

Automatic Duck Ximport AE User Guide



About Ximport AE

This plug-in imports XML files from Final Cut Pro X 10.1.2 and later into Adobe After Effects.

Using

To use *Ximport AE* you must first export an XML (.fcpxml) file from Final Cut Pro X 10.1.2 or later.

Once you have an .fcpxml file that *Ximport AE* can read, importing it is as simple as choosing the file in the *Ximport AE* dialog, setting any options, then let it rip.

How to Export

Select your project (timeline) in FCPX and from the File menu choose Export XML...

Which metadata view should you use? General will *generally* work fine, however beware that not all information you may want in AE is exported by FCPX in this mode. Specifically, clip alpha channel settings are not exported by the General metadata view, so if you have clips with an alpha channel After Effects won't import them as such.

You can, for example, add the Alpha Handling metadata field to the General view. If you wish, you can save this as a new setting that you can export with. Select a source clip in the FCPX Event Browser and show the Inspector. Click the Info button in the inspector and from the metadata view popup at the bottom left of the Inspector choose Edit Metadata View. Enable Alpha Handling and click OK. Now when you export using this metadata view the alpha channel settings will translate.

You can export sequences (or "projects" in FCPX parlance), compound clips, events, even an entire library. In the case of event or library exports, *Ximport AE* finds sequences to turn into compositions in After Effects.

How to Import

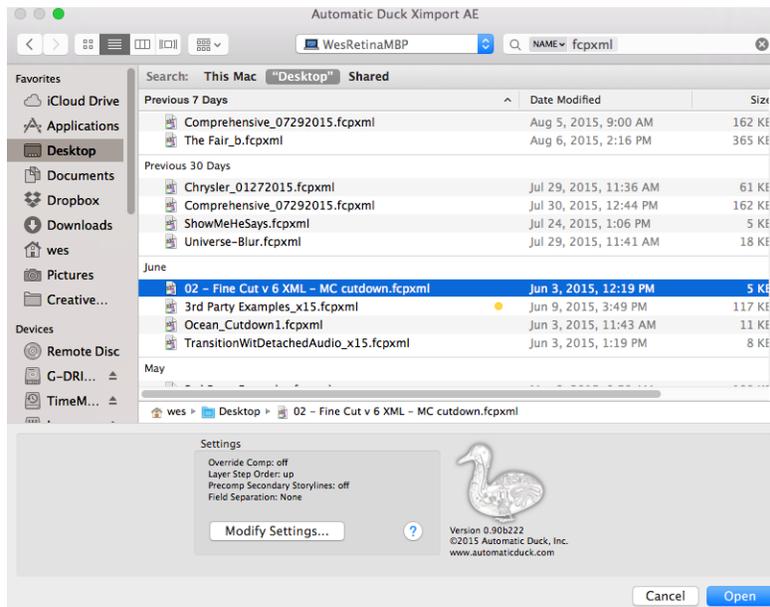
To access *Automatic Duck Ximport AE*, select it from the After Effects File->Import submenu, or right-click/control-click in your project pane and select it from the Import menu. If you right-click, you can right-click on an existing After Effects folder and *Ximport AE* will save the new comp and footage in this selected folder.

The upper part of the *Ximport AE* dialog is the file chooser where you select the file(s) you wish to import. You can select multiple .fcpxml files if you wish to import more than one file.

Below the file chooser is a summary of the *Ximport AE* settings. Click the Modify Settings button to change these options.

Choose the .fcpxml file(s), set your import preferences in the settings, then click Open.

When the import is finished the newly-created comp(s) will be selected in the project panel. This means you can just press the Enter key in After Effects to open the comp. We like making things easy.



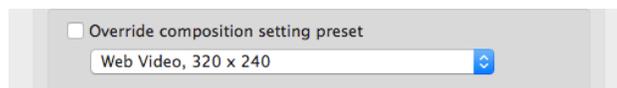
Settings

The settings dialog is organized into two tabs, the Comp and Layers tab that has settings for how the composition is created and layers added, and the Footage and Media tab for options dealing specifically with the imported media files.

