Matchbox - A Letter To The Editor

An explanation of the workflow for Picture Editorial

Matchbox is a Change Management tool for post production.
It is used by people downstream of the cutting room, to help find all the changes you have made since the last version of the film/reel/episode.

With this tool, the sound dept, compositor, colourist, VFX artist and Post-Super can see the changes and even re-conform all their own work automatically.

It works by comparing AAFs, EDLs, reference video, audio guides… whatever is available. So if you can provide one of these files with every picture turnover, they can very quickly update their work from any version to any other, without bothering the picture team.

It's a massive time saver, and it's really easy for you to support this workflow.

[Tips for overlays and burn-ins](#)

[I'm cutting in Media Composer](#)
[I'm cutting in Premiere](#)
[I'm cutting in some other NLE](#)

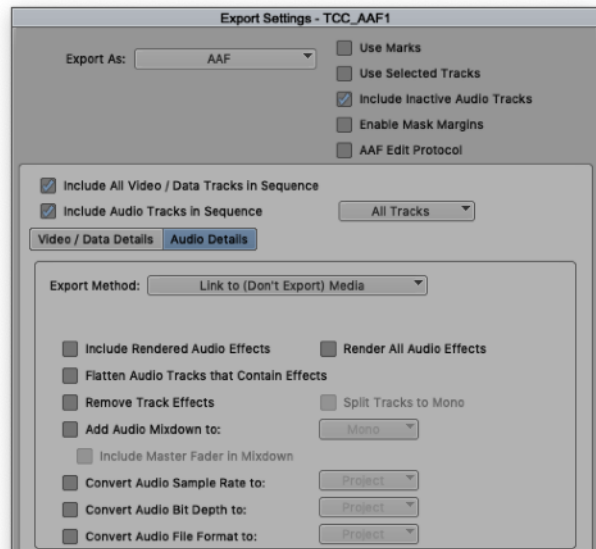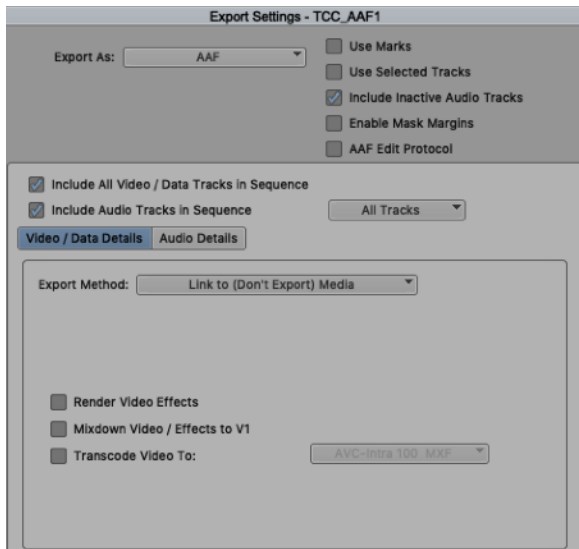[More about Matchbox - thecargocult.nz](#)

Media Composer

Easy. **All you need to do is export a linked AAF of the entire sequence.**

There's no need to flatten tracks, generate multiple EDLs or a change note.
AAF gives Matchbox a lot more to work with and gives the team downstream a few more options.
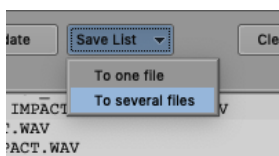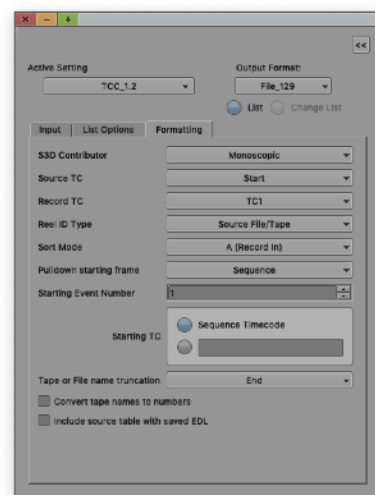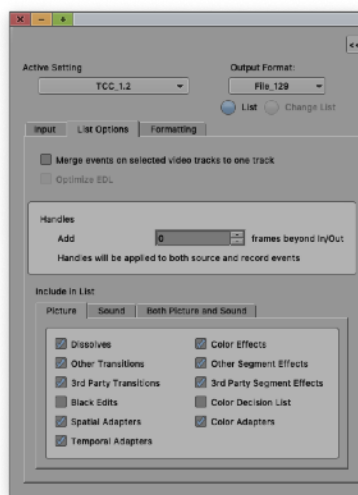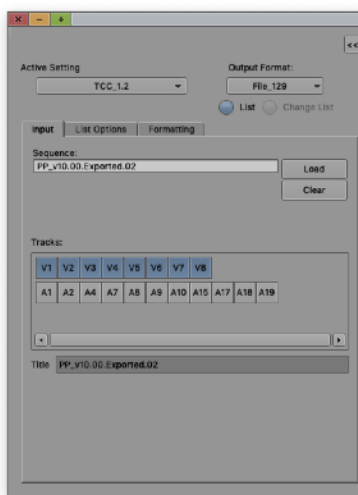
So just add the full AAF to each handover, along with the usual pix, guide audio and whatever else

