

After Effects Plug-in

User Manual

M852-1200-490



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1 INTRODUCING MIRANDA'S AFTER EFFECTS PLUG-IN

Miranda's After Effects Plug-in uses base After Effects projects to pre-render graphics into animation or video clip files that can then be used on a variety of Miranda playout devices.

- .oxi - OXI animation files for Intuition Classic devices
- .oxa - OXA animation files for Imagestore 750 and LGK -3901 devices
- .vaf - VAF video clip files for Intuition XG and Vertigo XG devices
- .mxf - MXF video clip files for HMP-1801 devices

NOTE

The After Effects Plug-in can also embed a .VAF inside an .OXI or .OXA file by enabling a setting within the **Oxtel Export Options** in Merge Mode. This allows the asset to be used on Intuition Classic, Intuition XG, and Vertigo XG devices. See [“Embed VAF in OXI” on page 2-6](#).

The Affects Effects Plug-in consists of two (2) options for rendering graphics files from an After Effects project:

- **Miranda Animation** - The **MIRANDA ANIMATION** option is the basic mode that simply uses the currently loaded After Effects project to generate and save the After Effects project as an animation or video file. See [page 2-1](#) for further instructions and information.
- **Miranda Animation (Merge Mode)** - The **MERGE MODE** option allows you to prepare multiple versions of graphics by using traffic data from an Excel spreadsheet to feed an Adobe After Effects Project template. The plug-in then combines the data and the template to generate multiple versions of the promo, as animation or video files, for different channels, days and times.

In addition to creating animation and video files, Merge Mode also allows you to output an Intuition template with the newly created animation inserted based on an original Intuition template.

Another practical use of the Merge Mode option is to transcode Targa (TGA) sequences from disk to OXI/OXA animations and/or VAF video clip format.

See [“Miranda Animation \(Merge Mode\) option” on page 3-1](#) for further instructions and information.

Installing Miranda's After Effects Plug-in

The After Effects Plug-in is packaged with the Vertigo Suite software's installation wizard. It can be installed as part of the full installation or as an individual (standalone) component (figure 1-1). In both cases, you simply need to run the installation wizard on the workstation where the Adobe After Effects software is installed.

✔ NOTE

The After Effects Plug-in for CS3 and CS4 is only available from the 32-bit version of the Vertigo Suite installer. Similarly, the After Effects Plug-in for CS5, CS5.5 and CS6 are only available in the 64-bit version of the Vertigo Suite installer.

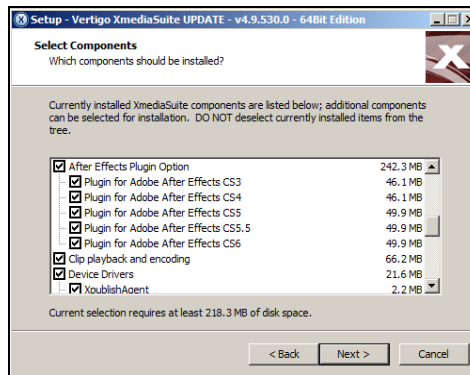


Figure 1-1. The Miranda After Effects Plug-in

✔ NOTE

When running Adobe After Effects and the Vertigo After Effects Plug-in on Windows 7, you must be logged on as **Administrator**.

Once the After Effects Plug-in is installed, start the Adobe After Effects application and then load or create a new After Effects project.

To verify that the Miranda After Effects Plug-in has been installed and is present in the After Effects application:

1. Select the **FILE>EXPORT** menu command.
2. Confirm that both the **MIRANDA ANIMATION** and **MIRANDA ANIMATION (MERGE MODE)** commands are displayed.

✔ NOTE

The Miranda Animation command will be disabled (gray) until a valid After Effects project is loaded and a composition is selected.

The first time that you run the After Effects Plug-in, you will be prompted for a license code. Please contact a Miranda Technical Support representative to request an After Effects Plug-in license code.

2 MIRANDA ANIMATION OPTION

The Vertigo After Effects Plug-in's **MIRANDA ANIMATION** option is the basic mode that uses the currently loaded After Effects project to generate an animation or video clip file. The resulting file can then be saved to a specified directory as one of the following formats: OXI, OXA, VAF, or MXF.

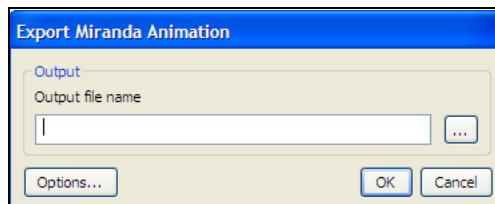


Figure 2-1. The After Effect Plug-in's Miranda Animation option

The following sections provide instructions for using the **MIRANDA ANIMATION** option, as well as descriptions of each of the Export options that are available:

- [“Using the Miranda Animation option” on page 2-2](#)
- [“Export Options panel” on page 2-4](#)

Using the Miranda Animation option

To use the **Miranda Animation** option to generate an animation or video clip file:

1. Start the Adobe After Effects application.
2. Load or create a new After Effects project.
3. Select the **FILE>EXPORT>MIRANDA ANIMATION** menu command.

The **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box appears (figure 2-2), which allows you to select the output file path and the type of file to be exported.

NOTE

If the **MIRANDA ANIMATION** option is greyed out, load a valid After Effects project and select a composition.

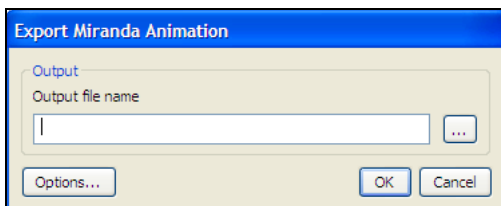



Figure 2-2. The Export Miranda Animation dialog box

4. Specify the **OUTPUT FILE PATH** in which you want to save the animation or video file:
 - a. Click the Ellipsis button  to open the **EXPORT ANIMATION** dialog box.
 - b. Navigate to the directory location where you want to save the animation or video file.
 - c. In the **FILE NAME** field, specify the name by which the file is to be saved.
 - d. Select from the **SAVE AS TYPE** drop-down list, the desired animation or video clip file type. The suffix at the end of the file name defines the type of file to be exported.

