

After Effects : A bluffer's guide

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Introduction

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Digital Distortion Showreel

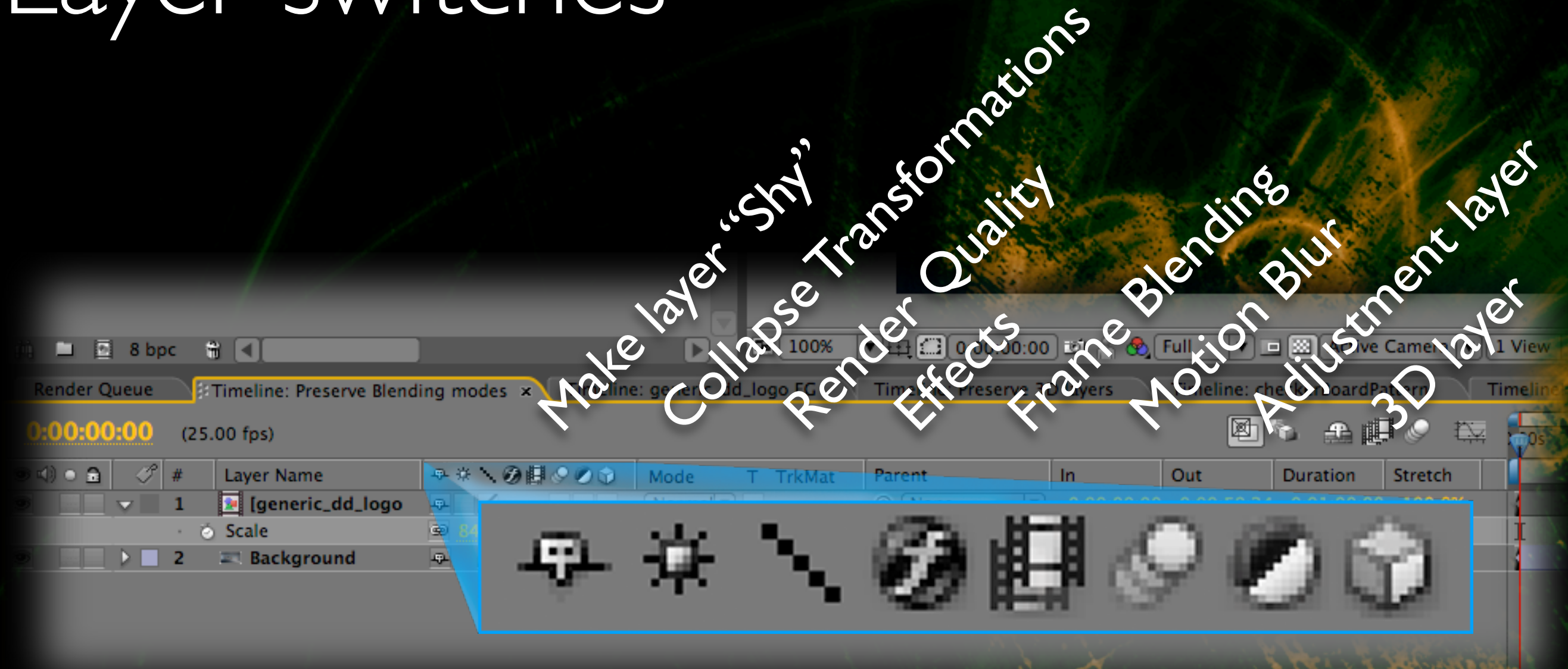
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Video Removed to reduce filesize
You can see it in the Portfolio section
of www.digitaldistortion.net

