Quick Start Guide
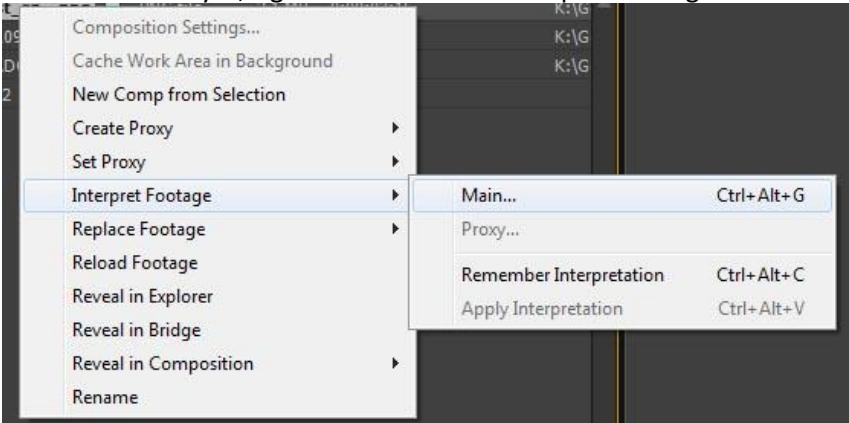
Composite a shot of a World War II plane

Contents
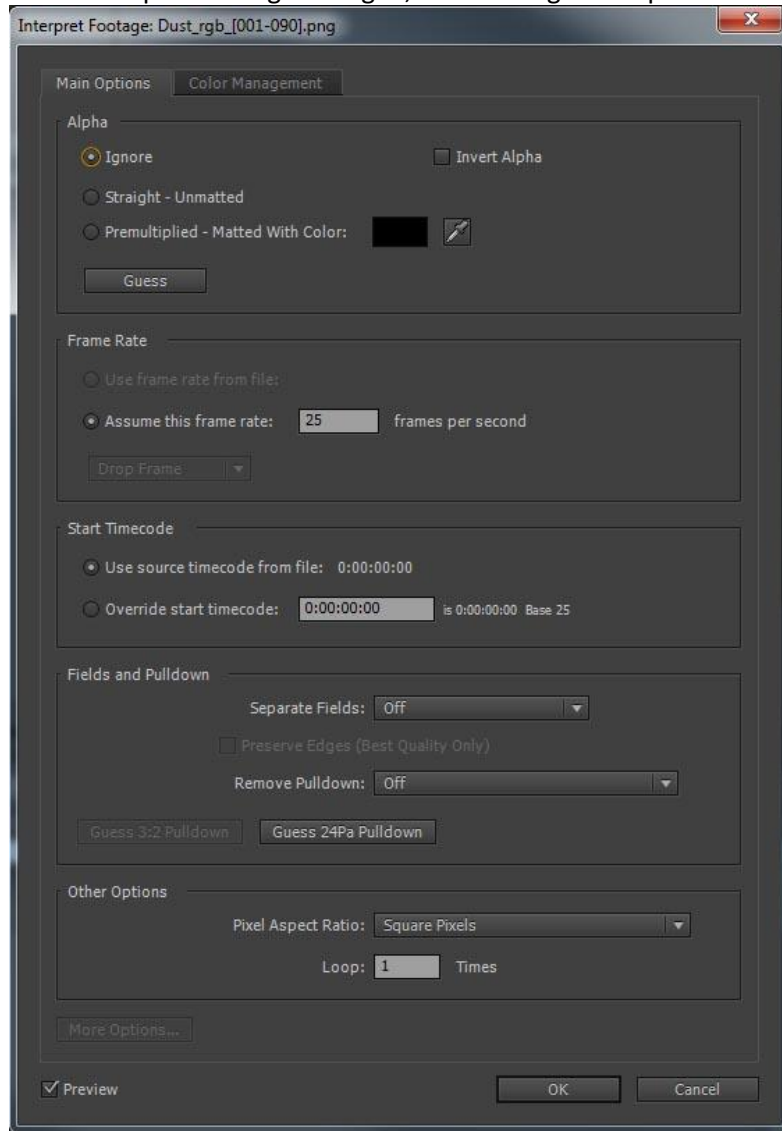
1. Create new composition, & 2. Drop files and sort layers

These four steps guide you through launching Adobe After Effects, creating a new composition, importing the necessary layers, arranging them in the correct order on the timeline, and fixing the alpha channel issue in the Dust layer.

