

Creative Menus in DVD Studio Pro

With RICHARD M. HARRINGTON



Richard M. Harrington

Author's Bio/Description

A certified instructor for Adobe, Apple, and Avid, Rich is a practiced expert in motion graphic design and digital video. His producing skills were also recognized by AV Multimedia Producer Magazine who named him as one of the Top Producers of 2004.

Rich is a member of the National Association of Photoshop Professionals Instructor Dream Team, and a popular speaker on the digital video circuit. He is also an instructor at the Art Institute of Washington and the American University in Washington, D.C.

Rich is an internationally published author. His book, Photoshop CS for Nonlinear Editors, was the first of its kind to focus on Photoshop's application in the world of video. He is also a contributing author for Final Cut Pro On the Spot, After Effects On the Spot, Broadcast Graphics on the Spot, After Effects at Work, and The Photoshop World Dream Team Book, Volume 1.

A Masters Degree in Project Management fills out Rich's broad spectrum of experience.

RHED Pixel – www.rhedpixel.com

Photoshop for Video – www.PhotoshopforVideo.com

Go Beyond Templates

Apple's DVD Studio Pro software is incredibly versatile and comes with several well-designed templates built-in. Templates are great (for a while), but you'll eventually hit a wall and want to start to customize your menus more. If you have access to any still or motion graphics applications, you can soon whip up your own menus.

The Specifications

DVD Menus have a lot of constraints... let's get our heads wrapped around what exactly can or can't be in a menu. If you are designing for the NTSC

- Final image must be 720 X 480 non-square pixels for a movie, 640 X 480 square pixels for a still image.
- Design Edge to Edge, but TV has a bleed area like print
- All viewable elements must fall within the 90% area, which is called the action safe area



notes

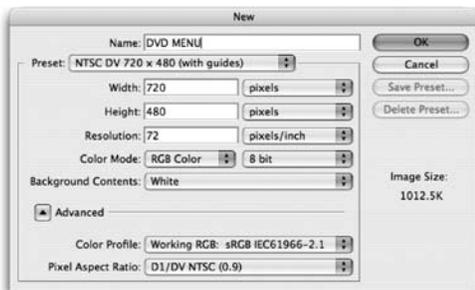
- All type elements must fall within the central 80% area, which is called the title safe area
- If the menu is moving, be sure your movie file is set to render at 29.97 fps or 24 fps
- If using field rendering, be sure to render lower field first

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The Title Safe Area

1. Create a new document sized 640 X 480 pixels.
2. Create a New Layer, name it Title Safe, and highlight it.
3. Select>All or press Cmd+A (Ctrl+A).
4. Select>Transform Selection
5. In the Options bar for the selection link the width and height together and scale the selection to 90%, then click Commit (the checkbox).
6. Load a high contrast color such as red.
7. Choose Edit> Stroke and apply a 4-pixel centered stroke.
8. Once again, choose Select>All or press Cmd+A (Ctrl+A).
9. In the Options bar for the selection link the width and height together and scale the selection to 80%, then click Commit.
10. Choose Edit> Stroke and apply a 4-pixel centered stroke.
11. Design your menu.



To use photos in your menu design

Be sure to scan or shoot your videos at a higher quality setting. This way you'll have extra pixels to use in your design. After fixing or stylizing the photo, you will need to crop it to size. If you intend to use the image full-screen or want to size the image to the correct video aspect, you need to perform a power crop.

1. Select the Crop Tool by pressing C.
2. In the options bar type in a width of 640 px (for pixels) and a height of 480 px. The resolution does not matter, as video works with a total pixel dimensions.
3. Crop the image to taste; remember video is a medium that works better with tighter shots. If you intend to use an image full-screen however, keep the Action Safe area in mind and leave some headroom.
4. Add a Levels Adjustment to make the image Broadcast Safe. You need to clamp the output levels to keep the image in the proper luminance range for television usage. Set the output levels to 16 for Black and 235 for White.
5. Copy & Paste or Drag & Drop the image into your DVD menu.



notes

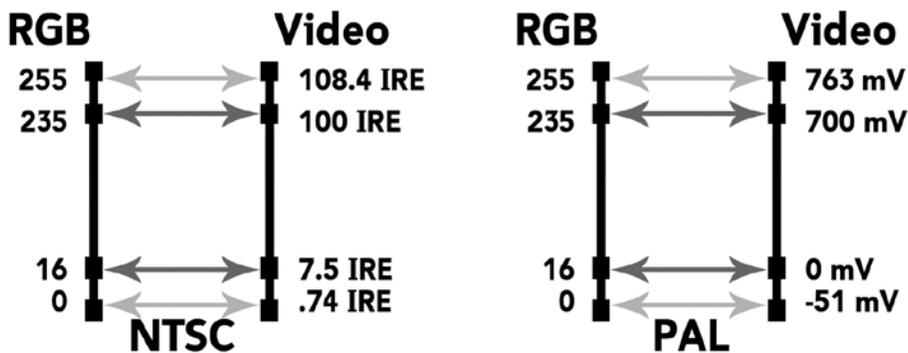
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Using Type