Comp and Layers

Override composition setting preset

Sometimes you want your After Effects comp to be setup differently than your editing timeline was set, you can use this setting to override how the new comp is created.



The composition created by *Ximport AE* will match the size and frame rate defined by the selected preset.

Customizing the preset list

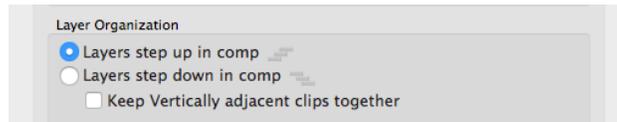
Unfortunately *Ximport AE* is not able to read comp presets from After Effects' preferences, so we have built our own XML settings file you can edit if you would like to modify the contents of this menu.

You can find the file "ADCompPresets.xml" located inside the plug-in package. Locate your After Effects plug-ins folder inside the After Effects folder in the Applications folder. Inside your Plug-ins folder is an "Automatic Duck" folder, and in there you should be a file called "Automatic Duck Ximport AE.plugin". In the Finder, right-click (or hold down the Control key while clicking on the package) and a contextual menu will appear. Choose "Show Package Contents" and a new Finder window appears. Open the Contents/Resources folder and "ADCompPresets.xml" will be in there. Open this file in your favorite text editor. We like [TextWrangler](#), it is free!

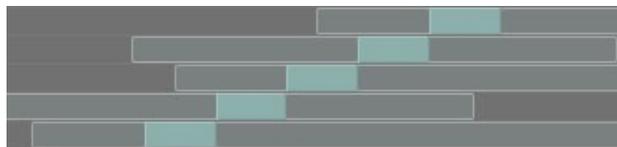
You will see the presets shown in the XML file plus instructions for how to format additions you make to the file. Just add new lines in the format shown, save the file and relaunch After Effects and you should see your custom setting appear in the list.

Layer step options

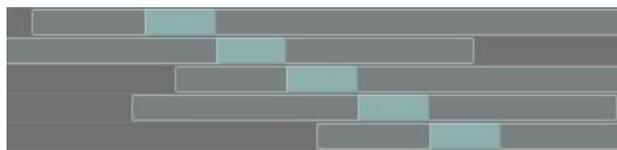
Some users work in After Effects with their clips “stepping up” the timeline, while others prefer to “step down”. Which is better? Who knows, but *Ximport AE* gives you a choice.



When **Layers step up in comp** is selected, layers from earlier in the comp appear lower in the layer order and later clips appear higher. The clips look like stairs going upwards.



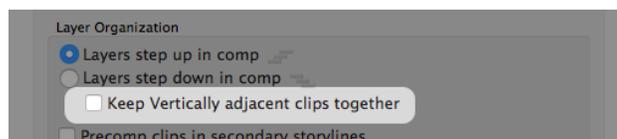
As you would expect, when **Layers step down in comp** is selected, layers from earlier in the comp appear higher in the layer order and later clips appear lower. The clips look like stairs going down.



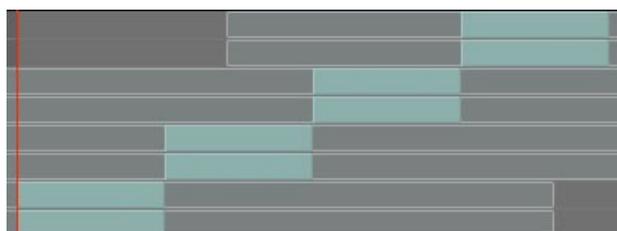
The choice is yours.

Keep vertically adjacent clips together

Normally *Ximport AE* adds clips to the timeline as the plug-in processed clips, first left to right on the primary storyline, then left to right on the first lane of connected clips, etc. This meant that for a long sequence, a clip on “V2” that appeared in FCP right on top of a clip on “V1” would be vertically separated from the lower clip in After Effects.



