

Manual Addendum
Aurora Sky
For Final Cut Pro

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Installation Instructions

OS 9

Launch the installer and select OS 9 from the pop-up.

You will also need to point the installer at the Final Cut Pro plugins folder. This should be in the same folder that your FCP application is in. Select 'Select Folder' from the pop-up menu at the bottom of the installer and browse until you locate the plugins folder. Select it and click 'choose'.

Click the Install button. That's all there is to it.

If you've purchased the product, you will need to register it. When you launch FCP after installing Aurora Sky, a registration dialog will pop-up. Click the 'Online Registration' button. This will take you to our web site, where you can enter in the serial number given to you when you purchased it. You will be given a License Key.

Return to FCP and enter in your serial number and License Key to validate the plugin.

OS X

Launch the installer and select OS X from the pop-up.

You will need to point the installer at the Final Cut Pro plugins directory. Select 'Select Folder' from the pop-up menu at the bottom of the installer.

If you're installing to the shared resources, your path will be something like this:

Hard Drive> Library> Application Support> Final Cut Pro System Support> Plugins.

Or, if you're installing for a particular user, the path will read:

Hard Drive> Users> [User Name]> Library> Preferences> Final Cut Pro User Data> Plugins.

Once you've found the plugins directory, select it by clicking 'choose'.

Click the Install button. That's all there is to it.

If you've purchased the product, you will need to register it. When you launch FCP after installing Aurora Sky, a registration dialog will pop-up. Click the 'Online Registration' button. This will take you to our web site, where you can enter in the serial number given to you when you purchased it. You will be given a License Key.

Return to FCP and enter in your serial number and License Key to validate the plugin.

Differences Between After Effects and Final Cut Pro

Layout

For the most part, the differences between the AE and FCP version of Aurora Sky are cosmetic. All the parameters that are available in the AE version are in the FCP version and work exactly the same. The main difference is that they are laid out somewhat differently.

After Effects allows us to section things into groups of parameters. This is not available in Final Cut Pro, so all the parameters are in one long list. This makes for a somewhat more cluttered interface. However, a filter can actually have more parameters in FCP than in AE. In AE we're limited to 128 parameters, there is no such limitation in FCP. This means some parameters are grouped a little more intuitively than in AE, where we had to put many parameters into the Options dialog box (there is no Options dialog box in the FCP version, as it was unnecessary).

Image Maps

The Image Map sections also work slightly differently. In AE you select an Image Map by selecting the layer you want to use from a pop-up. In FCP, you simply drag the image you want into the 'image box' in the parameter list. You can drag an image from the bin or from the timeline. This is actually a bit cleaner than the AE way as you don't have to clutter up your timeline with images/movies that are only going to be used as an Image Map.

What's Missing?

Preset Manager

The biggest thing missing is the Preset Manager. In the AE version, this allows you to Save and Load groups of parameter settings that create one effect or another. This is one of the primary reasons the FCP version is slightly cheaper than the AE version.

Bezier Cloud Shaping

The 3D Clouds can use a mask from After Effects to control their shape. Since we don't have access to Bezier Paths (vector splines like you find in Illustrator) in FCP, we are unable to offer that feature.

Parameter Min/Max Range

Some parameters don't have the range that they do in the AE version. This is mostly due to the fact that you can't enter in values larger than what is available on the slider. For example, in After Effects a slider may go from -2000 to 2000, but you can enter -25000 to 25000 by typing it into a dialog box. In FCP, you're limited to the values that are available on the slider.

The parameters work the same otherwise they just don't have some of the extreme settings that are available in AE. Most users will never need the additional values, but in some cases they do come in handy.

Options Dialog

As mentioned, the Options dialog box is missing. However this is due to not needing it. The parameters that were in this dialog are now in the main interface which makes them more accessible.

Tips And Tricks For Using Aurora Sky In FCP

One thing we've noticed about FCP users is that they aren't (in general) as used to working in lower resolution modes as AE users. Since so many things in AE need to render, AE users are very use to setting up filters and compositions in half or quarter resolution mode. This speeds up rendering, which speeds up your workflow.

Aurora Sky is definitely an AE filter in that it takes some time to render. You'll find that working in Low Res or Draft Res mode will make setting up the filter MUCH easier. One of the nice things about clouds is that they more or less look the same at any resolution. You can do most of your setup in a lower res mode and be pretty certain that the final result will look very similar when you render it out in all it's full res glory.

It also helps to turn off parts of the filter that you don't need to have render when setting up other parts of the filter. For example, if you're just setting up the 3D Clouds, there's no reason to have the Cloud Layer turned on. Turn it off and increase the render speed a little.

Keep in mind that you can lower the resolution of the 3D Clouds. Set the Spheres parameter to a low value and the 3D Clouds will render much faster. Set up your camera moves or get the correct size of the cloud with a low number of spheres, then crank it up when you do your full res render.