Remember when you were a kid watching Saturday morning cartoons? Did your Mom or Dad yell at you for sitting too close to the TV? "You'll go blind!" Well that's good advice to remember. Type for the Television screen is very different than for print or web. Here are some things to keep in mind when setting type in Photoshop.

- Use a larger point size. Stand up and walk 20 feet away from the computer screen. Can you still read it?
- White is 235 on a RGB scale, Black is 16. When picking colors for screen usage, do not exceed this color range for any of the RGB values.



- Be sure to anti-alias your type for smoother edges at low-resolutions.
- Photoshop layer styles help readability. Don't over-bevel, but a light bevel can help. Also add a contrasting edge with either a glow or drop shadow. If you add layer styles, you must 'flatten' the styled layer so it will import correctly. Do this by linking the effected layer to an empty layer. Then choose Merge Linked.
- Sans serif fonts are often easier to read on television sets. If using a serifed font, be sure to use a true bold version, not a Faux Bold effect.



notes

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Backgrounds from Stills

When designing a DVD, you are going to need a backdrop to hold your menu. There are several sources for these, but let's go ahead and make our own from scratch. By harnessing gradient layers and blending modes, we can quickly create rich backgrounds with depth and color.

1. Create random gradient layers using the gradient tool and filters. Be sure the gradients are at least 800X600 pixels to enable design flexibility. Limit yourself to working in the grayscale mode or working with blends between black and white. The important thing is we are going to combine these layers and only want to affect the results based on luminance. If you need some examples of gradients try visiting the following websites for free samples.

- www.thepluginsite.com
- www.autofx.com
- www.pixelan.com

2. We are now going to create a new document to mix our ingredients together. Choose File New or press Cmd+N (Ctrl+N).

- In Photoshop choose New 720 X 480 DV NTSC preset

3. Add three to four gradients into your composition by dragging them in.

4. Turn off the visibility of all but the two bottom-most layers.

5. Select the layer second from the bottom. We are now going to blend... but let's use a shortcut. Shift+= or Shift + - will cycle through blend modes. If you have a tool selected with modes it changes those, if you have a tool without modes, the layer's mode will change. Pick the move tool and press Shift + = to change the layer's mode. Stop when a resulting pattern satisfies you.

6. Turn on the next layer and blend. Repeat as needed.

7. When satisfied, we will make a flattened copy of these layers. Make a new layer and then choose Merge Visible while holding down the Option key. Apply a slight blur using Gaussian Blur or the Median filters.

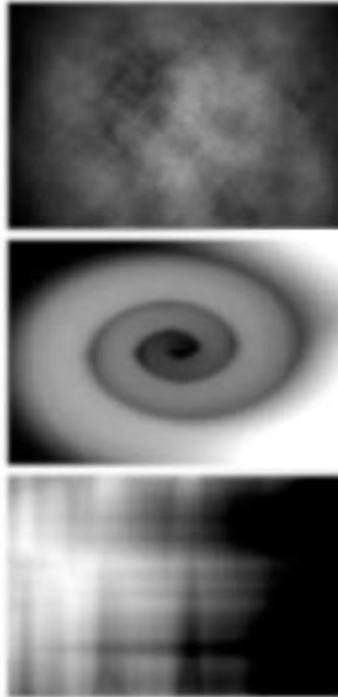
8. To bloom it out, duplicate the flattened layer and blur it heavily. Try blending again to get a softer pattern.

9. We are now going to add color.

- Placing a solid color fill layer or a color gradient above the composite can do this. Then adjust the layer's blending mode to taste.

- You can also try using a Gradient Map Adjustment Layer.

10. Add a Levels adjustment layer. Clamp the output levels by adjusting whites to 235 and the Blacks to 16.



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Acknowledgments: Abba Shapiro, Gary Adcock

Web site Info: www.rhedpixel.com, www.photoshopforvideo.com

Contact Info: RHED Pixel for production services, Creative Cow for technical questions.

For more - check out Final Cut Pro on the Spot and Photoshop CS for Nonlinear Editors

