



MAC ✓

PC ✓

→ AFTER EFFECTS PLUG-IN

PRICE: £199 (112)

CONTACT:

Trapcode
www.trapcode.com

Particular

If you need another particle system like a hole in the head, get your trepanning tools ready...

FEATURES

- User-definable particle generator
- Interaction with 3D layers and alpha channels
- Realistic cloud and trail effects
- Uses lights or layers as emitters
- 45 "Favourite" presets
- Built-in online Help system
- Independent motion blur

SYSTEM

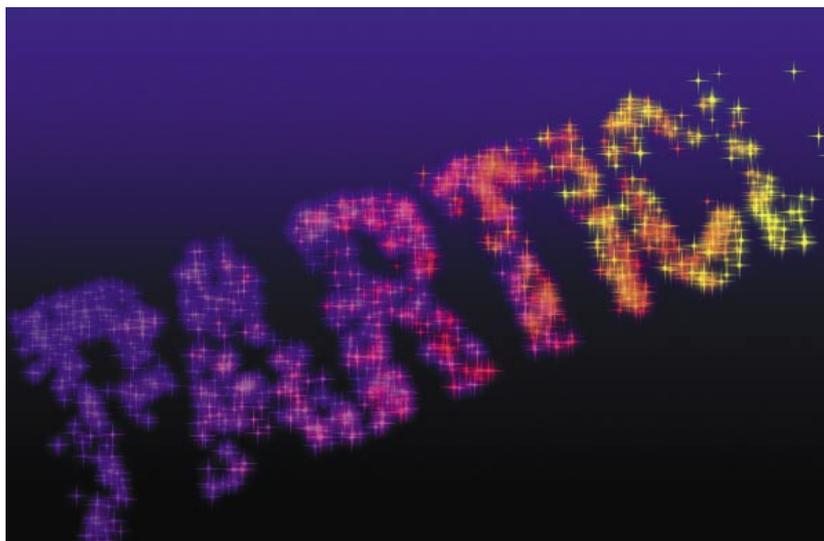
- PC/MAC: *After Effects 6* and a system capable of running it

FOR

- Moves fast, looks beautiful
- Perfectly integrated into *After Effects*' 3D space
- Fantastic system for trails, smoke and fire

AGAINST

- Nothing we can think of...



When transparent particles hit the letters in this alpha-channelled logo, they create an Auxiliary particle. Then, as the emitter sweeps across, you get a reveal, where "Particle" is painted-in by twinkling stars.



Particular creates the most lifelike clouds and smoke we've seen outside of a 3D volumetric system. They give the impression of real volume.



This intentionally gaudy CA logo is being used as an emitter for the coloured particles in the background.

→ We thought Trapcode's *Lux* (4.5 stars, issue 96), the sumptuous volumetric lighting plug-in, would be a hard act to follow. So when the Swedish code shop announced a new particle system, we thought so what? Most *After Effects* plug-in collections sport one – even Adobe's app comes with one built in.

But *Particular* is no ordinary particle system. Yes, it adheres to most of the basic principles, using a generator to spew out multiple points, but it takes it all to a whole new level. For starters, it works right within AE's own 3D space, and so it's a simple task to start a fountain and then orbit the camera around – or even through – the particle field using the standard tools. Most other systems require fiddly parenting or expressions to do this.

In addition, Trapcode has created a fantastic "Auxiliary" system to generate trails, which you can use to create beautifully realistic smoke and fire, or to leave a glowing signature behind each particle. But

because these are created from multiple instances of particles, they too exist in 3D, so you can fly through, spin around or stop time, *Matrix*-style.

Another offshoot of AE's Z-space is that the particles can detect and react with up to two 3D layers. You can then tell the particles to bounce on these layers, slide along them, stop still or just disappear. You can also create an Auxiliary system based on this collision event, so that as your particles hit, they make a spark or kick up a puff of dust. *Particular*'s collision is also aware of alpha channels, so your particles can react appropriately to a logo, say, attaching themselves to the letter shapes or falling through the gaps.

But that's not all. *Particular* can emit particles from lights (they're already 3D objects and are easier to see and animate), or from separate layers with alpha channels. In the latter case, the particles can be ejected in a number of ways, with their colour sampled from the layer itself. You can even use greyscale

images to attenuate the size or direction of the particle based on luminosity values!

Despite this complexity, the plug-in is quite straightforward to use, consisting of the main Effect Control panel, plus a further Option screen for more precise refinement of the particles' look and movement. From here, you can also access a comprehensive online Help file. This user-friendliness even extends to an ingenious built-in preview window, which shows what your scene will look like before you commit to a full render, plus editable graphs for the colour and opacity of all particles. The plug-in is also accompanied by 45 "Favourites", providing a range of animated presets.

Particular has it all. It's easy to set up and use, it works brilliantly with AE's Z-space, the fire and smoke effects look as good as anything we've seen and it's all fast. Yet another particle system may not be high on your wish list, but then Trapcode's affordable offering isn't just another particle system. **arts**

RESOURCE

For full tutorials, plus animated examples of *Particular*'s presets, visit www.trapcode.com. Tutorials cover such how-to's as Using Smokelet Particles and exploring Particle Emitters across a range of generators (Lights, Layers, Particles, Grid). Video tutorials are also provided.



COMPUTER arts VERDICT
Particular is stunning. It's beautifully put together and the creative possibilities are endless. As of now, all other third-party particle systems are redundant; if you've got *After Effects*, go out and buy this as soon as you can.

