

COMPUTER



→ AFTER EFFECTS

DIGITAL GLITCH EFFECTS

Dstrukt's Chris James Hewitt believes third-party plug-ins can change the way you work in *After Effects* forever. Here he reveals a great way to create realistic glitch effects to roughen-up your moving image work

→ When making animations for your video projects in 3D packages do you ever find that everything starts to look a little too clean? The current vogue for an all-digital workflow means perfect fidelity throughout the process, but sometimes you need to roughen things up a bit.

Analogue technologies, such as cine film and VHS video, had inherent flaws. Film has a grain and video creates distortion, but everyone loves a little bit of glitch – from directors such as Chris Cunningham to musicians like Telefon Tel Aviv, Chris Clark and Autechre. I also have an unearthly love for anything distorted or broken. I have no idea where this love comes from, and why when I hear and see static the hairs on the back of my neck stand to attention.

In this tutorial I'll show you how to tweak your footage to give it a grungy feel. You'll do this by adding camera shake and flicker, before tinting and grading the footage to give a bit more impact. This tutorial is all about using plug-ins to your advantage – including *Boris Continuum 3*, *Essential Effects* and *Tinderbox 3*. Not only will your workflow become much faster, but you might find this opens you up to a different way of thinking when it comes to your 'post' work in *After Effects*. It's all about making plug-ins do the hard work for you...

DOWNLOAD



DOWNLOAD
Click here to download the files you need to complete this tutorial

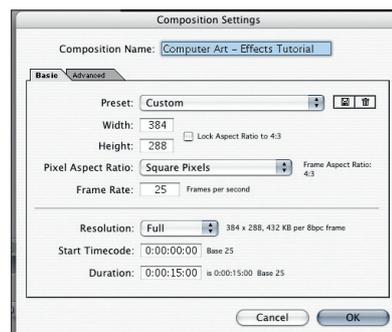
TIME NEEDED

1 hour

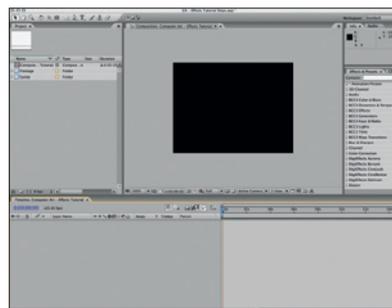
INFO



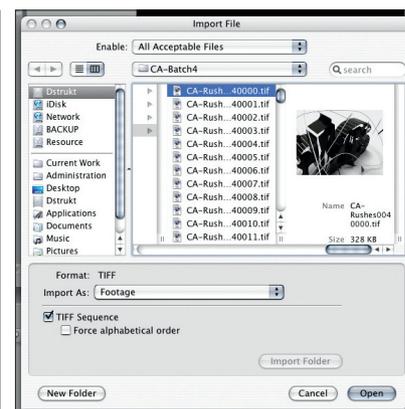
Chris James Hewitt is a freelance motion designer and art director currently based in Covent Garden, London. Working under his Dstrukt guise, Chris has produced work for a mix of high-end clients scattered across the globe, including MTV Networks Europe, Channel Five, the BBC, Digitalvision and Rolls Royce, receiving critical acclaim for both online and traditional media. Find out more at www.dstrukt.com.



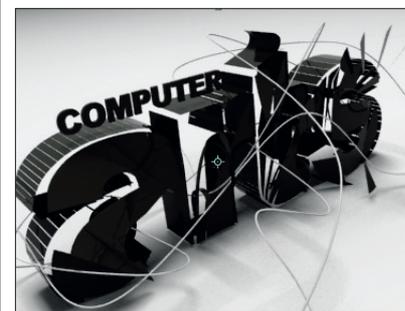
1 Once *After Effects* is up and running, go to the Composition tab at the top of the screen and hit New Composition. I rendered my 3D footage at half PAL res, so this composition should be the same. Make sure the Preset drop-down is set to Custom and the width and height to 384x288. Set the Aspect Ratio to Square Pixels and the duration to 15 seconds.



2 Before you import the footage, set up the necessary folders within *After Effects* to keep track of the elements. Click the small folder icon at the bottom of the project float and name the newly created folder Footage. This is where you'll store your imported edits. For larger projects, set up the following: Footage, Solids, Audio, Vector and PSD.