Step	Action
1	**Create new composition:** • Open Adobe After Effects and start a new composition. • Set the composition settings to 1280x720 at 25fps.
2	**Import layers and arrange layers on timeline:** • Select and import the four 'World War II plane' shot files as layers. ○ Place Background on the timeline first. ○ Place Shadow above Background on the timeline. ○ Please Airplane above Shadow on the timeline. ○ Finally, add Dust on top of Airplane on the timeline.
3	**Fix alpha channel** • Notice that the Dust layer looks odd. You can fix this by ignoring the alpha channel. • From the Dust layer, right-click and select Interpret Footage > Main.

		• In the Interpret Footage dialogue, check the Ignore Alpha Channel box. • Click OK to confirm and apply the changes.
4	**Save your work:**	• Save the project to preserve the arrangements and settings.

3. Remove dark areas

These six steps guide you through creating a masking channel by keying out black values in the image sequence. Using the Luma Key effect with specific configurations, you selectively remove dark areas, leaving the desired dust effects while ensuring a seamless integration into the overall composite.

Step	Action
1	**Apply Luma Key effect:** • Access the Effects & Presets panel in Adobe After Effects. • Search for and apply the Luma Key effect to the Dust layer.
2	**Set keying options:** • In the Effects Controls panel, set the key type to Key Out Darker.
3	**Adjust threshold and tolerance:** • Use the Threshold slider to define the darkness level to be keyed out. • Fine-tune the range with the Tolerance setting.
4	**Refine edges and feather:** • Use the Edge Thin parameter to refine edges. • Adjust the Edge Feather value for a smooth transition.
5	**Repeat and refine:** • Repeat steps 3-4 above until the dark areas are gone, leaving as much of the dust effects as possible.
6	**Save your work:** • Save the project to preserve the arrangements and settings.

4. Add more effects

These six steps guide you through enhancing dust effects by applying colour correction and adding a blur for a more natural look. You also introduce the ground shadow by changing its blend mode and adjusting opacity, and consider the brightness of the light source for realistic shadowing.

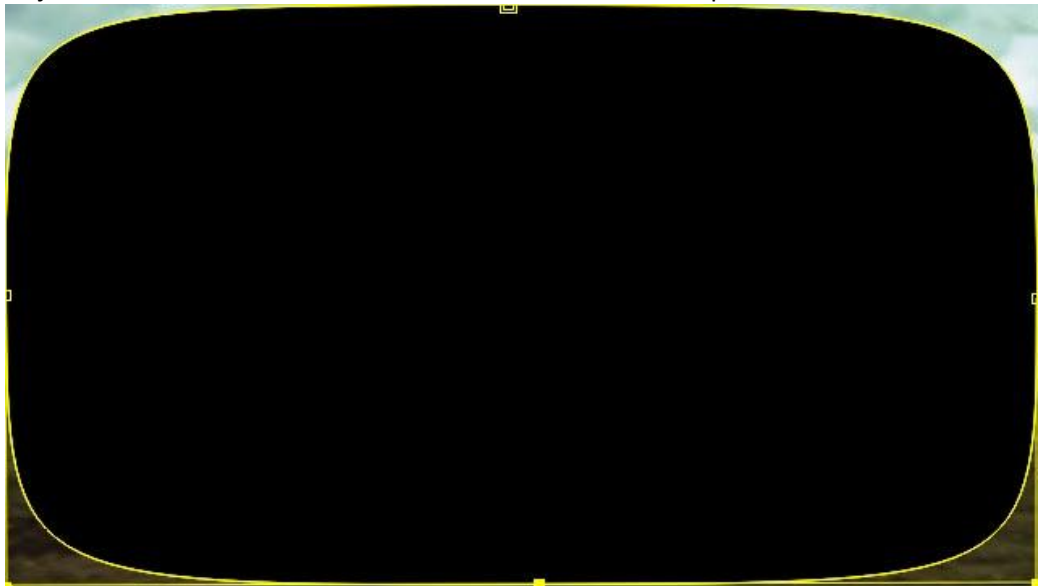| Step	Action
1	**Apply colour correction:** • Go to Effect > Colour Correction > Black & White. • Use the colour picker to select a part of the ground near the airplane's contact point, making the dust colour slightly like the ground colour.
2	**Add blur effect:** • Go to Effect > Blur & Sharpen > Fast Blur on the Dust layer. • Adjust the blurriness value to slightly soften the dust effect for a more natural appearance.
3	**Decrease Dust layer opacity:** • Lower the opacity of the dust layer to integrate the dust effect into the overall shot.
4	**Introduce ground shadow:** • Switch the blend mode of the ground shadow layer to Multiply. • Adjust the layer's opacity to control the intensity of the shadow.
5	**Consider lighting conditions:** • When adjusting the shadow opacity, consider the brightness of the light source casting the shadow. • Experiment with the shadow opacity to achieve a balance that complements the shot.
6	**Save your work:** • Save the project to preserve the arrangements and settings.

