

Welcome To CircusMonkey!

CircusMonkey is a script/plug-in hybrid that generates a variety of unique kinetic type rigs designed for animation in 3D space. An endless array of customizable animations can be created in seconds, much like our other Monkey scripts.

INSTALLATION

CircusMonkey requires AE CS 5.5 or later. To install CircusMonkey as a dockable panel, place the (.jsxbin) and accompanying (.ffx) files in After Effects/Scripts/ScriptUI Panels (MAC) or After Effects/Support Files/Scripts/ScriptUI Panels (Windows). The (.ffx) files contain presets for the Effect Controls, so make sure that they are placed in the same location as the (.jsxbin) file.

TheColor Palettes folder can be placed anywhere on your hard drive. You will be prompted to locate them when you click the Load button (K) in the Color Palette section.

The trial period is seven days with a maximum word count of 10.

OVERVIEW

When you launch the CircusMonkey script, you will be greeted by the User Interface (UI), where you can input your text and select the parameters that will define the initial type layout.

The UI includes settings for layout, type attributes, transition in and transition out animation, and camera settings. When you're satisfied with your selections, click DO IT! and CircusMonkey will build an initial layout.

The build will create a CM Master Control layer, where you will find a set of Effect Controls. These can be used to modify the layout in 3D space, set visibility parameters, and further animate the camera and layout.

PROCESS

A good understanding of what CircusMonkey actually does will help you to get the most out of it.

Once you click DO IT!, CircusMonkey creates a control layer for each of the words in the Text Box. The control layer is the size of the bounding box for the word itself, unless the Equalize box is enabled (see Equalize).

Each word is a child of its control layer, and each control layer is the child of the previous control layer. The first control layer becomes the Master Control layer for the entire build.

Please note that most of the layers created by CircusMonkey are hidden by default. Simply toggle the comp's Shy button to see them.

If you select one of the circular layouts, a Center Control layer will be generated to assist you with manually controlling the layout.

A camera will also be created (if selected in the UI) and will be animated to move from the center point of one control layer to the next. If Auto Frame is enabled, the camera will be positioned to fit each control layer consistently within the frame.

Each text animation and corresponding camera move is triggered by a marker on the Master Control layer. Each marker will be labeled with the corresponding word. You can easily adjust the timing of the animation by sliding the markers.

A set of Effect Controls is added to the Master Control layer. These can be accessed in the Effect Controls panel and offer additional control over animation, transformation, and visibility.

USER INTERFACE CONTROLS

TEXT BOX

You can either type or paste your copy into the Text Box. The font that is currently selected in the After Effects Character panel is the one that will be

used by CircusMonkey.

There are a couple of useful key commands that help control the layout and timing. You can display an info box describing the key commands by clicking the Star Button (*) near the top of the UI.

^ - The caret character inserts an extra marker on the Master Control layer. This creates a timing gap between the words on either side, and can be used for inserting beats after key words. Multiple carets (^) will insert multiple gaps. Inserting gaps can also help in organizing a longer project.

| - The pipe character is used to tie multiple words together. CircusMonkey will treat them as a single word.

LAYOUT

This section controls the overall layout.

Text Rig: You can select the basic layout of the text in this dropdown. Please note that selecting a particular rig may disable other controls in the UI and/or change some of the default settings.

Word Alignment: This dropdown controls how the words are aligned in relation to each other. Some of the choices may be disabled, depending on your text rig selection.

Direction: Each text rig has a default direction in which CircusMonkey will lay out the text. For example, Z Line, by default, arranges the words from front to back, with the first word being the closest to the camera. Y Line arranges the words from top to bottom. Z Circle arranges the words in a clockwise direction, and so on. In this context, Auto selects the default direction that we thought made the most sense for that particular text rig. If you want it to go the other way, simply change the selection to Reverse.

Spacing: This control sets the spacing in pixels between words. Keep in mind that different layouts may require vastly different settings for this parameter--especially layouts in Z space.

Circle Wrap: This control is only enabled for circular text rigs and controls the amount of curvature in the resulting layout. 100% means that the words are wrapped into one complete circle. 50% means that the words will form

a half circle. 300% will cause the words to be wrapped three times around the circle. Note that if you choose a value greater than 100%, you may want to use the Rig Controls to spread the overlapping words into a helix.

Equalize: Equalize causes CircusMonkey to create control layers that are all the same width or height, depending on the text rig. That consistency can create a much smoother camera move.