Choose one of the following file types:

OXTEL OXI FILE (*.oxi)	Exports an animation file for Intuition Classic devices (default)
OXTEL OXA (*.oxa)	Exports an animation file for Imagestore and LGK devices
VERTIGO ANIMATION FILE (*.vaf)	Exports a video clip file for Intuition XG and Vertigo XG devices
MATERIAL EXCHANGE FORMAT (*.mxf)	Exports a video clip file for HMP-1801 devices

- e. Click **SAVE**.

5. Select the **OPTIONS** button to expose advanced options, which specify how the animation or video file will be created, including desired looping behaviors. See [“Export Options panel” on page 2-4](#) for more information.
6. Launch the creation of the animation or video file by clicking **OK**.
The **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box closes, while the **EXPORT PROGRESS** dialog box (figure 2-3) appears and tracks the progress of the procedure. Once finished, the file is saved to the specific directory location.

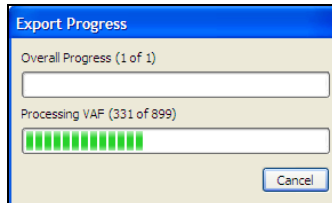


Figure 2-3. The Export Progress dialog box

Export Options panel

The **Export Options** panel allows you to specify how the OXI, OXA or VAF files will be created. As well, the Logging tab allows you to record the plug-in's rendering activities into a log file. Note that any changes made to the Export Options panel's settings are saved, so they only need to be modified as required.

Figure 2-4 demonstrates that the Export Options panel is organized into three (3) thematic tabs: **OXTTEL EXPORT**, **VAF EXPORT** and **LOGGING**.

The following sections identify and describe the options on each of the Export Options panel's tabs:

- [“Oxtel Export tab” on page 2-5](#)
- [“VAF Export tab” on page 2-7](#)
- [“Logging tab” on page 2-9](#)

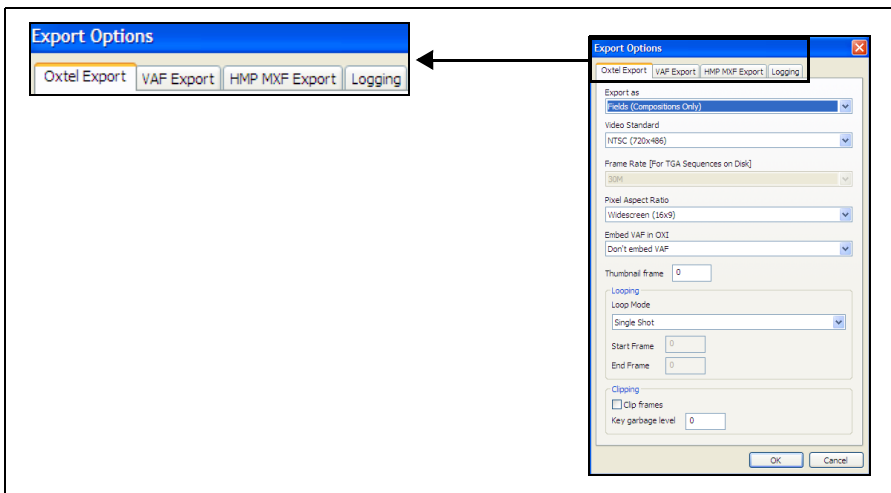


Figure 2-4. The Export Options panel

Oxtel Export tab

The Oxtel Export tab (figure 2-5) exposes a series of advanced settings which affect the way in which the After Effects Plug-in renders OXI and OXA animation files based upon an After Effects project.

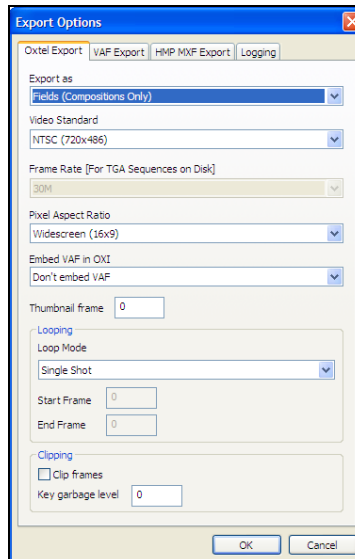


Figure 2-5. The Oxtel Export tab

The following table provides descriptions for each of the parameters on the Oxtel Export tab.

<p>Export as</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIELDS (COMPOSITIONS ONLY): When set to FIELDS, each frame from the After Effects project is split into two fields in the final animation. • FRAMES: When set to FRAMES, each frame becomes either an individual field (when creating an interlaced file), or a whole frame (in a progressive standard). <p>When outputting to a progressive standard, this setting will be ignored and each frame will always be treated as a frame.</p>
<p>Video Standard</p>	<p>Specifies the resolution format that will be used when the animation file is rendered.</p> <p>Choose from the following settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAL (720x576) • NTSC (720x486) • 720p (1280x720) • 1080i (1920x1080) • 1080p (1920x1080)

