



BUY-OUT AFTER EFFECTS PROJECTS: A LITTLE CASH SAVES A LOT OF TIME

Anyone working with video and graphics will respect Adobe After Effects and the power under its hood. A talented AE designer can create everything from fantastic film resolution composites to eye-popping corporate presentations and pristine wedding montages.

Many of the artists that create this content have put their After Effects project files for sale on the internet. With the AE project file, you are able to make changes--whether subtle or dynamic--to aspects of everything within that final media output. Change the color of the background, modify the text, swap out video files, make it longer or shorter--the list goes on. Whether you are an AE genius, or a die-hard editor who happens to have AE on their system, buy-out After Effects projects are a quick and easy way to create with minimal effort.



IN THE BEGINNING...

Sample After Effects project files have been around for some time. Adobe started including them with new releases of AE a few years ago. Dean Velez included them with his awesome training CDs. Digital Anarchy's "Chaos Stock" included them with their final renders.

Now, the market is growing and we're seeing websites pop up everywhere with project files for sale. There are sites that *build* content for resale, and there are sites that *call on end users* to submit their own content for resale. Either way, there is ever-growing content out there for just about everyone.

Many of you have visited AE project sites like ReRendered.com, MotionGraphicsLab.com, and PlanetAEP.com. These are great sites that I've purchased and downloaded from. However, I've chosen to look at a few websites that are "off the beaten path" a bit and test out what they have to offer.



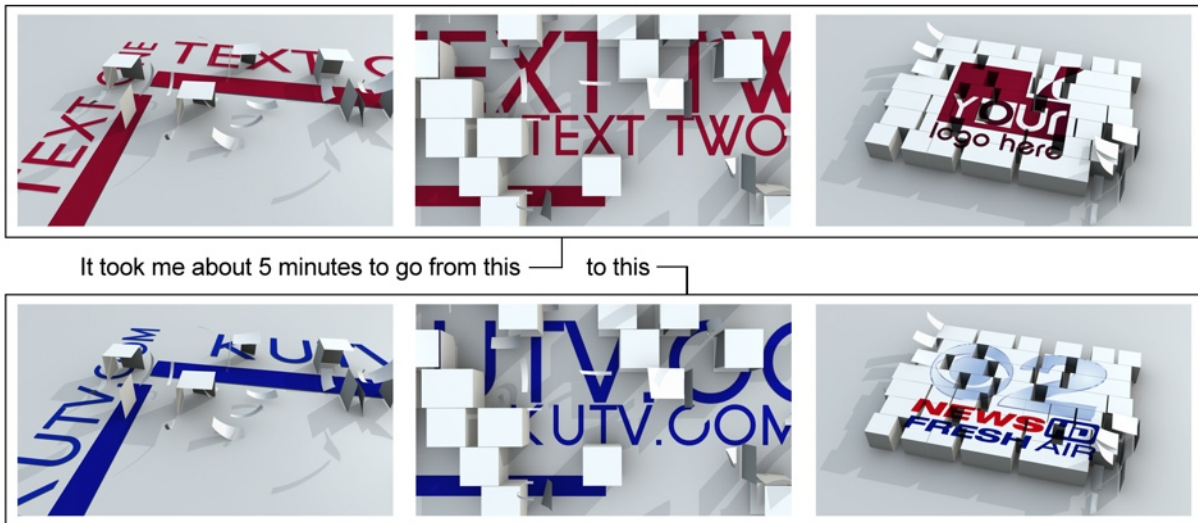
WEBSITE 1: VideoHive.net
AEP PRICES: \$5 - \$25

The first thing to do when going to the site is to click on the "Project Files" section on the left near the top of the page. This will lead you to a list of around 30 (and growing) .aep files.

Contrary to the "you-get-what-you-pay-for" rule, the price you pay for some of these projects is NOT an indicator of the quality of that project. Sure, there are a few less-than-spectacular files in here, but there are also some pretty well-designed items for \$10 and under. Nose around a little bit and you'll see what I mean.

Also, when you go to a certain project's preview page, pay attention to what comes with the project. Look for the version of AE it's compatible with, what assets are original (and pre-rendered), native resolution (HD/SD), and so on. Make sure that your purchase will be able to work with your version of AE and the resolution is at least as big as the project it's going into.

Pictured below is an awesome project file on Video Hive from 3DMworks that costs only \$15. Multiple angles show animated boxes slowly forming, with an overhead camera showing the end shot with the logo. Pretty cool. With six or seven clicks you've got your own logo or picture on top of the boxes there. This particular project pre-rendered the assembling boxes in Cinema 4D (logo replacement is done through using mattes on the renders)--so we weren't able to fine tune that part. Still, if you're looking for a logo stinger or a quick end tag to a corporate video, it's hard to beat this \$15 investment.



My only complaint with **VideoHive.net** is the shadowbox preview window for all their content. It'd be nice if we could save a click and have the video automatically load up when going to the project description page. Not a huge deal, but when you are trying to preview several projects in a row it's a pain to click the shadowbox on and off.

