

THE BRICKFILMING JOURNAL

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The image features a dark background with several glowing film strips. One prominent film strip runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right, with a large number '1' centered in one of its frames. Other film strips are visible in the upper right and lower right corners, some appearing as faint outlines or glowing paths. The overall aesthetic is cinematic and high-tech, with a color palette dominated by black, white, blue, and yellow-green.

Welcome to the very first edition of The Brickfilming Journal. A lot of effort has been made to bring you this magazine, and I thank the contributors greatly. The first edition may not have hundreds of articles, but it's got *heart*.

acericardo

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The Brickfilming Soapbox (by Colin 'Shale' Boyle):

Hey there, kids, this is the first Brickfilming soapbox. Actually, I probably shouldn't say 'kids.' No doubt I would recognize the usernames of many of those who will be reading this journal, so perhaps I should say, 'Hello, you greasy lot.'

That's better ;)

Anyway, some of you may be wondering exactly what a soapbox is, and what the purpose of having one is. Well, a soapbox in the literary meaning is basically using a space to get across opinions or even news, sometimes in a way as to be persuasive. The purpose of *this* soapbox, however, will be to generally discuss Lego and Brickfilming-related info with the hope that people come away having read something of interest.

To start with, I will write about a subject that all Brickfilmmers seem rather obsessed with: pink minifigs.

So, why are there pink minifigs, and are they as bad as people who make Brickfilms make them out to be? Well, let's take a look at Lego's Wikipedia entry: "Early prototypes of the Lego minifigure had a variety of skin colours and facial expressions, but production designs used only a yellow skin colour and standard smiling face. Lego Pirates in 1989 expanded the array of facial expressions by adding beards and eye patches. Soon the other themes caught on, ranging from sun glasses, lipstick, eye lashes, and so on. However, many of the older

collectors resented the new look, saying they looked too "cartoon-ish" or "kiddy", and preferred the simplistic nature of the two eyes and smile. Nevertheless, licensed series such as Lego Star Wars and Lego Harry Potter gave minifigures the personas of specific characters from their cinematic counterparts – ”

So far, everything is well and good. But the rest of the Wiki entry states:

“– but it wasn't until 2003, with the introduction of Lego Basketball, that the palette of skin tones broadened to include more lifelike colours.”

Some people just hate change. Some people complain about any Lego set made after 1988 (coincidentally, the year this soapbox's author was born, as if you gave a hoot). In fact, I've read many a complaint about Lego sets I know and love (such as the new Batman sets, which are ultra cool and feature some of the best weapons Lego has ever made). However, I suspect that pink minifigs are probably not popular with even those who are not outspoken about these things, for the following reason:

Their skin colour simply clashes with the classic yellow. I don't know about anyone else, but I find both colours used in a Brickfilm side by side jarring. If I make a Brickfilm, I either use one or the other throughout, if I can help it. Besides, even if I don't like to admit it, I grew up with the ambiguous yellow, and darnit, I see no reason to change.

Here's the problem, though: considering things from a non-Brickfilmer point of view, there's not much reason not to evolve.

The following is a hypothetical discussion between a Brickfilmer and a Lego executive:

Brickfilmer: "Why do you have to change the minifig colour for the movie and TV show tie-ins?"

Lego Executive: "Times are changing, sonny. Legos have got to be more diverse, with more clearly defined races. I hope you don't mind."

Brickfilmer: "Actually, I do mind, jackanapes! All the characters in my films have clashing skin colours. Now what are you going to do about it?"

Lego Executive: "Make pink Avatar figures? I hear Anime is hot."

The Brickfilmer proceeds to beat up the Lego executive with a lightsaber made out of Lego. He then logs onto the Internet and complains that a pink Batman looks totally 'gay' (as in stupid).

But hold up ... the Batman Legos aren't based on the movies!

Gasp!

Quickly pulling up the 'Products' section of Lego's official website, our intrepid soapbox author notes that many of the minifigs representing different types of sets on the site are pink! Avatar, Batman and Star Wars! Pink as a baby's backside!

Of course, to be fair, Knights, Townspeople, Exo Force, and other categories remain with yellow minifigs. Thus far, it's only been licensed franchises that have gotten the pink treatment. But as it stands, there are *two different main colours* of minifigs currently on the market. Will it forever be that way, or

some day, perhaps in the not so distant future, will Lego make a choice? And will that choice correspond with our sizable collections of Lego with which we make our films, or will it clash?

