

illusion of 3D

Using the Spheriod Creator and AE's Orient

Towards Camera function, you can easily disguise
the 2D personality of your layers.



a tutorial for : [spheriod creator](#) : from 3d assistants



[arrange and animate your 3D layers.](#)

[from Digital Anarchy]

f/x tools for revolutionaries.



A shortcoming of After Effects' 3D space is that while you can place and animate layers in 3D space, you're still dealing with 2D. When viewed from the side, it becomes obvious that your layers don't have any Z-depth. This can quickly destroy the illusion of 3D.

Orient Towards Camera is a function that can disguise the two-dimensionality of your layers. Our tutorial details how this technique can be used with our 3D Assistants to create animations that you'd swear were done in a true 3D application. [figure 1]

01- create a new comp

Open the 'Illusion' project. You will see an image file called 'blue flare.psd' in the project window. [figure 2] This file will be the basis of our animation.

Keep in mind that this technique works with any image file or movie file, especially ones that look dimensional to begin with.

Create a new 320 x240 composition with a duration of 5 seconds.



[figure 1]

02- adding image

Bring the 'blue flare' file into your composition. Check its 3D switch to designate it as a 3D layer.

Set the layer's transfer mode to Add. This will give us a nice overexposed effect when the flares overlap.

03- camera position

Go to Layer> New Camera and select the 20mm preset. Click OK.

Set the camera's position to 160, 120, -800.



[figure 2]



04- layer orientation

Select the blue flare layer and go to Layer> Transform> Auto Orient. The Auto Orient Window will appear.

Select 'Orient Towards Camera' and click OK. [figure 3]
Now your layer will face the camera no matter where you put it in the composition.



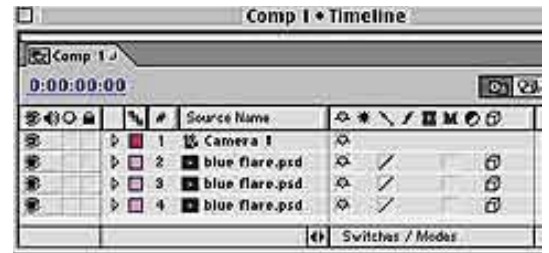
[figure 3]

05- duplicate blue flare layer

Duplicate the blue flare layer twice so that you have a total of 3 blue flare layers. [figure 4]

Now we're ready to jump into the 3D Assistants, specifically, the Spheroid Creator.

We've gotten through the setup of our AE file, and turned on Orient Towards Camera to fake a three-dimensional layer.



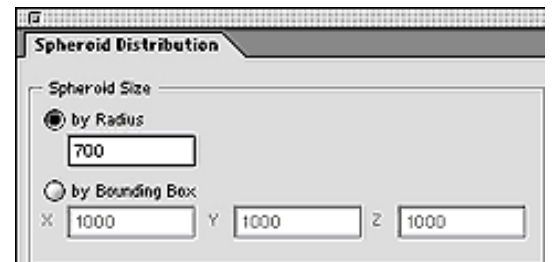
[figure 4]

Now we'll jazz up our composition with the Spherical 3D Assistant.

06- open spheroid distribution

Select all of the blue flare layers and go to Window> Spheroid Distribution. The Spheroid Distribution window will appear.

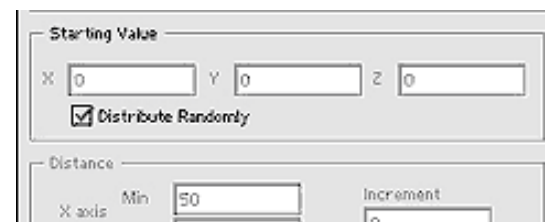
In the 'Spheroid Size' section, select 'by Radius' and type in 700 for the value. [figure 5]



[figure 5]

07- spheroid values

In 'Starting Value' select 'Distribute Randomly.' [figure 6]
This will disable the Distance and Increment options.

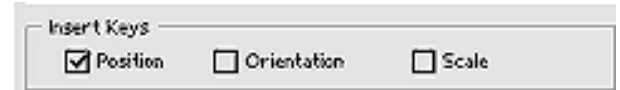


[figure 6]



08- set position keyframes

Click the checkbox for 'Position' in the 'Insert Keys' section. [figure 7] This will automatically set position keyframes for all of your layers.



