

Lightning Effects

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Lightning, thunder and electricity in general, give a stunning, dramatic edge to any composition. In this tutorial, you will learn how to apply a realistic lightning effect to spice up an otherwise ordinary picture. To follow along this tutorial, you need to have a plugin called Alien Skin Xenofex 2. The plugin, and thus this tutorial, are compatible with Fireworks MX 2004, Fireworks 8 and Fireworks CS3.

Before we start, click the below picture for a preview of what the effect will look like:

To start, open an image in Fireworks, or download the sample image used in this tutorial.

- We are going to apply a Live effect. With your image open, click on the + sign in right-side corner the Property Inspector. Select Alien Skin Xenofex 2 >> Lightning from the drop-down list that appears.
- You will see your image in the plugin application window. Use your mouse to move the two target-like icons that mark the beginning and end of the lightning arc, respectively. Click on the image below to see the values I used for the Lightning effect.

Most of the descriptions are self-explanatory, but I'll go over some:

- Taper Main Arc: when checked, this option sets the lightning to be thick at one end and thin on the other.
 - Arc Thickness: sets the value of the thicker part of the lightning.
 - Jaggedness: controls the curviness of the branches.
 - Branching: set this high if you want more branches.
 - Branch Spread: sets the angle width between the branches and their origin.
- We are almost done, but there is another tab titled "Glow". As its name suggests, this one contains the controls for the glow effect as seen on the top of the lightning. If you'd like to replicate mine, just click on the picture below:
- Flash Size: controls the size of the bright spot at the starting end of the lightning.
 - Glow Width/Opacity: these set the distance and transparency of the lightning's outer glow effect.
 - Inner color: modifies the color of the lightning's center
 - Outer color: modifies the color of the outside glow.

- Once the image in the preview window suits your needs, click OK. You'll return to the familiar Fireworks interface and you can see the live effect applied to your image. Congratulations!

Where to go from here

From this tutorial you've learned how to create a realistic lightning effect using the Alien Skin plugin Xenofex 2. Now that you are familiar with the basic options, get some creative ideas by experimenting with the factory presets accessible from the Settings menu of the plugin.

This plugin creates the traditional "single-root + branches" type of lightning. If you want lots of electrical sparkles starting from a central position, use the Xenofex 2 Electrify filter instead.

If you have any questions, ask on our forum or drop me a note.

Disclaimer: The author of this tutorial is not affiliated with Alien Skin.