# Motion Graphics with Adobe Creative Suite 5 STUDIO TECHNIQUES

**Richard Harrington and Ian Robinson** 



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# Motion Graphics with Adobe® Creative Suite® 5 Studio Techniques

#### **Richard Harrington and Ian Robinson**

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# **About the Authors**

Dedication: To my beautiful wife thank you for your love and humor through all these years. To my children you give my life true meaning. To my parents thanks for the lessons shared and for giving me perspective. — Richard Harrington **Richard Harrington** has had a long relationship with media. When he was seven, he was grounded for using magnets to rearrange the picture tube on the family's 13-inch color TV (it works, but don't try it). He has since gone on to many more interesting adventures as the founder of RHED Pixel, a visual communications company in Washington, DC.

Rich was first exposed to Adobe Photoshop and Adobe After Effects while working in a television newsroom. In those early days, computers were slow (very slow). Rendering projects often took days. When he was not creating graphics for broadcast, Rich worked on early websites, published a music magazine, was a concert photographer, and worked on the first nonlinear editing systems. A master's degree in Project Management fills out Rich's broad spectrum of experience.

Rich is also a certified instructor for Adobe and regularly speaks at industry events like the NAB conference, DV Expo, IBC conference, Photoshop World, and more. He has been the Program Manager and a Technical Chair for the PostlProduction World Conference at the National Association of Broadcasters since 2003.

Rich is an internationally published author. His book *Photoshop for Video* was the first of its kind to focus on Photoshop's application in the world of video. He is also the coauthor of *After Effects for Flash / Flash for After Effects, Broadcast Graphics on the Spot,* and *From Still to Motion: A Photographer's Guide to Creating Video with Your DSLR.* 

If you're looking for video training, Rich has created thousands of tutorials, which you'll find on Adobe TV and Creative COW, and as podcasts in the iTunes Store.

Rich believes that we live in a world that is getting increasingly cluttered with confusing messages. His personal philosophy is communicate, motivate, create. He's a firm believer that media can have powerful results.

When he's not working, Rich spends as much time with his wife Meghan as he possibly can. Rich enjoys traveling and digital photography, as well as teaching his kids the joys of science fiction, video games, and comic books. You can find more information about Rich on his blog at www.RichardHarringtonBlog.com. Follow him on Twitter at @rhedpixel. Answers to technical questions are provided via www.CreativeCOW.net.

Dedication: To my wife Lisa — thank you for always being there to inspire me. Your talent, determination, and sheer beauty never cease to amaze me. I couldn't have done it without you. To my mother and father for giving me my love of art and not letting me take that year off from school — thank you. To my sister and family — thank you. -Ian Robinson

**Ian Robinson** started creating motion graphics in the days before real-time playback. Having patience for a render was never his strong suit. Fortunately, after he spent years learning how to multitask, Ian's designs have appeared on many networks, including the Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, and National Geographic International.

As an instructor, Ian enjoys teaching online as well as in the classroom. As an author for Lynda.com, Ian provides courses in motion graphics and 3D. In the classroom, Ian teaches video game design and animation at George Mason University.

Ian also likes to step away from the computer and keep his traditional art skills sharp as a photographer. He enjoys shooting events with his wife Lisa as a part of SoftBox Media Photography.

## **Acknowledgments**

This book is the direct result of our love for Adobe After Effects and Adobe Photoshop. These two tools have been the foundation of our entire professional careers. Thank you to the product teams at Adobe for continuing to grow and evolve these tools. Each new version unlocks thoughtful tools that save us time and inspire creativity. A special thanks to Todd Kopriva, Michael Coleman, and Michelle Gallina at Adobe for answering our questions and helping us to discover the bigger picture that is the Creative Suite.

A big thanks to those who gave us our first starts. Rich would like to thank Larry Hawk, Jack Tow, and Eric Fishback, who challenged him to learn broadcast graphics in the first place. Ian would like to thank Henry Holdren, Joyce Peifer Forbes, and John Woody for inspiring a career. Both authors also owe a debt of gratitude to the coworkers, employees, clients, and students who've challenged them with tough questions and difficult requests.

A big thanks to the talented motion graphics community who've shared their knowledge with us through the years. In no particular order we'd like to thank Angie Taylor, Chris and Trish Meyer, Jayse Hansen, Rod Harlan, Jeff Foster, Ron Lindebloom, Brian Maffit, Mark Christiansen, Bob Donlon, Marcus Geduld, Jim Kanter, Paul Tuersley, Mark Coleran, Alex Lindsay, Mark Spencer, Michele Yamazaki, Rob Birnholz, and Stephen Kilisky.

Thanks to the great team at Peachpit Press who put this book together. Karyn Johnson, our patient and determined editor, brought the project together. Anne Marie Walker made any of our jumbled thoughts coherent (and made up for time spent doodling during English class). A big thanks to Todd Kopriva from Adobe who scrutinized our techniques and writing to ensure the best experience for you, the reader.

# Introduction

# Why This Book?

In the beginning, there was After Effects—and it was good (so good that a graphics company from California bought it). Once inside the Adobe fold, After Effects grew immensely with new features and capabilities. The most important in our opinion has been integration.

Sure, there are lots of sexy features in After Effects, and we love them. But what truly helps us get the job done is that After Effects enables us to import graphics files, photos, illustrations, and footage, and create compelling animation. These features have existed for a long time (layered Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator support has been around for ages).

But Adobe hit upon a true need when it started bundling applications together. Although the logic has taken a while to seep into the pores of designers, there indeed is power in numbers when it comes to software. Being able to see After Effects as the center point in the Creative Suite empowers a designer to be more productive.

