

Reflective Account on VFX Poduction Process

Date

20/11/2024

Introduction

In this project with Adobe After Effects 2024, I had the idea of trying to create two or three different scenes with a dragon landing on the ground, breathing fire and flying around buildings. I will use the videos recordings made during the class and other videos from my Canon camera. At first, my idea was to record a river or a pond and then add a fish jumping or of a creature jumping from one building to another.

When editing the video, Keylight will be used for green screen, camera tracking based on a selection of several points of the background and other adjustments such as scaling, moving, rotating, Color Correction (Brightness & Contrast, among others...).

First, I will create a storyboard to have a better idea of the scenes I want to edit in the program.

All the elements which will be added for this scene with Adobe After Effects:

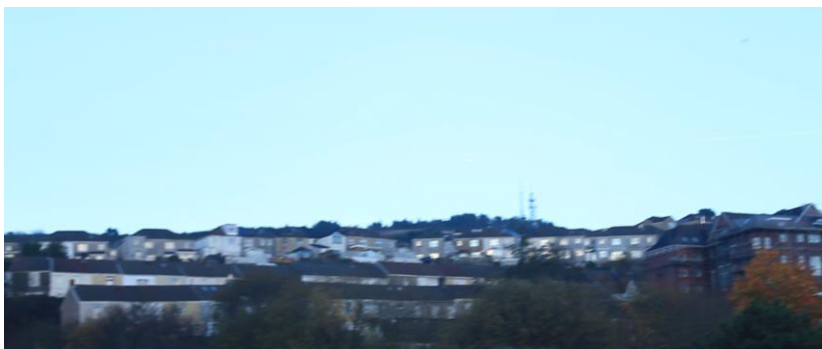


Figure 1 (Screenshot: Video with the houses for the background)



Fig. 2 (Green screen dragon with fire)

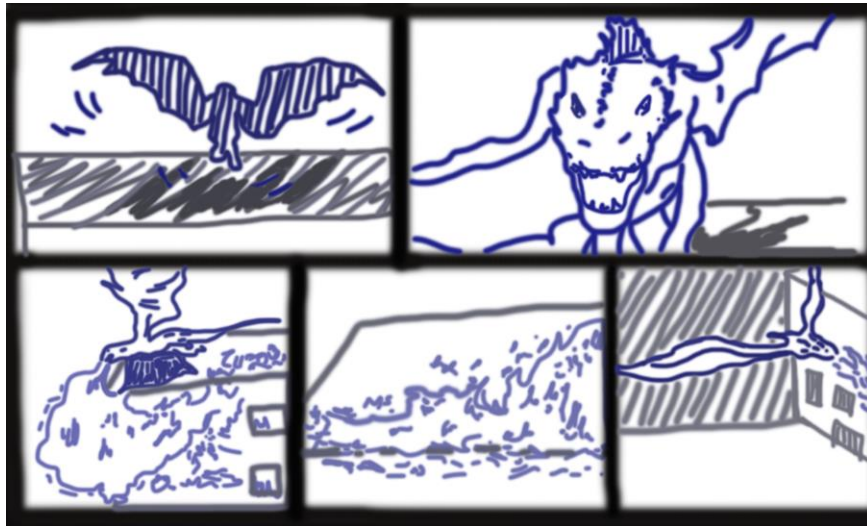


Fig. 3 (Green screen fire)



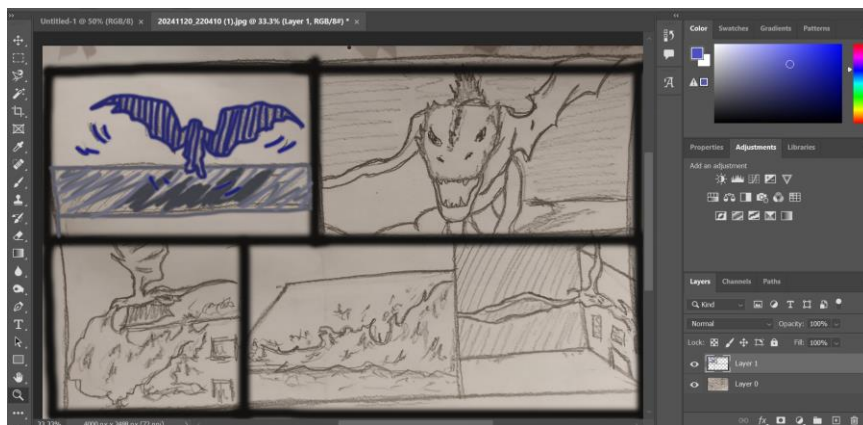
Fig. 4 (Black smoke green screen)

