

# Power Picker

fnord

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Version 1.01

December 22, 2002



fnord software

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For support send email to [powerpicker@fnordware.com](mailto:powerpicker@fnordware.com) or participate in the After Effects Email List, info currently at [http://www.fido.se/Pages/AE\\_list\\_info.html](http://www.fido.se/Pages/AE_list_info.html) but possibly moving in the near future.

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If you're not sure how many copies you should buy, the answer is: as many as the number of different copies of After Effects you use it on. As After Effects comes with free render clients, you may naturally use Power Picker with them for free.

We are a small company with no legal department and we will not be chasing after anybody. But if we sell a few copies here and there, maybe we can concentrate on writing and releasing more useful software and less on trying to get freelance gigs to pay the bills. What do you say?

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# Introduction

Welcome to **Power Picker**, a color picker plug-in for After Effects.

The longer you use After Effects, the less you might notice the program's glaring lack of a user-friendly, interactive color picker. After using Power Picker for a few days, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it.

In fact, assuming you've tried Power Picker before reading this manual, you probably already think so.

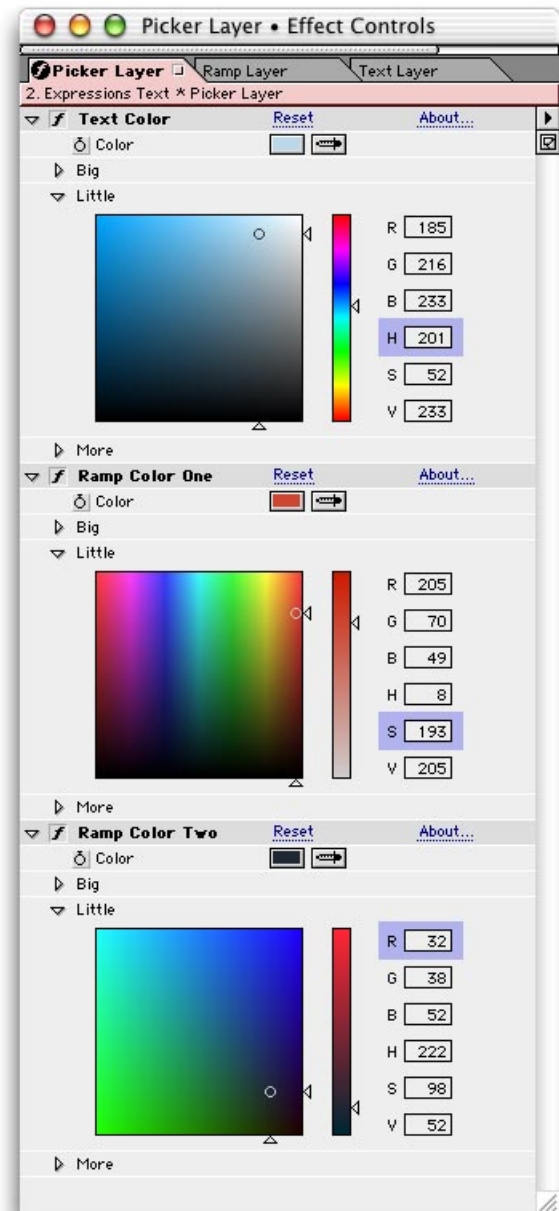
## Installation

If you haven't already, download Power Picker from [www.fnordware.com](http://www.fnordware.com). Windows users UnZip the archive to produce .aex plug-in files and a PDF manual. Mac users produce a disk image which will mount when double-clicked. All Macs should come with mounting software (Apple Disk Copy) that will automatically launch.

Drop the Power Picker plug-in anywhere After Effects loads plug-ins from. This is typically the Plug-Ins folder in the same folder as the application.

Mac users using a version of After Effects earlier than 5.5 should use "Power Picker Classic," found in the Extras folder.

The next time you launch After Effects, Power Picker should appear in the Effect menu under the **fnord** subheading.



# Registration

The first time you run Power Picker you will be asked to enter a serial number. You should receive your code in email shortly after you have ordered the plug-in on-line.

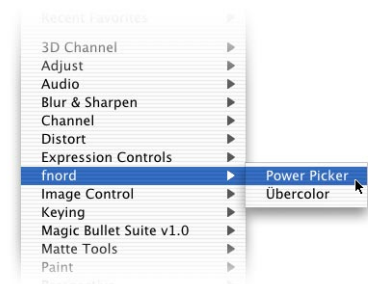
If you have not purchased Power Picker, you may run it in a full-featured **demo mode** for a week. Power Picker will run just as if you bought it, except it will bug you the first time you apply it in a session and eventually expire.

# Quick Start

Launch After Effects and create a new Composition with at least one layer, preferably either a photograph or colored solid.

With the layer selected, choose **Effect > fnord > Power Picker**. The Effect Controls Window should pop up with Power Picker in it. By default, Power Picker will fill the layer with the selected color (preserving the alpha channel).

Play with it.