<p>Frame Rate (for TGA Sequence on Disk)</p>	<p>The frame rate option for TGA sequences dictates the frame rate that will be written into the animation file. Since there is no way to store a frame rate with a TGA sequence, it must be specified manually in this parameter.</p> <p>The possible settings are dependent upon the Video Standard specified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAL = 25 • NTSC = 30M • 720p = 60, 60M, 50 • 1080i = 30, 30M, 25 • 1080p = 60, 60M, 50
<p>Pixel Aspect Ratio</p>	<p>Specifies the Pixel Aspect Ratio format that will be used when rendering the animation. Choose from the following settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Square Pixels • Standard TV (4x3) • Widescreen (16x9)
<p>Embed VAF in OXI</p>	<p>Specifies whether or not to embed the VAF payload inside the .OXI or .OXA file. Embedding the VAF allows for the same asset to be used on the Intuition classic, Intuition XG, and Vertigo XG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't embed VAF • Embed VAF in OXI/OXA file
<p>Thumbnail frame</p>	<p>This is the frame index from which the thumbnail proxy will be generated.</p>
<p>Looping</p>	<p>Loop Mode - Choose from among the following settings to specify the animation's loop behavior during payout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle: The animation file will play through until the end is reached and then loop back to the start of the animation. • Single Shot: The animation file will be replayed just once through. • Ping Pong: The animation plays forward and then returns in reverse. • In Loop Out: The animation will play to the End Frame as defined in the dialog then jump back to the Start Frame and then keep looping between these two frames. • Linear Control: Use this setting when the animation's playback is controlled by automation commands.
<p>Clipping</p>	<p>The following settings remove the empty parts of the animation frame (e.g. the black areas around the edges of each frame). This is helpful as it reduces the file size, though it takes longer for the plug-in to process each frame.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clip frames: Clips any solid transparent areas of the animation frame. • Key garbage level: This setting only needs to be changed from the default of 0 if the source material being used to generate the animation contains noise which is interpreted as part of the image. A setting above 0 creates a threshold below which any noise is ignored. The actual garbage level setting required depends on how much noise is included in the source material and the appropriate level can only be found through experimentation.

VAF Export tab

The VAF Export options (figure 2-6) exposes a series of advanced settings which affect the way in which the After Effects Plug-in renders VAF video clip files based upon an After Effects project.

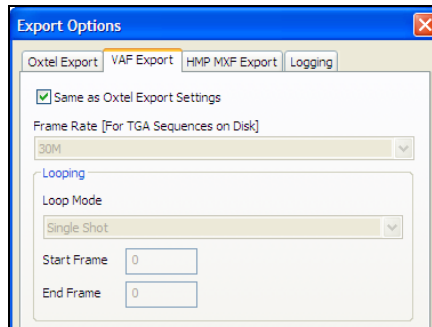


Figure 2-6. The VAF Export tab

The following table provides descriptions for each of the parameters on the VAF Export tab.

<p>Same as Oxtel Export Settings</p>	<p>When enabled, this parameter keeps the VAF settings the same as the OXI/OXA settings.</p> <p>Note that the loop settings between OXI/OXA and VAF are different. We interpret them as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OXI CYCLE = VAF Loop Entire Animation • OXI SINGLE SHOT = VAF Single Shot • OXI PING PONG = VAF Loop Entire Animation • OXI INLOOPOUT = Loop Range user set start frame to user set end frame • OXI LINEAR CONTROL = VAF Single Shot
<p>Frame Rate (For TGA Sequence on Disk)</p>	<p>The frame rate option for TGA sequences dictates the frame rate that will be written into the video file. Since there is no way to store a frame rate with a TGA sequence, it must be specified manually in this parameter.</p> <p>Choose one of the following settings: 25, 30M, 30, 50, 60M or 60.</p>
<p>Looping</p>	<p>Loop Mode - Choose from among the following settings to specify the animation's loop behavior during payout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Shot: The video is played just once through. • Loop Entire Animation: The video plays in its entirety, then restart from the beginning. • Loop Range: The video plays to the End Frame as defined in the dialog then jump back to the Start Frame and then keep looping between these two frames.

HMP MXF Export tab

The **HMP MXF EXPORT** tab (figure 2-7) exposes the following advanced parameters which affect the way in which the After Effects Plug-in renders MXF video clip files that are used by HMP-1801 devices.

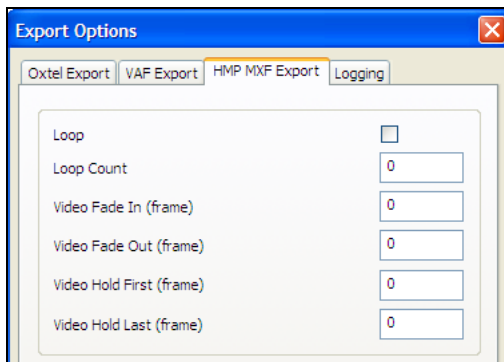


Figure 2-7. The **HMP MXF EXPORT** tab was added to the After Effects Plug-in Export Options panel

Loop	Enables or disables the looping of the MXF file's playout. The number of loops performed is set by the LOOP COUNT parameter.
Loop Count	Specifies the number of times the rendered video clip will be looped. The default value is 0 .
Video Fade In (frame)	Specifies the number of frames (duration) that it takes for the video to fade-in on initial playout. The default value is 0 frames.
Video Fade Out (frame)	Specifies the number of frames (duration) that it takes for the video to fade-out to the ending of playout. The default value is 0 frames.
Video Hold First (frame)	Specifies the time (in number of frames) to hold on the first frame of data. The default value is 0 frames.
Video Hold Last (frame)	Specifies the time (in number of frames) to hold on the last frame of data. The default value is 0 frames.

Logging tab

As the After Effects Plug-in operates, AE Plugin events are recorded to a log text file, which is stored in the following directory location:

C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Application Data\VertigoXmedia\Logs

Every execution of the After Effects Plug-in appends to the most recent AEPlugin log file until it reaches the size specified in the **LOGFILE SIZE** setting at which point it will rollover and create a new file.

The Logging tab (figure 2-8) features two settings to control the size and number of the log files stored:

- **Rollover count** - The rollover count determines the number of AEPlugin*.log files are kept in the logging folder. Choose a large enough number so that enough relevant log files are stored. This helps to identify of repetitive behaviors and facilitates troubleshooting.
- **Log file size** - The maximum size of a log file before starting over from the beginning. The value specified in bytes.