5. Add colour correction

These six steps guide you through creating a sepia-tone look using an adjustment layer in Adobe After Effects. By adding the Hue/Saturation effect, adjusting colorize settings, and fine-tuning additional parameters, you can achieve the desired vintage aesthetic for your composite shot.

Step	Action
1	**Understand colour correction:** • Colour correction describes adjustments to a shot's colour scheme, e.g. to hue, saturation, contrast, brightness, and tint. • Colour corrections are best added to an adjustment layer so that any changes made to the colour correction settings will be globally applied to all layers underneath that adjustment layer's influence range.
2	**Choose a sepia-tone look:** • For this composite shot, opt for a sepia tone to evoke the feeling of an old film. This step prepares for scratches and dust speck effects to be applied later to enhance the old film aesthetic.
3	**Create adjustment layer:** • Create an adjustment layer by navigating to Layer > New > Adjustment Layer (CTRL+ALT+Y).

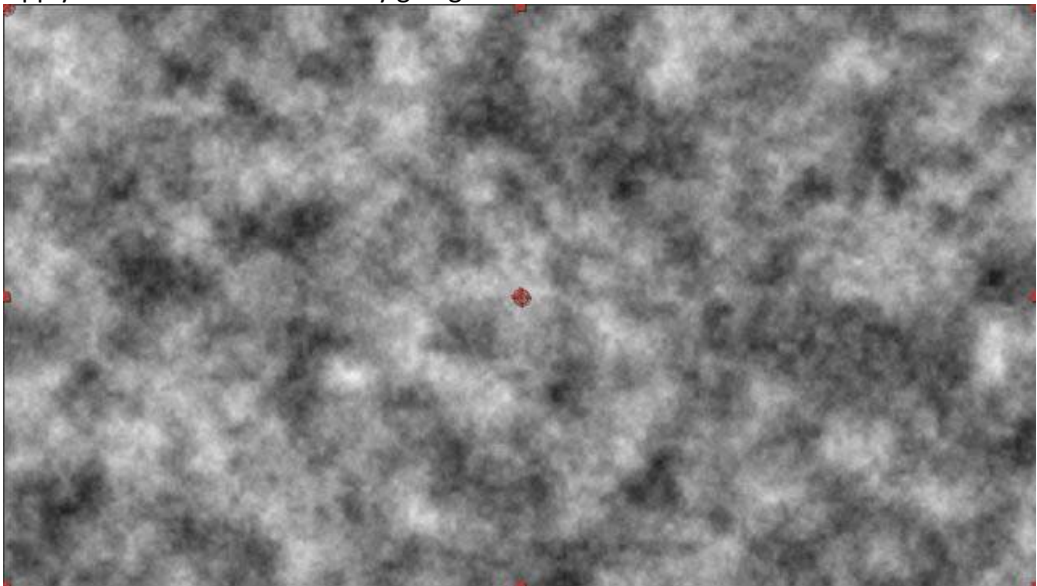| 4	**Apply hue/saturation effect:**
	• Go to Effect > Colour Correction > Hue/Saturation on the adjustment layer.
5	**Adjust Colorize settings**
	• Check the Colorize option.
	• Modify the Colorize hue value to achieve the desired brownish/tan sepia look.
	• Fine-tune saturation, lightness, brightness, and contrast to further enhance the image.
6	**Save your work:**
	• Save the project to preserve the arrangements and settings.