A few years back, Rich asked an Adobe exec why he had to use Photoshop to bring 3D models into After Effects (instead of direct support to just import models). The answer was eye opening. It turns out that designers, medical-imaging professionals, and 3D animators all need to use Photoshop. By condensing the support for 3D models and formats into one tool, the development could be more feature rich. You see, it's easier to put money toward new features to benefit a bigger group of users.

This is why killer features like Dynamic Link exist, for the seamless exchange of media between After Effects and Adobe Premiere Pro. Photoshop features like Vanishing Point, 3D Layers, and Camera Raw can work effortlessly with After Effects. The Creative Suite has evolved into a true toolbox; one that has a coordinated approach to working seamlessly while getting the job done. Unfortunately, most After Effects artists are afraid to venture outside their comfort zone. For us, a love of Photoshop motivated us to explore new ways of making these two applications work together. What we found encouraged us and eventually led us to Illustrator, Premiere Pro, and Encore. Newer additions like the Adobe Media Encoder and Flash also play an important role.

We're not advocating for you to go back to school and learn every application at the same level that you know After Effects. Rather, we offer compelling reasons and practical techniques that let you get more from Creative Suite. Whether you use only a few applications or want to explore the entire suite, you'll find timesaving and inspirational techniques that help you get more done.

## **Organization of This Book**

*Motion Graphics with Adobe Creative Suite 5 Studio Techniques* is organized into three sections:

- Section I, "Working Foundations," discusses the approach to modern motion graphics projects. You'll explore the tools contained within the Creative Suite as well as enabling technologies like Dynamic Link and the Open in Editor command. You'll also learn how to organize your project for cross-application (and even multiplatform) workflows. Don't skip these two chapters, because you'll learn some core technology that will save you time and reduce your stress.
- Section II, "Design Essentials," explores the core tasks we face as motion graphics artists. You'll learn how to use applications like Photoshop, Illustrator, and Adobe Premiere Pro to enhance After Effects projects. You'll also learn about new After Effects tools and overlooked commands that are truly essential. The whole gamut of tasks is covered, from logos, type, and vectors to footage, audio, and 3D.
- Section III, "Design Exploration," examines real-world projects and techniques. We often pick up a camera and break into the world of production as well. Here you'll investigate new ways to apply your motion graphics knowledge to produce creative output. You'll find three chapters in this section and a bonus chapter on creating a broadcast package design for download at www.peachpit.com/mgcs5st.

# What's on the DVD?

To see the techniques in the pages come to life, we've included hands-on projects and source files. Although space limitations have meant some compression and trimming, you'll still find completed shots and source materials so you can understand how we accomplished the results.

As you read this book, you'll encounter specific advice and techniques. But if you lift the curtain and jump right into the project and source files, you'll see the duct tape and bubble gum that holds everything together. We're not calling our techniques flimsy; rather, we're guiding you through real-world projects where nothing is ever perfect. Footage can be poorly shot, assets can be lacking, and the like, yet the job still gets done.

We're results-oriented people. The assets and materials on the DVD will show you just how we completed the project. Be sure to copy the appropriate folder to your computer's hard drive for each lesson. Due to speed issues and an inability to save your progress, you should not work directly off the disc.

# CHAPTER



# Logo Animation



A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. —Winston Churchill

# Logo Animation

f you've been in motion graphics for any amount of time, most likely you've been asked to animate a logo. Often, this is a kind of "right of passage" for young motion graphics artists. Unfortunately, so is dealing with not receiving the most optimum file formats to work with. Even if the stars align and we somehow end up with the proper files in their preferred format, logos also come with rules. Usually supplied by the original logo designer, these rules specify how the logo is to appear to best represent its brand. In this chapter we'll examine various workflows to help you find those opportunities where others might find difficulty.

#### **Preparing Your Files**

Where do you start? Do you begin in Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, or Adobe After Effects? Well, there is no right or wrong answer. Each application and file format has its own advantages and disadvantages. By the end of this chapter, you'll learn how to move seamlessly between these applications and begin to develop your own personal animation workflows, no matter where you start.

#### Logos Have Rules

Whether it's a large corporation or a small business, everything from the color to the placement of that logo says something about that business. With this knowledge, most companies will create a style guide to go along with their logo. The style guide is created to ensure that the logo will always be used and seen in the best possible light. It has a direct impact on what exactly can and can't be done when animating the logo. For example, some style guides will specify that the logo can only appear on a solid white background. Many guides will specify exact color values, specific fonts, text placement, and its respective point size. **Figure 4.1** shows an example of a style guide so you see what we mean.





Every logo should have a style guide to help define precisely how the logo is to be used. Sadly, we've found that most style guides only account for print or Web usage. If there are no specifications for video, Web specifications are often the best place to start for help. They both use RGB color space and have lower-resolution requirements.

Should you ever receive a logo without a style guide, the Web is a great place to go for guidance. Use the company website as a rough reference for placement and usage; that way you'll always have a fallback if questions arise.



If the logo you're using has a lot of rules and regulations about its appearance, it's always a safe bet to animate the background that will appear behind a logo rather than manipulating the actual logo. You can learn more about backgrounds in Chapter 7, "Designing Backgrounds."

# If you can't get the client's logo as a vector file, there's a great website to check out. Brands of the World (www.BrandsoftheWorld.com) offers several well-known and even obscure logos. While you're there, be sure to check out its free font section as well.





Even if a logo file isn't a native Illustrator file, it can easily be converted. Just choose File > Open and select a supported vector format (like EPS or SVG). You can then split the file into layers and save it as an Illustrator file.