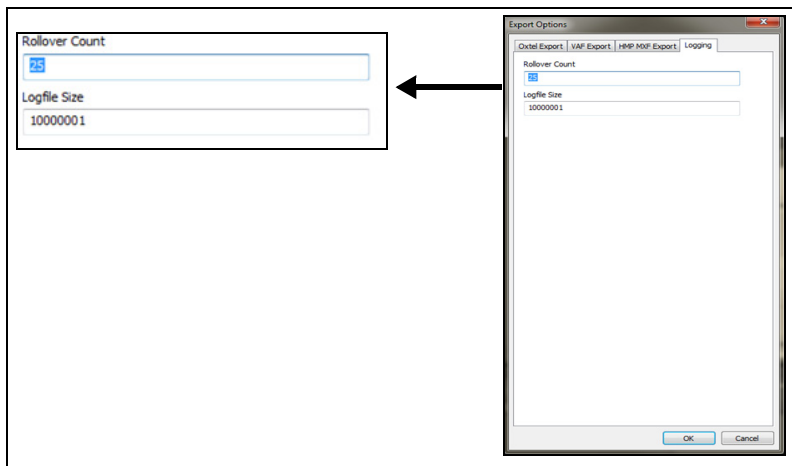


Figure 2-8. The Logging tab

3 MIRANDA ANIMATION (MERGE MODE) OPTION

Graphics which must be prepared in multiple versions, like in-show promos, can be prepared more quickly and more accurately using the After Effects Plug-in's **MIRANDA ANIMATION (MERGE MODE)** option. The process uses traffic data in a spreadsheet to feed an Adobe After Effects Project composition. The plug-in combines the data and the composition to generate multiple versions of the promo, as animation or video files, for different channels, days and times. This approach allows quality control tasks to be performed quickly and easily.

The following sections describe the workflow and provide instructions for using the **MIRANDA ANIMATION (MERGE MODE)** option to render multiple versions of in-show promotional graphics:

- [“Workflow for pre-rendering in-show promos using the After Effects Plug-in” on page 3-2](#)
- [“Using the Merge Mode option to perform a batch export of graphics files” on page 3-3](#)
- [“Creating a spreadsheet for Merge Mode” on page 3-5](#)

NOTE

By default, Miranda's After Effects Plug-in renders the first composition in a project. See [“Handling a Project with Multiple Compositions” on page 3-12](#) for more information.

The Miranda Animation (Merge Mode) option also allows you to generate an **Intuition template** for each exported animation containing the new animation file (the new template is based on a specified pre-existing template file). See [page 3-10](#) for more information.

Another practical use of the **MIRANDA ANIMATION (MERGE MODE)** option is to transcode Targa (TGA) sequences from disk to OXI/OXA animations and/or VAF video clip format. See [“Transcoding TGA sequences into animation and/or video files” on page 3-13](#) for more information.

Workflow for pre-rendering in-show promos using the After Effects Plug-in

Figure 3-1 demonstrates the workflow for pre-rendering in-show promos using the After Effects Plug-in.

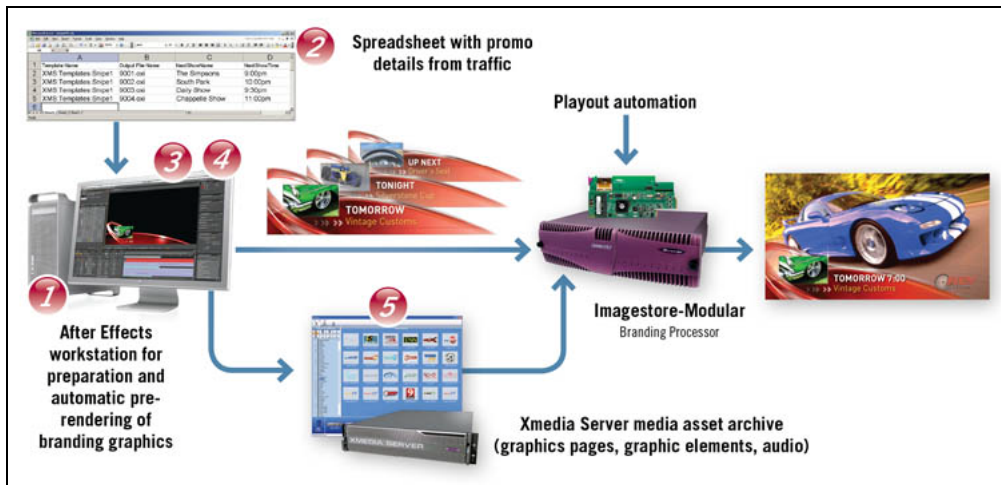


Figure 3-1. Workflow for pre-rendering in-show promos using the After Effects Plug-in

1. Graphics templates are created using Adobe After Effects on a graphics workstation, equipped with the Miranda After Effects Plug-in. The full range of After Effects text effects can be used for the graphics because they will be flattened before playout.
2. The operator opens an Excel spreadsheet from the traffic or promo department, which lists the details about the promos required, including the template to be used, the on-air dates and times, and the show names. The file names are also provided for effective integration with the station's playout automation.
3. The Miranda After Effects Plug-in extracts the data from the spreadsheet and creates a preview of the rendered graphics for quality control.
4. After quality control, the workstation automatically renders all of the promos, and generates flattened files.
5. The completed graphics are then transferred to a Vertigo Xmedia Server for archiving, or directly to a channel branding processor for playout under automation.

Using the Merge Mode option to perform a batch export of graphics files

To use the **Miranda Animation (Merge Mode)** option to generate a batch export of animation and/or video clip files from an **After Effects** project:

1. Create a base template for the graphics using the **After Effects** application.
2. Create an Excel spreadsheet that contains the proper formatting and information to feed the template and create multiple animation and/or video files. See [“Creating a spreadsheet for Merge Mode” on page 3-5](#) for more information.
3. Select the **FILE>EXPORT>MIRANDA ANIMATION (MERGE MODE)** menu command. A message appears warning you that the project you currently have open will be closed without saving. To continue, simply click **OK**.