6. Add vignette

These five steps guide you through creating a vignette using a solid layer in Adobe After Effects. By adding a circular mask, inverting the mask, and adjusting feather and opacity settings, you can achieve a soft, framing effect around the edges of your shot.
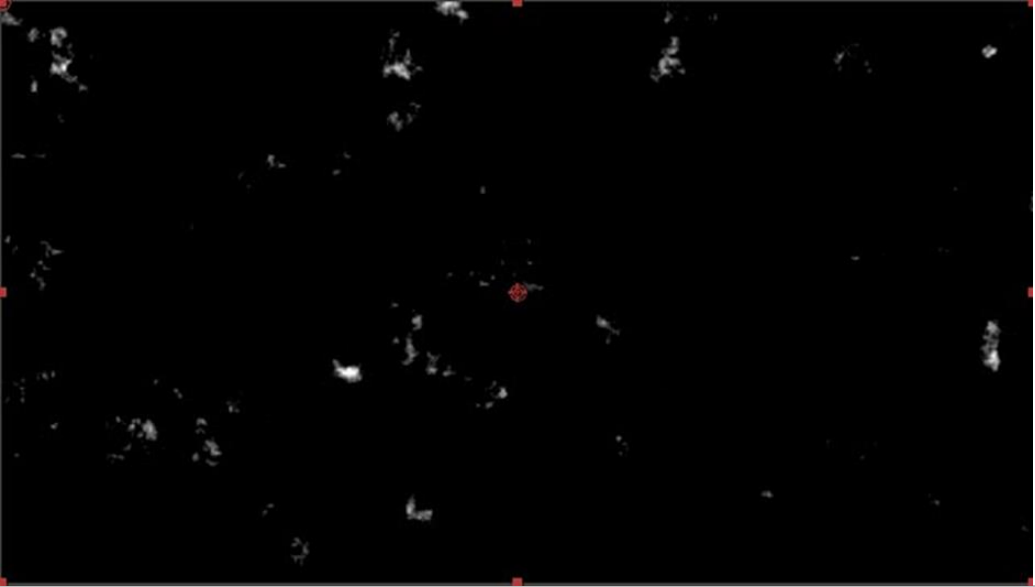
Step	Action
1	**Understand vignette purpose:** • A vignette frames an image or shot with a softening effect, with options for dark, light, or subtle softening around the edges.
2	**Create solid layer for vignette:** • Create a solid layer by going to Layer > New > Solid (CTRL+Y).
3	**Adjust mask for circular vignette:** • Draw a circular mask in the centre of the solid layer. In this example, it is a black solid, but you could choose any colour depending on the look of a final shot. • Adjust the mask handles to achieve the desired circular shape.
4	**Invert mask and adjust opacity:** • In the mask options on the solid layer, select Invert. • Adjust the mask feather for a soft-looking vignette. • Fine-tune the vignette's strength by playing with the solid layer's opacity until it meets your requirements.
5	**Save your work:** • Save the project to preserve the arrangements and settings.

Quick Start Guide: Composite a shot of a WWII plane
Diploma in Animation Level 5
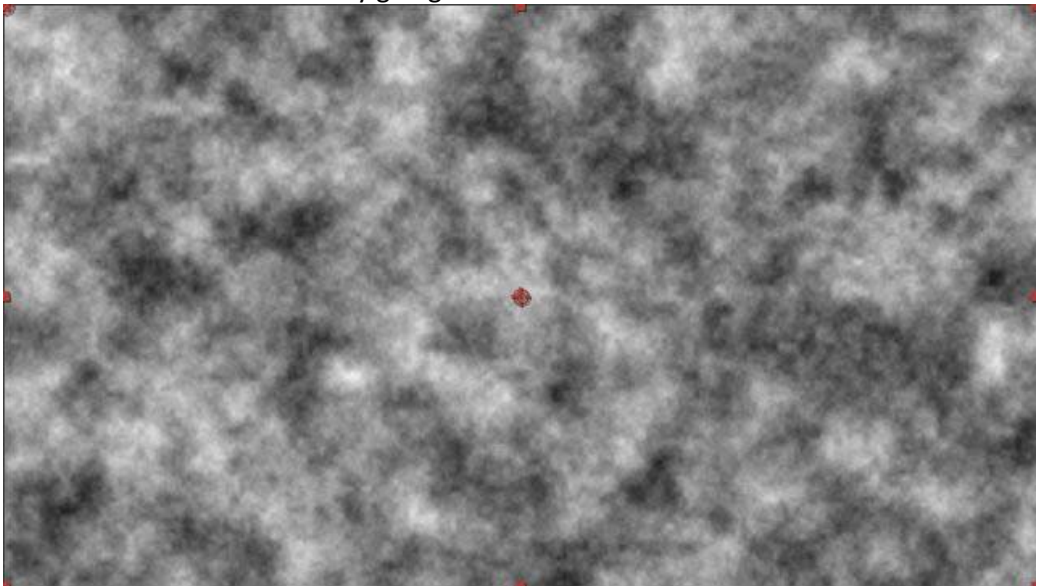Yoobee College of Creative Innovation (2023)