Storyboard



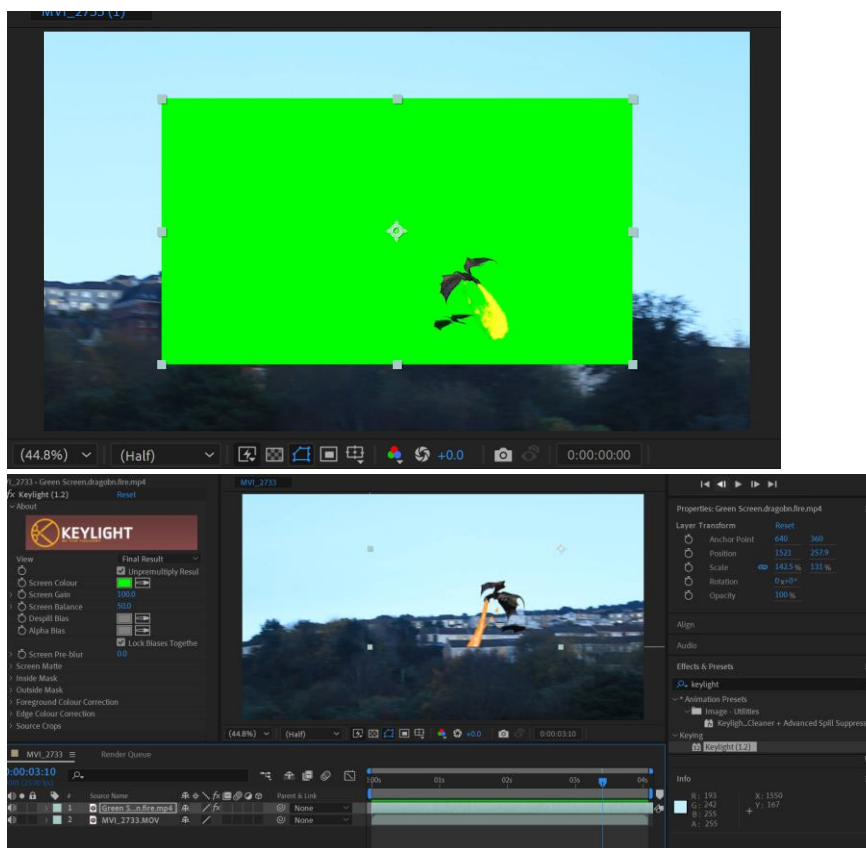
In the first two scene frames I was thinking of adding a dragon to a moving background that lands on the ground as it gets closer.

The last three reflect when the dragon is flying over buildings or houses while breathing fire, making this scene include fire and smoke. Maybe there would be something else in the same last scene or creating another type of scenario.

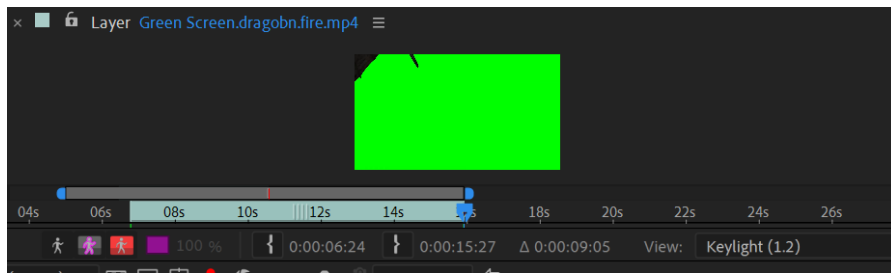


Screenshot in **Photoshop** (I created the storyboard with **Photoshop** using the **Pencil Tool** based first on my drawing)