The **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box appears (figure 3-2).

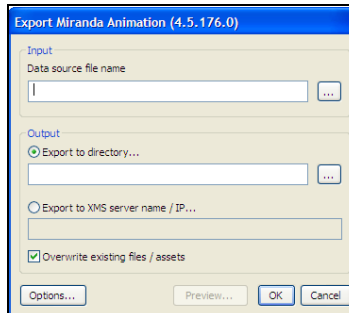




Figure 3-2. The Export Miranda Animation dialog box

4. Click the Ellipsis button  in the **INPUT - DATA SOURCE FILE NAME** field to navigate to and select an Excel spreadsheet, which contains the information for a batch export. Each animation file that is to be created can contain different information which can be extracted from an Excel spreadsheet. This information can replace tags within the project file during the batch process. These tags relate to layers which can contain text, images or clips for replacement. Layers are the basic elements of an **After Effects** composition and each layer can only include one footage item as its source. See [“Creating a spreadsheet for Merge Mode” on page 3-5](#) for more information about creating an appropriate spreadsheet.
5. Specify an **Output** destination where the animation and/or video files will be saved to.
 - **EXPORT TO DIRECTORY** - Enable and then click the Ellipsis button  to navigate to and select the directory in which to save the output files.
 - **EXPORT TO XMS SERVER NAME / IP** - Enable and then type either the Xmedia Server's hostname or the IP address of the XMS device where the output files will be ingested into.
6. Enable **OVERWRITE EXISTING FILES / ASSETS** if you wish to automatically replace an existing file that may already exist using the exact same name in the exact same location.

7. Select the **OPTIONS** button to expose advanced options, which specify how the animation and video files will be created, including specifying the looping behavior. See [“Export Options panel” on page 2-4](#) for more information.
8. To ensure that the animation and video files are generated correctly, you can scrub the animation or video before you generate the files and templates (if there are any setup). To preview an animation or video:
 - a. Click the **PREVIEW** button and the **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box expands to expose the **MERGE PREVIEW** section (figure 3-3).

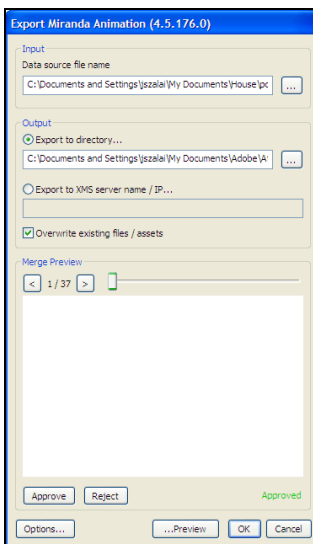




Figure 3-3. The Merge Preview section appears

- b. To preview each of the animations or videos that will be created in the merge process, click the  or  buttons or use the a slider to scrub through the resulting files.
 - c. If you choose not to process any of the animations or videos, press the **REJECT** button. **REJECTED** is then displayed in the lower-right corner of the Merge Preview section and when the batch process is started this file will not be generated.
9. Create the animation and/or video clip files by clicking **OK**.
The **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box closes and the **EXPORT PROGRESS** dialog box appears to track the animations' creation.

 **NOTE**

If errors occur while generating the exported animation files, an error message appears and offers you the opportunity to see specifically what caused the export to fail. Use these details to troubleshoot.

Creating a spreadsheet for Merge Mode

Before Merge Mode can create a batch export of animation and/or video files, you must create and populate an Excel spreadsheet containing the proper formatting and information (figure 3-4).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Project Name	Output File Name	NextShowDay	NextShowTime	NextShowName	Image	Asset Lifespan
2	C:\stuff\AE comps\CS4\NTSC_Guide.aep	Media\2007.oxi	Monday	5 o'clock	Les Papous	C:\stuff\cells\tga\IPBugXIV0001.tga	1
3	C:\stuff\AE comps\CS4\NTSC_Guide.aep	Media\2003.vaf	Tuesday	6 o'clock	La Roue de Fortune	C:\stuff\cells\tga\IPBugXIV0001.tga	
4	C:\stuff\AE comps\CS4\NTSC_Guide.aep	Media\2002.oxi	Wednesday	7 o'clock	La Poule aux oeufs d'or	C:\stuff\cells\tga\IPBugXIV0001.tga	24
5	C:\stuff\AE comps\CS4\NTSC_Guide.aep	Media\2004.vaf	Thursday	8 o'clock	Qui perd gagne	C:\stuff\cells\tga\IPBugXIV0001.tga	0

Figure 3-4. Example of a spreadsheet formatted for merge mode

The first row in the spreadsheet contains column headers for the data in the After Effects composition. After the first row of headers, all subsequent valid rows will create an animation or video file using the data specified in the row.

The following sections describe the mandatory and optional columns and information that must be present in the spreadsheet for Merge Mode to function properly:

- [“Project Name column” on page 3-5 \(required\)](#)
- [“Output File Name column” on page 3-6 \(required\)](#)
- [“Subfolder columns” on page 3-7 \(optional\)](#)
- [“Layer tag columns” on page 3-9 \(optional\)](#)
- [“Intuition Template & Intuition Template Element columns” on page 3-10 \(optional\)](#)
- [“Asset Lifespan column” on page 3-10 \(optional\)](#)
- [“Asset Expiry Date column” on page 3-10 \(optional\)](#)
- [“Vertigo Template, Vertigo Template Element & VAF XmediaServer columns” on page 3-11 \(optional\)](#)

Project Name column

When using the Merge Mode to perform a batch export of animation and/or video files, the first column in the spreadsheet must be named **PROJECT NAME**. This column must contain the entire path to the After Effects project to be loaded for the given row of data (figure 3-5).

