

SESSION # 1 – Luisa Winters

4/18/09, Sat 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM Track: Boot Camp

Session: **Fast Start with Adobe After Effects**

After Effects is one of the most powerful and popular motion graphics tools in the market today. Ever wanted to learn how to utilize it in your work? Learn the basis of this powerhouse application from a certified Adobe After Effects Instructor. This session will take you through an intensive overview, and will help unravel any reservations you may have about getting started with this amazing application.

Audience: Anyone interested in learning more about Adobe After Effects.

TRT = 180 minutes

Overviews

Quick overview of how After Effects works

After Effects works like this: You import the files, you place them in the composition, you animate, add effects, export and then you are done! This is an over simplified explanation, but this IS, in essence, how After Effects works.

Quick overview of panels and workspace

You can change the way After Effects looks and which panels are open and where they are located. This is referred to as a Work Space - After Effects comes with some pre-saved workspaces which can be accessed under Window>Workspace.

You can also save your own for future uses.

Project Panel, where you import your files

Timeline, where you add most of your Keyframes, and change temporal interpolation

Composition (monitor) where you see what's happening and can position layers by simply dragging them

Effects and Presets, where you can find effects and presets

Effect Controls Panel, where you can change the attributes of any given effect

Importing files

File>Import>File, or simply drag the file from Explorer to the AE Project Panel

You can also double-click on an empty place in this panel and the Import File dialogue box will open

You can import Video / Audio / Ppro projects. You can also import multi-layered PSD and AI files

Creating compositions

You need to set the frame size, frame rate, pixel aspect ratio of your compositions. You can do this at the time when you create the Comp.

You can also create a new Comp with all the correct settings for your clip by simply dragging the clip to the "New Comp Icon" at the bottom of the Project Panel.

Adding clips to composition

You can drag clips:

To the New Comp Icon

To the Timeline (Sequence)

To the Monitor Panel

Starting at TC other than zero

For trimming Clips use

Layer Panel

Sliding clips

Description of the Timeline

Play head (CTI) – This determines the time position of new Keyframes, among other things. The frame that the CTI is on, is the one that shows in the Comp Panel

Comp Panel (Monitor) – Shows the frame that the CTI is on. You can also drag layers here, and change their position in space, as well as Size, rotation, etc.

There are many other functions of the Timeline, you can add Keyframes, you can modify effects, speed, blending modes, etc. Chances are that you'll spend a lot of time working in the Timeline.

Properties

Transform Effects - Anchor Point, Position, Rotation, Scale, Opacity

Global changes – A change that is made, but not keyframed

Keyframes - a moment in time, where you set properties

Spatial interpolation – Changes in space (X, Y, Z)

Temporal interpolation – Changes in time (faster, slower, accelerate, etc.)

Masks

Masks hide parts of the layer

Creating – Pen tool, shape tools

Interpolating – Keyframe the position of the vertex points and then change these over time

Copying from Illustrator and Photoshop – just copy the path and paste unto a layer in AE

Smart Mask Interpolation – For more pleasant interpolation

Using masks for position Keyframes – Copy the mask and paste it unto position properties.

Invisible pen effect

- Draw a signature in Illustrator using the Pencil Tool
- Copy the path and paste it onto a solid in After Effects.
 - a. (Start a new composition and go under Layer>New>solid)
- Select the layer (click on it)
- Go under Effect > Generate > Stroke
- Look at the Effects Control Window, if you do not see it press F3
- You will see the Stroke effect in here. Press the 'Home' key and click on the Stopwatch icon for the End property.
- Change the value to zero
- Move the CTI (red edit line) a couple of seconds to the right and change the value of end to 100
- Change the color of the stroke; this will be the color of the 'ink'
- Change the width of the stroke (brush Size) this will be how thick the 'pen' is
- Open a 'pencil' or 'pen' image with an Alpha
- Place it in the composition above the signature layer
- Move the anchor point so that it agrees with the part of the pen that will be use to write (the tip)
- Select the signature layer
- Press the letter 'm' on your keyboard
- Click on the words 'mask shape' and copy
- Select the pencil layer
- Press the 'home' key
- Press the letter p (for 'position')
- Click on the word position
- Paste the mask shape in here

