

SESSION # 3 – Luisa Winters

4/19/09, Sun 5:00 PM - 6:15 PM Track: Advanced Motion Graphics and Visual FX
Session: **Mastering the After Effects Timeline**

Too many After Effects users skip over the timeline and go right to playing with filters and effects when they first start using this application. However, if you learn to master the timeline, you master the power of After Effects. Come to this session and learn to unlock the mystery of one of After Effects most overlooked feature sets.

Audience: Motion Graphics artists that want to learn more about the After Effects Timeline

TRT = 80 Minutes

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.). use the Graph Editor to adjust these keyframes

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.

Brainstorm

Brainstorm creates multiple temporary variants of your composition and displays them in a grid.

You can save any number of these variants, apply one to the current composition, or redo the Brainstorm operation using only the variants that you choose as input.

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.

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:
 - Reverse Path
 - Perpendicular to Path
 - Force Alignment
 - First Margin
 - 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.

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.

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 (+-)

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.



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