

Introduction

This tutorial aims to explain some techniques for animating bitmaps, including their preparation in PhotoShop.

First steps

Decide what sort of animation style you want to create. For the purposes of this tutorial we will look at a style which involves cutting out bitmaps. This could be described as a "Monty Python" style. There are good examples of this on www.honkworm.com. The movement of the bitmaps can give a rough and sometimes satirical edge to the work, which can be quite appealing.

In PhotoShop

- 1 Choose an image.

This could be a face or a person or an animal, anything in fact you want to bring to life. In this case we will use the face of actor Robert Newton.



- 2 Decide what you want to do with the image.

This should be considered in terms of the presentation as whole. In this case we will make Robert talk. By distorting bitmaps of his mouth we will bring him to life.

3. Import image into PhotoShop. File > Open

4. Cut out his face

There are two methods of cutting out shapes for use in Director. The method that creates the best quality cutouts is by use of alpha channels. In effect this makes the area around

his face (or whatever), transparent. Use this method for precise results. The downside of this technique is that it dramatically increases file sizes.

Alternatively, images may be cut out and placed on a white background. Director can recognise a white background and make it transparent. This method is preferable where quality is not an absolute priority.

To illustrate how these methods might be used, we will first make the background behind Robert transparent. This will give a high quality cutout. Unfortunately it will also produce a large file. We will then cut out his mouth using a different technique. The two images will come together in a Director movie.

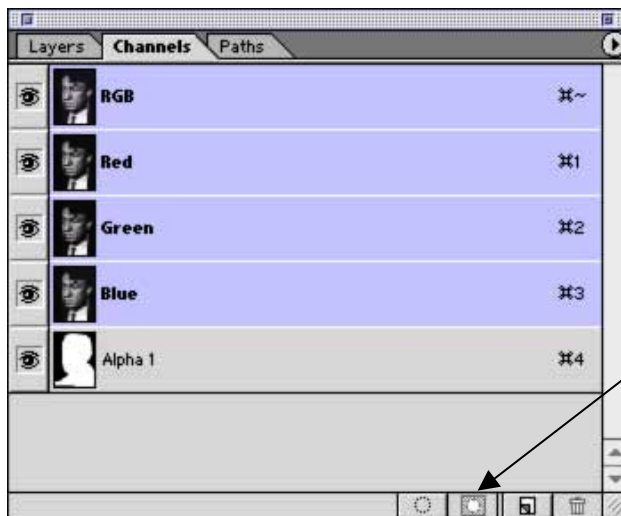
Using Alpha Channels

- A Ensure your image is sized appropriately. If your Stage in Director is set to 640*480, your image should be no larger than those dimensions. If you need to resize your image go **Image > Image Size** then type in the appropriate dimensions. Make sure **Constrain Proportions** and **Resample Image** are both selected. Click **OK**.
- B Use the **Pen Tool** to create an accurate path around his head.
- C Convert the path to a selection.



Loads Path as a Selection

- D Open the Channels Palette.



Save Selection as Channel

- E Click on the **Save Selection as Channel** Icon. This creates an alpha channel that uses your selection to make the areas of your image, which have not been selected, transparent.
- F If there is more than one layer in your image you need to flatten them into one. **Layer > Flatten Image**.
- G Save your image as a **psd** file. This can be imported directly into Director.

Using a White Background

- A Ensure your image is sized appropriately. If your Stage in Director is set to 640*480, your image should be no larger than those dimensions. If you need to resize your image go **Image > Image Size** then type in the appropriate dimensions. Make sure **Constrain Proportions** and **Resample Image** are both selected. Click **OK**.
- B Cut out the parts of the image you need. The simplest way to do this is by using the **Lasso Tool**. This gives a rough look, which in some cases might be desirable. With the **Lasso Tool** selected and **anti-aliasing** switched off, select an area you want to cut out – in this case Robert's mouth. Switching **off anti-aliasing** prevents a white halo appearing around the cutout after it has been imported into Director.

If you want a more accurate cutout than is possible by using the Lasso Tool, use the **Pen Tool** instead. To switch off **anti-aliasing**, in this case, you need to **Option Click** on the **Loads Path as a Selection** icon in the **Paths Palette** and then deselect **anti-aliasing** from the dialog box that appears.

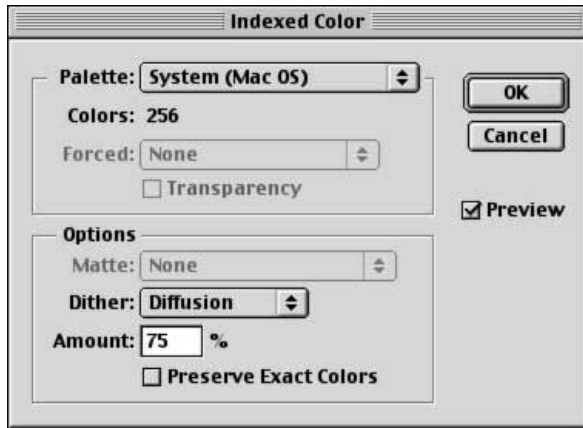


Loads Path as a Selection

- C Jump the selection onto a new layer. **⌘+J**. Switch off all other layers using the eye symbols in the **Layers Palette**.
- D Select the cutout you have created on the new layer. Use the rectangular marquee tool.
- E Copy the cutout to the clipboard. **⌘+C**.
- F Open a new window. **File > New**. (The window automatically scales to the size of the selection you have made).
- G Paste in the cutout. **⌘+V**.
- H Flatten the image. **Layer > Flatten Image**

H Save the image as a **bmp** file.

To reduce file size, save the bitmap with a colour depth of 8 bits. Go **Image > Mode > Indexed Colour**. This will bring up the window shown below.



Click OK to the settings shown.



Click OK to the settings shown.

Then go **File > Save As**. Choose **bmp** from the drop down list. Save your file.



J If you have many cutouts to create, consider using the **Actions Palette** to speed up your workflow.

In Director

5 Import images into Director.

In the case of the **psd** file, ensure **32 bit** is set as the colour depth when prompted by the dialog box.

In the case of the **bmp** file, ensure **8 bit** is set as the colour depth when prompted by the dialog box.

- 6 Drag the cutouts you have made onto the **Stage**. You will need a cutout of his head and mouth as a minimum.
- 7 Set the ink of the mouth sprite to **Matte** or **Background Transparent**. Background Transparent will change all pure white pixels to transparent. Matte will change only those pixels surrounding the image to transparent.

Select the head sprite on the Stage. In the Property Inspector, click on the bitmap symbol. Select **Use Embedded Alpha**.



- 8 Use Scale, Skew, Rotation etc. to animate the mouth. See example mouth.dir.