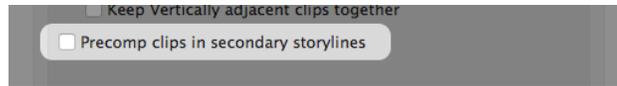
The **Keep vertically adjacent clips together** option reorganizes the timeline so that a connected clip will be immediately above its lower neighbor.



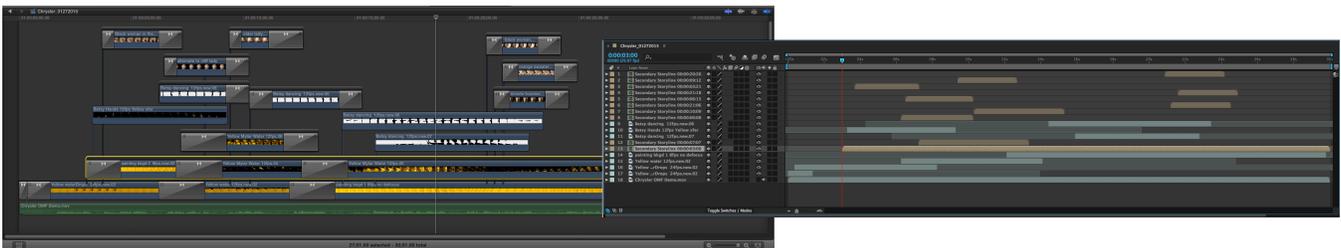
There are rules for how the plug-in decides to do this. The “vertically adjacent” clips must start at the same frame and must have the same duration.

This option only considers video clips, audio clips are not reordered in the timeline.

Precomp clips in secondary storylines

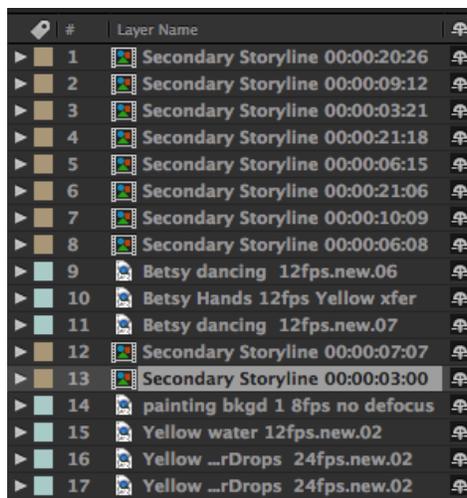


When Precomp clips in secondary storylines is enabled, all the clips in a single secondary storyline are placed into a nested composition.



You can still open the nested comp to edit or apply effects to the individual clips, but in the main comp you will be able to treat the secondary storyline as one element.

To help you identify the nested compositions, they are named with their main comp start time included in the precomp name.



Like nesting and precomps? Be sure to read the section on **Compound Clips**.

Footage and Media

The media that gets imported into After Effects is referred to as footage. In this section of the *Ximport AE* settings you tell the plug-in how you would like it to deal with these footage items.

Field Separation

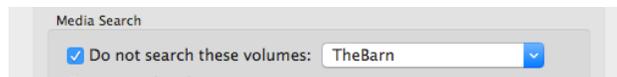
Sometimes you need to instruct After Effects to separately calculate each field of your interlaced footage, doing so is called Field Separation.



Explaining when you need to do this, or why you need to do this, is outside the scope of this document. After Effects' help has always been a good resource, indeed the writer of this user guide remembers that even though he had studied broadcasting in college it was the After Effects 3.1 user guide that gave him his first good explanation of why standard definition video is interlaced.

Do not search these volumes

Ximport AE spends a lot of time searching for media files. This is because the file path stored in the Final Cut XML file may no longer valid. There may be certain places on your computer, however, that you don't want *Ximport AE* to look in for media.



To prevent *Ximport AE* from searching certain volumes enable the checkbox then select the volume name from the popup menu.

Independent of this setting you can also cause individual folders to be ignored by surrounding the folder name in parentheses. For example the folder "(hidden media)" and its subfolders would never be searched.