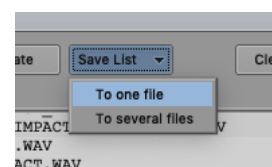**EDLs should be seen as the backup workflow** (for Matchbox at least).
But if you need to go this way, the best bet is multi-track EDLs for everything in your sequence - Audio and Video.

Serving suggestion for EDL exports:

Video tracks can't be properly saved into a single EDL, so use "To Several Files"

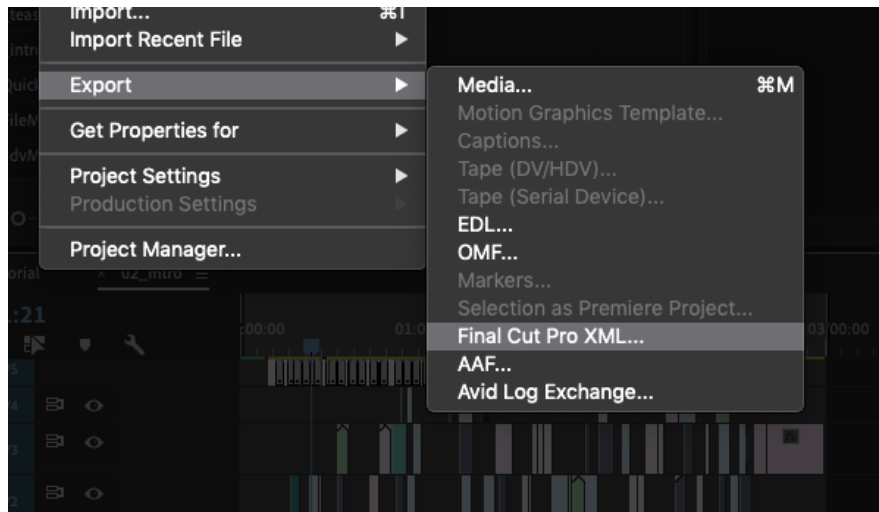…and for **Audio tracks** use "To One File".

Adobe Premiere

Premiere isn't so great with the AAF format, and many of the AAFs it creates are illegally formatted, rendering them useless in Matchbox (as well as other non-Adobe apps).
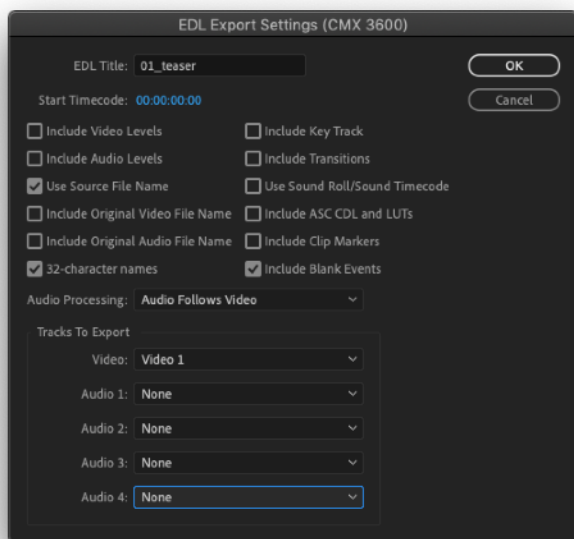
And exporting EDLs from Premiere is like laying a clutch of ostrich eggs.

So for you, the FCP XML format is the way forward.

It's multi track, it's easy to export, and there's nothing extra for you to do.

Just save out one of these XMLs for every reference movie so the teams downstream will have a fast and reliable way to track your changes.

If you really need to use the EDL workflow, you'll need to export one Video track at a time.

Yeah, it's really painful.

Audio tracks can be exported four at a time, but be careful not to include them in every video EDL.