8

7. Age the shot

These nine steps guide you through creating film dust using a solid layer and the Fractal Noise effect in Adobe After Effects. Adjust contrast and brightness, explore fractal types, and add keyframes to control the animation for a realistic and customisable film dust effect.
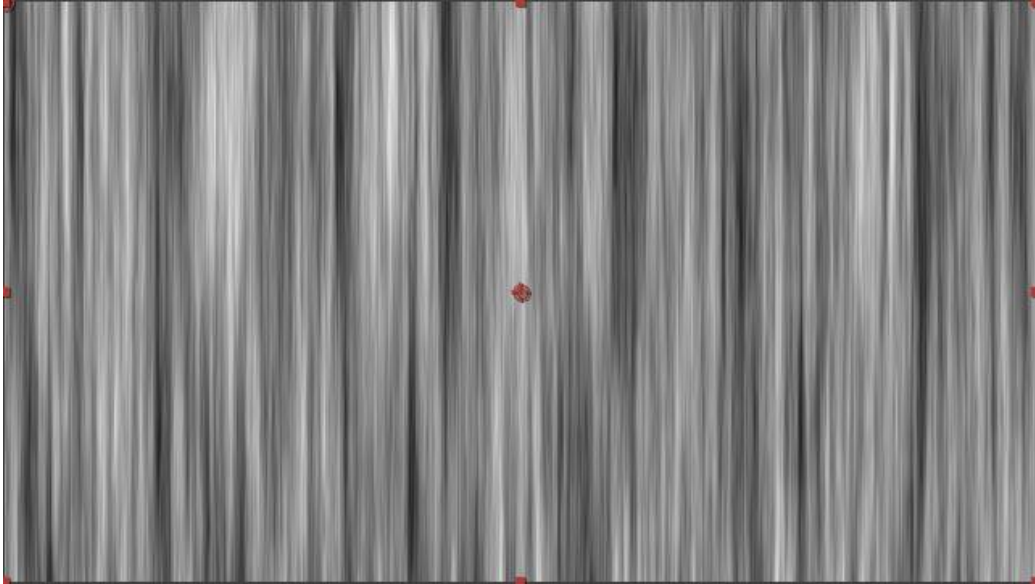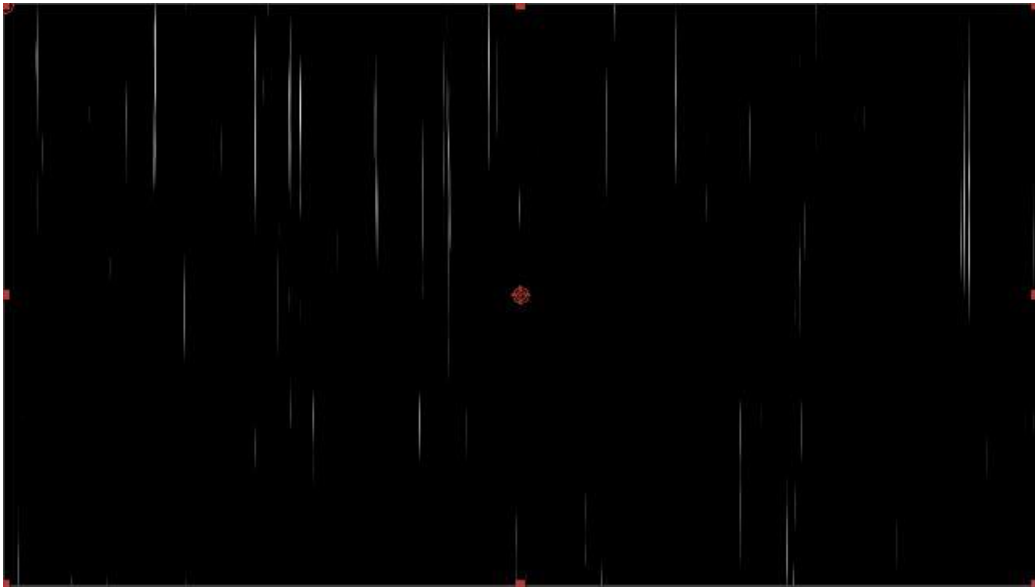
Step	Action
1	**Understand film dust effect:** • Film dust adds random specks, appearing like dirt or dust on a film's surface during the physical projection of a film reel.
2	**Create solid layer for film dust:** • Create a solid layer using Layer > New > Solid. Name the layer 'Dust'.
3	**Add Fractal Noise effect:** • Apply the Fractal Noise effect by going to Effect > Noise & Grain > Fractal Noise.