### **Best Files for Animation**

When you're getting ready to animate a logo, some file formats are more preferable than others. Unfortunately, all too often you'll end up with a "less-than-preferred" file format. When this happens, it's usually time to consider how much extra work will be required just to get the logo ready for animation. Don't accept your first dead end as being the end of the road. Make a right turn and keep looking and asking. Even if you sometimes end up re-creating the logo from scratch, we've found that double-checking with clients will often give them that extra push required to dig up a better solution.

We follow some general rules when it comes to file formats for animation. Vector files such as those created from Illustrator are always best because they allow you to scale your logo up to any size without losing quality (thanks to the After Effects Continuously Rasterize option).

Layered vector files are even better. If each element resides on its own layer in Illustrator, you can easily import the layered Illustrator file as a composition directly into After Effects for animation. Because layers are preserved on import, they are ready for animation. Even if the original logo doesn't have layers, it's often possible to split the file.

If you can only get a bitmap version of the logo, focus on the measurements for width and height, and make sure they are least twice the resolution of your final video format. For example, when working at a resolution of 1280x720, we would want a file that's at least 2560 pixels across or 1440 pixels high. This way there is some flexibility to scale up the logo in the animation. We often refer to this as the "200% rule" for preparing stills for video. Of course a layered file would be best, like a PSD or a TIFF for the same reasons we mentioned earlier.

## **Preparing Logos in Illustrator**

With its vector tools and ability to customize type using OpenType, Illustrator has long been the preferred application for designers when creating a logo. It is quite common to receive logos as Illustrator files. Usually, preparing these files for animation is pretty painless, but here are a few gotchas to watch out for.

#### **Color Space**

Because most logos were originally created for use in print materials, the files will most likely be in CMYK. And because video is RGB, you'll want to convert any CMYK documents to RGB before animation. Converting a file from CMYK to RGB is not nearly as problematic as the other way around. This is because CMYK has a narrower range of colors, also called a gamut. You should see little to no shifting in colors when you convert from a CMYK to RGB color space. To convert your Illustrator document to RGB, choose File > Document Color Mode > RGB Color. To better understand how the two spaces overlap, take a look at the color gamut chart in **Figure 4.2**.

You might find it interesting that RGB and CMYK at their core are designed to function quite differently. RGB is an additive color model. RGB starts with black (no colors at all) as a base color, and as you add more colors, eventually you will get to white (a mix of all colors) (**Figure 4.3**). CMYK works through subtraction. An image starts with white as the background color. As colors are "added," they actually subtract from each other as they mix together. So, if you mix all colors in the spectrum together in a CMYK document, the result is black (**Figure 4.4**).



Illustrator, the colors loaded in the swatches palette are determined upon document creation and will not be converted with your document settings. To change color space, it is best to copy and paste your logo into a new document created with any of the Video and Film presets.



Figure 4.2 As you can see, RGB colors include more colors than CMYK except for some very small areas. It's really only when you have a color value that's outside the range of your desired color space that you end up with a color shift.



**Figure 4.3** Red, green, and blue are added together to create white.



Figure 4.4 Cyan, magenta, and yellow are subtracted from each other to create black.



**Figure 4.5** Changing artboards to the dimensions of their intended video format will help you preview the size of the logo in relation to the screen.

#### **Preparing the Artboard**

If your document is CMYK, its artboard dimensions are most likely also set for print dimensions. Because Illustrator works with vectors, converting the artboard to different dimensions doesn't technically change any of the artwork within the document. However, when you start moving that file between applications, the artboard dimensions have an impact. For example, when importing a layered Illustrator file into After Effects as a composition, the dimensions of the composition will be determined by the size of the artboard. To change the size of an artboard, choose File > Document Setup and click the Edit Artboards button at the top of the dialog box (**Figure 4.5**). However, you'll find it faster to resize the artboard and convert color space by using the copy and paste technique we outlined in a previous note.

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Highlight	t Substitu	ted Glyphs				
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### **Release to Layers**

If you're starting with a flattened file in Illustrator, the Release To Layers option is a quick way to have Illustrator create layers from the elements that make up the logo. You have two options when using Release To Layers (**Figure 4.6**):

- Release to Layers (Sequence). Places each object onto its own layer.
- Release to Layers (Build). Creates a sequential build with all the objects, starting with the bottommost object on the bottom layer and then duplicating each layer and adding objects until the topmost object is added to the top layer.



TIP



Figure 4.6 On the left, layers are created using Sequence. On the right, layers are created using Build.

Once you've released to layers, it's quite common to end up with too many layers. To fix this, you'll need to group layers together by selecting their corresponding targets in the Layers panel and pressing Command+G (Ctrl+G). Don't forget to name your layers as you group objects together. A random name like "Layer 56" won't be very helpful when animating in After Effects. In addition to the organizational benefits, the group command also helps make selecting objects in your canvas easier as well (**Figure 4.7**).



Figure 4.7 To quickly select a group in the canvas, use the Selection tool (A). If you want to select one element within that group, use the Group Selection tool (B). If you need to select the individual anchor points of an object, use the Direct Selection tool (C).

#### Working with Template Layers

You can manually trace over an image by changing its layer into a template layer. Usually, we use template layers in Illustrator to allow us to trace more artistic interpretations of an image directly overtop of the original image (**Figure 4.8**). Unlike painting in Photoshop, Illustrator creates brush strokes with fully editable vector paths. This is amazingly helpful when you need to go back and adjust a brush stroke that might just be a little off.



Figure 4.8 Fully editable brush strokes created with Artistic Watercolor brushes are traced directly over the template layer.

There are three ways to create a template layer in Illustrator (**Figure 4.9**):

- When placing an image, select the Template option in the pop-up window.
- Double-click a layer and select Template.
- Choose Template in the Layers menu.



