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EffectsLab Pro - PC

Can this give Adobe's Affect Effects a run of its money?

by Stephen Patrick published on 20 March 2007

It's been 30 years since the first Stars Wars movie was released in cinemas but still our love affair with the series continues to grow. The latest proof of that comes in EffectsLab Pro, a CG authoring tool, which comes with pre-loaded effects that allow you to instantly add lightsaber flashes and even that weird ethereal glow the dead-Obi Wan had.

£90 would be a lot to pay for a one-off trick like this but that's merely the hook by which you get people to take interest in what is otherwise quite a complex tool. The fact that it's half the price of its nearest rival and considerably cheaper than the market leader, Adobe After Effects, suggests this is for enthusiastic home users.

The main problem with post-editing is that you need to know how the program works to get the best from it. However, simple effects can be done almost instantly with EffectsLab. For instance, most of the tools work using a polygon or vector design, so you can click at different points on the edit screen and anything in the ensuing box can be handled in different ways without affecting the rest of the screen. This can be as simple as masking portions of the screen - making things disappear, for instance - or so you can edit them. The particle system is great if you want to create more subtle effects, such as water or fire. It's not as direct as masking but the results are more rounded.

Most effects are simply one-click, so you don't need to spend too long getting to grips with the package. Once you get the hand of the program and want to add more features, the basic price starts to show up its limitations. The power of CG tools is often in the ability to use third-party plug-ins, which simply isn't supported here. Also, you can't force audio effects in with the timing of your changes, which is something Adobe's program



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does support.

VERDICT

If you want to add effects to your home movies, this program is as cost-effective and ambitious as it gets.

It's not perfect, the lack of sound editing means you'll need to buy an additional tool for that part.

However, as the first steps to creating a rival to Adobe's world-dominating After Effects it's worth looking at.

At a glance

What is it?

CG authoring tool

Good

Cheapest around, feature packed

Bad

Can't edit audio in-program

Verdict

If you want to post-edit your home movies on a budget, this is about as good as it gets - and that's good!

Price £90

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10