

Adobe Encore DVD 1.5

# Animate a menu using After Effects and Encore DVD

Flying buttons, graceful fade-ins, and spinning logos in DVD menus are easy to create if you're a knowledgeable user of Adobe® After Effects® 6.5. The Create After Effects Composition command in Encore™ DVD lets you quickly open a menu in After Effects so that you can animate it. When you're satisfied with your animation, you can import it back into Adobe Encore DVD and use it as the background for a menu.



## 1. Create a complete version of the menu.

Using either Adobe Encore DVD or Adobe Photoshop®, design a static version of the menu that contains the elements you want to animate. Place the text and button images in their final resting position. You'll use this menu as the basis for the animation—once you animate it, it will become the new background for the DVD menu.

For best results, make sure that the image dimensions (in pixels) of the menu are the same as the frame size of the project's television standard (NTSC or PAL). All menu templates included in the Library palette will match both the NTSC or PAL TV standard you're working with. If you create a menu in Photoshop CS, use one of the following preset image sizes:

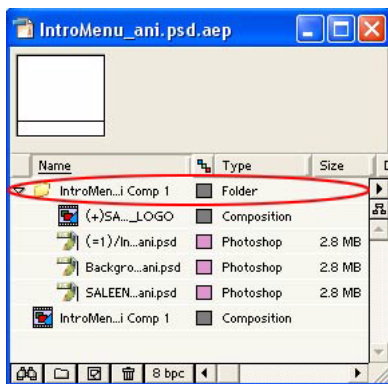
Project TV standard	Photoshop CS preset image size
NTSC Fullscreen (standard)	NTSC DV 720 x 480 (with guides)
NTSC Widescreen	NTSC DV Widescreen, 720 x 480 (with guides)
PAL Fullscreen (standard)	PAL D1/DV, 720 x 576 (with guides)
PAL Widescreen	PAL D1/DV Widescreen, 720 x 576 (with guides)



## 2. Create an After Effects composition from the menu.

In the Menu Editor, display the menu that you want to animate, and then choose **Menu > Create After Effects Composition**. Encore DVD prompts you to save this menu as a PSD file. When you save it, After Effects opens and converts the menu into a composition and each of the button sets become nested compositions. After Effects also displays the Render Queue window. Keep this window open in the background because you will need it later.

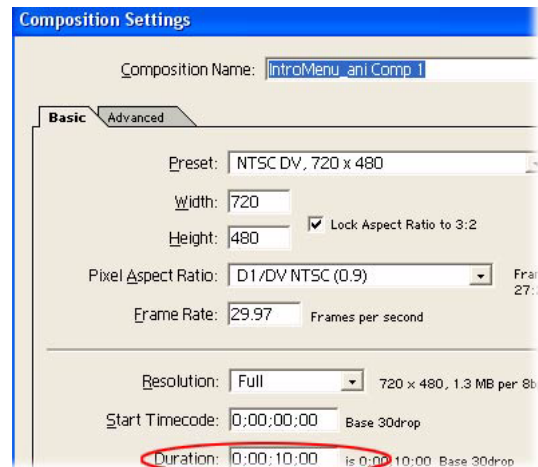
In the Project window, you'll see a folder containing each of the layer sets as individual compositions. These layer sets are the nested compositions in the menu composition. This folder also contains the layers that you used to create the PSD file. You can use the contents of this folder to create more complex animations.



## 3. Prepare the menu for animation.

Now is the time to set up the composition for animating and decide how you want to animate the layers. Open the composition that corresponds to the name that you gave your menu. Decide how long you want your composition to be. (To facilitate seamless audio looping make sure that the composition is at least as long as the complete audio clip you plan to use.) Choose **Composition > Composition Settings** and set the composition's duration.

