4:3 IN 16:9

While there are no really good techniques for showing 4:3 footage in a 16:9 Timeline, one solution is to use a modified version of the 4:3 image behind the 16:9 footage. The copy behind is scaled across (or simply larger) to fill the blank space, dropped in opacity with a color treatment and/or blur.

The decision to work in 16:9 or 4:3 should be made before production starts, as I note in my blog entry "16:9 from 4:3 - you can't get there from here!" <http://intelligentassistance.com/blog/?p=6> but even in the best managed productions there is a need to use archival or "once in a lifetime" shots in 4:3 into the 16:9 sequence. There are no really good solutions:

blowing up the shot drops the quality and totally destroys the original composition;

stretching the width is just plain ugly; and

leaving 4:3 as 4:3 leaves unattractive pillar boxes to the sides.

One of the more effective solutions is to fill the pillars at the side with something relevant. This can be used quite creatively, but the problem with creativity, is that it takes time! A quicker solution is to put the Clip behind and treat it so it fills the screen, is relevant to the image, but not hard to work with.

- Duplicate the Clip.

- Scale the lower (background) layer to fill the screen.

    - Depending on the footage you can just scale it horizontally or scale it in proportion.

This example was scaled horizontally without changing vertical scale by holding down the Shift key while dragging a corner, to over-ride the proportion scaling.
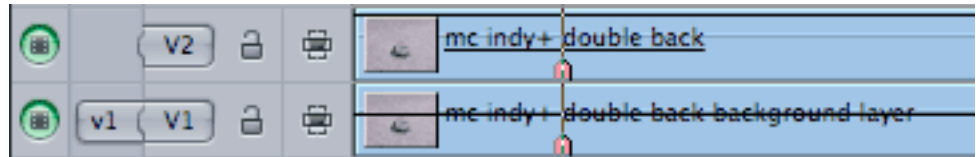
- Drop the Opacity of this layer to give some "depth" between layers

    - 60-65% is a good starting point but the amount will vary with the footage.

- Apply a Blur Filter to soften the detail and make the background more abstract.

    - This example uses a Gaussian blur at 12; usually 8 to 14 will be a suitable range where the background image is still recognizable, without having distracting detail that conflicts with the foreground.

    - The blurring also helps hide the loss of resolution caused by scaling the image. If you get banding add a small amount of noise.

A final finesse is to crop the edges and blur very slightly to lose the hard line. The Motion Tab Crop settings will always feather from all sides. With the Four-Point Garbage Matte the matte points can be set right outside the image at top and bottom so the edge can be feathered slightly.

Another tweak is to tint the background with the Tint Filter or using a Color Corrector.

•   Here a Tint Filter used a color sampled out of the sky in the foreground.