

Title: Adobe After Effects CS3 (Mac Edition)
Publisher: Adobe
Reviewer: David Slone (<http://www.d-mag.org>)
Rating: 4 of 5 stars

With Apple Inc. moving to the Intel chipset, After Effects needed an upgrade. Adobe has responded and released After Effects CS3, which has architecture to run on the Intel chipsets. One of the first things I noticed was the time to load After Effects has been significantly reduced with this new version. Along with this enhancement it appears Adobe has listened to user feedback and improved many of the previous problems.

One thing Adobe has yet to improve is their installer for the Mac. It still operates much like the windows installer in that you must open folders and double click an installer and next through a bunch of meaningless screens before you get to actually install the program. One of the nice features about the Mac is that application installation is as easy and drag and drop the program and drop it into your Applications Folder. Adobe is still behind the curve when it comes to application installation on the Mac.

To test some of the performance increases in the new After Effects I opened some of my previous CS2 files. Adobe still informs you that this file is from an older version of After Effects but after clicking the "OK" button will allow you to continue. To the best of my knowledge there is no way to turn this announcement off for the future.

After opening the file, which contains some expressions, multiple file types, compositions, and effects included in After Effects, began rendering the main composition file which rendered everything the way it should and much faster. The preview when jumping around the time line when set to full resolution was also faster than my render times in CS2. This due to the fact I am able to utilize my processor without running in the Rosetta environment Apple created to run PowerPC applications on the Intel chipset.

The next big test was installing my plug-ins to see if they are compatible and how well they perform. Fortunately most of the 3rd Party Plug-ins I use have updated to CS3. I began using the plug-ins from Trapcode now part of Red Giant Software called Shine and Particular. Although my times are not scientific and controlled by any means I was able to see a difference in the preview render times when creating a particle system or applying advanced effects.

Alongside of the performance enhancements there are some very nice additions to this version of After Effects. One addition is the Puppet Tool. By creating joins on a still photo can you easily animate the photo giving it South Park like animation. The Puppet Tool can even animate text layers, which adds a large range of possible text animations that are possible. While testing this addition I was very impressed with how it stretches and bends the images and still gives amazing results. Through a quick tutorial I was able to quickly animate an arm bending at the joints within a matter of minutes.

Another nice addition to After Effects CS3 is the integration with the rest of the Adobe software package. Adobe has improved the software to allow seamless back and forth with Photoshop CS3 Extended allowing you to use Photoshop on your videos. This is a long needed upgrade to the software.

Perhaps an over-looked feature in the new version of After Effects is the Adobe Clip Notes. The user is now able to render their work into an Adobe PDF which can be

sent to the client for review. The client can make review notes on a frame or series or frames removing the hassle of trying to communicate where in the timeline they are looking at and want to change things. When importing the notes back into After Effects the notes appear as markers in the time line making it easy to find the frame the client wants change allowing changes to be made quickly and send back to the client for review.

Overall, Adobe has once again created an amazing product, that I am excited to explore the possibilities and take my creativity to the next level. Each time I open After Effects I'm excited at the possibilities that await. After Effects still remains my composition software of choice over other alternatives like Motion. Adobe has once again delivered a solid product that no professional should be without.