[figure 7]

09- whole sphere

Select 'Whole Sphere' at the bottom of the window. [figure 8]



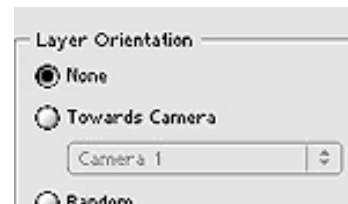
[figure 8]

Set 'Layer Orientation' to 'None.' [figure 9]

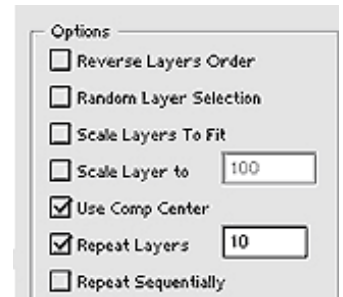
10- more values

In the Options menu, select 'Use Comp Center' to keep the group of layers centered in the comp's 3D space. [figure 10]

Finally, select the 'Repeat Layers' option and input a value of 10. This will multiply the 3 layers you have selected by 10, giving you 30 additional layers for a total of 33.



[figure 9]



[figure 10]

When you've input all of these values hit 'Apply'.

11- blue flare cluster

Voila! You should now be looking at a cluster of 33 little blue flares. [figure 11] (Don't worry if some of them are off the screen.)

With all of the blue flare layers still selected, set the time marker to the last frame of the animation.



[figure 11]

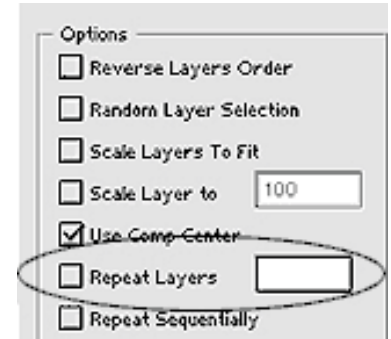


12- deselect repeat layers

Go back to the Spheriod Distribution window. Your previous settings will still be there.

Deselect the 'Repeat Layers' option. [figure 12] This is very important. Failure to do this will result in your 33 layers being multiplied by 10.

Be careful of this feature. It's easy to forget it's on and create more layers than your machine can handle.



[figure 12]

13- previewing animation

With 'Repeat Layers' turned off, click Apply. Your layers have now been distributed in the same spherical space, but they all have different positions.

Preview your animation. You should see the blue flare layers slowly changing position over time. Now we'll add more action to the animation.

A cool feature of the 3D Assistants is that they will generate a different random value every time they are used if you have 'Distribute Randomly' selected. If for some reason you don't like a particular random arrangement, just click 'Apply' again and you'll get a new distribution. Now let's spice up our composition.

14- start to spice it up

When you preview your animation, you should see the blue flare layers slowly changing position over time.

With the layers still selected, set the time marker to 2:15, the halfway point of the animation. In the Spheriod Distribution window, set the radius to 50 and click 'Apply.'

Your layers should now be starting as a loose cluster, gathering in the middle of the comp, and returning to a different loose cluster.



15- null object layer

Set the time marker to the beginning of your comp and go to Layer> New Null Object.

Click the 3D check box next to the Null Object to designate it as a 3D layer.

16- parent settings

Select all of your blue flare layers. In the Parent column of the Time Layout window, change any of the layers' parent from None to Null 1.

When a group of layers is selected, changing any one of the layers' parent settings will change the parent settings for the group.

NOTE to AE 5.0 users

5.0 does not support Auto-Orient when layers are attached to a Null object. Your results will look slightly different than if you were using AE 5.5.

Now we'll add more motion using the Null object.

17- the finishing touches

Select the Null object and type 'R' on the keyboard to bring up its rotation values. With the time marker still at the beginning of the comp, set a keyframe for Y rotation.

Go to the end of the comp and input 6x+0.0 for the Y rotation value.

Preview the animation. Notice that the flares never look flat, despite the fact that they're rotating and flying all over the screen. [figure 13]



[figure 13]