Part I: The simple little things

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Layer switches



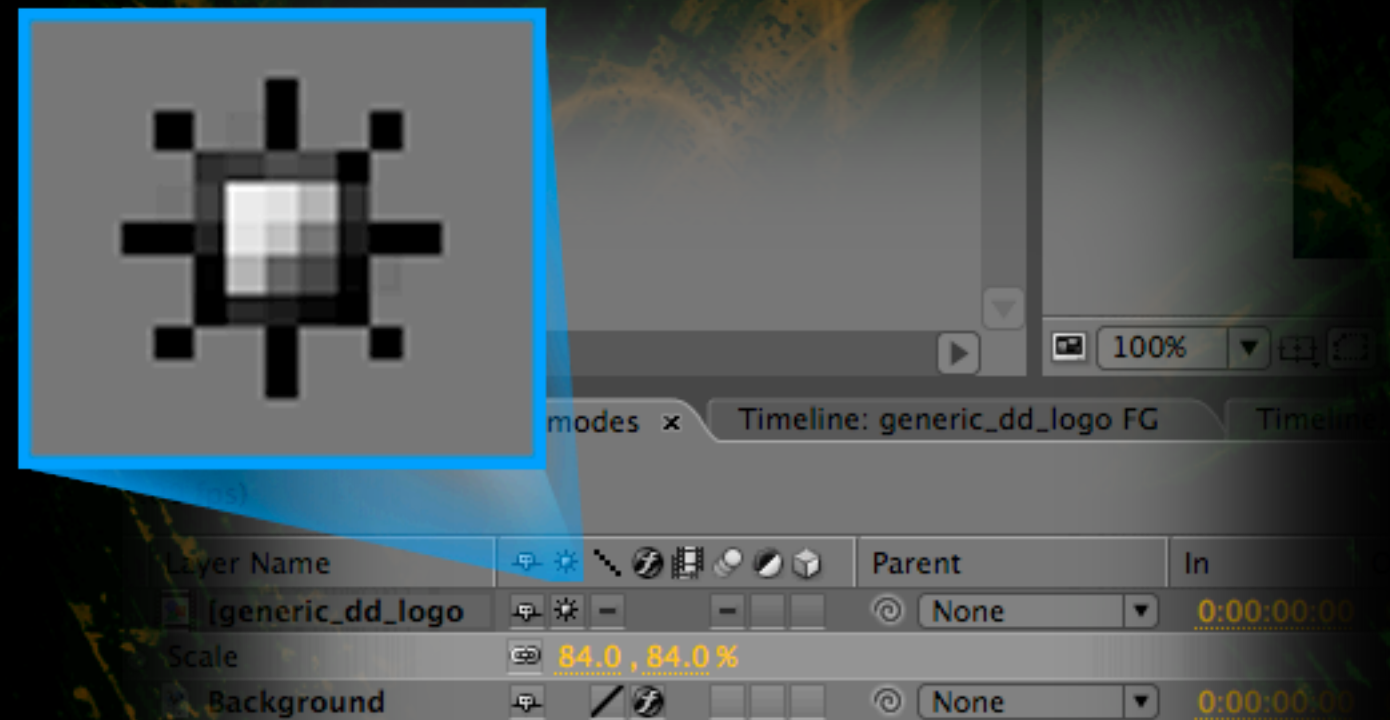
Don't be shy - Pre-compose!

- Helps keep your projects organised by cutting down on the number of layers in a composition
- Allows you to make source files easily editable - very useful if you need to swap out video footage and the replacement has different timings or formats
- In many cases, intelligent use of pre-comps will speed up rendering. Comps are cached - no rendering penalty if multiple instances are used.



Collapsing your comps

- The “Collapse Transformations” layer switch has multiple uses
- It keeps vector artwork crisp by dynamically redrawing it after any resizing or rotation
- When used with comp layers, it forces that comp’s internal layers to occupy the same timeline as the parent comp
- This can be used to preserve layer blending modes and 3D positioning in nested comps

