

AE Blending Modes: Harness the Power



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Blending Modes are an incredibly powerful feature of Photoshop, After Effects, and Final Cut Pro. These modes determine how one layer interacts with another. Elements can interact in new and exciting ways thanks to blending modes. The easiest way to learn blending modes is to just try them. The keyboard command SHIFT – or SHIFT + will cycle you through them in Adobe applications.

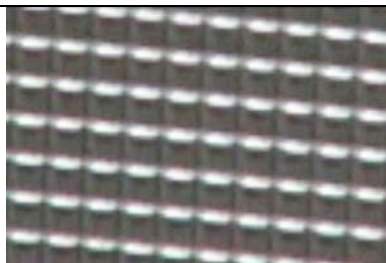
Filters take on new life when you blend a filtered copy of a layer over the original. Blending Modes can also solve the problem of knocking out a white or black background. My favorite use of blending modes however is creating moving backgrounds for use in a video project.

By using three to seven layers of “found” footage you can quickly create a great look. All of the footage used in this project was captured on a European vacation using a Cannon ZR10 Mini DV camcorder. Low light mode is helpful for getting “crushed” and “streaking” colors without running filters.

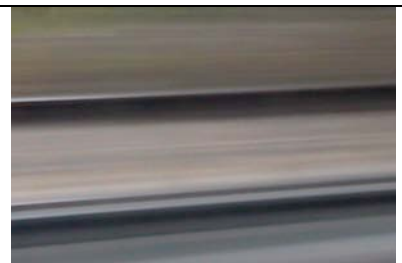
The Source Material



Church windows shot in a 500 year-old German Cathedral



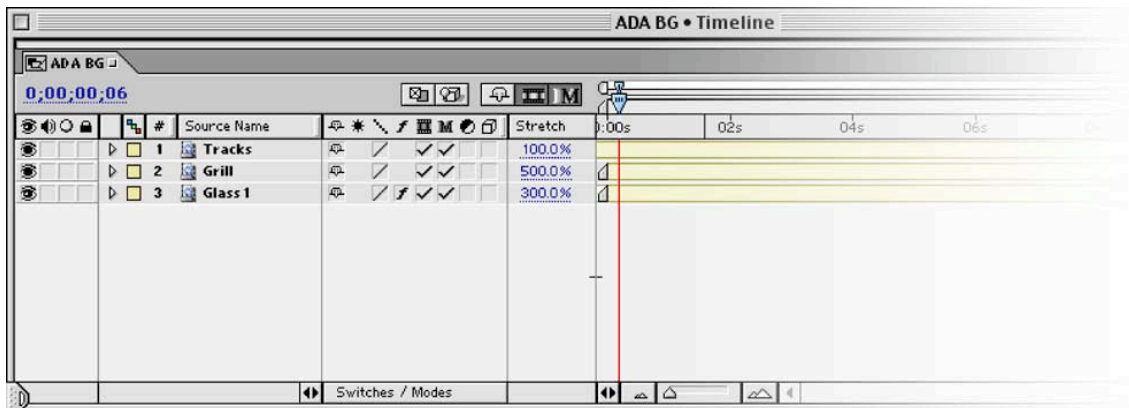
The Grill of an antique car near King Ludwig's Castle in Germany



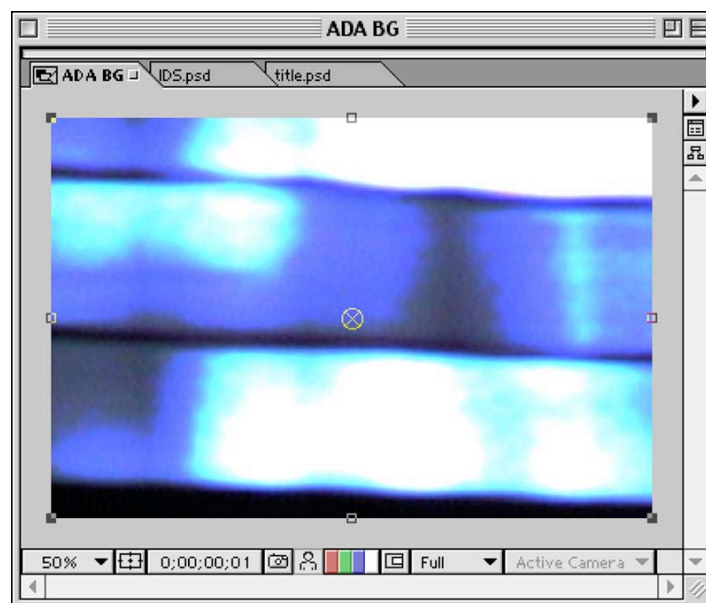
The tracks out the window of a train bound for London's Heathrow airport

