Creating Motion Graphics with After Effects
Volume 1: The Essentials
by Trish & Chris Meyer
CMP Books • September 2002

Table of Contents

Foreword: *Harry Marks* ..... **vi**
The father of modern broadcast motion graphics reflects on how much easier life is today.

Introduction ..... **ix**
Why we wrote this book; an explanation of what subjects will be covered in this volume versus volume 2.

How to Use This Book ..... **x**
How this book is organized, what the icons means, and a note for instructors.

What's on the CD **1**
The enclosed CD is an essential companion for getting the most out of this book – it includes projects for the majority of the chapters, and numerous free plug-ins.

PART 1 Getting Started and Animation

1 After Effects 101 ..... **2**
An introductory tutorial project for those new to After Effects. Shows you how to use the major features of the program, while building a main title to a mythical detective show, *Dark Motives*.

2 Creating a Composition **28**
Setting up and managing compositions – the place where you layer your sources together. Includes essential shortcuts for navigating in the Comp and Timeline windows, plus managing the work area. The sidebar, *Preview Possibilities*, covers the various techniques for previewing your animations.

3 A Matter of Time and Space **52**
A keystone chapter: keyframing and animating properties over time, starting with Position. Includes mastering motion paths and velocity, plus the following Keyframe Assistants: Easy Ease, Motion Sketch, and Time-Reverse Keyframes.

4 A Trio of Transformations **82**
Having mastered Position, we move onto animating Scale, Rotation, and Opacity.

5 The Anchor Point **98**
Setting and animating the center around which transformations occur.

PART 2 Layers – The Next Level

6 The Layer Essentials **104**
Managing layers in the Timeline window, including markers, snapshots, hot keying, and shortcuts. The sidebar, *Beswitched*, explains the various layer property switches.

7 Trimming the Fat **116**
Manipulating layers in time including trimming layers, plus the new slip, ripple insert, and overlay edit tools and the Sequence Layers Keyframe Assistant.

8 Stretch, Reverse, and Blend **128**
Altering the speed or reversing the playback of a layer, plus Frame Blending.

9 Motion Blur **134**
Automatically calculating motion blur for animated objects.

PART 3 Modes, Masks, and Mattes

10 Transfer Modes **138**
Transfer Modes are one of After Effects' best tools for graphics artists. This chapter explains what each mode does and how best to use it.

11 All About Masking **154**
Details on drawing, editing, and combining masks, including using masks created in Illustrator, rotoscoping tips, and an introduction to Smart Mask Interpolation.

12 All About Track Mattes **180**
The creative technique of borrowing the luminance or alpha channel of one layer to define the opacity of another.

13 Stencils and the "T" **204**
Stencils and silhouettes can affect the transparency of multiple layers in a comp. Includes Preserve Transparency and the Alpha Add transfer mode.

PART 4 Cameras! Lights! Action!

14 3D Space **210**
An introduction to 3D space, and how to move 3D layers through it. Includes working with alternate composition views and 2D/3D layer interactions.

15 Cameras **232**
Creating, editing, and animating cameras to view your 3D layers. Includes the comp's default camera, and demystifying the camera's numerous parameters.

16 Lighting in 3D **250**
Creating, editing, and managing lights, including the different light types and their parameters. Explores the all-important layer Material Options, as well as shadows, light transmission, and creating gels and gobos.

PART 5 Building Hierarchies

17 Parenting Skills **276**
Parenting is a powerful new way to group layers, allowing each to have its own animation while they also follow a leader.

18 Nesting Compositions **288**
The secret to building manageable complex projects is to use multiple compositions. This important chapter explains how to build these hierarchies.

19 Precomposing **300**
Nesting, but backwards: adding intermediate compositions into an existing hierarchy. It's not as tricky as it sounds when you understand the logic.

20 Collapsing Transformations **308**
A useful technique for maximizing image quality in a chain of comps, and how that differs when comps have 3D layers – with warnings about unexpected results.

PART 6 Effects Essentials

21 Applying Effects 101 ..... **318**
The essentials on applying effects to a layer, and editing different effect parameters. Includes managing effects through the use of Favorites and the new Effects palette.

22 Adjustment Layers **332**
The ability to have effects applied to one layer affect all layers underneath it can greatly streamline work, as well as open up many new creative options.

23 That Ol' Black Solid **336**
Sometimes, the best way to add an effect is to not add it directly to an image. Applying effects to a solid gives you more flexibility in how they are composited.

24 Standard Effects Round-Up **340**
A compendium of our favorite tips and tricks using the effects that come with the Standard version of After Effects, plus those included free on this book's CD.

PART 7 Importing and Rendering

25 Import and Interpret **370**
Critical details on how to import different types of media, and how the Interpret Footage dialog determines important parameters for your footage files.

26 Join the Queue **386**
The Render Queue, Rendering Settings, Output Modules, and templates.

Bonus CD Tutorials Overview
A number of tutorial projects are also included on this book's CD. See summary on page **404**.