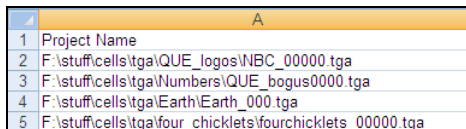
	A
1	Project Name
2	F:\AE comps\CS4\Project1.aep
3	F:\AE comps\CS4\Project2.aep
4	
5	F:\AE comps\CS4\Project3.aep
6	F:\AE comps\CS4\Project4.aep

Figure 3-5. Example of the Project Name column for exporting a batch of animation files

Figure 3-5 also demonstrates that different projects can be associated with each row of a spreadsheet so that animations and/or videos generated from the data in one spreadsheet can be created from different projects.

Also note that once the project name is specified, all subsequent blank rows will use the same project file until another file is specified (e.g. rows 3 and 4 will both use project 2).

When using the Miranda Animation Merge Mode option to transcode Targa (TGA) sequences, the first column in the spreadsheet must still be named **PROJECT NAME**, but it must contain the entire path to the first frame of the Targa sequence on disk (figure 3-6). See [“Transcoding TGA sequences into animation and/or video files” on page 3-13](#) for more information.

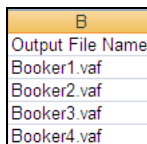


	A
1	Project Name
2	F:\stuff\cells\tga\QUE_logos\NBC_00000.tga
3	F:\stuff\cells\tga\Numbers\QUE_bogus0000.tga
4	F:\stuff\cells\tga\Earth\Earth_000.tga
5	F:\stuff\cells\tga\four_chicklets\fourchicklets_00000.tga

Figure 3-6. Example of the Project Name column for transcoding TGA Sequences

Output File Name column

The second column in the spreadsheet must be named **OUTPUT FILE NAME**. This column specifies the name and file format of the animation and/or video clip that will be created during the batch export (figure 3-7).



B
Output File Name
Booker1.vaf
Booker2.vaf
Booker3.vaf
Booker4.vaf

Figure 3-7. Example of the second column in the spreadsheet required for Merge Mode

The suffix of the file name specifies the type of animation or video file to be created. Valid file types are:

- **.vaf** - VAF animation files for Intuition XG and Vertigo XG devices
- **.oxi** - OXI animation files for Intuition Classic devices
- **.oxa** - OXA animation files for ImageStore 750 and LGK -3901 devices
- **.mxf** - MXF video files for HMP-1801 devices

NOTE

The After Effects Plug-in can also embed a .VAF inside an .OXI or .OXA file by enabling a setting within the **Oxtel Export Options**. This allows the asset to be used on Intuition Classic, Intuition XG, and Vertigo XG devices. See [“Embed VAF in OXI” on page 2-6](#).

By default, the animation or video file is saved to the location (directory or XMS) specified in the **OUTPUT** field of the **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box (see [page 3-1](#)).

If, however, the file is required to be saved into a different directory, this can be specified either in a directory relative to the **OUTPUT DIRECTORY**, or as an absolute path. Figure [3-8](#)

demonstrates that specifying the relative path `Animation\3001.oxi`, the animation will be saved to the directory `c:\AE\Animation`. Meanwhile, specifying the absolute path of `c:\AEAnimationFile\3001.oxi` saves the file in the folder `AEAnimationFile` at the root level of `c:`.

B	
Output File Name	3001.oxi
	Animation\3001.oxi
Absolute path ←	c:\AEAnimationFile\3001.oxi

Path relative to location specified in the **OUTPUT** field

Figure 3-8. Example of the second column in the spreadsheet required for Merge Mode

NOTE

You can automatically publish the newly rendered animation or video files to the appropriate devices by selecting the appropriate devices within the category or subcategory properties in the Asset Browser (Xplorer or Xstudio).

Subfolder columns

By default, the rendered animation or video files are saved to the location (directory or XMS) specified in the **OUTPUT** field of the **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box (see [page 3-1](#)).

As an alternative method to specifying a relative path in the **OUTPUT FILE NAME** column ([page 3-6](#)), you can also determine exactly where the files will be stored by adding optional **SUBFOLDER X** columns to the spreadsheet. The Subfolder columns allow you to specify the name and hierarchy of the directory subfolders or XMS subcategories in which to save the file. Subfolder columns must be sequentially numbered starting with **SUBFOLDER 1**.

Figure 3-9 demonstrates that Subfolder columns must be sequentially numbered starting with **SUBFOLDER 1** (one-level below the directory location specified in the **OUTPUT** field or the XMS's root category). Each additional Subfolder column creates a subdirectory/subcategory below the previous. Also note that the relative path specified in the **OUTPUT FILE NAME** column ([page 3-6](#)), is conserved and applied last. You can also add multiple subdirectories/subcategories in one subfolder column (e.g. `cat1\cat2`).

B	C	D
Output File Name	Subfolder 1	Subfolder 2
NTSC_BT5.vaf	AE	Audio
Test\NTSC_BT7.oxi	AE	Audio

Figure 3-9. Subfolder columns

 **NOTE**

You can automatically publish the newly rendered animation or video files to the appropriate devices by selecting the appropriate devices within the category or subcategory properties in the Asset Browser (Xplorer or Xstudio).

Layer tag columns

Merge Mode allows you to generate multiple versions of a promo for different channels, days and times by substituting the text, image, or clip associate with a layer in the After Effects project and then rendering each variation as a separate as animation or video file.

To make layer substitutions, you must first be sure that the layer name in the After Effects project must contain the tag name. Figure 3-10 demonstrates that the layer's tag name in the After Effects project must be preceded with `<` and followed by a `/>`. To rename a layer in After Effects, select the layer and press the **ENTER** key. This allows you to rename the layer.

