

AE Link v1.1 Beta

Preliminary release notes for public BETA

AE Link v1.1 introduces many new features and expands compatibility with older versions of After Effects. This public beta is provided as is, please report any issues using the ticket system in your Dashboard.

What's new in AE Link 1.1

Live Custom Objects

Changing text contents or Solid Size in AE Link's custom objects will update the After Effects version. In order to avoid overwriting something that has been modified in After Effects, the Lock status in After Effects' timeline is now taken in account for these properties. If it is set, the layer can still be synchronized, but solid size and text content properties will be write-protected.

A new control has been added to AE Link's Custom Objects: solid color. As the name says, this allows to change the color that AE Will use for the solid layer.

AE Link custom solids are also aware of the Pixel per Meter scaling factor. Previously, changing the Pixels per Meter parameter would always produce the same image. AE Link would compensate the scale factor, favoring the visual result and only changing the values used inside After Effects.

In other words, previously Custom Objects would stay the same size in After Effects while appearing smaller or larger in Lightwave. Now "what you see is what you get" and the Pixels per Meters does a 1:1 export.

Auto open compositions when syncing

When you issue the first synchronization command, the comp will be loaded in the viewer, no need to double click it in the project panel.

Faster and cleaner data exchange

A cleaner approach to rotation leads to over 20% speed increase avoiding the creation/deletion of Z rotation channels.

Camera resolution changes

Changing Lightwave's camera resolution will change After Effects' comp size. No adjustment is necessary, everything is recomputed on the fly [requires Sync Scene command].

Markers

Custom markers are added to the layers exported by AE Link, to easily distinguish between layers created in After Effects and Layers exported from Lightwave.

Double clicking a marker or hovering the mouse on it, shows additional informations, such as the Lightwave scene name and the time & date the first export of that layer has been done.

Lights

AE Link 1.1 major focus is advanced light support. It supports After Effects's CS5.5 ability to change Light Types and many more Light properties are exported for all versions of After Effects.

In After Effects CS5.5 and higher:

Light Type - Sets Lightwave Point Lights to Point, Lightwave Distant Lights to Parallel, and all other Lightwave Lights to Spotlight

Falloff - Maps Lightwave's "Off" to no Falloff, Lightwave's Linear to After Effects Smooth and both Lightwave's Inverse Distance modes to After Effects "Invsquare".

In all After Effects versions:

Light Intensity (animated)

Light Color (animated)

Light Cone angle (animated) - The match is accurate, but Lightwave spotlights can have a cone angle larger than 180 degrees, so values larger than 180 are clamped to 180.

Light Cone Angle Feather (animated)

Light shadow-casting (on/off)

Even if as many properties as possible are exported to all versions of After Effects, After Effects lights require extra care during the export because the Light Type, as set in After Effects, enables or disables some properties.

Only the spotlight supports all properties, and this is probably the reason why it's the only scriptable Light Type in After Effects prior to CS5.5.

AE Link 1.1 introduces some special checks to avoid issues when exporting lights and changing their Light Type attribute in After Effects.

Only After Effects CS5.5 provides real support for flawless workflow with repeated export and modification of lights properties.

AE3D Compatibility mode

Activating this setting, AE Link will offset the exported data so that it's centered in After Effects, and compatible with the free AE3D Export script. For full compatibility with AE3D Export, change the frame range in Render Globals so that it starts at 0.

Online check for updates

AE Link can now call home and check if a new version is available for the platform it's being run

on. The check is performed when opening the AE Link Config panel for the first time in a session. The "Check for updates" option in AE Link's config allows to enable or disable the check.

Bug fixes & compatibility enhancements

Fixed compatibility issues with Japanese versions of LW & After Effects on Mac. Implemented a suggested fix (Adobe's cpsid_51615) for older versions of After Effects on Snow Leopard.

Added a workaround to avoid After Effects to auto-quit when started from Lightwave in Windows systems. Removed the LGT suffix that was being added to lights.

Improved compatibility with older versions of After Effects, now supporting After Effects 7 Professional, After Effects CS3, After Effects CS4, After Effects CS5, After Effects CS 5.5.

EXPERIMENTAL FEATURE

Sync Preview

The Sync Preview command is a new plugin added to AE Link. It acts as a Sync Scene but also computes, and loads, a preview. Requires Lightwave 10+. This is labeled as "experimental feature" due to some issues and limitations, often platform specific, that negatively impact its workflow.

In other words, it's too good to be left out, but not good enough to be considered on par with AE Link's current workflow. That's why there's no preset button to add this plugin using the menu configuration file. You will have to add the button yourself. Suggested name is Sync Preview.

Invoking the new Sync Preview will undock the preview window, set it to the current camera size, and preset the frame range to match the values in Render Globals. The original values will be restored after the preview has been generated.

Click on Make Preview, then, after the preview has been computed, click on End Preview. Lightwave will prompt you to save the preview. Make sure to save the preview in the same folder where the Lightwave scene is.

Use the name "a.mov" (Mac) or "AELINK_PREVIEW.avi" (Win). See below for details on the naming convention.

Once the preview has been saved, AE Link will also perform a Sync Scene command and the preview will be loaded as footage inside After Effects.

Any movie located in the current folder and named AELINK_PREVIEW.mov (Mac) or AELINK_PREVIEW.avi (Win) will be loaded. This file will not be loaded if a rendered sequence is found.

Windows-specific issues and workarounds

The "Full Frames (Uncompressed)" codec has to be selected, and the Encoding type set to UYVY in the Preview Options before using the Sync Preview functions. This has to be done every time Lightwave is restarted.

Quicktime must be installed for After Effects to properly handle the previews, even if they are saved in avi. The last frame of the preview is a copy of the previous one. AE Link works around this issue by computing a longer preview.

Mac-specific issues and workarounds

Currently, for undocked previews, the preview frame range does not match the interval set in Make Preview. AE Link will compensate, subtracting 1 frame from the values set in Render Globals.

When using sequences that start at 0, such as for the AE3D Export script, this will generate a -1 start frame. The first preview computed this way will still not match. But from the second preview onwards, everything will work correctly. This "double preview" will be needed every time the Render Globals range is changed.

On Mac preview files can not be replaced. Even clicking on Replace will abort the saving with Lightwave issuing a "Can't open preview file." error. AE Link has a workaround for this, needed only on Mac.

Instead of overwriting the existing AELINK_PREVIEW.mov file, this file will be pre-deleted by AE Link. When the Save Preview dialog appears, type "a" (without quotes) and press enter.

This will save the "a.mov" file, which AE Link will then rename into AELINK_PREVIEW.mov before synchronizing it with After Effects. The "a" name has been chosen because it's short to type.

Please report any issue!

The whole point of an open beta is to catch as many system-dependent issues as possible in the shortest amount of time.

To report an issue, please open a ticket in your Dashboard at vfxwizard.com.