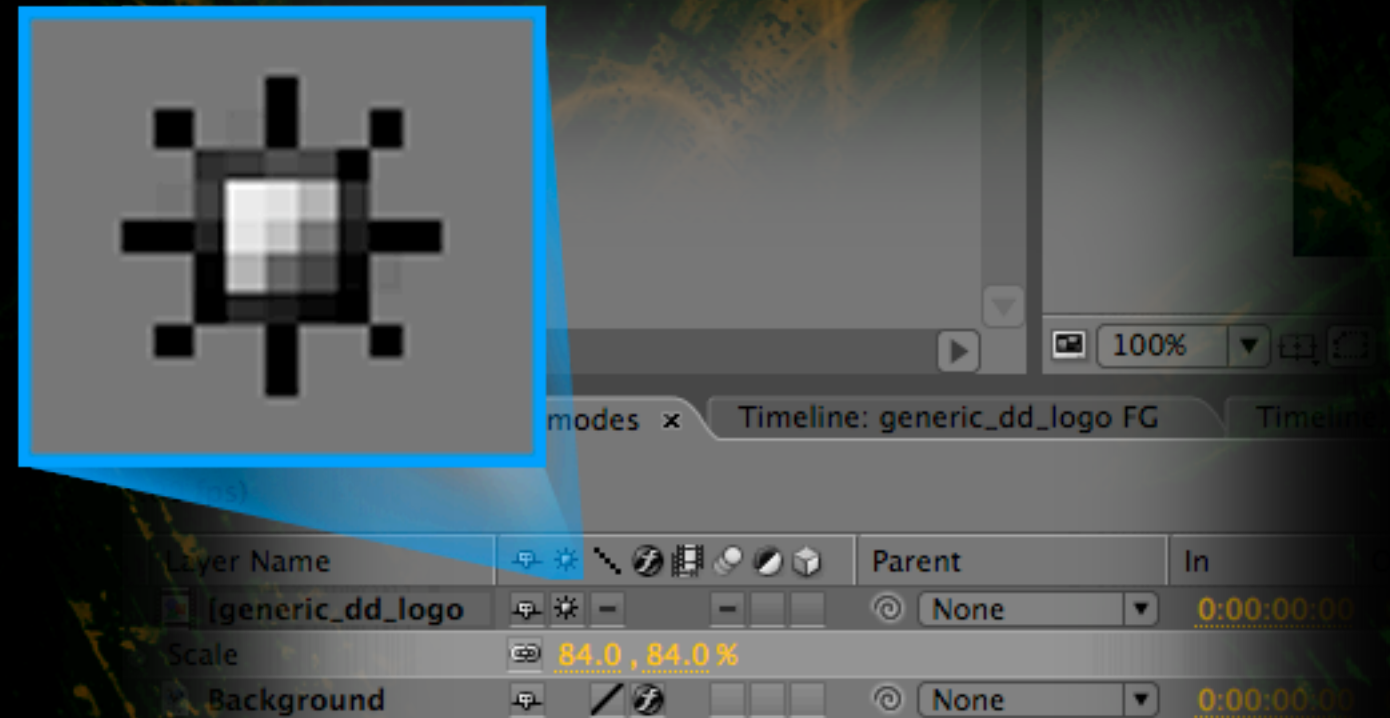


Demo: Preserving Blending Modes

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Demo: Preserving 3D Layers

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Part 2: Keying and Compositing

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Preparing your footage

- Untreated DV footage can produce a noticeably blocky matte when chroma keyed
- Use the “Channel Combiner” filter to convert the footage from RGB back to the YUV colour space so you can soften the UV channels using “Channel Blur”, then convert back to RGB using another Channel Combiner
- Ringing / Haloing can be caused by mis-alignment of the RGB or YUV channels



Original DV footage



After UV channel blur

Demo: Preparing DV footage

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Putting the elements together

- Our finished comp is built using 3 main comps.
 1. A foreground matte comp
 2. A foreground colour comp
 3. A background comp
- Having these as separate comps gives us much greater control of the colours and blending afterwards



Demo: Keying and Compositing

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Keying & Compositing - Recap

- Colour match foreground to background using separate RGB levels
- Inside your Foreground Colour Comp, add blurred versions of the background plate, masked using blurred foreground matte for the spill
- If it's matted and colour-matched well enough, a strong overall grade on the finished comp will pull the elements together, so they'll look even more like part of the same scene

Real-world example: Music Video

Katherine Williams - "When"

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Part 3: Make stuff go boom

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The joy of plug-ins

- After Effects has tons of cool plugins available from third parties
- Two plugins I find indispensable:
Knoll Light Factory and Trapcode Particular
- Scripts for AE speed up workflow and reduce repetitive tasks
- Expressions allow complex control of effects and layers

Good working practice

- Use Null Objects! Try to link common movement to the minimum number of objects - no more copying and pasting keyframes
- Use Parenting or Expressions to link Nulls and Layers together. Using Expressions you can even link between different comps
- Wiggle Expression is VERY useful and easy to apply