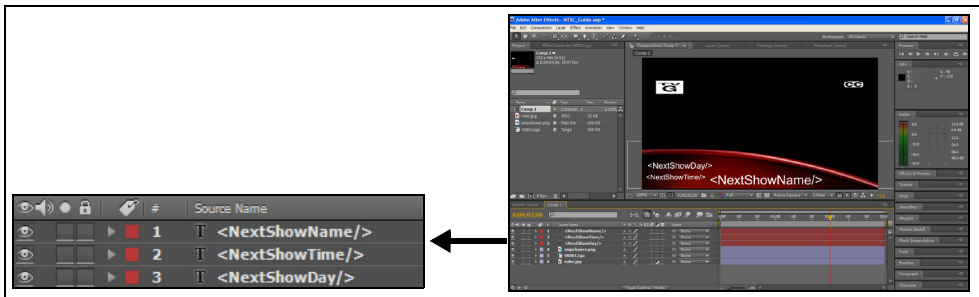


Figure 3-10. Tag names for the layers in the After Effects project

Once the layer names in the After Effects project contain the properly formatted tag names, you can add a column for each layer that is to be modified. The column headings must be identically named to the tag names given to the layers in the After Effects project, but without the `<` and `/>`.

Each row after the header row should contain the information that will replace the current content of the layer tag. Figure 3-11 demonstrates that the spreadsheet contains four (4) layer tag columns and that the first animation rendered will feature the following substitutions:

- `<NextShowDay/>` will be replaced by Monday
- `<NextShowTime/>` will be replaced by 5:00pm
- `<NextShowName/>` will be replaced by Les Papous
- `<Image/>` will be replaced by 'V001.tga'

C	D	E	F
NextShowDay	NextShowTime	NextShowName	Image
Monday	5 o'clock	Les Papous	C:\stuff\cells\tga\PBugXIV0001.tga
Tuesday	6 o'clock	La Roue de Fortune	C:\stuff\cells\tga\PBugXIV0001.tga
Wednesday	7 o'clock	La Poule aux oeufs d'or	C:\stuff\cells\tga\PBugXIV0001.tga
Thursday	8 o'clock	Qui perd gagne	C:\stuff\cells\tga\PBugXIV0001.tga

Figure 3-11. Layer tag columns

✓ NOTE

When replacing an image or a clip, the complete path to the graphic needs to be specified. There can be as many columns of layer tags as required, but they must be from the third column onwards. When replacing a clip, the animation plays out the clip for the duration of the composition.

Intuition Template & Intuition Template Element columns

Merge Mode allows you to automatically take an existing base Intuition template and substitute the animation within this template with the newly created Intuition animation file. Figure 3-12 demonstrates that this is accomplished by adding two optional columns to the spreadsheet: **INTUITION TEMPLATE** and **TEMPLATE ELEMENT**.

C	D
Intuition Template	Intuition Template Element
c:\AE\basetemplate.tem	test.oxi
c:\AE\basetemplate.tem	test.oxi
c:\AE\basetemplate.tem	test.oxi
c:\AE\basetemplate.tem	test.oxi

Figure 3-12. Intuition Template and Template Element columns

The **INTUITION TEMPLATE** column defines the path to the base template from which the new template will be created. The **TEMPLATE ELEMENT** column specifies the name of an existing animation entry in the base template that the newly created animation will replace. The newly created template will be saved in the same directory as the animation file that has been created and will be saved with the same name as the output animation file (as a .tem file). The templates are also ingested into the XMS and converted to scenes.

Asset Lifespan column

Adding an optional **ASSET LIFESPAN** column to the spreadsheet allows you to set the publish lifespan of each animation or video file created by the After Effects Plug-in's Merge Mode.

The value is specified in days that must elapse since the last time the new file has been accessed before it is removed from the published device. **This does not remove it from the Xmedia Server.**

If the entry for a specific row is empty, then the Xmedia Server assigns the default lifespan of 365 days.

Asset Expiry Date column

Adding an optional **ASSET EXPIRY DATE** column to the spreadsheet allows you to set the date of when the new animation or video file is to be **deleted from the Xmedia Server**. The format for this setting must be **M-D-YYYY**.

Vertigo Template, Vertigo Template Element & VAF XmediaServer columns

The following columns in the Merge List file (.xls) allow the VAF portion of a OXI-Embedded VAF to be ingested into specified Xmedia Servers, while the After Effects Plug-in is generating the OXI-Embedded VAF.

- **Vertigo Template:** Specifies the name and location of the base Template that the VAF uses when loaded on the XG playout devices. This template must exist on the Main and Backup Xmedia Servers.
- **Vertigo Template Element:** Specifies the name of the template element that holds the VAF when the template is loaded.
- **Vertigo Template Element:** A comma separated list of Xmedia Server IPs or names that represent where the target Xmedia Servers are defined.

E	F	G
Vertigo Template	Vertigo Template Element	VAF XmediaServer
XMS:Templates.Ace01:T_01	Texture1	ca-vxm-tet49, ca-vxm-test48
XMS:Templates.Ace01:T_02	Texture1	ca-vxm-test48

Note that the VAF that is ingested into the Xmedia Servers with the same name as the OXI-Embedded VAF and it will be added as a clip asset in the root of the **CLIPS** category. Also, a **Page** is created based of the base template specified in the **VERTIGO TEMPLATE** column of the .xls Merge List. This Page has the same name as the VAF and is categorized in the root of the **PAGES** category.

Handling a Project with Multiple Compositions

It is possible to generate an animation file from a project containing multiple compositions. Elements within any composition can be substituted. Additionally, the composition that the operator wishes to render can be specified. Figure 3-13 provides an example of the modified spreadsheet to support multiple compositions.