Custom search paths

Just like you might want to instruct *Ximport AE* to never search certain places you might also want to give the plug-in some priority locations where the plug-in should search for media files.

Ximport AE will search these locations you add to this list before any other.



What is translated

Ximport AE is able to translate a lot of metadata from Final Cut Pro X into After Effects. Not everything translates, of course, but a lot does.

The following table shows what is translated from Final Cut Pro X to After Effects.

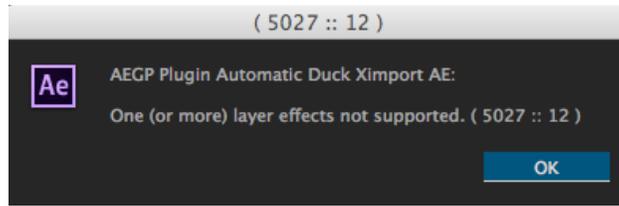
Effect and Parameter Support from FCPX	
FCP Effect/Parameter	After Effects Translation
Opacity (Inspector)	Opacity
Scale (Inspector)	Scale
Rotation (Inspector)	Rotation
Center (Inspector)	Position
Distort (Inspector)	Corner Pin
Crop ("Trim" type only)	Rectangular Mask created
Constant Speed retiming	Stretch
Variable Speed retiming*	Time Remap Keyframes set
Hold retiming	Time Remap Keyframes set
Freeze Frame	Time Remap Keyframes set
Distortion > Flipped set to Horizontal	Transform Effect applied, Scale set to -100, 100
Distortion > Flipped set to Vertical	Transform Effect applied, Scale set to 100, -100
Distortion > Flipped set to Both	Transform Effect applied, Scale set to -100, -100
Dissolve **	Opacity Keyframes
Blend Mode	Transfer/Blending Mode
Color > Colorize	Tint Effect applied
Audio Level and Audio keyframes	Audio level keyframes created
Audio Fade	Audio level keyframes created
Video Fade	Opacity Keyframes
Disabled clip	Layer created with audio/video switches turned off
Clip Notes field in Inspector	layer Comments

* Speed Transitions are not translated

** All transitions are converted to dissolves so their overlap is properly maintained

When Effects are Unsupported

Effects and parameters that are not supported are not translated, and are therefore lost. Please keep this in mind as you prepare to migrate from Final Cut Pro X to After Effects. If your timeline contains elements that *Ximport AE* knows that it cannot translate for you, a warning message will appear.



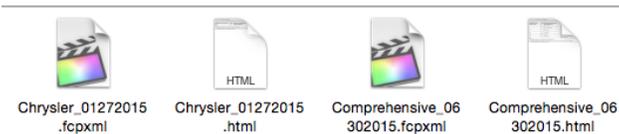
This warning notifies you that some “effects” are not supported. In the context of this dialog, the term effects refers not only to effect filters, but to any parameter or feature that modifies your clip. In most cases it appears because of unsupported features or filters, not any kind of dramatic failure.

Clip Markers



When *Ximport AE* sees an effect, parameter, or setting it doesn't know how to translate, it places a marker on the layer with the effect or parameter name in the marker.

Additional information about import exceptions can be found in an HTML log that is saved at the same location as your imported FCPXML file. Open this file in a web browser to view.



Source Clip Markers

Markers from source clips in FCPX sequences are translated into layer markers in After Effects.

Markers, Chapter Markers as well as ToDo Markers are all translated into After Effects layer markers.



Markers are a great way to make comments about clips that need special attention in After Effects.

Retiming

Clip retiming information from Final Cut Pro X is translated into After Effects using *Ximport AE*. Clips with a single, constant retime applied is turned into a layer stretch in After Effects. Clips with bladed speed resulting in varying retiming is converted to Time Remapping in After Effects.

Speed Transitions in FCPX are not translated.

Keyframe Interpolation

Keyframes created in After Effects are default linear keyframes; easing is not supported. Bezier curves in motion paths are also not supported.