Figure 4.9 It's always easy to spot a template layer because the layer will lock, the image will dim its opacity, and the eye icon in the Layers panel will change. Converting a layer to a template layer allows you to trace over the layer without worrying about accidentally moving the image as you work.

Using template layers in Illustrator is also a great way to create extra elements to use in the animation. As motion designers, we have the benefit of time (don't laugh). Even if the animation needs to end on the original logo, that doesn't mean we can't play with it along the way. In the Timeline for an animation, we can cut between treated versions of a logo or just use some of the elements to help highlight and add accents to different parts of the animation (**Figure 4.10**).



Does painting look interesting? Don't worry; we cover Illustrator's extensive paint and drawing tools in Chapter 10. You'll learn how to create realistic brush strokes with the Bristle brush; create custom brushes; and use the Blob brush, Path tool, and erasers, to name just a few tools.



Figure 4.10 Creating multiple versions of a logo gives you flexibility when it comes time to animate. Just using a simple jump cut between the traced and untraced version can spice up the animation without having to use a single keyframe.

Trace Presets.

#### Live Trace

If you want to create some stylized versions of a bitmap image, Live Trace can save you loads of time tracing (Figure 4.11). It will automatically trace a bitmap image, creating a vector graphic. Several settings control the amount of detail as well as the colors used after tracing.



Color 6

**Simple Trace** 

Grayscale

You can have more control over Live Trace by selecting the Tracing Options at the bottom of the Preset list. Use Tracing Options to experiment with multiple settings with Preview selected.



mand in greater depth in Chapter 5. You'll learn how to convert a footage clip into a vector animation.

- **1.** To activate Live Trace, simply place or open a bitmap image in Illustrator. When placing an image in Illustrator, the adjustments will appear at the top of the screen in the Control panel.
- 2. Click the arrow button between the Trace button and the Mask button, and choose a preset from the list to apply your Live Trace.

### Live Trace with Layers

Live Trace as a function is very powerful because of its presets and ability to quickly deliver some very accurate tracings, but sometimes you'll want more-more detail and more control over individual areas of an image. When it comes to selecting and isolating specific parts of an image, there's nothing better than Photoshop. So go ahead and use Photoshop to separate the different sections of the image onto their own layers.

When you're ready to use Live Trace in Illustrator, choose File > Open and select your new layered PSD document. Choose Convert Layers to Objects in the Options area (**Figure 4.12**). All the layers are imported just as they were in Photoshop.



**Figure 4.12** Layered Photoshop files work well for import into Illustrator.

## **Preparing Logos in Photoshop**

Because video is not vector based, we use Photoshop a lot when preparing files for animation. If you're starting with a flattened bitmap image file, Photoshop makes it easy to remove the background or separate your logo into multiple layers for easy animation.

#### **Color Space**

As discussed earlier in the chapter, RGB color space is very important for maintaining color accuracy when creating and converting artwork for use in video. If your logo was delivered in CMYK, choose Image > Mode > RGB Color to convert your file.

Even if you're placing an external file into your Photoshop document, it's always wise to make sure that document is already converted to RGB before placement.

#### Resolution

As you learned earlier, follow the 200% rule for the best resolution results, and be sure to consider the overall pixel count determined by pixel height and width.

#### **Pixel Aspect Ratio**

There are so many different dimensions, frame rates, and codecs that remembering the exact settings, workflow, limitations, and or advantages can get confusing to say the least. When you add nonsquare pixels into the mix, there's yet another detail to consider. Using the Film and Video project presets found throughout the Creative Suite can help lend some organization to the specifics of each format. The Creative Suite offers many options that allow you to preview nonsquare pixel footage throughout many of its applications.

When we design for large projects, we've often found it easiest to actually convert any nonsquare pixel footage into a square pixel composition so there is one less detail to think about. Once everything is square pixel, we no longer have to worry about pixels being distorted, interpreted, or displayed improperly. Again, because large motion graphics projects have so many files moving between various applications, one less item to worry about really can make a difference.

Keep in mind that nonsquare pixel assets can be easily converted into a corresponding square pixel resolution. For example, if you had a project in an Adobe Photoshop Extended document that was created with the DVCPRO HD 1080p preset (1280x1080 nonsquare pixels), you could use one of three ways to convert that to the HDTV 1080p preset (1920x1080 square pixels) (**Figure 4.13**):

- Choose File > Place and place the DVCPRO HD 1280x1080 footage into a project with corresponding square pixel dimensions, in this case, HDTV 1920x1080.
- Copy and paste the layers between the two projects.
- Drag and drop the layers into the proper project.



Changing the Pixel Aspect Ratio of a Photoshop document using the View menu does not actually change anything in the document. This setting only creates a preview of what the document will look like once the pixels are stretched.



Figure 4.13 If you use any of the three conversion methods listed, Photoshop will automatically properly resize the footage to fit the square canvas settings. To preview a document with nonsquare pixels, choose View > Pixel Aspect Ratio and select the desired ratio. Photoshop will then distort the document to simulate its final dimensions.

### Removing a Background Using Channels

Consider a typical "worst-case" scenario: Let's say we have clients with time constraints, and the only version of a logo they can get us quickly is embedded in a video clip. Before Photoshop Extended, we'd usually ask the video editor to quickly save out a still frame. Either way, as a still or video file, once our logo is open in Photoshop we can separate the logo from the background.

With newer tools like the Quick Selection tool and the Refine Edge command, separating an object from its background isn't nearly the challenge it used to be. However, sometimes it might just be faster to use an "old-school" technique using channels. Before many of the selection tools were created in Photoshop, channels were often the easiest and fastest way to select specific areas in an image. To view the channels of a Photoshop document, navigate to the Channels panel (**Figure 4.14**).