As explained in the Overview, CircusMonkey will create a control layer that is the same size as the bounding box of the corresponding word.

Depending on the word alignment, this can cause the camera to drift from side to side as it moves from one word to the next.

Please keep in mind that Equalize can counteract the effect of Auto Frame, which allows the camera to dolly in or out for consistent framing. Since each control layer is already the same size in the frame with Equalize on, Auto Frame may not appear to work correctly. (See MonkeyCam section).

TYPE ATTRIBUTES

Create Text Layers Only: When this control is selected, CircusMonkey will do nothing more than create a text layer for each word in your text. The text layers are not arranged, scaled, or animated in any way, and no camera or control layers are generated. This feature can be useful for creating text layers to be processed by LayerMonkey.

All Caps: When this control is selected, all of your entered text will be converted to upper case. The case of your entered text will be preserved if left unselected.

Font Size: This dropdown control gives you four options for font size:

1. Constant: All characters will be the same font size.
2. Random: The font size will be a random value within the range defined by the minimum and maximum values.
3. Ascending: Font sizes will increase with each word, and be spread evenly over the range between the minimum and the maximum values.

4. Descending: Font sizes will decrease with each word, and be spread evenly over the range between the maximum to the minimum values.

Color Palette: This control allows you to specify up to five colors for your text. Only one color (white) is enabled by default. Additional colors are available by activating each checkbox and/or by clicking the grey square.

CircusMonkey will allow you to load (.ase) files into the Color Palette. For your convenience, we have included a few palettes in the CircusMonkey download folder.

These palettes can be stored anywhere on your hard drive. They will not load automatically, but can be accessed by clicking the K button to the right of the color boxes and navigating to them on your drive.

TYPE ANIMATION

Transition In: This is the control that selects how the text animates on.

Speed: This control determines how quickly the transition occurs. Note that the transition times vary for the different transition types, so it helps to think of this control as a speed multiplier for the default values.

Fast gives you the default speed. Medium takes 1.5 times as long as Fast, Slow takes twice as long as Fast, and Sloth takes three times as long. Keep in mind that since the camera is synched to the transition, this also affects the camera moves.

Motion Blur: Checking this control will enable Motion Blur for each of the text layers created by CircusMonkey. It doesn't, however, activate the composition's Motion Blur preview switch, so the effect won't be immediately visible.

Activating the comp's Motion Blur preview switch will let you preview the Motion Blur, but it will also slow down the preview.

Transition Out: This section controls how each word disappears from view. The options are Cut, Fade Out, and None

Delay: This control affects the timing for the selected Transition Out. The default is Next Marker, which ties the transition to the marker triggering the next word. If this option is selected, the last word will not transition out.

Other options set the number of frames from the point the text is triggered to when the Transition Out begins. Please note that it is possible to set up situations where the Transition In may not complete before the Transition Out begins. In such cases, you can try speeding up the Transition In, or increasing the Transition Out Delay.

Fade Duration: This control sets the duration of the dissolve if Fade Out is selected. Short is 15 frames, Medium is 30 frames and Long is 60 frames.

MARKERS

Time Span: This control sets the duration over which CircusMonkey will evenly distribute the markers.

By default Time Span is set to Work Area. In order to ensure the final animation completes before the end of the comp, make sure that you have allotted enough pad after the work area. For example: If your total text animation takes three seconds, the work area should be about 2.5 seconds and the comp length should be three seconds or longer. Some adjustment may be necessary, depending on your selections in the UI .

Work Area: By selecting this option and adjusting the Work Area duration (B/N on the keyboard), the animation will be distributed over a defined length within the comp. This is particularly convenient for adding pad at the end.

Comp Duration: Markers will be distributed over the duration of the entire comp.

Marker Sync: This control will cause CircusMonkey to sync the markers it generates to markers on an existing "guide" layer. For example, if you have an audio layer that has a marker on every beat, and select it as the guide layer, CircusMonkey will place a word at every beat.

Please note that the guide layer must have at least as many markers as there are words.

When you click Undo It in the UI, CircusMonkey will ask if you want to save the current Master Control layer as a marker guide layer for the next build. This allows you to save any work you may have invested in getting the

markers set up just the way you want.

Scripts that are useful for generating audio markers include Lloyd Alvarez's *Audio-to-Markers*, MamoWorld's *Beat Assistant* and Joachim Hollar's *TextSynchr*, all available on aescrpts.com.

MONKEY CAM

Include Camera: If you don't want CircusMonkey to generate a camera, then turn this control off.