Auditions

The selected “pick” in an Audition will appear in your After Effects composition, alternate clips from the Audition are not translated.

Multicam

Ximport AE translates the active angle from a multicam clip into After Effects. Alternate angles are not translated.

Compound Clips

Final Cut Pro has long had a powerful ability to nest sequences inside sequences and Compound Clips added to sequences is FCPX’s modern take on nesting. After Effects shares this functionality, you can nest comps within comps. *Ximport AE* supports nesting, so your Compound Clips from FCP will become nested compositions in After Effects.

You can export a project containing a compound clip and the compound clip appears in the main translated comp as a nested composition. You can also export the compound clip from your browser to XML, *Ximport AE* can import an XML file exported from a compound clip.

Text and Titles

Title clips using the Basic Title generator translate into After Effects as text layers, and *Ximport AE* makes an effort to translate not only the text content of the clip but also the font (but not the “face”), color, size and position of the text.

Other text generators, including those you create or edit yourself, will not translate as fully, but if *Ximport AE* sees a text block in the exported XML it will create a text layer in After Effects with the same text content.

Captions

Captions are ignored entirely.

Proxy Media

Ximport AE intentionally ignores proxy media files and instead will search for the original media with its superior resolution.

Audio

Ximport AE turns your audio fades into audio volume keyframes, same with crossfades. Volume settings are also translated. The plug-in tries hard to make sure your After Effects comp sounds like your FCPX project.

Often, audio and video come from the same file, so it is easy to have an After Effects layer that plays both picture and sound. But in some situations *Ximport AE* creates separate audio layers.

If you have a split edit, sometimes called an L-cut, reverse L-Cut or J-cut, *Ximport AE* creates separate layers to represent the picture and sound so that they start and end individually like they did in FCPX.

Ximport AE does not support Audio components disabled in the Inspector. Disabled and enabled audio channels are treated the same.

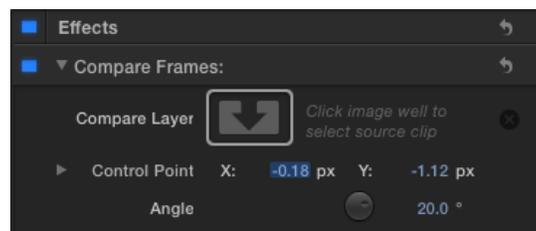
Third Party Plugins

Many plug-in makers have both FCPX and AE versions of their plug-ins, and *Ximport AE* can translate third party plug-in effects from FCPX to After Effects. The plug-in will be applied to the layer in AE and the parameters from the XML set on that plug-in.

Ximport AE reads the plug-in name as well as the effect parameters from the FCPX XML and tries to find the same plug-in installed in After Effects. The matched effect is applied with the same parameters values found in the XML.

Some plug-ins don't have exact parameter matches between FCPX and AE, so parameters that don't match can't translate. Some plug-ins, even when the parameters match, show slightly different results in Final Cut Pro X and After Effects making an exact recreation impossible for us.

Information about the media used in image wells are not included in FCPX's XML exports, *so cannot be translated*. Any plug-in with that accepts or expects a layer in the inspector *will not fully translate*.



Some plug-in packages offer Presets that are separate from the plug-ins themselves, presets are not supported. In fact, *Ximport AE* doesn't translate Presets parameters, because that can override the individual parameters that you might have set in FCPX.

At the time of this writing we have tested the following plug-in sets...

manufacturer	plugin set
Boris FX	Boris Continuum Complete 9
Digital Anarchy	Beauty Box , Flicker Free
Noise Industries	FxFactory Pro
PHYX†	Cleaner , Color , Defocus , Flarelight , Glitch and Stylist
Red Giant	Magic Bullet Suite 12, 13 (Colorista III , Colorista IV , Looks 3 , Looks 4 , etc.)
Red Giant	Universe (except generators and transitions)
Yanobox	Moods†† , Mosaic††

† plugin-ins currently unsupported from FxFactory

†† Layer marker added to show necessary Preset selection

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