

Serif MoviePlus Project 1



Lights, camera, music, action!

Project brief

You are in a band that has been invited to produce a rap or music video on a topical issue to promote the cause to a youth audience. The video will be broadcast on MTV in a 11.00 AM Saturday morning slot.

Curriculum focus

This is a cross-curricular creative project for an arts or activity week

Music – Unit 1: Bridging unit (exploring musical processes); Unit 13: Music and media

English Framework – Year 9: Drama 14

ICT – Unit 2: Information and presentation

Citizenship – Unit 9: The significance of the media in society

Art and design – Unit 7A Self image; Unit 9A Life events; Unit 9B Change your style

Movie genre

Music video with chroma-key (or blue-screen/green-screen) technology*

* The technique known as chroma-keying enables actors and props to be superimposed onto a 'virtual' background to form a composite image e.g. in weather forecasts or for special effects like superman flying through the air. The action is shot against a uniform blue (or green) background and during editing in MoviePlus another image source is substituted for the blue (or green).

Blue, which is rare in nature, is often used as the key colour because the background colour must not appear anywhere in the foreground. Colour or chroma detectors in MoviePlus apply a mask to those areas that contain the key colour, making them transparent and replacing them with the background image.

TIPS for chroma-key compositing

- ☆ For the best results, illuminate the background brightly and evenly. If possible use a photographic light meter to check for shadows.
- ☆ Side lighting will eliminate more shadows: ideally two lights of equal strength placed equidistant and at an angle of 45° to the backdrop.
- ☆ If feasible, use a specialist blue/green fabric stretched so it is completely smooth
- ☆ You also need to light the foreground actor and props, which will always look brighter than they actually are when the blue-screen is illuminated.
- ☆ To make editing simpler and to ensure the blue-screen always fills the background completely it is advisable for chroma-key novices to film the foreground action from a fixed camera viewpoint.

Learning objectives

- To compose, refine and record a piece that explores how music with other media can convey ideas and communicate a message.
- To use moving images descriptively taking music and lyrics as a starting point
- To use MoviePlus chroma-key technology to combine two types of footage creatively
- To edit video clips in a way that reflects the rhythmic pattern of the music or rap

What you need

DV camera and tapes	Studio lights or other strong lighting
Tripod (essential for the foreground video)	Blue or green chroma-key paper or paint*
External microphone	Serif MoviePlus

* Specialist paint costs approx. £41 for 3.79 litres; fabric is about £10 per yard. Stockists of specialist paper, fabric and paint are: <http://www.chroma-key.com> or <http://www.lxstore.com> However, ordinary blue or green household paint can be used if your budget is tight.

Project outline

Pre-production

This is a cross-curricular creative project for an arts or activity week.

- Students could be organised in many different ways, but one suggestion would be to allocate individuals to different creative teams who would be responsible for one aspect of the production:

Creatives	Role
Director or directorial team	To oversee and manage the production by liaising between groups, setting clear deadlines and communicating a coherent visualization of the final production.
Musicians	To compose and perform original music and lyrics that convey a powerful message about a topical issue.
Foreground production team	To style (by preparing the set, blue-screen, props, and costumes) and film the foreground action i.e. the band, crew or solo rapper in performance.
Background production team	To storyboard, prepare and film the background footage and effects, using visual metaphors that reflect and enhance the lyrical message to give the rap/music a compelling visual identity e.g. artwork, graffiti, natural forms viewed through a digital microscope or macro lens, masks, face paint and body ornament, text, location footage, still images, reflections, digital manipulations.
Film editors	To create a finished composite production in which cuts between clips in the background movie reflect the rhythmic pattern of the music or rap.

- Set the theme or issue that will be the focus of the lyrics and visuals. This might already be determined by the theme of an arts activity week or special project, but could be debated and chosen by participants at the outset of the project.
- Use concept mapping techniques to gather as many creative ideas as possible around the selected topic, from which a clear approach and message should emerge. Start by compiling a list of key terms and, through word association, brainstorm visual metaphors that avoid clichéd interpretations.

