

bowling the crowd

Get a crowd together in a 3D arena
and knock them off their feet.



a tutorial for : [planar assistant](#) : from 3d assistants

3d assistants



arrange and animate your 3D layers.

[from Digital Anarchy]

f/x tools for revolutionaries.



Let's put a crowd together in a 3D arena, and knock them off their feet. With our After Effects talent, no doubt, as well as the Planar Assistant. [figure 1]

01- create a new comp

Open the After Effects project file called Crowd and create a new 320x 240 composition of any duration.

Bring all the Illustrator files in the Project Window (red man.ai, blue man.ai, yellow man.ai, green man.ai, magenta man.ai) into your comp.

02- quality check

Click on Continuously Rasterizing button for each AI man (or Illustrator layer).

Since we're moving around in 3D space, the little men will be scaled up and down based on far away they are from the camera. Continuously Rasterizing will make sure they are rendered crisply without any pixelization.

Click the 3D check box for each layer, and set their quality to best. The 3D Assistants only work on 3D layers

03- create a camera

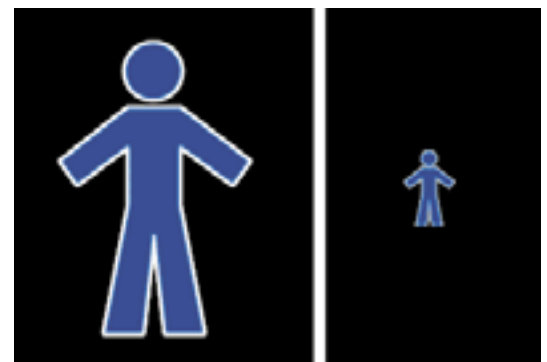
Go to Layer> New Camera to create a new camera. Select the 35mm preset and click OK.

Select the camera and type 'P' to call up its Position properties.

Input the following position values for the camera: 160, 0, -1200. This will give you a better view of the crowd you are about to create. [figure 2]



[figure 1]



[figure 2] Left side is before the camera move. Right side is afterwards.



04- anchor that man

Now select one 'man' in the Timeline and double-click to open up his Layer window.

Move the anchor point from the middle of the layer to the middle bottom. [figure 3] Repeat for all of the five 'man' layers.

This changes the rotation point of the layers. After we set all the men up, we're going to knock them down. Since we don't want little foosball guys spinning around their center, we've moved the center of rotation down to their feet, so they fall down like normal people.

Move the anchor point for each AI man.

Of course, if you WANT the men to fall down like they've been run through with a pogo stick, well, that's up to you.

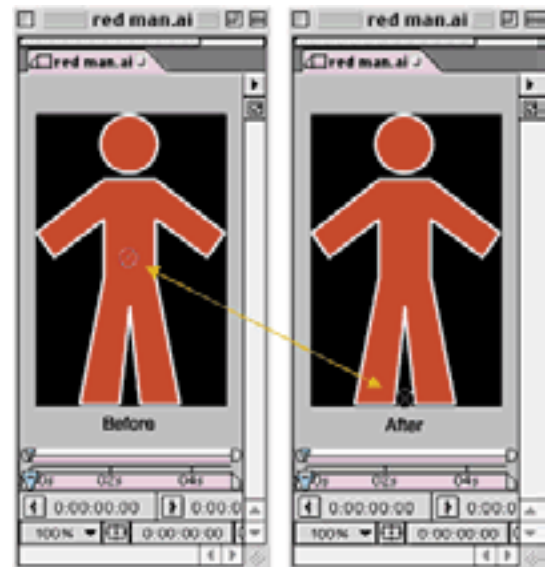
As for me, I'm off to the more exciting venture of setting up the 3D Planar Assistant.

Set 'em up, Knock 'em down. Now that we've organized our 3D men, let's use the Planar Assistant to bowl them over.

05- apply planar assistant

Select all of the 'man' layers and go to Window> Planar Assistant.

The Planar Assistant interface will appear. The layers that are selected are the ones that will be affected by the Assistant.



[figure 3]



06- your values

In the Starting Value section, select Distribute Randomly. This will scatter the little men throughout the plane in a random fashion. [figure 4]

Set Layer Orientation to None, and set the plane orientation to XZ.

In the Options section, select Use Comp center to center the crowd in the composition. Also select Random Layer Selection, which will ignore the layers' order in the time layout window and select the layers randomly.

Select Repeat Layer Selection and set the value to 5. This will repeat each of the 5 selected layers 5 times, adding another 25 little men to the scene, for a total of 30.



[figure 4]

07- your orientation

Finally, click on the checkbox for inserting an Orientation keyframe. Very important! This will set a keyframe for the Orientation of every layer selected.

This value allows you to animate the layers from that point in the future. Since we want to animate these guys falling down, setting keyframes for the Orientation is important. If we wanted them dancing around as well, we'd set keyframes for Position as well.

Click Apply.

So now we've got all these guys spread out on the dance floor. And we're going to knock them all out of commission. [figure 5]



[figure 5]

Remember in STEP 06, where we told the Assistant to insert a keyframe for all the Orientation properties? That's going to come in handy. In this final stage, we'll reexamine our orientation in order to make the little men all fall down along the X axis.



08- bring up props

Move to 00:00:20 (20 frames into the timeline). Make sure all the 'men' layers are selected.

Press the 'R' key to show all the rotation and orientation properties. [figure 6] The Orientation for each layer should have a keyframe set for it at 00:00:00.



[figure 6]

NOTE : If it doesn't, go back to 00:00:00. With all the layers selected. press option + R on the Mac (alt + R on the PC). Then return to 00:00:20.

09- orient to x axis

Set the Orientation along the X axis for any layer to -90. This will set all the selected layers to -90 on the X axis, which will cause them all to fall down. [figure 8]

That's it! Render out the movie to see if it looks like ours.

Try playing around. Make the guys dance a bit before knocking them out. Have them fall down and bounce back up. Experiment.



[figure 7]



[figure 8]