When you're using channels, look for the most contrast between the logo and the background (**Figure 4.15**). You want to create a selection using the luminance values from one of the channels. To have more options for animation, don't worry about keeping the drop shadow as a part of the logo. You can always add that back in later.



activate all the channels again by

selecting the RGB channel before

you return to the Layers panel.



Figure 4.14 Each channel shows the luminance values for each color channel that makes up that image.



Figure 4.15 The Blue channel looks like a good starting point.

To create a selection from a channel, drag the desired channel down to the Layer button in the Channels panel to create a duplicate (**Figure 4.16**). This new copy is now an alpha channel. If you were to save this document right now, this new alpha channel would control the transparency for all the channels combined. To be honest, in this example it's hard to see one channel that works better than another. Since there is no clear winner, this is the perfect time to use more than one channel. Let's mix it up with Calculations!

#### II: Design Essentials



**Figure 4.16** Duplicating a channel is a good start to making a clean mask.

#### Using Calculations to Create Layer Masks

The Calculations command controls how you blend together multiple channels. You can even blend together the same channel to get various results. Using Calculations can save you loads of time when you're trying to create quick selections. You'll clean up the mask later with the new Refine Mask function, so don't worry about any jagged edges or selecting all of the image. You just need to create a general selection that's close.

- Convert the background layer into a regular layer by double-clicking it in the Layers panel, and then rename the layer Logo.
- With the Logo layer selected, choose Image > Calculations (Figure 4.17).

The key to success with Calculations is to try and try again. Play around with different settings to see where they take you. **Figure 4.18** shows some of the many settings within Calculations.

#### Chapter 4 Logo Animation



	Calculations	A Source. Gives you the ability to blend channels between more
A B C	Source 1: Channel-Select.tif	<ul> <li>than one open document.</li> <li>B Layer. Creates the ability to blend between individual layers as well as the entire document.</li> <li>C Schemel Service and Servi</li></ul>
D	Source 2: Channel-Select.tif	<ul> <li>C Channel. Specifies exactly which channels to blend between.</li> <li>D Blending. Controls the specific blending modes happening between the above layer and chosen channel settings.</li> <li>E Result. Specifies what format or file to deliver when the Calculations command has been processed. You can save the blend as a new channel, in a brand-new document, or as a selection.</li> </ul>
Е	Result: New Channel	

Figure 4.18 After changing a few options, you have a much better starting point for your mask.

Have fun and change a few settings in the Channel areas and the Blending mode options. If you're using the example file from the book, don't worry about specifying layer settings because there is one layer in this example.

- **3.** When you get an outcome that might work, choose a setting for your result. For this example, we chose Selection.
- 4. Choose Window > Mask to open the new Masks panel, and click the Add Pixel Mask button to apply the selection as a mask to the layer (Figure 4.19).

ADJUSTMENTS MASKS	
No mask selected	<b>S</b> 2.
Density:	
Feather:	
Refine:	(Mask Edge)
	Color Range)
	( invert )
C 📀 🖉	3

Figure 4.19 The new Masks panel makes working with selections and masks a joy.

**5.** Since the mask is masking out the logo, not the background, click the Invert button in the Masks panel.

Although the result might be close to what you want to achieve, you still have some work to do. Let's clean up the mask manually.

**1.** To view the grayscale mask you created, Option-click (Alt-click) the layer mask thumbnail (**Figure 4.20**).



Figure 4.20 Viewing the mask is a fast way to see which areas need attention.

2. To flatten out the variable White and Black levels left in the mask, press Command+L (Ctrl+L) to apply a levels adjustment (Figure 4.21). Click the black eyedropper

tool and click on any gray pixel. Any pixel darker than the one you clicked will turn black. Repeat the same process using the white eyedropper tool. If you flatten out too many of the gray values, you'll end up with a very aliased image. Again, don't worry about that now; you'll fix it soon using the new Refine Mask command.



Figure 4.21 The mask after using the black eyedropper tool outside the logo shape to set the black levels. As you can see, it helped flatten out the background a lot.



When applying Calculations between different documents, the pixel dimensions need to be the same. If the documents have two different color spaces, you can only calculate one channel from the source document to blend with the composite of the destination document. In other words, you cannot blend both composite channels between two documents that have two different color spaces. **3.** Now that the center of the logo is masked out, just paint out any random extra pixels remaining outside the logo with the Paint tool.



#### **Changing Views With Layer Masks**

When cleaning up a layer mask, place a solid flat color layer directly below the masked layer. Choose a color in direct contrast to the masked layer, and you will see any stray pixels that aren't 100 percent masked out. To view the grayscale mask, Option-click (Alt-click) the mask thumbnail. Repeat the key command or just click the layer eye icon to redisplay the layers. Shift-click the layer mask to turn it off and display the unmasked original layer. Repeat the same process to turn the mask back on.

#### Finalizing Masks with Refine Mask

Instead of using blur to fix the rough edges of the mask you've been working with, you'll use the new Refine Mask function. To activate Refine Mask, click the Mask Edge button in the Masks panel (**Figure 4.22**). If you've ever found pulling a clean mask to be a challenge, this new feature should make life much easier.

Refine Mask actively analyzes the contrasts around the defined edge of a mask to improve detail along the edges of a mask. The panel is divided into four distinct sections that contain several options (**Figure 4.23**).