# Interface

## Picker UI

Where all the action is. Drag around to select the color. Hold down option/alt to toggle live updating.

## Action

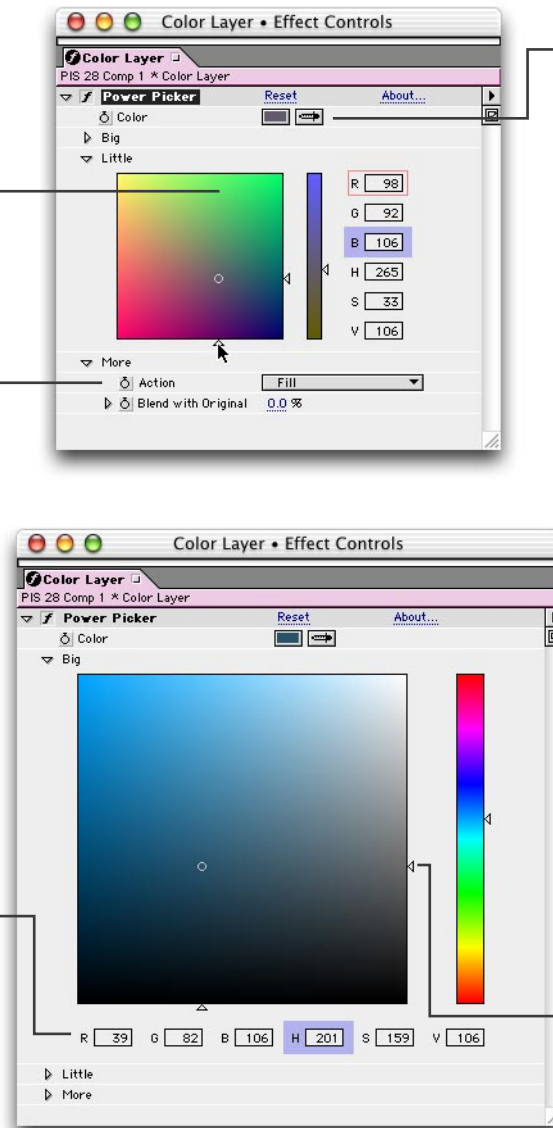
Sets what Power Picker will do with the layer you apply it to. It can fill the layer with color, tint an image, or do nothing. Blend with original moderates the effect.

## Value Readouts

Live reporting of RGB and HSB color values. Clicking on the numbers switches between different pickers. The selected readout determines which value will be set using the vertical bar. The two other related values are set in the square region.

## Color Swatch

The color output of whatever actions you perform on the picker interface. Particularly handy for linking expressions to Power Picker. You can also use the eyedropper to get colors from anywhere on the screen. Or use the old Apple picker if you miss the Crayons.



## Sliders

Used to adjust just one color value at a time. The value being adjusted will have a red border drawn around it.

# Actions

These are the results of the different “Action” settings. Filling the layer (with Alpha intact) and linking other filters to the color swatch are the most common uses of Power Picker. But you can consider the tinting features a nice little bonus.



## None

The original image.



## Fill

Fills the layer with the selected color, leaving the Alpha intact.



## Black To Color

As if you were printing with an ink of that color.



## Midpoint to Color

Blacks and Whites stay, everything in between shifted to the color.



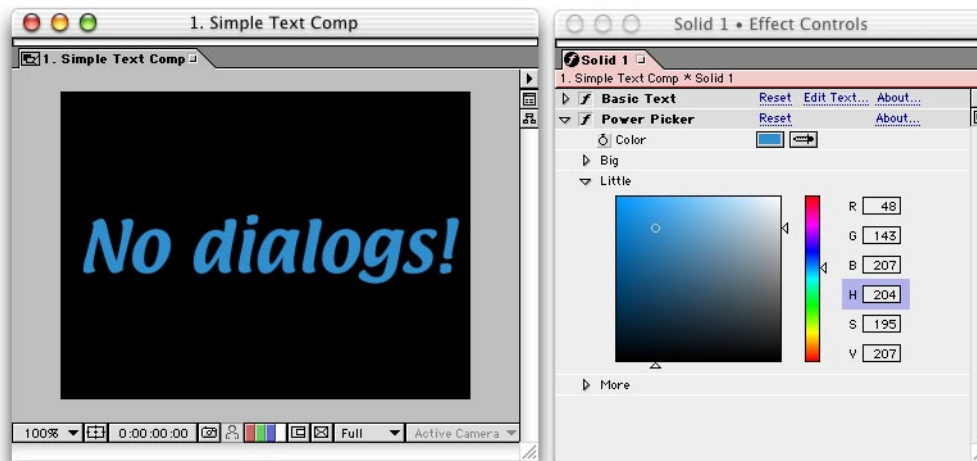
## White to Color

As if that were the color of paper used to print the image on.

# Tutorial 1

Create a new Comp and add a solid layer. To that layer, apply Text > Basic Text from the Effect menu. This should create text with an alpha channel. Enter some text and adjust the size as you see fit. You may want to set the layer to best quality to get antialiasing. If you have checkerboard transparency on, you may want to turn it off.