Any other Non-Linear Editor

Whether you're in Resolve, FCP7, FCPX or something else, the rule of thumb for Matchbox workflows is to export one of the following files for every reference movie you export:

1. **An AAF of the entire sequence**, both audio and video, without media.
or..
2. An FCP XML (old-skool fcp7 style)
or..
3. An EDL for each Video track and each Audio track.
or…
4. A flattened EDL of just the Video Tracks

At the time of writing, FCP(X) XML is not fully supported, so while it may work in many cases, we do not recommend it at this stage.

The important thing is that you test the workflow with the teams downstream from you, so you know which approach is going to save the most time for everyone.

Tips for Overlays, Watermarks & Burn-ins

Matchbox has a couple of pretty incredible tricks it can do with reference videos.

It can compare similar shots between 2 versions of a reel and identify changed VFX elements, reframing, colour grades, and can even use the raw video frames as a means of finding cut changes.
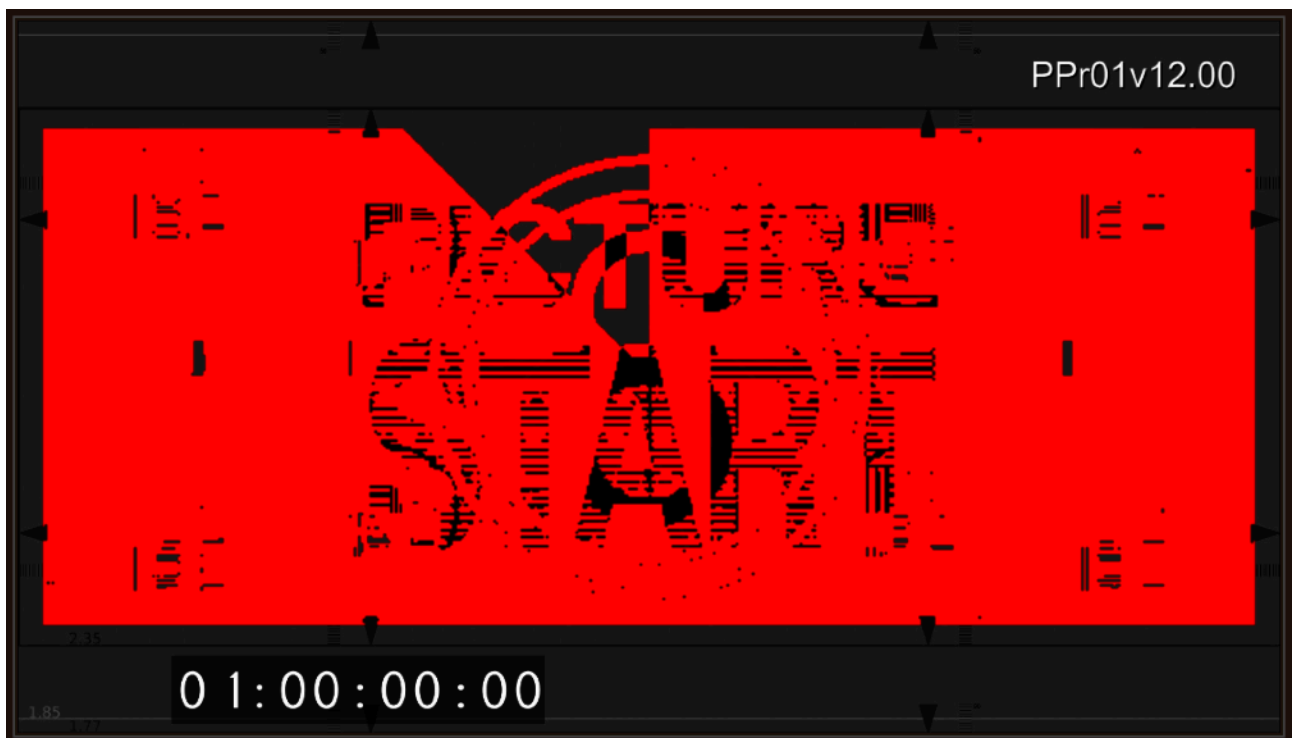
But for this to work, it needs a "safe zone" within which there are no timecode overlays, wandering watermarks, version numbers or dates. This is the area of the frame where Matchbox does all of its computer vision fuzzy logic.

So if you put the date across the middle of the frame, or change the size of a watermark, Matchbox will think that every shot is a VFX update, since it looks different to how it did last week. Stink buzz.

- **Keep timecodes, file names, near the edges of frame**
- **Don't change the watermark between versions**

The default scan-area is slightly smaller than a 2.35 letterbox (in a 16:9 frame):

Users can change the horizontal and vertical window amounts, so you just need to be mindful about keeping timecodes, shot names, date and version overlays in the usual masking areas at top and bottom of the frame. Thanks.