E.	A View: Show Radius (J) B Show Original (P	7
- 11	C Edge Detection	
E.	D Smart Radius Radius:	рх
	Adjust Edge	
	E Smooth: 24	1
	F Feather: 0.7	рх
	G Contrast: 17	%
	HShift Edge:	%
	Output	
	Decontaminate Colors	-
	Amount:	96
	Output To: New Layer with Layer Mask	•





**Figure 4.22** Mask Edge does an amazing job of refining edges with little or no painting involved.

- A View button. Displays the logo over different backgrounds or the original unmasked layer.
- **B** Show Original. Toggles the visibility of the layer with the original mask applied.
- C Edge Detection. Controls the width of the edge selection. Use a larger number for softer edges and a smaller number for more precise edges.
- D Radius. Toggles the visibility of the edge selection being made by Refine Edge. Smart Radius automatically adjusts for sharp and soft edges within the selection.
- **E Smooth.** Smoothes out any minor irregularities along the edge of the selection to remove any jagged edges.
- **F** Feather. Softens the transition between the affected and unaffected pixels in the selection.
- G Contrast.Sharpens any soft-edge transitions in the selected edge.
- H Shift Edge. Moves the border of the mask in or out. This is similar to choking or expanding a matte when color keying.
- I Decontaminate Colors. Removes any extraneous color fringing along the edge of the mask by changing the color of the edge to better match the contained source.
- J Output To. Determines the format to apply the new refined mask.



Change the View mode to help clarify exactly how the various adjustments are affecting the mask. Although an edge may seem clean over black, it may show different results over white (**Figure 4.24**). In addition to the slider adjustments, there are four tools within the Refine Mask panel (**Figure 4.25**).





**Figure 4.25** The Refine Radius and Remove Refine Mask tools help refine the selection of the edge being affected by the Refine Edge command.

_	Refine Mask
a 3	View Mode View: Show Radius () Show Original (P)
	Refine Radius Tool     E     Erase Refinements Tool     E
•	Adjust Edge
	Smooth: 24
	Feather: 0.7 px
	Contrast:
	Shift Edge: -22 %
	- Output
	Decontaminate Colors
	Amount:
	Output To: New Laver with Laver Mask

- A Zoom and Hand tools. Function exactly like the corresponding tools in the Photoshop Tools panel, controlling magnification and navigation around the canvas.
- B Refine Radius tool. Allows for precise control in defining edges through painting directly on the canvas.
- C Remove Refine Mask tool. Provides paintable control for removing areas affected by the Refine Mask function.

Figure 4.26 shows how we fixed the aliasing on the original matte using Refine Mask. Consider the following tips when using this function:



Figure 4.26 After some trial and error, the Refine Mask command has really helped smooth out the mask.

- Only use Smart Radius if you have irregular edges that transition from smooth to sharp to smooth again.
- Wait to paint. Make sure all the sliders are first set to 0. Start by adjusting the Radius slider, and then move on to the other sliders.
- Use the Refine Radius and Remove Refine Mask tools to further refine the mask with more precise control. Be as accurate as possible with the placement of your brush as you paint. If you need to make a minor fix, start painting away from the area and slowly move the brush back toward the area to watch the adjustments.
- If you want to compare the original mask with the refined mask, choose one of the New Layer options in the Output To menu when you've finished your adjustments.

#### **File Formats in Practice**

When creating graphics for use in a film or broadcast, it's quite common to have to deliver graphic elements to an editor for final placement into the project. Most editing systems natively support layered Photoshop documents, but some may not. If the editor is working outside an Adobe workflow, two of the more popular and widely



When using Command-click (Ctrl-click) to select transparent pixels, watch out for layer styles and Repoussé. Both need to be rasterized before their effects can be loaded as part of a transparency selection. Be sure to save another copy of the layer or document since these effects will no longer be editable. To rasterize layer styles or Repoussé, create a new blank layer, select both the new layer and the layer containing the layer styles (or Repoussé), and press Command+E (Ctrl+E) to merge the layers together. Then you can Command-click (Ctrl-click) on the thumbnail of the layer to load the transparency data.

supported formats for still graphics are TIFF and TARGA. Because they are uncompressed by default and also support alpha channels for transparency, they are a good choice for graphics.

### Manually Creating Alpha Channels

Saving a TIFF or TARGA file out of Photoshop is a straightforward process. But if you want a graphic to have transparency, you need to save that transparency information as an alpha channel. Here's a quick shortcut: Command-click (Ctrl-click) on the thumbnail of a layer to load any painted pixels as a selection (**Figure 4.27**). If you want to add more than one layer's information, hold down Command+Shift (Ctrl+Shift) as you click on more thumbnails in the Layers panel.



Figure 4.27 Once you're comfortable using Command-click (Ctrl-click) for quick selections, don't be surprised at just how often you'll use it.



To quickly and easily create a flattened file with an alpha channel, load the preset video actions in the Actions panel. The Alpha Channel from Transparency action will properly load all transparency, including any layer styles or Repoussé information, and create the proper alpha channel data. To save the selection as an alpha channel, choose Select > Save Selection and click OK. With the transparency saved as an alpha channel, the document is ready to save as a flattened TIFF or TARGA file while still preserving the transparency.

# **Preparing for Animation**

Layers are as essential to motion graphics as letters are to the written word. So, just like each letter has a purpose in composing a word, each layer should have a purpose in your compositions as well. When brainstorming about logo animation, it's always a good idea to start with some solid basics. The animation of a logo can be just as much of a brand mark as the still logo. Always try to ensure that the animation stays true to the brand.