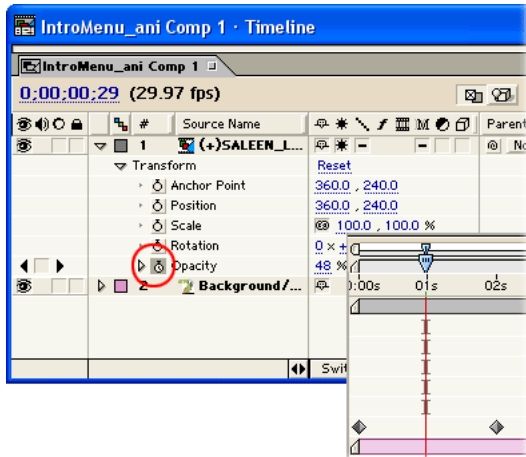
Though you can animate any layer of the menu, animating the button elements is probably the effect you'll want to accomplish most often. You can choose to animate only opacity or scale, or you can change the buttons' positions. If you animate the button position, make sure that the animation ends with the buttons at the same position they occupied in the original, static menu. We'll show you how to do that in the next step.



## 4. Animate the buttons.

Now it's time to get things moving. If you want to animate the buttons, first drag the current-time indicator to the point where you want the button animation to end (make sure that you set the button animation to end before the end of the composition). Click the Stopwatch icon for each Transform keyframe you plan to set. These keyframes ensure that the animation will return to its original value. Press the Home key to return the current-time indicator to the beginning of the composition.

Adjust the Transform values to create your animation. When you're done setting keyframes, write down the timecode at the end of the animation. You'll need this information later when you set the Loop Point for the menu in Adobe Encore DVD.



### 5. Animate other layers.

If you want to animate any layers besides the button layers, you can do so now. You can set keyframes for any value, including effects and masks.

Because these other layers don't need to align with the highlight areas in the original menu, you don't need to return them to their initial value. And, unlike the button animations, you can set keyframes for these other layers all the way to the end of the composition.

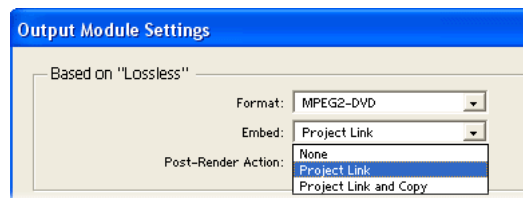
### 6. Render the file.

To facilitate the quickest final render from Encore DVD, export the composition as an MPEG-2 file. Choose Window > Render Queue, open the Output Module Settings dialog box, make sure that Project Link is selected in the Embed menu (if you want to include a copy of the project itself in the rendered file, choose Project Link and Copy), and then choose MPEG-2 DVD from the Format menu. In the MPEG-2 DVD Settings dialog box, choose an appropriate preset from the Preset menu. Make sure that you choose a preset that matches the project's aspect ratio. For example, if your project uses a 4x3 aspect ratio, choose a 4x3 preset.

If your animation contains audio, select Audio in the Summary area. Click OK. Next, open the Render Settings dialog box and choose Length Of Comp from the Time Span menu; then click OK, give the file a name, and render the file.

You can export the file as an AVI file by using Microsoft DV compression, or you can export the file without compression. However, Encore DVD renders all files as MPEG-2 to make them DVD-legal. So, to save conversion time, render it as an MPEG-2 file from After Effects. encode the file before you import it.

*Tip: One advantage to rendering your animation as an AVI file is that Adobe Encore DVD will subsequently encode it using optimal bit rate settings for the size of the DVD disk you are burning. If you render the file from After Effects as an MPEG-2 file, Encore DVD will not perform this function.*



### 7. Hide the animated layers.

Go back to Encore DVD and open your original menu. You are now going to hide the layers you animated in After Effects (you'll understand why soon). Choose Window > Layers to display the Layers palette. Expand the layer set that represents each button you animated. In the expanded layer set, click the Eye icon for each layer in the set to hide the corresponding element in the menu. (By default, the subpictures are already hidden.)

