Dialogue Editing

Dialogue editing is the process through which you build the foundation of your sound track.

It involves cleaning the dialogue by identifying and replacing bad sound, and smoothing out the backgrounds so that the scene sounds seamless.

No one really notices good dialogue editing, but if you dialogue edit poorly it will negatively affect your sound track no matter how much music or effects you lay over it.

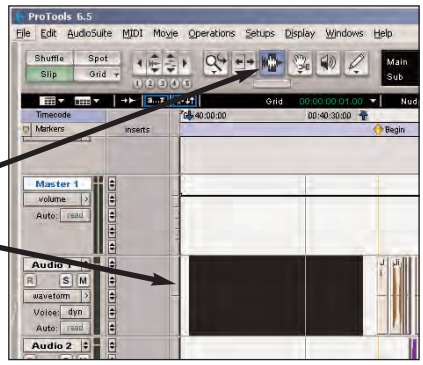
BAD DIALOGUE EDITING WILL LEAD TO A BAD SOUNDTRACK!

Use headphones while dialogue editing so that you can hear your sound properly!

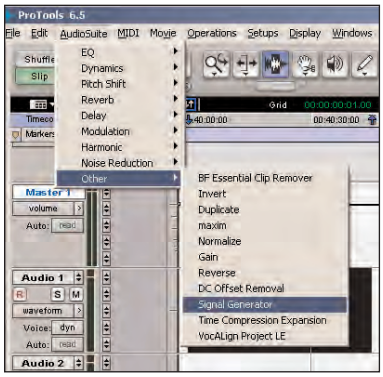
1. Setting up a reference tone:

So that you can set standard and uniform levels throughout the sound design process, place a reference tone at the head of the project. In order to do this you be using the “signal generator” Audio Suite plugin.

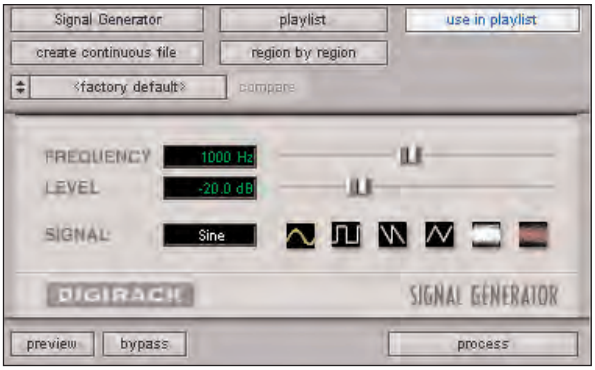
a. Use the "Selector" tool to highlight a 30 second area on the first track before the start of sound.



b. Click on "Signal Generator" in the “Other” folder in the "Audio Suite” menu on top bar.

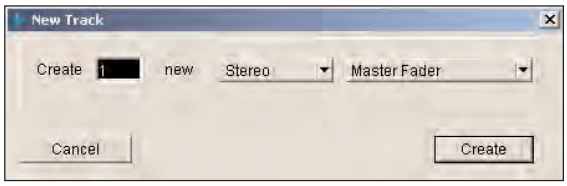


c. Set Frequency to "1000 hz", level to "– 20 db". Click on the "process" button".



2. Setting up the “master fader” and real-time “meter” plugin:

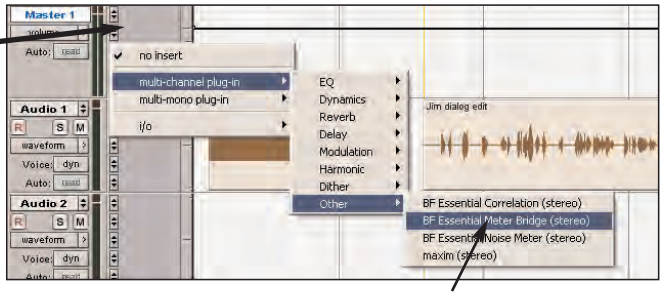
a. Setting up the “master fader”: Under "File" menu select "New Track": Create "1" new "Stereo" "Master fader"



b. Setting up the “meter”: Select "Insert View" under the "Edit Window Shows" in the "Display" menu on top menu bar.

c. Click on one of the 5 bullets in the "Insert View" at th head of your track, Go to the "Other" folder and select "BF Meter Bridge".

Plugins are accessible through the “Insert Views”



Select “BF Meter Bridge”

d. Open the Meter plugin, select the "-20" on the “meter calibration button”, play back the tone and make sure the needle is at "0" on the meter. The “rms/peak” switch should be set to “peak.”

NOTE: If your tone is on a mono track, you will have to raise the level on your “tone” by 2.5 db to compensate for the fact that the single channel mono tone is split to play back through 2 channels.

Set to “-20”

Set to “peak”

Tone when played back should register at “0”.

3. Balance your Level

It is important that you start the sound design process by setting the correct nominal levels for your dialogue. It will help you hear what is in your production sound better. You will not be able to hear such sounds as camera noise, hiss etc... if your audio levels are too low.

Remember that all your music and sound effects will be mixed in relationship to your dialogue. By setting your levels early you are, in a sense, pre-mixing your film as you sound design it.

How to set levels:

a. Make sure your reference tone plays back at “0” on the meter.

b. Mute all the tracks except for the production tracks.

c. Select the “Volume” mode at the head of the track.

d. Playback the production audio and make sure your average dialogue levels register around “-5” on the meter. They should not go below “-10” or above “0”.

Note: You can also make things easier by setting up a compressor plugin that will automalically lower your high levels. See the Pre-Mix section.