#### **Importing Logos into After Effects**

There are three main ways to import files into After Effects (**Figure 4.28**). Which one you choose really depends on the sources you have at hand:

000	Import File	
	Project Files	c Q search
▼ DEVICES sbmbp Macintosh HD Macintosh HD ShARED mac001f5bea SoftBoxiMac' ▼ PLACES	ECO-Logo.ai	
Enable: Format: Import A: 🗸	All Acceptable Files Illustrator/PDF/EPS Footage Composition Composition – Retain Layer Siz	es k
	0	Cancel Open

Figure 4.28 Each of these three import options is designed to help speed up the animation process when importing layered Photoshop and Illustrator documents.

- Project files. If you've already animated a logo, you can import one After Effects project into another. This will bring all the compositions and sources into your current project. This workflow is best if you have some standard elements that you need to reuse from project to project.
- Composition. If your source is a layered Photoshop or Illustrator file, you're in luck. Someone worked hard to create all those layers, so preserve them. Layered files can and should be imported as compositions.

Footage. If you're in a hurry or are dealing with flattened sources, your choices are pretty limited. Any graphic you import into After Effects can be imported as footage. This is the most common option if your logo is a flattened graphic or a prerendered movie file with an alpha channel.

Let's explore the options you have when working with compositions or footage import.

#### **Compositions**

When importing a layered document for animation, choose Composition – Retain Layer Size. This makes animation faster because each layer is individually sized, and its anchor point is placed at the center of each layer as opposed to the center of the composition. With the anchor point already set to the center of each layer, transform properties like scale, position, and rotate will function as expected, centered on each layer. Importing layered Photoshop and Illustrator files as compositions is a great time-saver and results in a smooth workflow.

#### Footage

Anytime you import graphics or video into After Effects you're creating footage. Even when you import a layered Photoshop or Illustrator file as a composition, each layer that was imported is considered to be footage. To look at the specific properties of any footage item in After Effects, just select the footage item in the Project panel and look at the text to the right of the preview thumbnail at the top of the panel. You can find out more information if you Option-click (Alt-click) directly on the footage item.

It's sometimes necessary to change how After Effects interprets footage, such as to specify how the alpha channel or frame rate should be handled. To access the Interpret Footage dialog box, select the footage and choose File > Interpret Footage > Main (**Figure 4.29**).



When modifying footage in the Interpret Footage dialog box, you may notice that some of the fields are grayed out. Don't panic; that just means that the selected footage didn't have those properties to change in the first place.

#### II: Design Essentials



Figure 4.29 In the Main Options tab of the dialog box you can change the settings for the alpha channel, field order, frame rates, and pixel aspect ratio. If you're being plagued by strange render issues with certain shots, Interpret Footage is always a good place to start your troubleshooting process.

Since most motion graphics projects end up with a range of footage sources (to say the least), it's a good idea to be meticulous about organization. So if you haven't checked out Chapter 1, we covered several techniques for dealing with footage and keeping your projects organized while working in After Effects.

#### **Interpreting Alpha Channels**

Alpha channel information can be stored with color channels in two ways: straight and premultiplied. Whenever any footage with transparency is imported into After Effects, alpha channel data is being interpreted. For example, if you select any Photoshop footage in the Project panel, you'll see the words Millions of Colors + (Straight). The + denotes an alpha channel is present, and (Straight) means the footage has color channels that do not include information related to the alpha channel. Photoshop works with straight channels because they have the best color accuracy. Premultiplied channels are most common when dealing



If you're not quite sure what kind of channels you're dealing with, you can have After Effects guess for you as it analyzes the file on import. Just press the Guess button toward the top of the Interpret Footage dialog box. **Figure 4.30** In addition to changing the interpretation, if you're getting a strange fringe color, you can use the eyedropper to sample the specific color and clean up that edge.

with moving graphics. Adobe Premiere and After Effects support both kinds of channels.

If you ever notice a strange "halo" effect around your graphics, it's most likely due to how the alpha channel was interpreted. To fix this, just access the Interpret Footage dialog box and change the channel interpretation (**Figure 4.30**).

Interpret	Footage: O/ECO-Logo.ai
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#### **Converting Photoshop Text to Vector Type**

One of our favorite integration features between Photoshop and After Effects is editable text. Any editable text in Photoshop that is imported into After Effects can actually be converted into editable text in After Effects. Although this doesn't happen by default, it's an amazingly helpful feature. In the Timeline, just select any layers that were text in Photoshop and choose Layer > Convert To Editable Text. Now the text is exactly the same as it would be if you created it directly in After Effects.

Why should you convert your text in After Effects? Well, it's worth it! You can scale the text infinitely. You can also take advantage of the text animation controls in After Effects. We explore text animation more in Chapter 3, "Typography for the Screen."

### **Using Continuously Rasterize**

Continuous rasterization is applied when the Continuously Rasterize switch is selected on a vector graphic layer (**Figure 4.31**). This allows a vector graphic to scale without pixelation. Using continuous rasterization does increase render time because the graphic is continuously redrawn using the vector data. When you scale a vector logo over 100 percent and want to prevent the image from pixelating, using continuous rasterization is a must.



Figure 4.31 You can select or deselect Continuously Rasterize for each vector layer and choose exactly which layers need to remain sharp when scaling up to 100 percent.



# **Logo Animation Techniques**

Now, let's explore some additional techniques that we use most when it comes to animating a logo. We provide some step-by-step instruction, but the information we offer is more of a broad overview of ideas meant to motivate you.

Even if you have perfectly prepped source files, animating logos can be a little complicated. Not only do you need to find inspiration, but you'll also need to determine just how much creative latitude you have to manipulate the logo. The more you find out at the beginning of a project, the less heartache at the end.

Because almost all art is created through inspiration, many of the techniques we discuss are based on finding insight through the unique properties of each logo. And because a logo is an iconic representation of a brand, it's important to consider that as well.