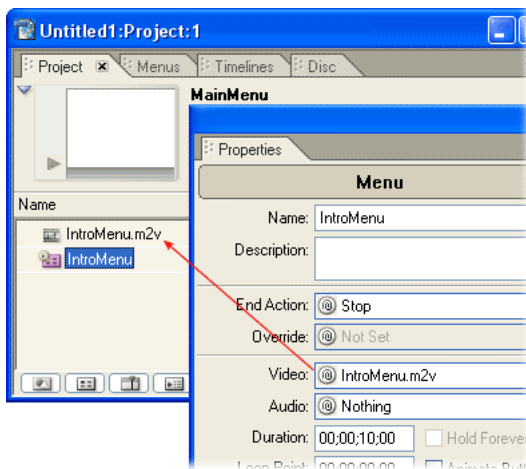
To create an animated menu, you need to set the movie file as a background for the original menu. You hid the layers earlier so that you can now see the animation instead. Because you are only hiding the button layers, as opposed to replacing or deleting them, the highlights areas on the button layers will still become visible when the viewer selects them. If you returned the animated buttons to their original positions in the menu, the areas you could select in the original menu are still selectable in the animated menu.

**Important:** If you are doing your work in Photoshop, be sure to leave the button layer sets visible—hide only the button image layers.



### 8. Import the animation and link it as a video background to the menu.

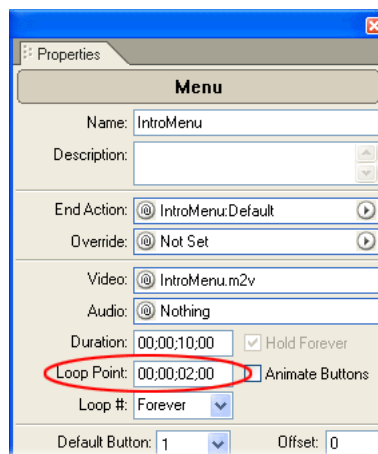
Now you're ready to replace the original menu with the animated menu. Import the new animation as an asset into your Encore DVD project. Then, in the Project window, select the original menu. In the Properties palette, locate the pick whip next to the word Video and drag it to the animation file in the Project window. The new animation appears in the Menu window as the menu background.



### 9. Set the Loop Point and Duration.

Display your menu by clicking the Menu tab and then double clicking the menu name in the list. In the Properties palette, set the value for Loop Point to match the timecode value that you wrote down in Step 3. In the Loop # menu, choose Forever so that the menu animation loop continues until the viewer selects a button.

The Loop Point value serves a dual purpose in this case. First, it designates when in the animation the viewer can select a button. Typically, this value is the time at which the animation ends. In addition, the Loop Point value specifies when the menu begins its loop. Setting the Loop Point to the end of the animation causes the menu to begin each loop when the buttons are stationary. If you animated other elements, they will continue to play for the time you've specified for Duration. The Duration value defaults to the composition length that you set in After Effects.



### 10. Preview the menu.

Now it's time to look at your work in action. Right-click the menu and choose Preview From Here. If your menu doesn't immediately begin previewing, click the Render Current Motion Menu button in the Project Preview window to watch the animation as it will appear on DVD. Move the pointer over the buttons to check any highlights and links. Click the Exit and Return button to stop the animation and return to the Menu window.

In our example, the Opacity value of the button is animated so the button slowly fades in to 100% opacity.



#### 11. Make adjustments as necessary.

After you preview your animation, you may want to make some changes. In the Project window, select the asset you used for your menu and choose Edit > Edit Original. The original project opens in After Effects, where you can make adjustments. Remember that you're making changes to the original project, not the rendered file, so you'll need to re-render and re-import the animation, as described in the earlier steps. If you re-render, you can choose to overwrite the original or create a newer version. If you overwrite the original, you'll need to use the Replace Asset command in Encore DVD in order to use the new version in the original Encore DVD project. See Adobe Encore DVD Help for more information.

With practice, and with the variety of effects and tools available in After Effects, you can create vibrant menus that will distinguish your DVDs.

