



Tutorial: Creating Film Grain

You can easily add a layer of grain to your final movie by using some simple compositing techniques in your editing program. Alternatively, you can import your finished video into a compositing program such as After Effects, and add the grain there. Although you can add film grain to your effects on a shot-by-shot basis, it's usually easiest to apply the effect to your finished edit. Note that for this effect to work, your editing program must be able to create solid color layers, have a noise filter of some kind, and be able to change the blending or transfer mode of a layer.

Step 1: Add a Color Layer

In your editing program, add a layer of 50% gray above all of the other layers in your project. Most editing programs have a facility for creating solid color layers. If yours doesn't, then you'll have to move to a compositing program. With the layer in place, your video should be completely obscured.

Step 2: Create the Grain

Now we want to make this gray solid into a noisy gray solid. We'll then composite this over our footage. Your editing program should include some kind of Noise filter, use it to add some monochrome noise. If it offers a Gaussian noise option, select this. How much noise is up to you, but grain is a very subtle effect, so don't go crazy with it.

To keep the effect from being too strong, you'll want to reduce the contrast of the noise. Use your editing program's Levels or Contrast control to lower the contrast of the noisy solid.

Step 3: Change the Blending Mode

Now set the blending mode of your noise layer to Hard Light. Some programs call this the "Transfer" mode and not all will have a Hard Light option. If yours doesn't, try the other transfer modes until you find one that looks good. You will probably also want to adjust the opacity of the noise layer to control the amount of grain (Figure 18.33).

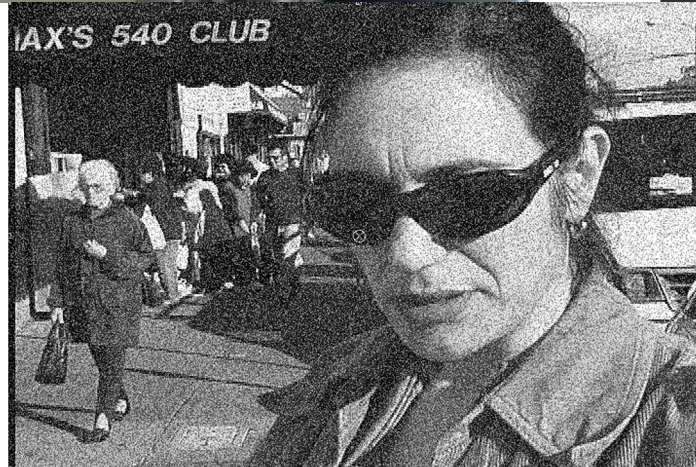
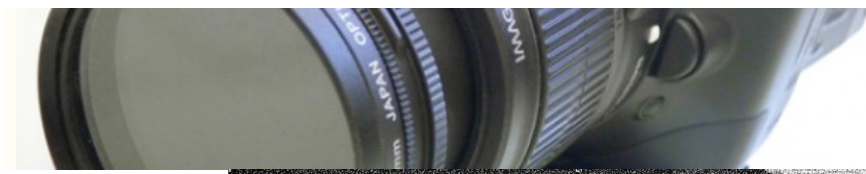


Figure 18.33

With a slight opacity adjustment, you can reduce the intensity of your virtual film grain.

That's it! Instant grain. What's more, it's instant, adjustable grain. You can alter the opacity of your Grain layer to make the grain more or less pronounced. Try adding a Gaussian Blur filter to your Grain comp to make the granule size larger or smaller. (Use really small blur amounts—.3 to 1—to make the grain “chunkier.”)

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