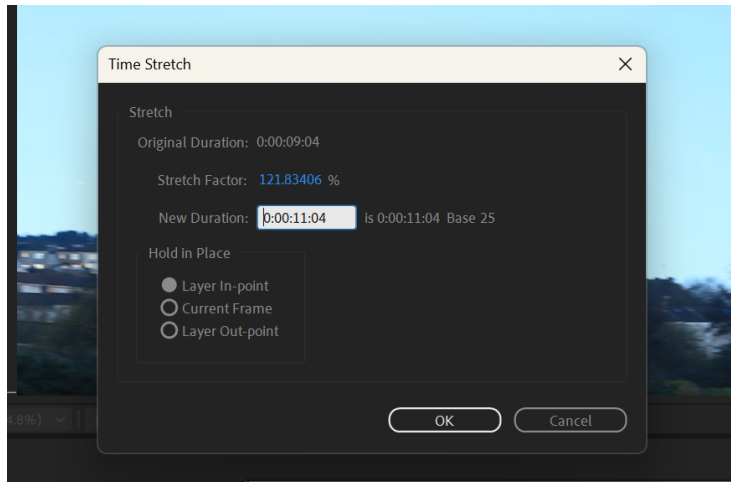
- 1- First what I do is import files, starting with the background (that would be the video with the houses) and the fire-breathing dragon. I add both to the timeline, but I bring the green screen above the background and in the Channel Box that appears to the right of the screen, I look for the **Keylight** option and I drag it to the dragon's green screen by clicking on the **Screen Colour** option that appears to the right of the screen. This serves so that the green screen disappears and so the dragon is seen with the other background layer. I also adjust the size and position of the dragon by moving and scaling it.



- 2- I set the correct time of the dragon green screen video with the **Set IN** and **OUT point current time** by moving first the blue bar. I also make both videos a little slower by selecting **Layer to Time** and in Time Stretch I adjust the total duration by adding 2 more seconds.

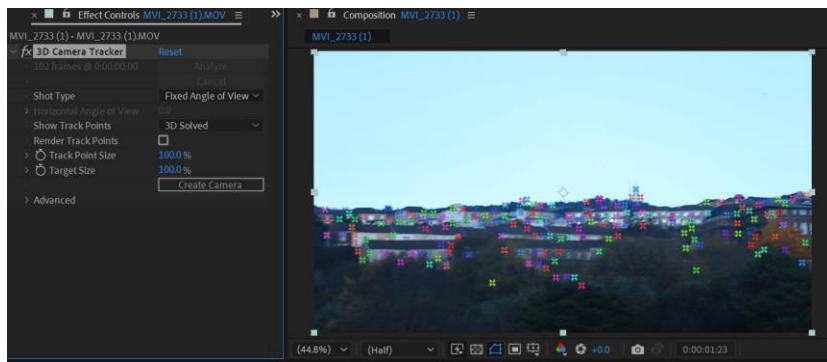


(Set IN/OUT)

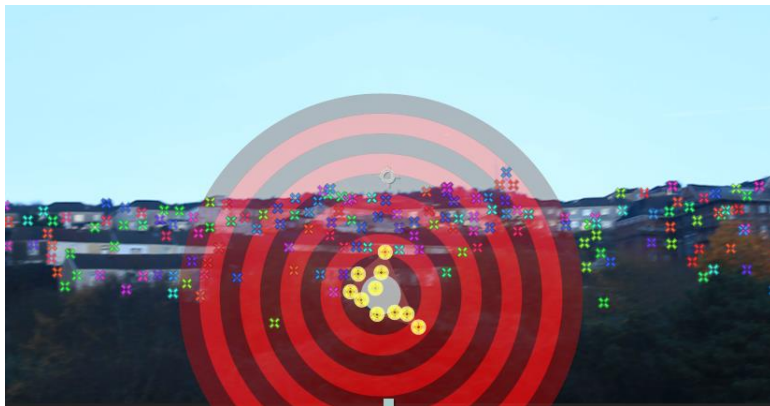


(Time Stretch by changing the **New Duration** to make it a bit slower)