3 Now go to File→Import and browse the directory containing the included footage from the CD. I rendered from *3ds Max* as a series of *QuickTime* movies. Click the first image from the sequence, hit the TIFF Sequence tab and press Open. *After Effects* has now imported the sequence of images as a merged clip. Import all the different edits and arrange them into the correct folder.



4 I used three of the four edits to compose this piece. You should start by dragging one of the clips into the timeline and then hitting O on your keyboard to see the buffer head go to the end of that clip's duration. Arrange the remaining edits together, ensuring that each clip starts at the end of another to avoid overlapping. →



→ AFTER EFFECTS

WORK AT LOW-RES

In your composition window you can choose what resolution your work is viewed at. This can be extremely useful when working with heavy file sizes such as live footage, plug-ins and high resolution PSDs. Try using half and third to help speed up your workflow.

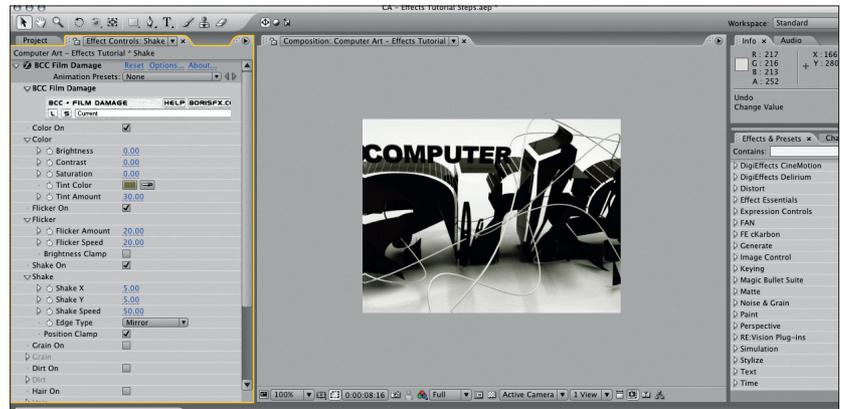


5 You now have a base structure. By hitting 0 on your number pad you can RAM preview the animation so far. It's very linear and there's room to add some dynamics. Add an Adjustment Layer. When you apply an effect to an ordinary layer, the effect applies only to that layer. However, an effect can exist independently if you create an Adjustment Layer for it.

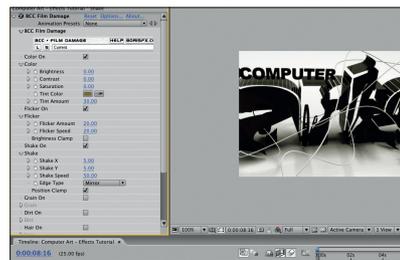
6 With the Adjustment Layer selected, go to the Effects palette and select Essential Effects Camera Flash (EE Camera Flash). The default value is too high, so drop the Intensity down to 5 per cent, leaving the Saturation at 0.0 and the colour White. The footage will have a bleached out feel to it – something I class as global effect, meaning it's applied to everything in the composition and isn't keyframed in any way.



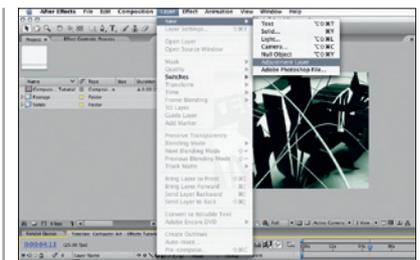
7 Next up is one of the more intense effects you'll be applying to your project. Create another Adjustment Layer and get some camera shake on the go! Select Boris Continuum's *Film Damage* from the Effects palette and ensure that Colour, Flicker and Shake are all turned on. Choose a Tint Colour and increase the amount to 30.00, ensuring the Brightness, Contrast and Saturation are all set to 0.0.



8 Next, tweak the Flicker values. You can change these to your taste, but here I used a value of 20.00 for both the amount and speed. This will give you a steady and not too overpowering strobe effect.