#### **Using Audio for Inspiration**

If you ever get stuck with a logo or graphic that just doesn't excite you, audio is always a great place to turn. Ask your client for any other collateral marketing materials. Even if the client doesn't have any audio or video materials, use what you know about the brand to find something on your own. Adding audio to even the smallest animation will go a *long* way when it comes time to present that animation. As you're listening to various tracks of music, visualize your animation playing out to the key points in the music track.

If you need to find the music on your own, Adobe Soundbooth is a great place to start. In Soundbooth you'll find a large amount of royalty-free audio to use in your projects. We cover Soundbooth more in depth in Chapter 9, "Designing with Audio." Let's return to the process of animation once you've found the right audio soundtrack.

To time key points of your animation with key points in the audio, you'll need to use markers. Markers will translate across applications in Creative Suite 5. When you add markers in Premiere or Soundbooth, they'll import into After Effects either through import or Dynamic Link. Markers offer easy points to synchronize reveals for different pieces of a logo. After all, you'd like your logo to time out to the music or sound effects track whenever possible. We typically try to mark audio using applications like Soundbooth or Premiere Pro, but if you need to create markers directly within After Effects, there are several ways to do so.

To time an animation to audio, start with just the audio file first. To ensure that the audio is playing in realtime, load an audio only preview by pressing the . (decimal) key on your keypad instead of a RAM preview. As the audio preview is playing, you can add layer markers or composition markers into your projects. We recommend adding an adjustment or solid layer to hold just the markers or add them directly to the audio track.

To create a layer marker, select the layer you want to mark and press the \* (multiply) key on your keypad (Ctrl+8 on a Mac if you don't have a keypad). The marker will be added to the selected layer wherever your current time indicator is in the Timeline. For best results, invoke an audio preview and literally "tap out" the beat you want. If you need to remove a marker, you can right-click and delete it. Check out the files in the Chapter\_04\_Media folder included on the DVD to see just how useful the audio and markers were to create the ECO logo animation.

### **Gaining Control with Hierarchy**

When you have audio for your project, it's time to use the elements that make up the logo for further inspiration. Having a layered Illustrator file is essential, but once all those layers are imported into After Effects, you'll have to deal with a whole new set of challenges. Using the ECO logo animation as an example, as you spin one circle, you'll want the other circles to move interactively. To make animating all these layers effortless, you need to create a hierarchy among the circles (**Figure 4.32**).





Figure 4.32 The intertwined circles in this logo are screaming for some kind of animation where they can spin around and "interact" with each other.

#### **Parenting Layers**

If you've ever experimented with character animation, you've probably heard of the term rigging. For example, if you rotated the arm on a rigged character, the chain of animation would make the forearm, hand, wrist, and fingers follow the position of the rotation. In After Effects, the primary steps for rigging are achieved through parenting the layers (**Figure 4.33**). You could also use Expressions for extra control between parameters, but for now let's stick to parenting.

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Figure 4.33 Even though there are multiple levels of parenting, you can always clearly see the exact details by looking in the Parent column.

If the Parent column is not available along the top of your Timeline, right-click (Control-click) next to the word Source Name, select Columns, then select Parent from the list that appears (**Figure 4.34**) to show the Parent column. There are two ways to parent layers in After Effects:



Figure 4.34 In addition to activating the Parent column, you can activate a host of other columns via the same key command.

Select the layer you want to be the parent layer and click the menu in the Parent section of the Timeline panel. Choose the layer you want to control. That layer is now known as the child of the parent layer (Figure 4.35).



Pick Whip

Figure 4.35 It's rather straightforward to assign the parent/child relationship using either the menu or the pick whip.

Drag the pick whip for the parent layer to the layer name of the child layer. When the name is highlighted, let go of the pick whip. The child layer name should now appear in the parent layer, just like when you chose it from the list (Figure 4.35).

#### Null Objects

When you have to move a number of layers around a scene simultaneously, you can select all the layers and choose Layer > Pre-Compose. If you need to have access to all those individual elements, as well as every other layer in the composition, you'll want to create a null object. To create a null object, choose Layer > New > Null Object. With a null object, you can take all those layers you need to animate together and make them children of the null object.



Then you can apply your keyframes to the null object just like a pre-comp. Just remember that null objects do not control opacity. Anytime you think you might need a bit more control over the elements onscreen, a null object is always a good place to start.

### **Finishing Touches with Adjustment Layers**

More often than not, logos end up looking a little flat. It's just the nature of optimizing an icon to look good on anything from print to an iPod to a king-size home theater system. Here is where adjustment layers come to the rescue. You can apply an effect directly to the adjustment layer, and that effect will treat any layer that is below the adjustment layer in the composition (**Figure 4.36**). However, when you're working with iconic logos that have sharp edges and clean lines, it's very important to get the animation pixel perfect. Then take some time to look at some different ways to treat the footage.



Figure 4.36 The filters applied to the adjustment layers add depth and style to the logo animation.

To create an adjustment layer, choose Layer > New > Adjustment Layer. In the ECO logo animation, we used adjustment layers to apply the finishing flares, blurs, and color corrections. To draw attention to the center of the screen, we applied a blur and vignette to the edges of the canvas, masking out the center of the adjustment layer. To add some pop to the open, we used the CC Light Burst 2.5 effect to create the flash/glow at the beginning of the animation. You can even use adjustment layers with the Generate effects like Circle. Because the logo was so circular in animation, we wanted circular "rays of light" to fly out from behind the main part of the logo at key audio points. They were often pretty subtle, but it's those little things that can make or break an animation.

Check out the project files and QuickTime movie included on the accompanying DVD if you want a closer look at the ECO logo animation project. This page intentionally left blank

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