Production

- Record the two video sources, noting the tips for chroma-key techniques when filming the foreground footage. Don't use any of the chroma-key colour in the foreground.
- Although not essential, continuity for audio is easier if the rap or music footage can be filmed in one take to create a single continuous clip.
- Minimise unwanted ambient sound (ambience) by using an external microphone to record the music audio (source): this is known as maximising the source/ambience ratio.
- Use a tripod when filming the foreground video footage.
- Assets for the background movie could include still images and a variety of shots and sources depending on subject matter.

Post-production

- Make a project folder with two folders inside it called *foreground* and *background*.
- Connect your camera to a suitable PC, making sure it's set to Playback mode.
- Open MoviePlus, select Start from scratch on the *Startup* menu and choose a suitable project setting – either DV PAL or DV PAL Widescreen are standard UK formats. Choose as high a resolution and quality as possible at this stage: the movie can be resized and compressed later.
- To transfer your foreground video footage from your camera to your PC, choose *Capture* from the Tools menu or click the *Capture* button, then use the controls under the preview window to play and pause the tape in your camera to find the footage you want to use.
- Start to play your video source a couple of seconds before the point at which you want it to start, then click Record. Click Pause if you want to fast forward to another part of the tape, then Pause again to resume recording. Click Stop when you have all the scenes you need.
- Save this footage to the *foreground* folder and repeat the process with the background footage. For the latter choose whether to save all your scenes as separate files (recommended) by clicking in the *Split files by scene* check box. MoviePlus will automatically name and number your files.
- Edit the foreground movie first.
- Use the Explorer pane to navigate to the assets you have saved. Drag the clips you have captured to the Timeline. Use the skills learned in the introductory lesson to sequence and edit the movie:
 - o Drop the foreground movie clip(s) onto Video Track 1 (MoviePlus composes from the top down, so if the top track contains a Chroma Key effect the underlying track will be visible through those areas).
 - o Drop the background source onto Video Track 2. Sound files should be dropped onto Audio Track 1 on the Timeline [**Lab 2: Video sources**];
 - o Play back, rewind and pause a sequence [**Lab 3: Previewing your project**];
 - o Zoom in on the Timeline to view it in greater detail [**Lab 2: Video sources**];
 - o Trim a clip by adjusting its start and end points. [**Lab 4: Trimming your video**]
- Preview the movie regularly.
- To apply a blue-screen effect to your foreground movie source select Chroma Key from the menu on the Effects pane and drop the Chroma Key thumbnail onto the foreground video clip on your Timeline (see page 85 *MoviePlus Companion*). To apply the effect to the whole track drag the thumbnail onto the track header. MoviePlus will try to remove the key colour from every video source on that track.
- Edit the background movie on Video Track 2, synchronising images to the rhythm of the audio by cutting on the beat between clips.
- When you are happy with your movie select the Export button on the Standard toolbar and choose MPEG Video (*.mpg) as the file type, VCD PAL from the template list and set the export Quality to High, then click the Export button. When MoviePlus finishes composing your movie you will be able to view it in your computer's default media player.

Extension/differentiation

- ☆ Identify and research a charity that supports the cause championed by your video. Make a short presentation about the charity's work.
- ☆ The charity wants to release your video on DVD to raise funds. Design a cover for the DVD.
- ☆ Design a poster and flyers to advertise the première of the movie at your school.

Criteria for success

- The lyrics and music conveyed an unambiguous message effectively.
 - The background movie enhanced the message of the music and lyrics through original and apt visual metaphors.
 - The chroma screen remained in shot throughout and the performance was captured successfully.
 - Audio levels and source/ambience ratio were good.
 - Chroma-key technology was used skilfully to combine the two movies.
 - Editing of the background movie echoed the rhythmic pattern of the music or rap.
 - The groups collaborated well as teams.
 - The directing was purposeful and had authority.
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