I'm not quite sure what to hope for, other than that the two colours remain for years to come, with the choice between either. The sheer non-interchangeability of the pink with the yellow also bothers me. I don't run across this sort of thing often, because I don't actually own that many pink minifigs, but one experience I had occurred in this manner:

I was making a film (this was a while back, when I was using a horrid digital camera ... ugh). In this film I had a character, and I intended to have him lying asleep on a bed. I asked one of my brothers to lend me his Ronald Weasley minifig, the one with the eyes closed. He did so, and I realized ... it was a pink head. The other characters in the short were yellow; he was pink. I was originally going to use separate heads for the sleeping character, one with eyes closed, and a different one with a more unique expression than Ron's awake face. Turned out it had to be Ron the whole way, and a pink Ron at that. But I had to use it for the character in the film to sleep, so grudgingly, it remained in there as that character's head.

Of course, I have not shown myself overly fond of those who hate on pink minifigs, whilst I myself have done nothing but criticize them. I shall attempt to list the reasons I think pink minifigs are positive:

- 1: They're a more realistic colour. I mean, really, whose idea was it to make Lego people yellow? You don't see Mega Bloks struggling with this dilemma. After all, they came after Lego and only needed to copy the most relevant aspects of the Lego brand, which apparently didn't include ridiculously yellow skin for their people
- 2: They make Lego people seem less like aliens and more like people. For instance, now you can have all sorts of nationalities, and this ultimately could help serious Brickfilms be taken more seriously. The less Legos seem like silly little toys, the easier it is to take Brickfilming seriously;

even though many Brickfilmmers already do, the average person probably doesn't.

The only problem with these aspects is that millions of yellow minifigs have already permeated the world, to the extent that most people undoubtedly think of little yellow people when they think of Lego.

Whether or not being yellow is a good thing, it is part of what Lego people are, and part of what they have been for a very long time.

My guess is, the yellow will still be around for a long time, even if it has to co-exist with the pink. But if worst comes to worst, well ... we'll always have Bricklink.

- Shale signing off. Funk away!

This Issue's article...

Add Explosions to your films

by Pointless Studios

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

What you need:

Lots of Lego

Stop Motion Animator / iStopmotion

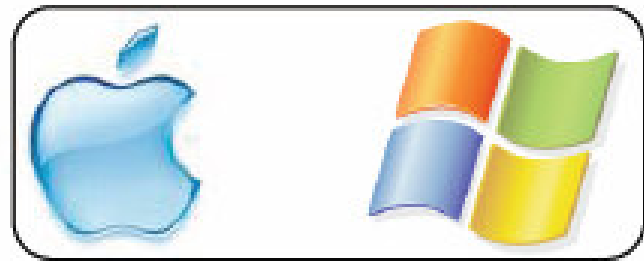
Final Cut Express HD / Axogon
Composer / Adobe After Effects etc.

A Camera

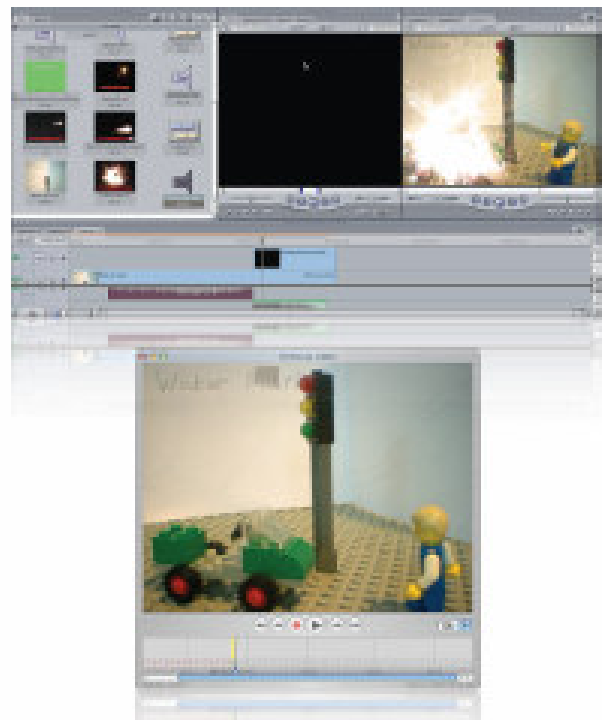
Internet Connection

Some Cash (opt.)

You've seen all the big-budget Hollywood movies these days. For example, in Mission: Impossible, Tom Cruise dives out the way of explosions to save a beautiful maiden, in The Hitchhikers Guide to the galaxy, Martin Freeman and Mos Def narrowly miss the rather spectacular destruction of the earth and in Top Gun, pilots get destroyed by enemy MIGs. The list is almost endless. Every pumping action movie contains at least 2 explosions.