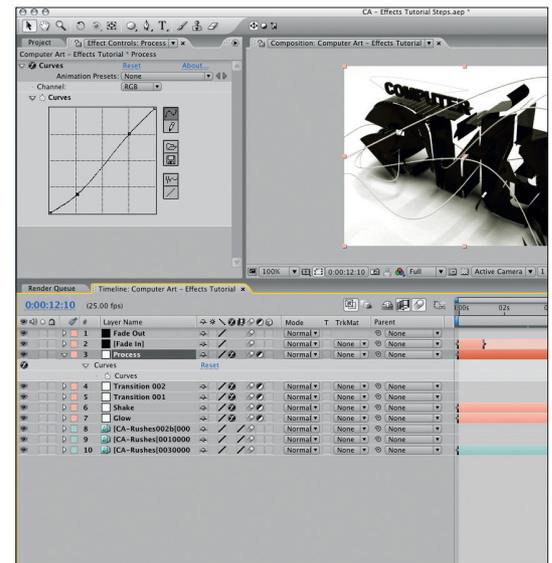


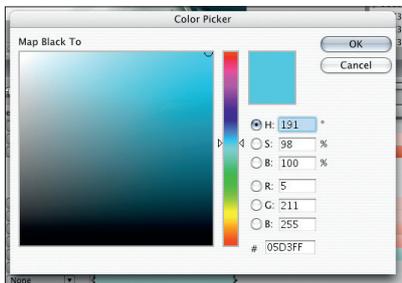
9 To add the camera shake, set the X- and Y-axes to 5.00 with a speed of 50.00. Although the *Film Damage* plug-in is amazing, I tend not to use the shake too often. The movements can be quite rigid and it lacks a lot of motion blur. To make your own, try linking your footage to a Null layer and adjust the position values every two to four frames.



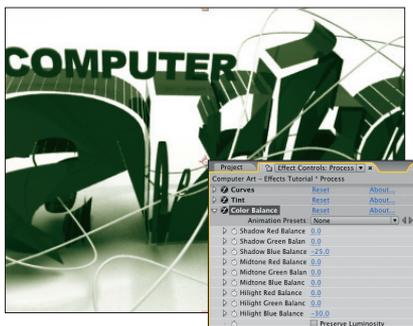
10 Before you add your transitional effect, focus a little more on the grade of your piece. Colour grading is the process of altering and enhancing the colour of a motion picture or television image – either electronically, photo-chemically or digitally. Rather than using third-party plug-ins, you can do this manually using *After Effects'* Colour Correction tools.

11 Start by selecting Curves from the Effects palette. The Curves effect adjusts the tonal range of an image. You can use Levels to do this, but Curves gives you more control. Click in both the bottom left of the graph and the top right to add two control points. Carefully adjust these points until you find a suitable range for your footage. You might find you need to add more than two points in order to get the desired effect.

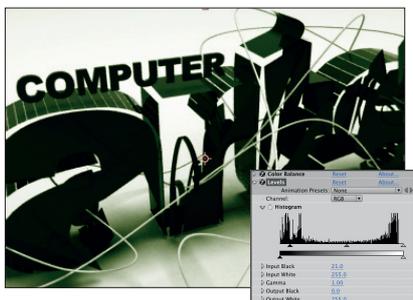




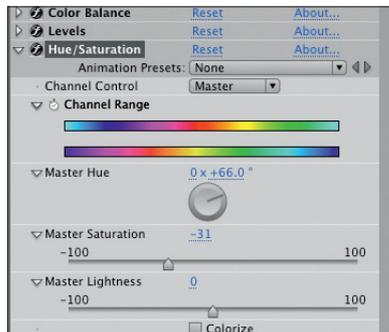
12 Next select the Tint effect from your Effects palette. This alters an image's colour information. Select your colour of choice from the Map To Black channel and leave the white to gently add some colour to the middle of your footage. Don't forget to drop the tint amount to roughly 15 per cent so you don't overpower the scene.



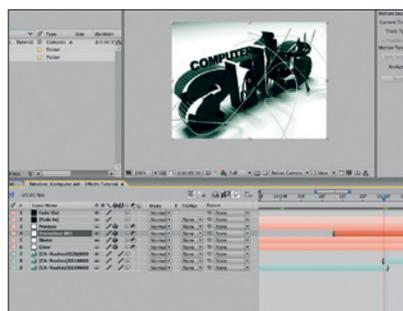
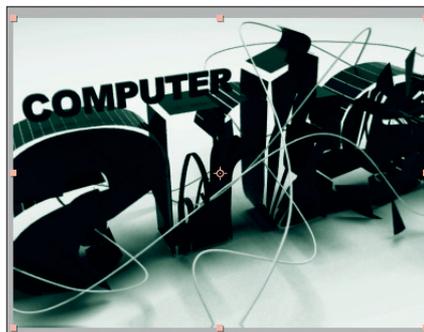
13 The Colour Balance effect changes the amount of red, green and blue colour in a layer. This is where you can pump colour into footage using the Shadows, Midtones and Highlights. Experiment with adjusting the values and see what works best. I've only tweaked the Blue Shadows by -12 and the Blue Highlights by -30. This turned my blacks into a muddy brown colour.



