an audio track, or move the playhead marker along the timeline by scene. The right encoder is used to adjust the pan position of the currently selected track. Touch any one of the encoders and the display will refresh immediately with more information about what the encoder will do. This cooperative behavior between the touch-sensitive encoders, mode buttons, and LCD are an important part of AlphaTrack's overall design.

Mode and Function Buttons

Eight function buttons with discrete LEDs occupy the center portion of the AlphaTrack. The bottom row is labeled TRACK DOWN, TRACK UP, LOOP and FLIP. The Track buttons behave just as they are labeled. You can use either the Track buttons or the left encoder to select tracks. LOOP is not currently used in FCP. FLIP is used to toggle the fader to the Master fader control. This row does not use the Shifted functions.

The upper row is labeled F1 - F4, and when SHIFT is enabled, F5 - F8 respectively. These buttons can be used in conjunction with the 5 mode buttons above them to be programmed as up to 40 short-cut keys by the user. A complete description of this function can be found below.

Transport Controls

The standard 5-button transport is located just above the scroll strip at the bottom. These include REWIND, FAST-FORWARD, STOP, PLAY, and RECORD buttons. The RECORD button is not used in FCP. Pressing the SHIFT button with the RWD and FFWD buttons become Return-To-Zero (RTZ), (go to) END, and Local Settings.

SHIFT

The SHIFT button allows some of the other buttons to perform more than one function, expanding the range of control that AlphaTrack has over FCP. Press and hold SHIFT, then press another function button to access its expanded feature. SHIFT also has a “sticky” feature to simplify one-handed operation. Press and release SHIFT by itself to lock it in the enabled position. The SHIFT button will slowly flash its red LED to indicate that SHIFT is enabled. Now multiple shifted functions can be performed without holding the SHIFT key. Press SHIFT again at any time to disable it. The Shift button can be used with F1 – F4, Rewind, Fast-Forward, Stop and the touch-strip.

Touch Strip

At the very bottom of AlphaTrack is located an innovative feature called the touch strip. This behaves similar to a ribbon controller and is another touch-sensitive surface that can be used in several ways.

Moving one fingertip along the strip in either direction will jog through the project timeline in the same direction with a 1 frame resolution. Hold the shift button to jog in 1 second increments.

Using 2 fingers will act like a shuttle wheel, accelerating and decelerating the timeline according to how far they are moved across the strip.

AlphaTrack Button Functions

The following charts describe the normal and modified functions of each function button. You will also find “Final_Cut_Pro_Layout_v1.1.pdf” on the AlphaTrack downloads page, which serves as a quick visual guide for the AlphaTrack functions with Final Cut Pro. You may want to print this document for quick reference.

Name	Normal Function	SHIFT + Function
REW	Rewind 1/2/3/4/5/6x	Go To Home
FFWD	Fast Forward 1/2/3/4/5/6x	Go To End
STOP	Stop	<i>(Hold for Local Settings)</i>
PLAY	Play	
RECORD		
TRACK ◀	Move 1 Track Up	
TRACK ▶	Move 1 Track Down	
LOOP		
FLIP	Select Master Channel	
F1	F1 – user-programmable	F5
F2	F2 see below	F6
F3	F3	F7
F4	F4	F8
REC	Toggle Motor On/off	
SOLO	Toggle Track’s Solo On/off	
MUTE	Toggle Track’s Mute On/off	
FOOTSWITCH	Play	

User-programmable buttons

Each of the F1 – F8 function buttons can be programmed to perform up to 5 different shortcuts from the Keyboard Layout panel (Tools > Keyboard Layout > Customize). AlphaTrack's 5 mode buttons are used to select which group of 8 functions that you want to use. The following chart shows the modifier value that is added when each of the mode buttons is selected.

Button	Modifier applied to F1-F8
PAN	Option
SEND	Shift-Option
EQ	Command
PLUG-IN	Shift-Command
AUTO	Option-Command

To assign commands to F1 through F8:

1. Open the Keyboard Layout and unlock it by clicking on the lock symbol at the bottom left corner.
2. If the F-keys are not displayed at the top of the window then press any one of them on your Mac keyboard to show the expanded QWERTY keyboard.
3. Select one of the modifier tabs at the top that coincides with one of AlphaTrack's mode button values. For example select the "opt" tab to program the commands assigned to F1-F8 when the PAN button is selected.
4. Select a command from any of the menus on the right and drag its icon to the key (F1 – F8) that you would like to assign it to. Repeat this for each of the keys F1 through F8.
5. To create additional key assignments select another modifier tab at the top.

When you have finished close the Keyboard Layout panel and begin using the short cut keys. Remember to select the desired AlphaTrack mode button, and press Shift for F5 through F8. You can save this as a preset from Tools > Keyboard Layout menu if desired.

Troubleshooting

Because AlphaTrack uses only Mackie Control emulation to control FCP and does not install any additional plug-in, or control software other than its basic driver, troubleshooting problems are usually quite easy. The 3 most common problems encountered are;

1. AlphaTrack's operating mode has not been set to Final Cut Pro (MCU) from its status bar icon, or from the AlphaTrack Manager.
2. Settings in the Tools > Control Surfaces panel are not set correctly. Make sure you have added a Mackie Control and set the Input and Output connections to Frontier Design AlphaTrack.
3. The Audio Mixer panel is not open in your current project. This is necessary for the AlphaTrack to access your project.
4. The audio tracks are locked. Unlock all audio tracks by clicking on the Track Lock symbol on the left side of the Timeline panel.