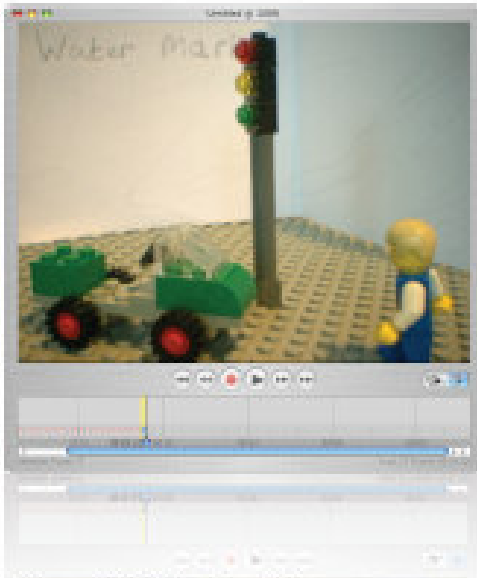


For Mac and Windows



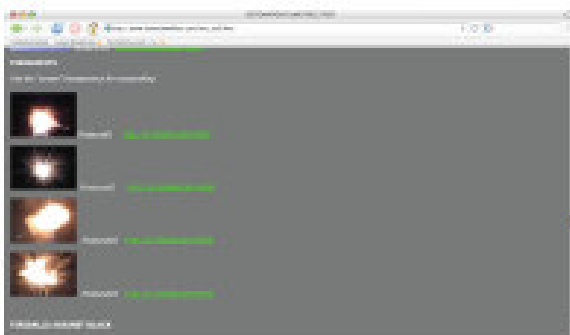
Don't get too excited, using indoor fireworks as a special effect is dangerous. It probably won't give the best result. Instead, you could fake it. You can get stock explosions on the web, I would recommend the very clever chaps at detonationfilms.com. They sell Explosions at a cheap price (as little as \$7, £3.60 or 5€50!) or, you could download some for free! This tutorial takes about 10-15 minutes to do.

Simply follow this step-by-step process!



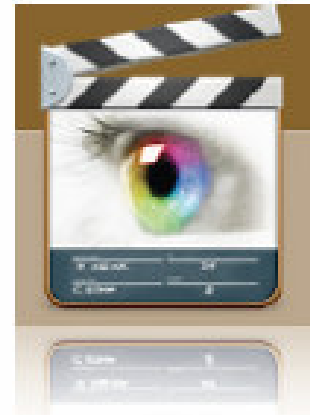
Step 1. Animate the sequence. When done, export as a movie. (.mov or .AVI)

Note: Time the scene carefully. Show your character getting blown back by the blast and show your car in smithereens about 1/2 a second afterwards.



Step 2. Find a stock explosion (preferably free) off the web. Make sure the screenshot is on a black background.

Note: I would personally recommend www.detonationfilms.com for stock footage. All footage is in NTSC format. Don't worry, It will still work on a PAL monitor.



Step 3. Open your effects editing program. I'll use Final Cut Express for this tutorial.



Step 4. Import the stock footage and the raw, unedited footage. Place the raw footage on the first video track and the stock footage on the second video track. Remove the 10 frame title card from the stock footage.



Step 5. Apply a "screen" composite to the stock footage. This should remove the black background.

Note: This command may vary from different programs and operating systems. On the Mac, I just Ctrl-Clicked (right click on the Mighty mouse) on the clip, and selected Screen off the Composite modes menu.



Angle it and resize it until you get something like this.



Step 6. Find an explosion sound effect off www.findsounds.com to add to the mix. When added, your sequence will be complete!

Note: Don't think you can get away with using my footage! I've handwritten a watermark onto the paper background!

Afterthoughts:

Don't think you have to limit it to just a car bomb. The same techniques can be used for gunfire, squibs, blood and even lightsabers in some cases! The time of this tutorial may vary depending on your internet speed. I hope you enjoyed this tutorial and I will be back next issue with some more special effects advice!

Here are some links to the resources I have used in this tutorial.

www.detonationfilms.com

www.findsounds.com

www.apple.com

And here is the download for the finished movie. (Watermarked!)

www.postbrickfilms.com/pointlessstudios/films/Car%20Bomb%20Tutorial.mov

The BRICKFILMING Journal

GreenScreening For n00bs

You will need:

- A frame capture program that saves animations as AVI's
- Masterkey
- Good lighting
- A piece of green or blue card- A3 is best.
- Bluetack
- A webcam and a PC
- A set or characters
- Eyes

Firstly, set up your GreenScreen- or BlueScreen if you prefer. It depends really on what colours you are using in your set- if you have a Minifig with a blue torso, it may be a good idea to use a GreenScreen, as otherwise the Minifig could be left with a gaping hole around his stomach. The best size of card to use is A3, as this means you could have a shot from long away, or if you want to fit a particularly tall building in for instance. Stick your piece of card against a wall, or board behind where your



set will be. Bluetack is good for sticking the card in place.