4. Checkerboard your sound:

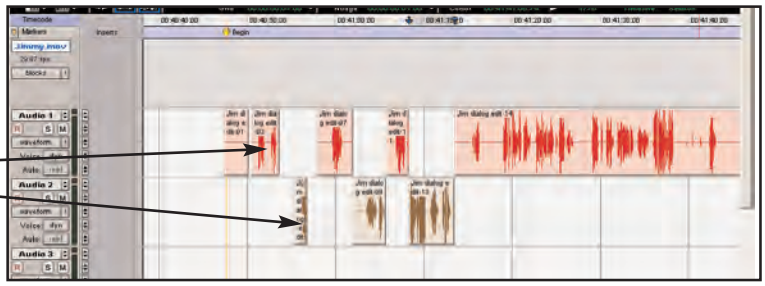
Separate the audio for each shot, and place the audio alternatively on tracks 1 and 2.

a. Separate the shots by placing the “selector” tool at the point of separation, and then click on the “b” key which will splice the region in two.

b. Use the “hand” tool to move the separated suio up or down.

i. You can lock audio clip in place vertically, so that it does not slip, by holding the “shift” button down as you drag the clip down or up.

Separate the audio that corrersponds to each shot, and place the each clip alternatively on tracks 1 & 2.



You might even consider a 3rd or 4th track if some clips have dramatic shits in their backgrounds.

Also, create and label special tracks for problem sounds that will need to be processed later.

-ie., “camera noise”, “hiss”, “boominess”, “telephone effect”, etc...

5. Clean the Backgrounds:

Remove by “selecting” and “deleting” any glitches or extraneous sounds from the production tracks.

To remove digital clicks:

a. Use the “scrubber tool” to identify the exact location of the click.

b. Zoom in all the way until the wavelength turns in to a line.

c. Locate the glitch. (It will look like a jagged indentation in the wavelength.)

d. Use the pencil to overwrite it.

If there is some noise on the production tracks that you cannot remove (distortion or bad hum...) through “eq” or “noise reduction” follow these step:

a. Check original production sound (it might be clean)

b. Check alternate takes (they might be clean and might work)

c. Check wild lines (if you have any)

d. Schedule ADR!

Note: Check the Pre-Mix section for fixes to problems such as “hiss”, “camera noise” etc...

The quicker you can determine if your sound is “fixable,” the earlier you can plan for ADR.

6. Smooth the Backgrounds:

Overlap your backgrounds to hide shifts in background sounds from shot to shot.

This is done by extending and cross fading background sounds.

Make sure you fade in and out of every clip.

Most of the times you will have to “cut” and “paste” the “room tone” that you have at the head of your shot (hopefully the director waited a second or two before calling “action”), if not you will have to “cut” and “paste” clean “room tone” taken from in between your dialogue lines.

If you have to loop backgrounds, make sure you do not hear any looping sound!!!!

If there is a looping sound, you can try to get rid of it by adjusting the size of the cross fades.

Use the “trimmer tool” to shrink the fade until the loop sound goes away.

If the looping sound is not in the crossfade, you can try to delete it from the clip if it not too big.

If you cannot get rid of the looping sound, find another piece of “room tone” for that shot.

Remember that if you cannot find usable “room tone” for that specific clip of the shot, you might be able to find some usable “room tone” from another section of that shot that is used later in the scene.

Note: The greater the difference in background levels or pitch between 2 shots, the longer the overlap.

Make sure there is room tone from the beginning to the end of the scene!

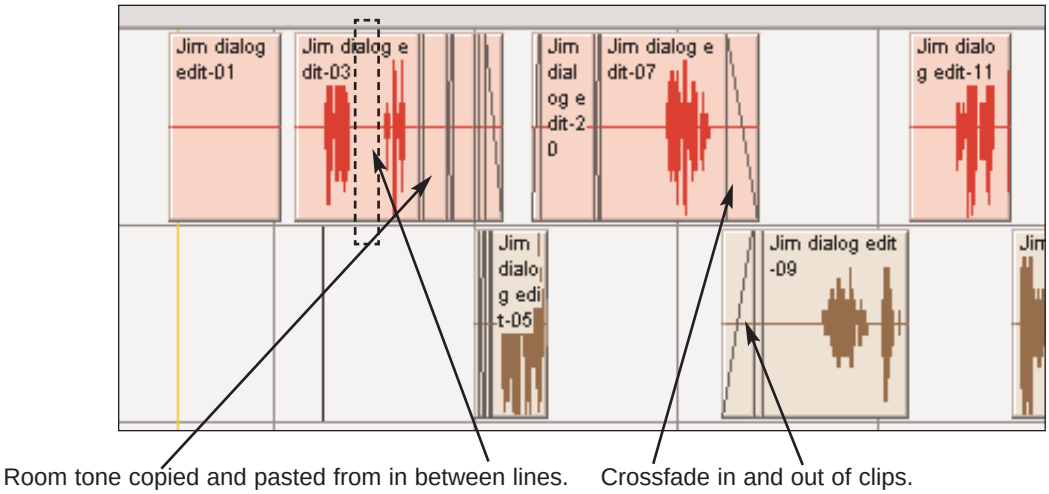
Make sure one cannot hear the "room tone" shifting from shot to shot.

WARNING: Do not try to get rid of the “shifting backgrounds” by merely finding the noisiest background and looping it from the beginning to the end of the scene.

This just adds more noise to the scene and you might still hear the shifts!

In some cases, no matter how much of an overlap you may have, you still notice the transition because, due to the changing perpsective of the microphone, some of the the audio clips will sound different from each other (ie., bassier...).

In that case you might want to eq the audio so that they sound similar (see Pre-Mix section.)



Good Luck!