14 The Levels effect remaps the range of input colour levels on to a new range of output colour levels, and also changes the gamma correction curve. Play around and see what works best for your source footage. I increased the input black a little to deepen the look and feel.

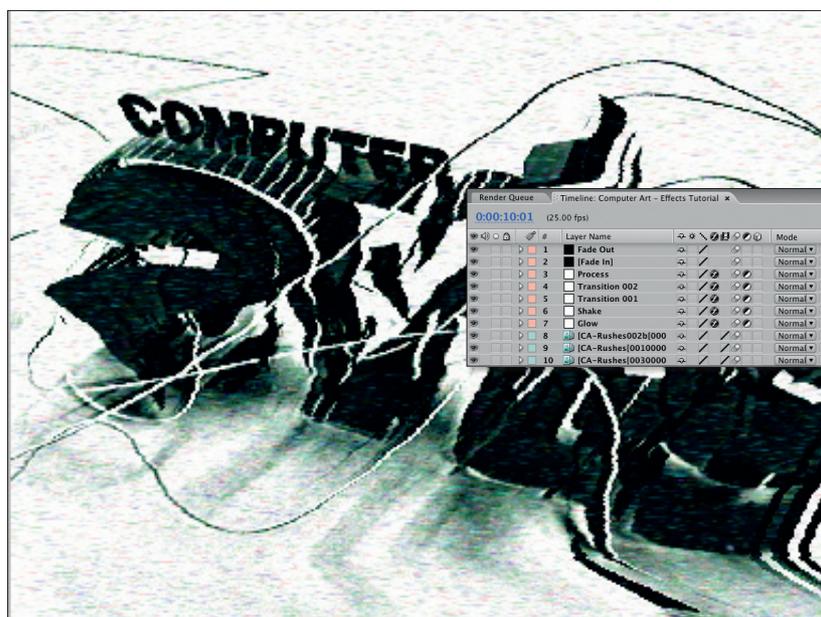
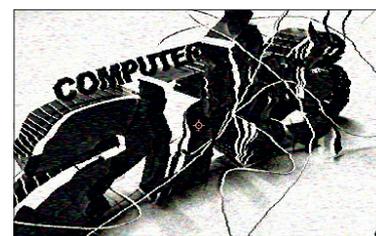


15 Now for the final stage of the grading process, adding Hue/Saturation from the Effects palette. This effect adjusts the Hue, Saturation and Lightness of individual colour components in an image. Drag the colour wheel and watch how your footage changes colour. You can also adjust how much colour is pushed through using the Saturation slider.



16 So far you should have a well-structured, graded and funky piece of motion design, but the piece lacks transitions between each clip. Create a new Adjustment Layer and cut the Duration down to one second. Drag the layer so that the midpoint is directly between your first two clips.

17 In the Effects palette, select Tinderbox's *Bad TV* plug-in. Choose *Bad TV* from the Preset drop-down and make sure Tint is selected. Now, instead of adjusting the plug-in's value, edit the Adjustment Layer's transparency to make the effect fade in and out. Hit I so the buffer head goes to the start of the layer, hit T and add a keyframe for the transparency. Set this to 0.0. Move the buffer head to the midpoint of the layer and set the Transparency to 100. Hit O, keyframe to 0.0 and hit Preview.



18 Duplicate the transition layer and place it inbetween the following clips to finish the film off. One idea might be to tweak the *Bad TV* values for each transition. This way each edit will differ slightly. **arts**

SHY LAYERS
When working with lots and lots of layers, don't forget to use Shy Layers. By ticking the small face icon on the selected layer you can now make this and any other layer 'shy' - or hidden. Simply turn on Shy Layers in the Timeline. This is a great feature to use if you're working with highly complex and/or scattered compositions.