- Play your animation (press '0' on your numeric keyboard)
- Your pencil and your signature will not agree, and this is because masks do not have time, so you need to select both layers and press the letter 'u', wait 2 seconds and then press the letter 'u' again. This will show you all of the Keyframes related to both layers
- Click on the last Keyframe of either layer and drag it. After you start dragging it left or right, press and hold the SHIFT key. This will make the Keyframes snap to one another.
- Make sure that the first and last Keyframes of both layers start and end in the same place (time).
- Play your animation and enjoy!!!

Text Effects

To create a text layer, grab the text tool, click on the Comp panel and start typing

Using / adjusting / creating presets – to use the preset go to the panel menu of the Effects and Presets panel and select "Browse Presets". This will open Bridge. Go to the text effects and choose the preset that you want. Double-click it and it will be applied to the selected text layer. If no text layer is selected, a new layer will be created.

Text on a path – type your text, add a path and expand the layer. Go to the text> Path options and choose the mask you just created. The text will snap to the mask, and you can change / Keyframe several properties in here.

Animators / range selector – You can add an animator and then control their changes with the "Range Selector". Remember – the changes will only occur between the lines, the lines are controlled with the Range Selector

Wiggly – For random changes in values. You can choose how often the changes will occur, and how much the (random) changes in value would be

3D Text - Procedure

- Type text in a comp
- Expand the text player
- From the animate menu select Enable per-character 3D option
- From the animate menu choose Scale, Anchor Point, Position or Rotation
- An animator will appear on the Timeline
- Expand the Range Selector
- Adjust (or Keyframe) properties of Start, End and/or Offset
- Adjust the value of the "new" position value that appears in the animator (not the Transform position)

You can also use some of the text animation presets that come included when you install After Effects.

Key

The key to master the text animator is to understand that the 'new' property (Scale, Anchor Point, Position or Rotation) that exists under the Animator position is different than the property that exists in the Transform properties. Whatever changes you make to the property will affect only the characters that exist between the start and the end lines. You can see these lines if you look in the Comp panel carefully. You can even adjust these lines right in the Comp panel by clicking and dragging.

Start animates the line on the left; End animates the line on the right. Offset animates both lines at the same time. You can add a second (or third or more) range selector so that you can select discontinuous characters.

All of these lines can be animated.

A couple of things to note

A text layer itself automatically becomes a 3D layer when you enable 3D properties for its characters. A text layer will also become a 3D layer when you paste any property that exists only in the 3D environment. You will notice that the layer is 3D because the '3D enable' switch will be selected. When you use the Per-character 3D option, then the rendering performance of your system will decrease. To disable the Per-character 3D, deselect the '3D enable' switch in the Timeline.

Animate characters on a path with per-character 3D properties

- Create a new composition.
- Create a new text layer with the words 3D text.
- Create a path on the text layer.
- Text> Path Options>Path> Mask 1.
- Animate or change any of the text on a path properties to taste:
 - o Reverse Path
 - o Perpendicular to Path
 - o Force Alignment
 - o First Margin
 - o Last Margin
- Choose Animation > Animate Text > Enable Per-character 3D.
- Choose Animation > Animate Text > Position, Rotation, Anchor Point or Scale.
- In the Timeline panel, in the Animator group, set the property and set the value.
- Expand Range Selector 1.
- Adjust the numbers for the End Property so that they affect only one character (do not Keyframe, just adjust).
- Click the stopwatch icon for the Offset property to set an initial Keyframe with the value at 0 seconds.
- Set the Offset property value to the negative number of whatever your End property value is: If the End property value is 15%, then you set Offset to -15%
- Move the CTI (current-time indicator) to a point in the future (3-4 seconds), and set the Offset value to 100%.
- Preview the composition.

