



Andy's Photoshop Tip #35 - Color Palette Optimizing

I get asked many times how I get my animations to be so smooth and clean. This is a trick that I have spent a while perfecting, but to aide in this process I have made this tip. The reason behind it is this: If all your frames have the same color palette then the animation will be smaller in file size and will look much better. This is how I do it:



1

Lets talk about my little 3D smile face animation. I created the original animation in Extreme 3D with a smile face I did in Photoshop. I Rendered each frame as a separate bmp file.

2

Then what I did next was to create a new file in Photoshop. I then opened each frame and pasted a copy of it into this large image. Then I convert this image to index color (IMAGE...MODE...INDEX) with an adaptive palette, 8-bit, 256 color image with NO dither. Normally I choose diffusion dither, but if your animation will have a transparent color in it, then it's best to have it as none. This way you don't have a speckled background (see example below).



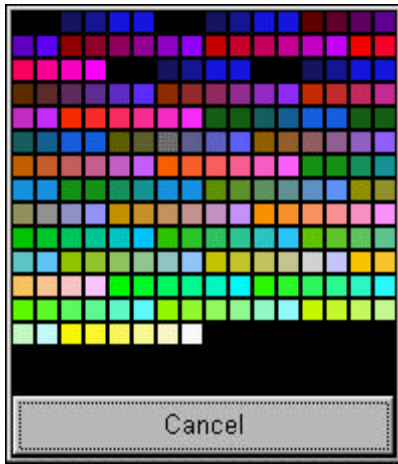
What this step is doing is creating a palette with all the colors in your animation. By doing this, you get a much better looking image and you only have the colors in the animation that you want to.

It's best to save this color palette for future use in case you need it. You can do this by IMAGE...MODE...COLOR TABLE and saving it as a .act or .pal file.

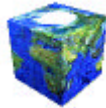
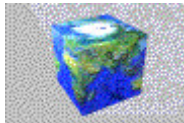
Now you will have to click on each image and convert it to index color with the "previous color palette". This will assign the same colors and color sequence to all of your images. Repeat this step for all your frames and save each one.

3

When I compile my frames in my animation program (Gif Construction Set for example) you have two options. 1) use a default global palette of the frames, or 2) use the palette of the images. Since we have taken the time to make our own global palette, use the palette of your images and not the default palette supplied by your animation program. Let's look at the two palettes. The first image is the default global palette and the second is our optimized palette. If we would have used the programs default palette, then we would have only had 10-20 shades of yellow vs. the 256 shades that we have created. The animation will be much more 3D and colorful. :



Below are two examples of animations. The first was created with the default global palette and the second was optimized. Not only is the second 15K smaller, it has a common transparent background and has many more colors than the first.



I hope that this will help you out when creating your gif animations.



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