Movement: This control determines the type of interpolation used for the movement of the camera. There are four options:

1. *Ease & Pause:* Will ease in and out of each move.
2. *Ease:* Will drift continuously from one word to the next with easing.
3. *Linear & Pause:* No easing (best for smooth moves through single lines of text).
4. *Linear:* Will move continuously from one word to the next without any easing.

Please note that Ease & Pause or Linear & Pause can cause skipping if the markers are placed too close together to allow for the move to complete.

If this occurs, you can try changing the Movement style, or rebuild the comp with an extended work area. Then drag the entire comp into a new comp (pre-comping might break expressions). Once you've done that, Time-Remap or Time Stretch the comp to the desired duration.

Auto Rotate: Selecting this control will cause the camera to rotate as necessary between words in order to keep each word level in the view.

Auto Frame: Selecting this control will cause each word to be framed at a consistent size by dollying the camera in or out. The five options are: Loose, Medium, Tight, Kong and Off.

Note that a warning message will pop up if you build your comp with Equalize and Auto Frame both active. (See *Equalize* for more details).

Include Camera Light: When this control is selected, CircusMonkey will create a light, parent it to the camera, and place the light at the same position as the camera. If you want to reposition the light, you'll need to un-shy the comp, unlock the light layer, and move it manually.

Update Cam: This control allows you to adjust camera settings after the build. Click Update to alter the camera settings without having to regenerate the complete layout.

LIVE CONTROLS

CircusMonkey adds a set of Effect Controls to the Master Control layer as part of the build. These Effect Controls provide additional, post-build control over many of the kinetic type parameters. You can access these controls in the Master Control layer's Effect Controls panel.

Please note that with versions of After Effects before CC (12.1), the Effect Control names will be prefixed with "Missing:". This is normal and won't affect the operation of CircusMonkey.

Rig Controls: These are controls that allow you to stretch and twist the text rig. Since each control layer is parented to the preceding one, the overall effect is compounded. So, for example, if you enter a value into the X Stretch control, because of the parenting, the overall effect will be similar to a staircase.

One important point to consider if you're using a camera is that since the camera seeks the center point of each control layer, shifting the control layers affects the camera movement. The result can be a more active camera, depending on the layout and displacement involved.

Text Controls: These controls are similar to Rig Controls, but they only affect the text layers. Since the text layers aren't in a parented chain, they are affected individually. Using our previous example of entering a value into the X Position control, each word would end up being shifted the same amount with no compounding.

Please keep in mind that the camera isn't affected by changes in the Text Controls since the camera seeks the center of the associated control layer.

This will generally result in smoother camera moves than those resulting from using the Rig Controls.

Circle Controls: This set of controls is created only for circle-based text rigs. When creating a circle-based rig, the Master Control layer is parented to a Center Control layer. The Center Control layer is connected to the Circle Controls via expressions, so any change to these controls affects the rig as a whole. Please note that if a camera is included in the build, changes to these controls (except Scale) may not be obvious, because the camera will attempt to maintain the same view. These controls are especially useful for rig animation when you are not using a CircusMonkey camera.

Camera Controls: This set of controls is not generated unless Include Camera is selected. The Camera Controls are divided into three groups:

Camera Position: These controls allow you adjust the X, Y, and Z position of the camera.

Camera Rotation: These controls allow you adjust the X, Y, and Z rotation of the camera.

Visibility: This group of controls is designed to help with legibility when words overlap in Z space and to add a sense of depth. There are a lot of controls here, nested in three sub-groups.

1. **Opacity Controls:** When Enable Z Opacity is selected, this group of controls will cause each word to fade out, based on its proximity to the camera's focal point.

Use the BG Opacity Distance slider control to set the distance beyond the camera's focal point where the opacity will fade to zero. If Enable Foreground Opacity is selected, the text opacity will fade to zero as the text approaches the camera. For both the foreground and background effects, the corresponding Opacity Curve dropdown selects the type of easing for the ramp.

2. **Fog Controls:** These controls operate the same way as the Opacity controls, except that instead of affecting opacity, each word will be tinted with the color specified in the Fog Color control. As with Opacity, the

greater the distance from the camera's focal point, the greater the effect.

3. DOF Controls: When Enable DOF is selected, these controls adjust the intensity of the camera's depth-of-field effect. Note that if necessary, you can unshy the camera and adjust the camera's DOF Blur Level manually to increase the overall effect.

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