Avid for beginners

Avid is the leading non-linear computer-based video editing system. It is used by production companies all over the world to produce most of the television and feature films we watch.

It takes time to master the full power of this flexible system, however, it is easy enough to get to a point where you feel confident starting up the system and making a simple edit.

The purpose of this **one day** course is to get attendees to a point where they would feel confident starting up the system, making a complete film using Avid and outputting it to tape again. There are two ways in which this course takes place:

1. With small groups of up to six students, with pairs of students sharing a computer and being guided through the steps by the trainer.

2. With larger groups of students watching a clear set of demonstrations by the trainer on a large projector screen.

Both of these courses include notes you can take away to refresh your memory but the second option is at a lower cost.

The course progresses through the complete process of making a short film:

1. An overview of the Avid interface and what each tool is for

The interface for Avid is basically the same regardless of whether you are working on a PC or a Macintosh computer and whether you are working on an Xpress or a Media Composer Avid. You will always be able to sit down and get to work without having to relearn the interface. Learning what you are looking at is really the first stumbling block. After that, you are well on the way to understanding and even self-training.

2. Creating a sequence on Avid Xpress DV or Avid Xpress Pro

After an explanation of how Avid organises video, sound, pictures and graphics we produce a sequence and explain some solutions for organising yourself while editing. Here you can begin to see how powerful Avid is, allowing you the most possible flexibility while editing.

3. Inputting source footage

Essentially, Avid works like a video tape recorder when you want to get moving pictures in to it, with some very handy features for being able to automatically repeat the process in the future. This section also covers some of the issues connected with importing and some tips on how to speed up the importing process.

4. Assembling your sequence / film

There is a workflow best followed when working with a non-linear editing system such as Avid and the assembly edit is the first stage once you have organised your available source material. After the Assembly edit, you begin to produce a rough cut, which is also covered as part of this section.

5. Trimming

For some people, this is one of the most difficult techniques to understand from a textbook but when it is demonstrated it is so easy to master. Trimming is one of the most powerful features a non-linear video editing system has to offer and once you have mastered the simple principle behind it you can begin to sweeten the cuts in your finished film. There are several kinds of trim available but they all follow the same basic idea of 'rolling' an edit (the point in time within a video clip where it begins to play or ends)

6. Editing Audio

In many ways, editing audio works exactly like editing video on a non-linear editing system. In fact, with Avid, you can even apply a dissolve to your audio (just another way of making the sound cross-fade from one clip to another). Each track of audio for a video clip exists independently inside Avid and you have complete freedom to change the way the sound relates to the picture.

There are special effects you can apply like reverbs or compressors but most of the time you'll be changing the overall volume for a sound clip or whole sound track and then making more subtle adjustments over time. These two stages of sound adjustment are made first using the Audio Mix Tool and then using the Automation Gain Tool (or manually created 'key-frames' directly on your timeline. Both are explained as part of this course.

7. Creating Titles

Although Avid generally does not come with a fancy title tool built in, it often includes a third-party application such as Boris Graffiti, which will allow you to produce complicated 3D graphics. You can use just about any graphics application (Photoshop is very popular) to make your graphics and titles. This section of the introductory course explains the very simple to use and user-friendly tool built in to the Avid software.

One of the benefits of using the built-in title tool is that you can transfer your titles from pretty much any Avid system to pretty much any other Avid system as part of your edit project folder (which will usually fit on a floppy disk for short films as it contains no media at all). The reason this works is that title information is effectively a Vector Graphic (a set of information like a blueprint for the title), so it can be re-made at any resolution at any time, rather than a rasterized graphic (which is like a complete drawing

you have to copy, carry around in full and if you make it larger, looses sharpness).

8. Outputting a finished program

Yes, it finally happens! The most common finishing format is a master tape with timecode that matches the timecode on your timeline inside Avid. However, it is also possible to output your finished film in a variety of compressed formats such as QuickTime and MPEG for a DVD.

9. Summary

All the basic processes of editing a film using this powerful interface are covered, although in the limited time, some areas are just touched on to enable students to self-train in their own time. Once a student has been shown why you would use a tool and the basics of how to use it, it becomes much easier to work things out when playing around with it later on.

Students are not required to have any existing computer or video editing skills to take this course but a basic understanding of mouse-clicking and menu selections will helpful. There is some explanation of the basic processes of editing a film as part of this course and each tool is explained as it is referred to.

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