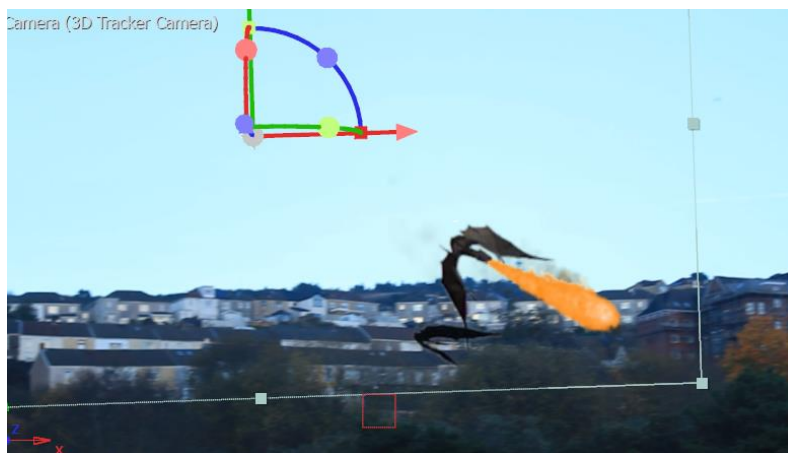
- 3- Now to better match the movement of both videos to make it look more realistic with camera tracking, first I make sure to select the background layer (**Fig.1**) and in **Animation** I click on the **Track Camera** option and wait for it to analyze it. Then many dots of different colors appear. I can also enlarge the size in **Track point size** on the left. In my case I will select several dots in the middle of the background. Next, I right click on the points already selected and click on the **Create Null and Camera** option and in the green screen dragon (**Fig.2**) I add the 3D Layer (it is shaped like a 3D cube) and thus finally get the effect of the dragon synchronized with the background movement.



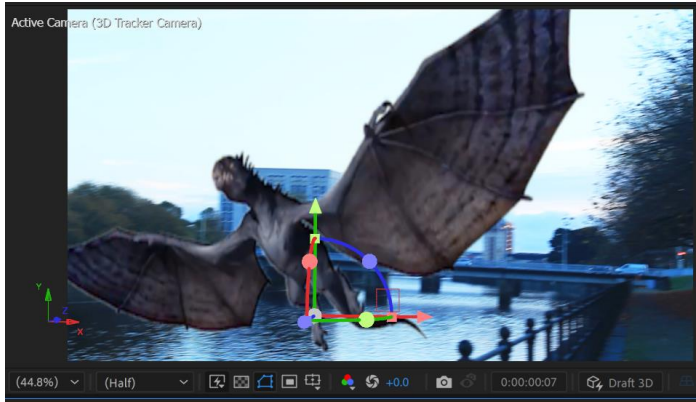
(Track Camera)



(I select a few dots in the middle, the yellow dots shown in the image, between the light color of the buildings and the dark color of the trees)



Changing again the position, rotation and the size of the dragon after doing the camera tracking.



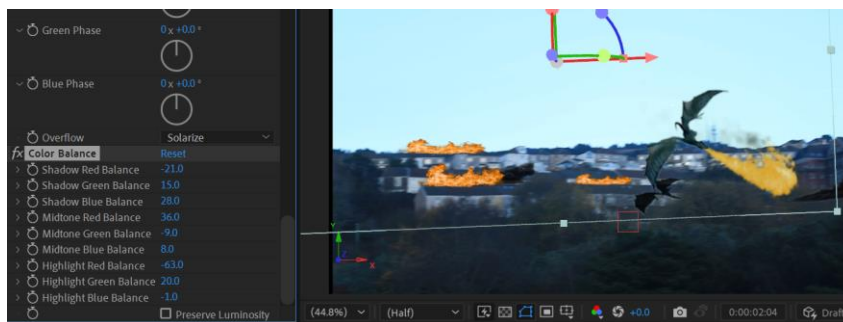
(The same process for another short scene of the dragon flying up, it was a last idea to add, as the dragon approaching the buildings from the other side of the river Tawe).

- 4- The next thing I will do is add the green screen of the fire and smoke, I will also duplicate each of them like 3 or 4 times. I do the same process that I did before with the dragon, by selecting the **Keylight** option to remove the green screen and I include the **3D Layer** cube to also follow the movement of the background with **camera tracking**. I place them in various areas on the sides and on top of the roof of the houses, thus showing how the dragon is spreading the fire to its surroundings.