One thing I like about VideoHive.net is that you've got lots of different artists contributing, and therefore a lot of different looks and ways to do things:





WEBSITE 2: **WeMakeMotion.com**
AEP PRICES: \$35 - \$85

I work in the graphics department at a CBS Television affiliate. Recently we had a quick turnaround project to promote a city parade celebrating the University of Utah football team's undefeated season. It had to look cool, but we only had a half day to work on it. Recipe for disaster? Nope. We got help from **WeMakeMotion.com** (hereafter referred to as "WMM.")

On the WMM website, there is a cool AE project file called "AdSpot X". After we got the link to this project file and unzipped it, the .aep file loaded instantly into After Effects. (Note: you may run into some zip issues between Macs and PCs, but it's a somewhat easy fix and does not affect the project files inside the zip.)



There was a dominant blue theme throughout the project file (see image above on left.) The Utes' colors are red and black. Their main rival's colors are blue and white--so keeping the existing colors was not an option. Since we had access to all the project's elements, we quickly dropped the source files into Photoshop, changed all blue hues to red, and re-saved the files. In AE we simply right-clicked those files and selected "reload". Done.

WMM's project file hierarchy was well-organized and thought out. Within a few minutes we were able to change text, tweak keyframes, and insert video clips into the various precomps. The render output, even though it was heavy on the motion blur, was very quick on an older Mac G5. Very impressive. The news director and promotions people loved it, and we had it on the air--start to finish--in about two hours. Amazing. If we had subbed this out, it would have cost us at least \$1500 to get this quality and taken no sooner than two days. The accounting people at the station like to see money-makers like this.



What I like about **WMM** is that you get a variety of well-designed projects covering multiple genres: broadcast, corporate, government, wedding-type stuff, and more. Low on the “cheese,” and high on the quality. Some of the 30+ project files are similar to others, but there’s a lot there to choose from. Keep in mind that you’re able to customize, change attributes, and mix-and-match most everything you see.

As with a lot of projects that are out there on the web to purchase, you get to tap into some of the finer AE minds out there and see how they do things. It’s nice to dissect their projects and see how they pull off 3D layers and lighting, camera moves, compositing modes, etc. I really appreciated the design sense at **WMM**.



For those who need more than one project file, they have bundled some of these together to save you a few bucks.



WEBSITE 3: AEProjects.BIZ

AEP PRICES: \$30 - \$100

One site I found on accident turned out to be one of my favorites. The project files on **AEProjects.biz** (make sure you're at the .BIZ site, not the .COM site) are a little more money, but also pack a little extra into them. About 80% of them contain original audio and sound effects. If you need audio work, this may be an option to check out. Whether you use it or not is up to you.

The main force behind AEProjects.biz is Cassidy Bisher--an Apple Certified Pro guru from the Midwest. Much of the audio that accompanies these AE project files is original stuff that he recorded himself. (You need to listen to it--great stuff!)

We were able to test drive a couple of files here, including "Particle Fly Through" (below on the left) and "3D Boxes" (below right.) The particles in "Fly Through" were generated by Trapcode Form, and the website provided project files for both those who *don't* have this plugin (via pre-rendering) and those who *do*. (Those who do own Form can tweak the particles.) In each case, the .aep files were easy to modify. The HD output looked great. Some of the project files on the site were over a minute in length. The comps were easy to pull apart and create :30s, :15s, and so on.



What I really like about **AEProjects.biz** is the high-res Quicktime/Flash/Still frame previews. It's nice to be able to preview content and see a little more detail of what's in there. Also, I'm a big believer in good audio. Having a good audio track and sound effects sweetening helps tremendously with the overall feel of the project. The audio in here works well. Big upside to this site.

As with **WeMakeMotion.com**, bundles are available at **AEProjects.biz** when you see more than a couple of projects to buy.

SUMMARY

All in all, there are a bazillion advantages to tapping into project files from some of the great AE users out there. Not only do you have all the "building blocks" for a cool effect or commercial spot, but you can rearrange those building blocks to create motion backgrounds, lower thirds, transitions, and so on within the same art direction.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE! You can *modify* the art direction, pick it apart and use only the elements you want, or save the elements out for use in other projects. Unless specified, you can use the included assets however you want. If there are Illustrator or Photoshop files involved with the project, you could even use them for print (depending on their resolution) to create a DVD menu, CD label, or case insert.

In a trying economy, you may have a limited budget as to what you can and can't afford to invest here. There are AE projects files for all types of budgets, including freebies. The higher end project files that are longer in length and include more assets--they may cost more, but they may also bring a higher return on investment with a client. The

lower cost projects can be built upon for more customization, or just pulled apart as a sort of “tutorial” to see how they did that. Just balance your knowledge of After Effects with what you expect to do with the project file--AE gurus will have an easier time with more complex changes.

Buy-out After Effects project files are a win-win situation. For AE artists, the more projects we purchase, the more we can improve our craft. Our support for this emerging market will keep it growing with a large variety and competing prices. Check out what's out there to test the waters and see how you can tap into this “collective creativity.”

(Stay tuned for round two in our look at buyout After Effects projects.)