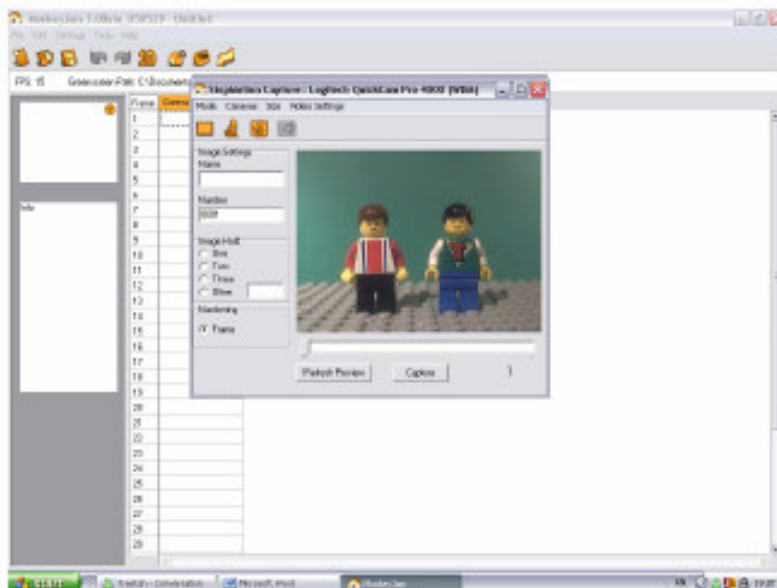


Then, put your ready assembled characters or set in front of the green screen, in this instance, I'm going to use Jim and Bob. After you have done this, put your webcam in the place you would like to film from, and open up your frame capture program to make sure that only the GreenScreen can be seen as the background.



Now, this is the really important bit. Set up your lights, so with your eyes the card appears to be all one colour, so there are not parts which are lighter or darker than other areas.

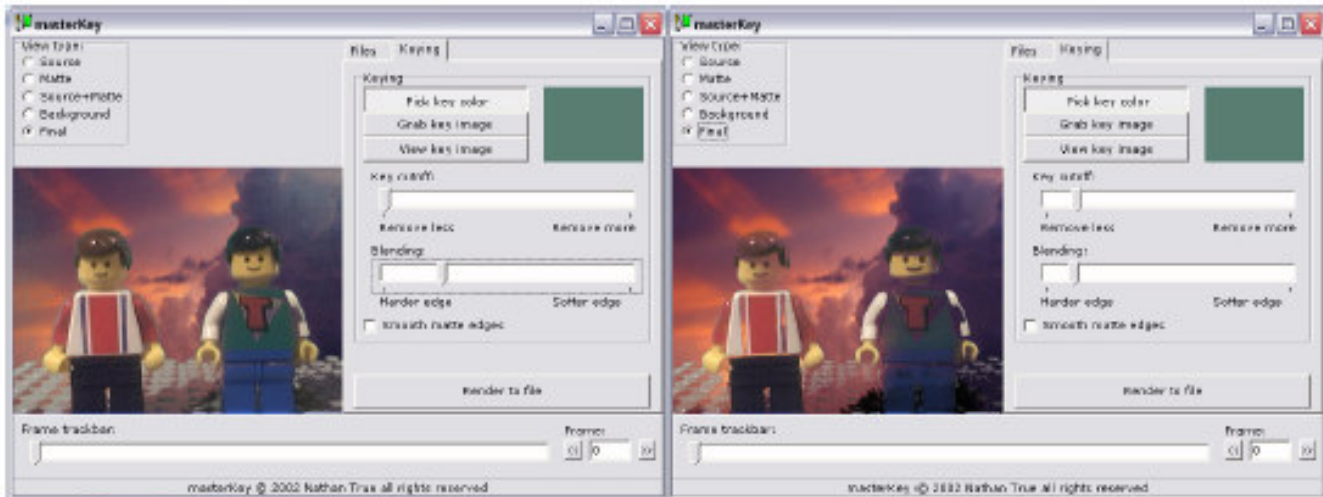
Also, this is the part where your frame capture program really comes in useful. Open it up (I'm using MonkeyJam), and using the live preview, check once more that your background appears to be all the same colour.



If it looks ok, film your scene, and then export it as an AVI file.

Then, switch to the keying window and click "Pick Key Colour" and press your mouse in the GreenScreen area, the box to the right hand corner should then change colour.

Then, move the "Key Cutoff" and "Blending Bars" up or down to change how much area you cut off or green colour you lose.



Good

Not Good

When you're happy, click "Render to file" and choose where you want to save it.

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*This article is part of the Brickfilming Journal Series,
"Articles for n00bs"*

Well, that was the first edition of The Brickfilming Journal. I know I enjoyed it, and I hope you did too.