E	F	G	H	I
Render Composition	Comp1 NextShowTime	Comp2 NextShowName	Comp2 Image	Comp3 Clip
Main	9.00pm	The Simpsons	c:\AE\Image\The Simpsons.jpg	c:\AE\Clips\Simpson clip.wmv
Main	10.00pm	South Park	c:\AE\Image\South Park.jpg	c:\AE\Clips\South Park clip.wmv
Main	9.30pm	30 Rock	c:\AE\Image\30 Rock.jpg	c:\AE\Clips\30 Rock clip.wmv
Main	9.00pm	The Office	c:\AE\Image\The Office.jpg	c:\AE\Clips\The Office clip.wmv

Figure 3-13. Rendering an animation file from a specific AE composition

The **RENDER COMPOSITION** column specifies which composition within the project will be rendered by the After Effects Plug-in. If this column is not included, the first (default) composition for the project will be rendered.

To specify an element within a composition to substitute, the format of the column header must be '**COMPOSITION NAME|ELEMENT NAME**'. For example, **COMP1|NEXTSHOWTIME**.

If only the element name is entered, then the substitution will take place on an element in the composition specified within **RENDER COMPOSITION** column, or within the default composition if this is not specified. For example, figure 3-13 shows that the first substitution will take place in the composition called **COMP1** and it will look for an element named **NEXTSHOWTIME**.

Transcoding TGA sequences into animation and/or video files

Merge Mode can also be used to transcode Targa (TGA) sequences into OXI /OXA animation file and/or VAF video clip files. The newly created files can then be saved either to disk or ingest into an Xmedia Server, which can then be configured to automatically publish the assets to a playout device.

Figure 3-14 demonstrates that the entire path to the first frame of the Targa sequence on disk must be specified in the spreadsheet's **PROJECT NAME** column. Meanwhile, the name and file type of the desired animations or video clips must be specified in the **OUTPUT FILE NAME** column.

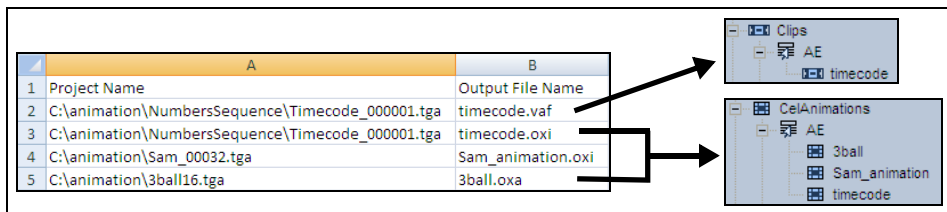


Figure 3-14. Transcoding Targa sequences into clip and/or cel animation assets

To use the Miranda Animation (Merge Mode) option to transcode TGA sequences into OXI, OXA, or VAF files:

1. Create and save an Excel spreadsheet that has a minimum of the two (2) columns:
 - **PROJECT NAME:** Specify the entire path to the first frame of the Targa sequence on disk.
 - **OUTPUT FILE NAME:** Specify the name and file type (.oxi, .oxa, or .vaf) of the desired animations or video clips.
2. Start the Adobe After Effects application.
3. Select the **FILE>EXPORT>MIRANDA ANIMATION (MERGE MODE)** menu command. A message appears warning you that the project you currently have open will be closed without saving. To continue, simply click **OK**.

The **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box appears (figure 3-15).

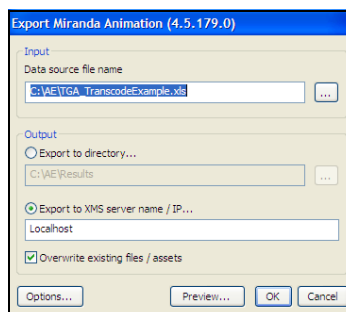




Figure 3-15. The Export Miranda Animation dialog box

4. Click the Ellipsis button  in the **INPUT - DATA SOURCE FILE NAME** field to navigate to and select the Excel spreadsheet created in step 1.
5. Specify an **Output** destination where the animation files will be saved to.
 - **EXPORT TO DIRECTORY** - Enable and then click the Ellipsis button  to navigate to and select the directory in which to save the output files.
 - **EXPORT TO XMS SERVER NAME / IP** - Enable and then type either the Xmedia Server's hostname or the IP address of the XMS device where the output files will be ingested into.
6. Enable **OVERWRITE EXISTING FILES / ASSETS** if you wish to automatically replace an existing video file that may already exist using the exact same name in the exact same location.
7. Select the **OPTIONS** button to expose advanced options, which specify how the animation and video files will be created. For example, you can specify your animation's looping settings. See [“Export Options panel” on page 2-4](#) for more information.
8. To ensure that the animation files are generated correctly, you can preview the animation before you generate the files.

To preview an animation:

 - a. Click the **PREVIEW** button and the **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box expands to expose the **MERGE PREVIEW** section (figure 3-3).

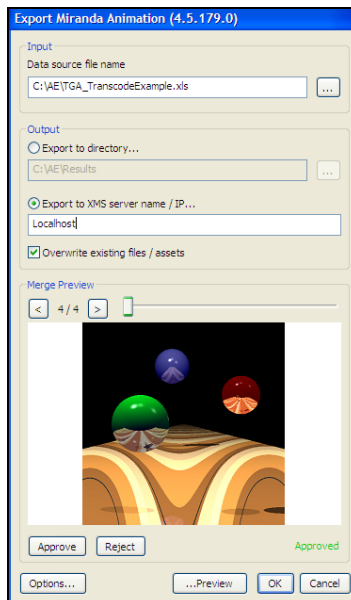




Figure 3-16. The Merge Preview section appears

- b. To preview each of the animations that will be created in the merge process, click the  or  buttons or use the a slider to scrub through the animation.

- c. If you choose not to process any of the animations, press the **REJECT** button. Rejected is then displayed in the lower-right corner of the Merge Preview section and when the batch process is started this animation will not be generated.
9. Create the animation and/or video files by clicking **OK**.
The **EXPORT MIRANDA ANIMATION** dialog box closes and the **EXPORT PROGRESS** dialog box appears to track the files' creation.
If errors occur while generating the exported animation and/or video files, an error message appears and offers you the opportunity to see specifically what caused the export to fail. Use these details to troubleshoot.