Getting Started

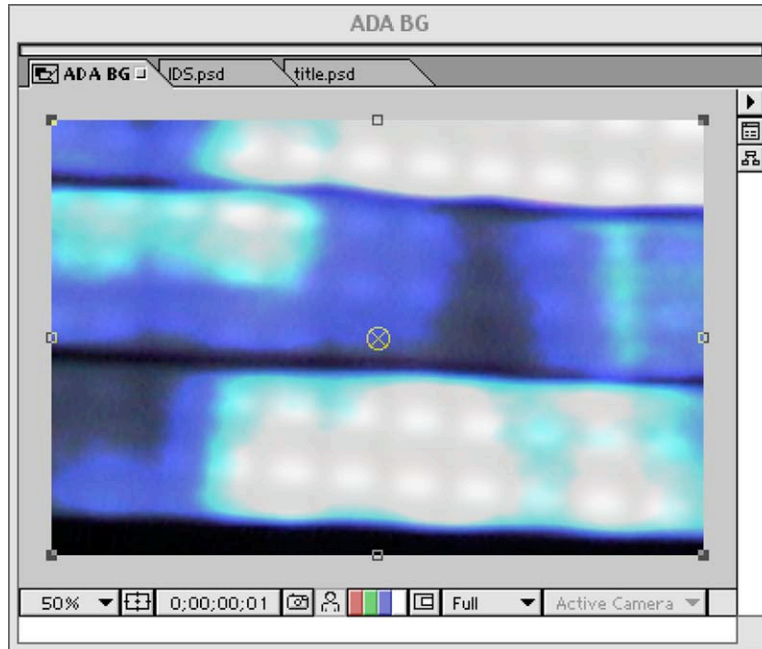
- 1.) **Bring your captured clips into After Effects and layer them on top of each other. You can now drag all of your clips at once on the new composition icon to create a new document with all your layers.**
- 2.) **Use the stretch feature to make your clips the same duration. Use even percentages to resize and be sure to enable frame blending.**



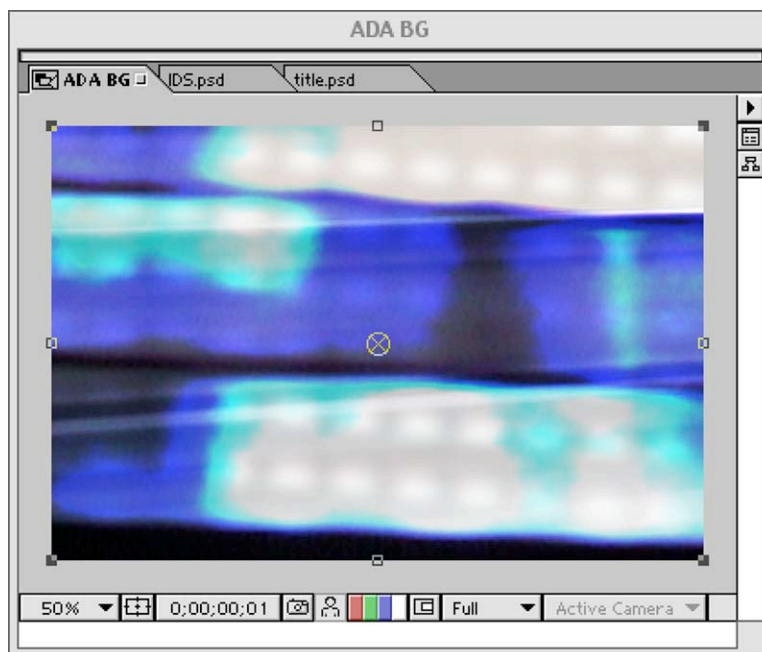
- 3.) **Solo your bottom-most layer for easy viewing. For a greater visual impact, I recommend boosting the intensity of your bottom layer. You can do this through Levels adjustments or by using a Glow filter.**



- 4.) Turn off all layers except the bottom-most two. Adjust the blending modes on the top layer until you find a look that you like. Experiment with blur filters on the top layer and adjust opacity to personal taste.