Parenting

Parenting is when the Transform changes of one layer affect another layer. If you unparent, the child layer does not return to the original state.

Shape Layers

If you start a 'mask' when no layer is selected, you create a Shape layer instead of a mask. You can add special effects to these Shape Layers.

Puppet Pin Tool

Imagine your layer is made of rubber, and you are pinning this rubber to a cork board. You can stretch the layer and even animate the pins. To make parts of the layer 'stiff' use the starch tool and to make parts of the layer be in front of others, use the Overlap Tool.

Intro to expressions

To add the expression select the property and go to Animation> Add expression. You can also press and hold the ALT (OPTION on the MAC), and click on the stopwatch to add the expression. Use the pick whip to connect properties.

To the rhythm of music

Place music in the Timeline. Make sure it is selected and choose Animation>Keyframe Assistant> Convert Audio to Keyframes

A new layer is created, select it and press the letter u to show the Keyframes – this layer is a placeholder for changes in the volume values of the original audio layer

Create a text layer, type any word and then select the rotation property

Enable the expression for this rotation and use the pick whip to connect the rotation of this layer to the properties of the placeholder layer

Your text will rotate to the rhythm of the music

Negative

To have the layer rotate to the other direction multiply by -1 (at the end type *-1).

You can also change rate, direction and actual values by using multiplication (*) division (/) adding and subtracting (+-)

Effects

Particles

Particles is when there is 'stuff' that is born from a place, at a rate, is going somewhere, and something happens (wind, gravity, etc), and then the 'stuff' disappears

Create smoke with Particles

Create solid

apply Particle Playground Effect

Change parameters at will

Apply Fast Blur Effect

Place on top of any layer

You have smoke!

Compound Effects - Water Using Wave World and Caustics

Create solid layer

Add Wave World

Change view to height map

Adjust waves at will

Precompose layer (Move all attributes to new comp)

Create new layer

Add Caustics Effect

Use precomposed layer for the water

Add logo to bottom

Adjust properties of the water at will

Displacement map with still image

In Photoshop Paint displacement gradient onto different layer with brighter parts being more protruding places (like the nose)

Bring into AE (Composition)

Apply Displacement map

Change parameters

3D Text Using Shatter

Write text

Apply Shatter Effect

Change view to "Rendered"

Shape>Pattern>Custom – choose the text layer

Force 1 – change radius to "0"

Texture – choose for the front, side and back layers

Camera system, choose 1st comp

Add a camera to the comp. Animate at will.

Export

Select the composition and then choose Composition> Add to Render Queue

Change settings to whatever you need

Save to the appropriate place in your hard drive, give it a name

Click Render

Luisa Winters is an internationally celebrated instructor, presenter, and musician. An accomplished videographer, editor, 3D animator and graphics designer, she has created and edited scores of broadcast video and web projects for corporate, government, and educational, commercial and private clients.



An accomplished violinist, Luisa was, at the age of 13, a full-time member of the National Symphony Orchestra in the Dominican Republic. While attending the legendary Peabody Conservatory (in Baltimore, MD), Luisa learned from master musicians: Henryk Szeryng, Berl Senofski, Aarond Rosand, Charles Libove, and Leon Fleisher, among others.

Expressing her art in digital form, Luisa became an editor and motion graphics artist in 1985, and has been performing both arts full-time since that point in time. Luisa was the Adobe Premiere Pro Technical Chair for the Post-Production Conference at the 2008 NAB convention in Las Vegas.

Luisa is the author of Total Training for Adobe After Effects CS4 - Essentials (DVD), Absolute Training Premiere Pro Essentials (DVD), Adobe Premiere for Videographers (DVD) and Scores of magazine articles on Adobe Production Premium techniques (in English and Spanish). She can be reached at LuisaW@FMCTraining.com