

# Adobe After Effects: Smoking Text by Eran Stern

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Available at Creative Cow Tutorials,

[http://library.creativecow.net/articles/stern\\_eran/The\\_Smoke/video-tutorial.php](http://library.creativecow.net/articles/stern_eran/The_Smoke/video-tutorial.php)

The idea is to change the shape of the text using a displacement map with video, AND see the video inside the text at the same time.

## *This tutorial shows us:*

- How to use a video in place of a still image as a displacement map
- How to use an alpha channel to 'see' video 'through' text
- How to scale text for animation
- How to move rows of text within one text block
- How to move the reference point (of a text block) for effect and scale transitions
- How to use Adjustment Layers

## *You need:*

- Some video (a short clip) of a suitable visual 'effect', like smoke or light or flames etc
- To have already done the Displacement Maps (without video) tutorial

## The Displace Composition

1. Bring the video clip into After Effects and drag onto the new composition icon.
2. Rename this 'Displace'.
3. Open the composition.
4. Select the video clip in the timeline.
5. Blur the video slightly, by using 'effect/fast blur' or similar.
6. Put a 'blurriness' factor of about 10, and tick 'repeat edge pixels'.

The video displace layer is now ready. (See Fig1.0)

## The Text Composition

1. Drag the Displace Composition to the 'new composition' icon.
2. Rename the new composition 'Text'.
3. Switch the 'Title/Action Safe' guides on (icon beneath main screen display).
4. Use the text tool (top left) to type in a title of your choice.
5. Make adjustments to size and font as desired – NB: To adjust a lower row of text without changing the upper row, select the word(s), and holding down the 'alt key', use down or up arrow to adjust placement. Horizontal arrows will spread the text wider or narrower as desired using this method.
6. Move the registration point of the text box to a central position by using the 'Pan Behind Tool' on the top menu.
7. Select the text in the timeline and apply a displacement map effect using 'Effect/Distort/Displacement Map' and dragging to the text layer.
8. Route the 'displacement map layer' to the Displace Composition.
9. Change the 'use for horizontal' and 'use for vertical' to 'Luminance'.
10. Set a value for maximum horizontal and vertical placement to a value desired for effect.
11. We can animate the text a little by using the scale parameter under the transform setting, in the timeline. Click the clock to set a start and end position in the timeline.
12. To smooth the transition between the keyframes created in the previous step and press F9, for 'easy ease' transition.

The Text Composition is now ready. (See Fig 2.0)

## The Smoke Composition

*NB: 'The Spotlight' in the screenshots*

1. Drag the Text Composition to the 'new composition' icon.
2. Rename the new composition 'The Smoke'.
3. Drag the video clip into the timeline below the text composition.
4. Select the mode of the Text Composition and change it to 'screen'. NB: if you can't see 'mode' in the columns of the timeline controls, right click on the Layer Name row, and select 'columns/mode' to view the mode column.
5. Now you should see both the video footage and the text with the footage inside it.
6. To clean up the contrast slightly, keep the Text Composition layer selected, choose Effect/Color Correction/Levels and move the top graph arrow a little along, this adjusts the input black level and cleans up the text.
7. Add a second effect to the Text Composition layer; choose Effect/Blur and Sharpen/Fast Blur, to smooth the appearance of the text within the video.
8. Now, with the Text Composition layer selected, choose Edit/Duplicate and duplicate the composition.
9. On the duplicate Text Composition layer, delete Fast Blur and replace with (CC radial fast blur in Eran's tutorial) or another suitable effect (e.g. radial blur) to play around with.

### *Adding the Adjustment Layers to the Smoke Composition*

1. Right click in the composition window and select New/Adjustment Layer
2. Select this Adjustment Layer and choose Effect/Generate/4-Color Gradient.
3. Change the colours to suit your design. This will act as a masking layer to add depth of colour.
4. Change the blending mode in the effect to Multiply.
5. Add another Adjustment Layer to add another effect mask.
6. Select the Ellipse tool and double click it to place in the Composition window.
7. Choose Effect/Blur and Sharpen/Fast Blur.
8. Choose a setting for blurriness, (suitable for your design and look), and select 'repeat edge pixels' to smooth the edges of the mask.
9. Change the mask setting for this Adjustment Layer from Add to Subtract.
10. Change the Mask Feather setting to approx 300 to help with smoothing the edges of the mask blurriness.
11. Do a Ram Preview to check your results.