Demo: Effects and Expressions

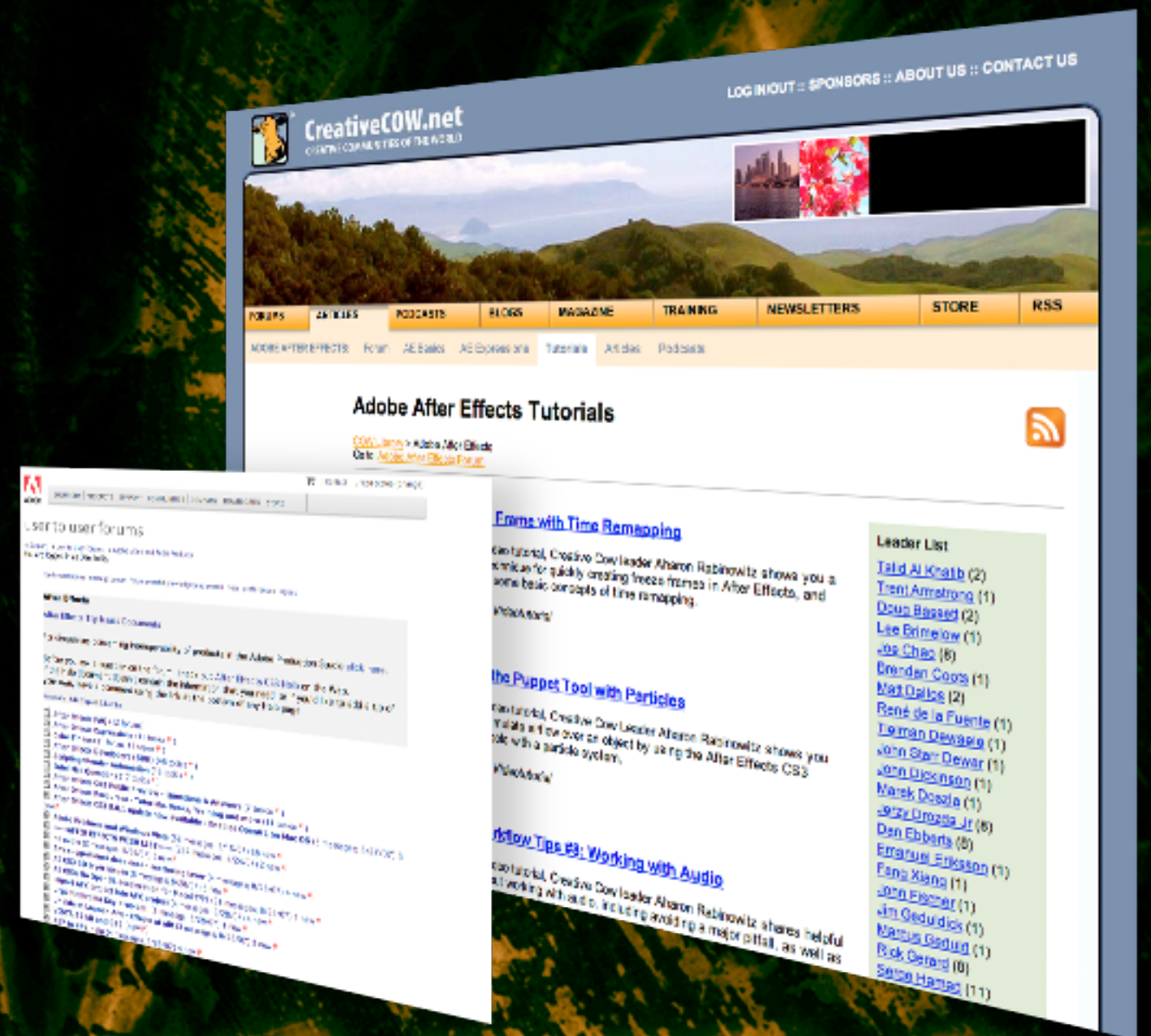
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Part 4: Final thoughts

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Online resources

- www.CreativeCow.net
After Effects tutorials
- www.AEnhancers.com
Scripting and Expressions site
- www.adobeforums.com
Adobe's own forums
- www.digitaldistortion.net



Q&A

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