Apply fnord > Power Picker. The interface will appear and the text will inherit the color. Play around with the picker and observe how great it is to not have to click on a color swatch.



# Tutorial 2

Create a new Comp with an image. Apply Power Picker. Play around with the three color mapping modes. Notice how using a healthy dose of Blend With Original (65% or so) can be particularly effective for making subtle color balance changes. Scratch head. Not bad for a bonus feature.

## Tutorial 3

Now we're getting advanced. We'll use Power Picker to control other filters using **expressions**. You'll need After Effects 5 or later to do this.

Create a new Comp. We're going to create three layers and apply filters to each. It's important that you **rename** every layer by clicking it's name in the timeline and hitting Return (or using Command-K on Mac, Ctrl-K on Windows). Expressions get confused when multiple layers have the same name.

Add a solid and call it "Background Layer." Apply Render > Ramp to it. Leave the default colors...for now.

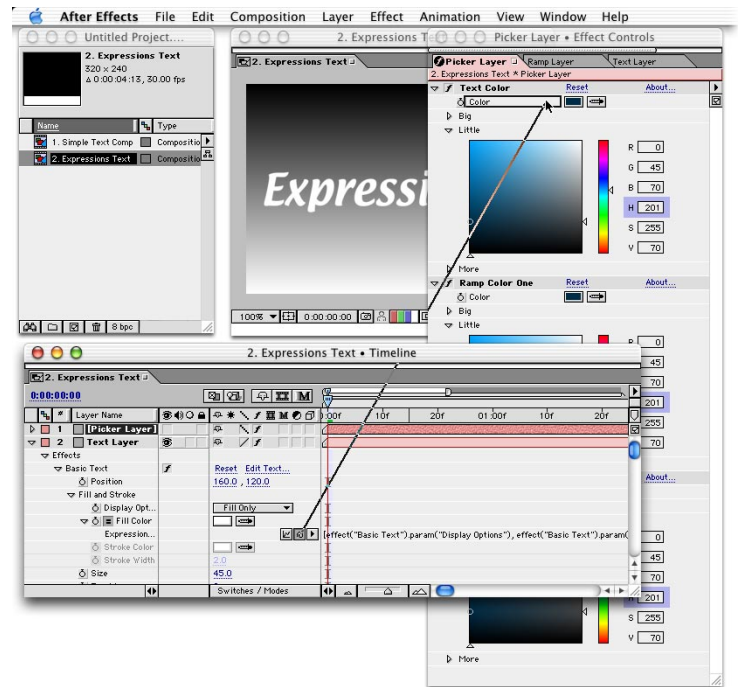
Add a solid and call it "Text Layer." Apply Text > Basic Text and set the text us as you like,

Add a third solid and call it "Picker Layer." Apply fnord > Power Picker three times. Name each picker something different by clicking of the effect name and hitting Return. Call them "Text Color," "Ramp Color 1," and "Ramp Color 2." Again, the renaming is **crucial** for getting this to work.

Click off the Picker Layer's eye button to make it invisible.

Here's where this gets a little more tricky.

In the timeline, twirl down the Text Layer until you see where the text color is set. **Option/Alt-Click** on the keyframe stopwatch to set up an expression for this parameter. Make sure you can see color swatch for the Text Color picker we set up before and then draw the **pickwhip** to the color swatch. If you play with the color picker, you should see the text color updating.





Do the same for the two Ramp colors.

Now look at the Effect Controls window for the Picker Layer and see how you can interactively adjust the colors for all the object without going to a dialog. You are a god!

## Using Expressions with Power Picker

In most cases, you will use Expressions to directly link a color swatch in one Effect to the RGB color swatch in Power Picker without having to write expressions for each RGB value individually.

If necessary, the RGB values in Power Picker can be accessed individually using the standard array syntax (for example: `Color[0]` gives you red). After Effects also includes a built-in expression function to convert the RGB value to HSL, which is not the same as the HSV used by Power Picker, although the Hue values for both color spaces are identical so you can at least use that. Here are rough formulas for getting HSV values from Power Picker's RGB swatch:

$$\text{Hue} = \text{rgb\_to\_hsl}(\text{RGBcolor})[0]$$
$$\text{Sat} = (\max(R, G, B) - \min(R, G, B)) / \max(R, G, B)$$
$$\text{Val} = \max(R, G, B)$$

The sample project includes a Comp set up with the actual AE expressions.

Alternatively, if you dig deep into the Power Picker disk image, you'll see an additional plug-in: Power Picker HSV. This is the same as the regular Power Picker filter, except that the HSV values can be animated and tied to expressions rather than the RGB color swatch.

## Technical Tidbits

One teeny issue with Power Picker. When you tell After Effects to undo a change you've made, the color swatch will update, but AE doesn't update the picker interface. To force it to update, you can just click on a blank part of the Power Picker UI, such as off to the right side.

If you encounter other issues, let us know!