The Smoke Composition is now complete. (See Fig 3.0 and 4.0)

That's it, enjoy!

Pen Lister

**NB** When I worked on the tutorial I used a light video clip, and called my main design composition 'The Spotlight', as I did not have any smokin' video!

Find more Eran Stern tutorials (and many other authors) for After Effects at Creative Cow, a great resource online.

Fig 1.0: The Displace Composition



Fig 2.0: The Text Composition



Fig 3.0: The Smoke Composition, showing Adjustment Layer 1

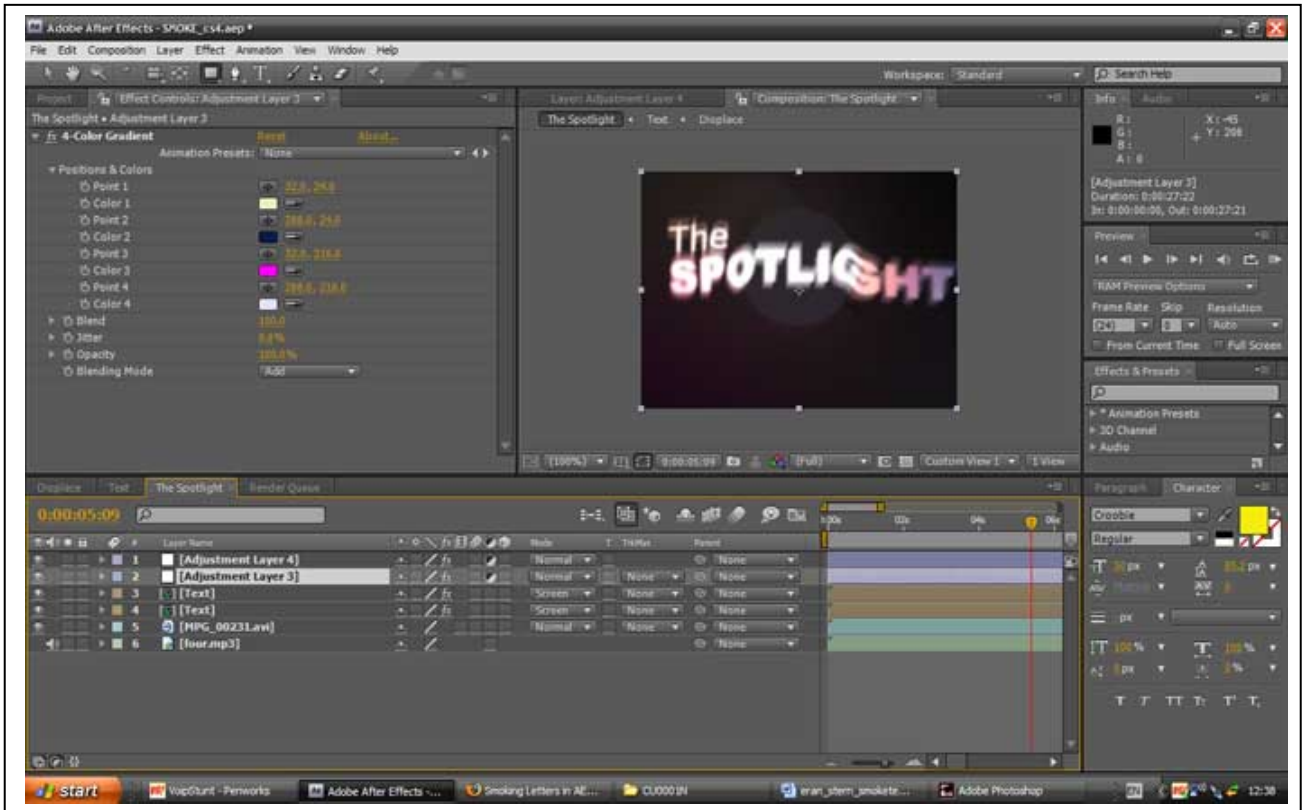


Fig 4.0: The Smoke Composition, showing Adjustment Layer 2