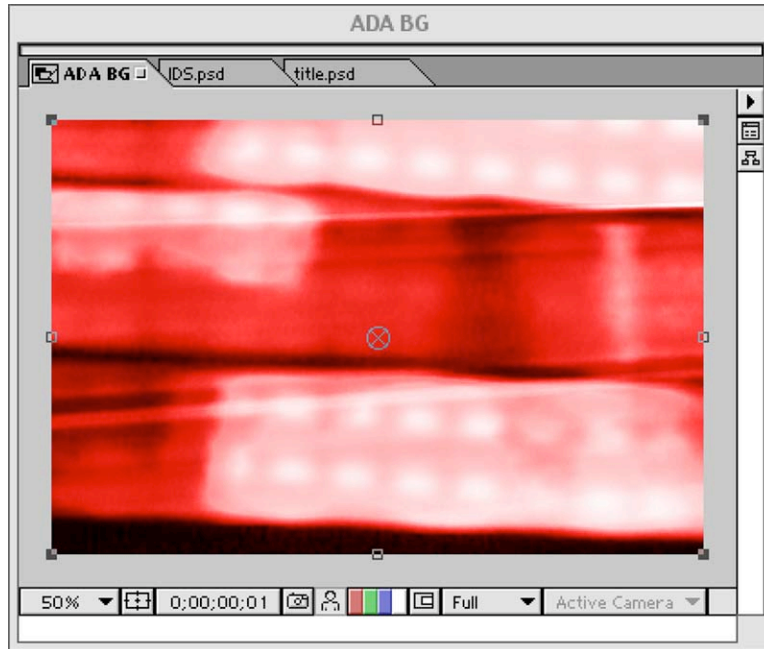


- 5.) Repeat the blending technique on remaining layers. Cycle through blending modes by pressing SHIFT + or SHIFT -.

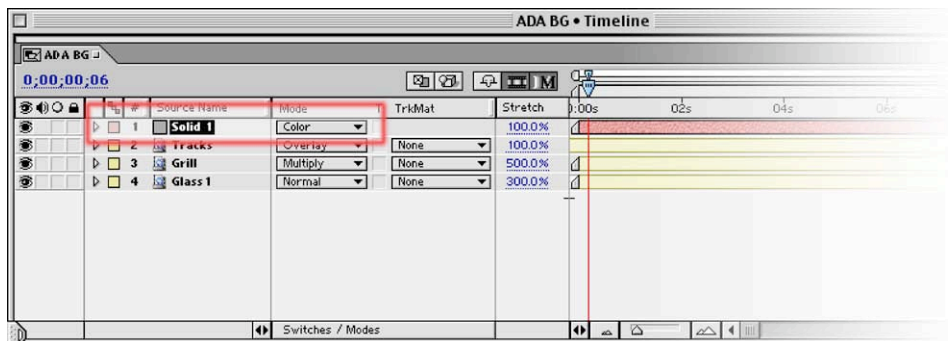


Colorize and Intensify

- 6.) By placing a tinted solid layer above your footage layers, you can quickly colorize the composition. Create a new solid layer by choosing **Layer > New > Solid**. Pick your desired color.

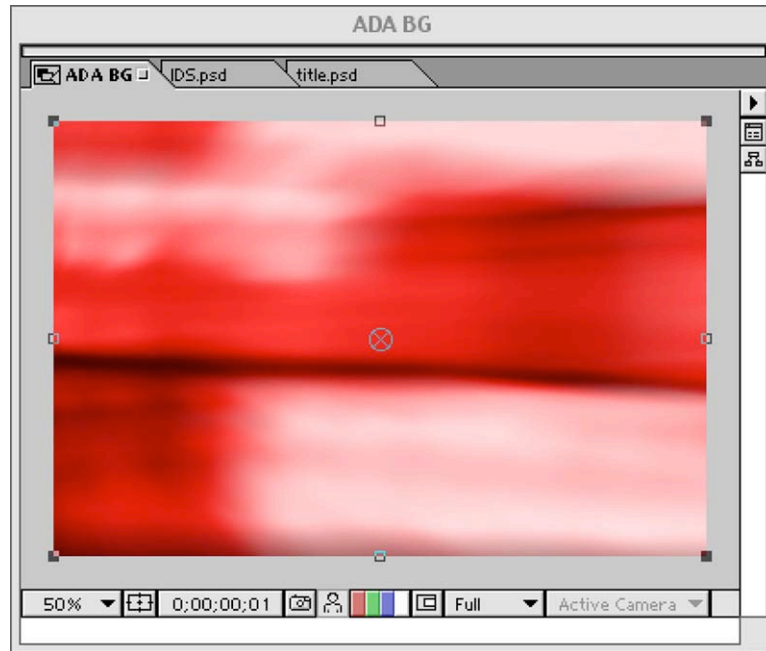


- 7.) Make sure the solid is on top of all other layers and that the blending mode is set to **COLOR**.



Stylize

- 8.) By placing an adjustment layer on top, you can apply global effects or adjustments to all layers below. Use this to tweak your saturation or intensity. You may want to apply the Effect > Video > Broadcast Colors filter. Other filters can be applied for a global effect as well. It is significantly faster to apply an adjustment layer, then to render individual effects on each layer.



- 9.) Make sure the frame blending switches are enabled and double check your layer blending modes. Then render away!