4	**Adjust Fractal Noise settings:**
	• Increase contrast and decrease brightness for less detail in the noise.
	• Example settings: Contrast: 600, Brightness: -200 will generate this:
5	**Explore Fractal Types:**
	• Experiment with different Fractal Types from the drop-down menu for varied noise types.
6	**Animate with keyframes:**
	• To add animation, set keyframes for the Evolution property.
	• Place a keyframe at the beginning and another at the end of the shot.
7	**Fine-tune animation:**
	• Adjust keyframe values to control the speed and appearance of dust specks.
	• Experiment with keyframe values for the desired animated dust effect:
	o A large value change in the evolution will make the animation fast and appear as more random dust specks.
	o A small value change will make the animation slower with more of a smooth morphing of the dust specks.
8	**Adjust Dust layer blend mode:**
	• Change the blend mode of the dust layer to Subtract to remove colour information below the specks.
	• Adjust the opacity of the layer to blend it into the composite.
9	**Save your work:**
	• Save the project to preserve the arrangements and settings.

8. Add more fractal noise

These eight steps guide you through creating film lines using another solid layer and adding more Fractal Noise effects with modified transform settings, animating with keyframes, and blending the 'Lines' layer into the shot.

Step	Action
1	**Understand film lines effect:** • Film lines add random lines, appearing like scratches or wear and tear on a film's surface during the physical projection of a film reel.
2	**Create solid layer for film lines:** • Create a solid layer using Layer > New > Solid. Name the layer 'Lines'.
3	**Add Fractal Noise effect:** • Add the Fractal Noise effect by going to Effect > Noise & Grain > Fractal Noise.

4	**Modify Fractal Noise transform settings:**
	• Uncheck Uniform Scaling in the Fractal Noise transform settings – this allows you to adjust the scale width and height independently from each other.
	• Use Scale Width and Scale Height sliders to stretch out the effect, or type in your desired values to over-rule maximin/minimum values.
5	**Adjust Fractal Noise settings:**
	• Decrease detail in the noise by increasing Contrast and decreasing Brightness for a desired look:
6	**Animate and blend:**
	• To add animation, set keyframes for the Evolution property.
	• Place a keyframe at the beginning and another at the end of the shot. The movement of the film lines should be less random and slower than the film dust.

7	**Adjust Lines layer blend mode:**
	• Change the blend mode of the lines layer to Add and adjust opacity for integration into the shot.
8	**Save your work:**
	• Save the project to preserve the arrangements and settings.

9. Render and review

These four steps guide you through rendering the composite shot in Adobe After Effects by accessing the render queue, configuring settings, saving the project, initiating rendering, and reviewing your final rendered shot.

Step	Action
1	**Confirm all is ok:** • Make sure you are satisfied with your composite shot before you render it.
2	**Access render queue:** • Select the composition and add it to the render queue.
3	**Adjust render settings:** • Set render settings according to desired specifications.
4	**Finalise rendering:** • Save the project, initiate rendering, and review your final rendered shot.