

WIVB TV

Adobe After Effects Delivers Award-Winning Graphics to Help WIVB TV Meet Tight News Deadlines

Adobe™ After Effects™ *in Television Graphics*

Key Benefits Summary

- Rendering time is reduced, due to the ability to apply multiple effects to a single layer.
- High-quality, eye-catching graphics not only win awards for the station, but they also help WIVB retain its viewing audience.
- Faster rendering and easy-to-use plug-ins give WIVB the time it needs to handle more commercial clients, thereby increasing revenues.

All the news that's fit to print is now more than fit to be viewed, if you happen to be one of the 350,000 WIVB TV viewers in and around Buffalo, New York. The CBS television affiliate produces award-winning graphics to accompany its news programs, creates promotions for upcoming shows, and produces local commercials. According to Kurt Murphy, art director for the station, about 60 percent of his work focuses on the opens, bumpers, and teasers for the daily news programs.

"News means tight deadlines," says Murphy. "With luck, we have a full day to produce the artwork. Often, we have only hours. Adobe After Effects software is the most powerful animation and compositing program available for meeting our tight production schedules. It also gives us a lot more flexibility, which enables us to be a lot more creative."

150-Layer News Open

Since he began using Adobe After Effects, Murphy says that WIVB's on-air look is "about 1,000 percent more effective." One of the first projects undertaken with the new software was the creation of a news open. The open has 150 layers and includes video, text, and elements from four or five other news projects—about 140 different elements altogether.

Murphy began by pulling the various elements into Adobe After Effects, and then he set up the animation by adding motion to the text layers. He was then able to use the same motion over and over again, merely substituting new PICT files. Many of those elements are now used in other WIVB projects. In fact, Murphy says that he can easily use these elements to pull together a teaser or promotion in about 20 minutes.

"Without Adobe After Effects, we simply wouldn't have this sophisticated open," Murphy says. "The station could not have afforded the \$40,000 to \$50,000 that a production house would charge. And even if it could have, the open wouldn't have been as eye-catching, or as easy to change.

"Adobe After Effects makes the difference. We can now create high-quality, sophisticated animations and broadcast graphics in record time. However, that was not always the case."

Before Adobe After Effects: Limited Capability, Limited Creativity

Previously, Murphy relied on the combination of a character generator, an Aurora 128 Paintbox, a digital video effects (DVE) machine, and various switchers to link everything together. He could work with no more than six layers at a time and had a limited color palette.

Timing delays were perhaps the biggest problem because the composite had to go through several switchers and the DVE machine. Murphy says that he always ended up with black edges, no matter what. As a result, the art department could only produce simple graphics and animations.

The process also posed logistical problems. Three people were required—the art director, the segment director, and someone to handle the tape—and the control room had to be scheduled in advance. Because the news graphics and animations required so much time, WIVB was limited in the number of commercial clients that it could handle, which translated into lost revenues.



"For years, I had asked for a Quantel Paint system," says Murphy. "But at \$60,000 to \$150,000, it would have been a real budget-buster. Now, I'm glad we didn't get it."

Adobe After Effects Delivers Creativity

In lieu of the Quantel system, WIVB purchased Murphy an Apple® Macintosh Quadra® 950 running Adobe After Effects and Adobe Photoshop™ software. It has proven to be a winning combination for the station.

"I complete projects much faster with Adobe After Effects and Adobe Photoshop than some artists who work on the Quantel Harry," says Murphy. "Rendering time has been slashed for most projects by more than half.

"Plus, I don't have to coordinate schedules for the control room and three people. Most important, I can create opens, bumpers, teasers, and other elements that rival anything put out on a Quantel. The awards the station has received prove that."

Murphy can also do things such as subtle blurs and blends that he couldn't do before. For example, a recent news opening showed a logo coming into focus on a camera lens, complete with moving high-lights and shadows. In addition, he has a full color palette at his fingertips.

The compositing features of Adobe After Effects 3.0 are probably the biggest bonus for WIVB's art department. Murphy creates approximately 15 stills in Adobe Photoshop every day. Those native files, as well as files created using Adobe Illustrator™ software, can now be imported directly into Adobe After Effects and manipulated there. The Adobe Illustrator images can then be scaled to any size and still retain the highest-quality resolution and level of detail.

Multiple elements can be used in a single layer, and multiple layers can be created. Initially, Murphy created a news open comprising 150 layers. He saved many of the elements and now uses them in other projects. All layers can be composited in a single pass.

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—Kurt Murphy,
art director,
WIVB TV

The enhanced motion control capabilities in Adobe After Effects are also impressive and will help Murphy solve many of the problems he previously faced. For example, Time Remapping gives Murphy the control to manipulate the time for any layer, to create slow motion, palindrome looping, stuttering, and other timing effects. Roving keyframes provide smooth acceleration between keyframes.

Adobe After Effects has enabled WIVB TV to win numerous awards, including two gold, one silver, and three bronze medals from the Western New York Creative Awards. Work created in Adobe After Effects also earned a gold and three bronze medals from the prestigious International Broadcast Designers Association.

Roll Over, Beethoven

One of the award-winning promotions that Murphy created in Adobe After Effects was a promotion for a special about Beethoven.

The piece begins with a small musical score. The notes in the score then animate, forming a bust of Beethoven.

Murphy began with a scan of a Beethoven bust (2000 x 1600 pixels) at 72 dpi and notes photocopied from a music book. Using the scan as a guide, he positioned the notes over Beethoven's face, until the face was formed. He then created an animation in which the notes fly on and form the face.

Working one frame at a time within After Effects, Murphy scaled each note down until the face was formed. He relied on the motion control features of the software to ensure a smooth transition. "The entire motion of melting from notes to the bust was smooth and seamless," Murphy says.

"Adobe After Effects gives me powerful compositing and editing tools that enable me to create eye-catching graphics in time for the nightly news," Murphy says. "Like other graphic designers, I used to dream of working on a Quantel Harry with a lot of specialized software. Adobe After Effects gives me much more flexibility at a fraction of the cost, which translates into more creative work for the station and more free time to take on commercial clients."

WIVB TV Systems at-a-Glance

Hardware

Apple Macintosh Quadra 950 with 72 MB of RAM
Apple Macintosh Quadra 840 AV with 64 MB of RAM
1 GB hard drive
2 GB hard drive

Software

Adobe After Effects
Adobe Illustrator
Adobe Photoshop
Adobe Premiere™

Adobe Systems Incorporated
1585 Charleston Road, P.O. Box 7900
Mountain View, CA 94039-7900 USA

Adobe Systems Europe Limited
Adobe House, Mid New Cutlins
Edinburgh EH11 4DU
Scotland, United Kingdom

Adobe Systems Co., Ltd.
Yebisu Garden Place Tower
4-20-3 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku
Tokyo 150 Japan

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