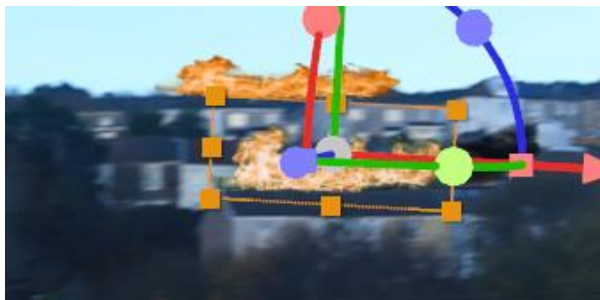


5- I will adjust the brightness, saturation and darker tones to match everything with the background.

For example, for the dragon I adjust the **Color Balance** options found in **Effect to Color Correction**, to achieve a tone something between dark blue and gray, because the landscape looks darker when the sun goes down in the evening. In **Color Correction** I have been adjusting especially with the following options: **Brightness & Contrast**, **Color Balance** and **Hue/Saturation**.



(Color Correction: I adjust the Color Balance)

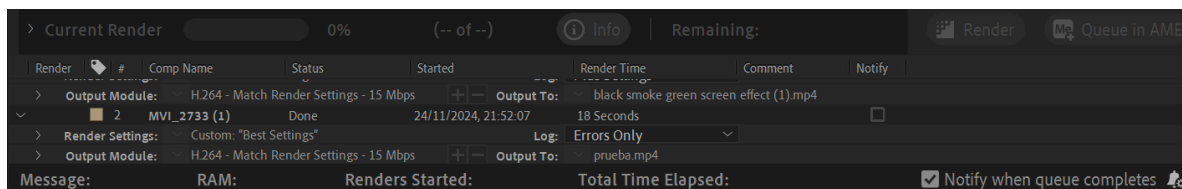


6- I also wanted to add an extra effect of falling snowflakes, instead of a snowflakes green screen video I chose “**CapCut**” program this time, to avoid having problems when downloading. So, to add it I go to the **Effects** option, find the snowflakes effect and then drag it to the video that I want to have snowflakes. Making the environment of the video look even more interesting and eye-catching.C



Fig. 5 (Snowflakes)

- 7- To finish, I export the video in **File** and then **Export** to Add to **Render Queue**. I make sure all the layers are selected, I choose also where I want to save it, and I make sure the timing of the video when it starts and when it ends is correct.



- Even if I placed the fire layer below or above the dragon layer, the fire was still seen first until moving just a little further into the dragon. Basically, when the dragon passes through the fire, I must make sure it is a little further back from the dragon so that the dragon can be seen first.
- To organize myself better and not get confused with the layers, I changed each one to different colors in **Select Label Group**, by right clicking on the small square of a layer.

Bibliography

- Adobe, After Effects, 2024
- Adobe, Photoshop, 2023

- **Fig. 3:** Fire Green Screen, X Gamer, YouTube, 2018.
- **Fig. 4:** Black smoke green screen effect, Robin Mikalsen, YouTube, 2012.
- **Fig. 1:** Background video has been recorded with Canon EOS 1300D.
- **Fig. 5:** CapCut, 2023

Next Scene

All the elements which will be added for this scene:



Figure 1 (Video for background)



Fig. 2 (Green Screen Dragon landing)

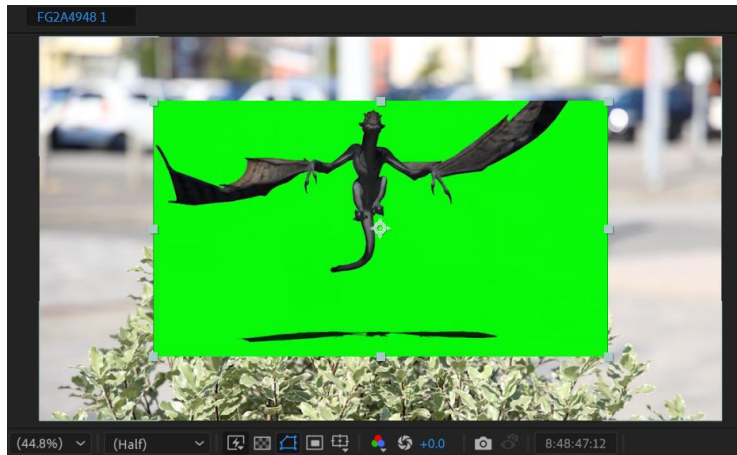


Fig. 3 (Green Screen Dust)

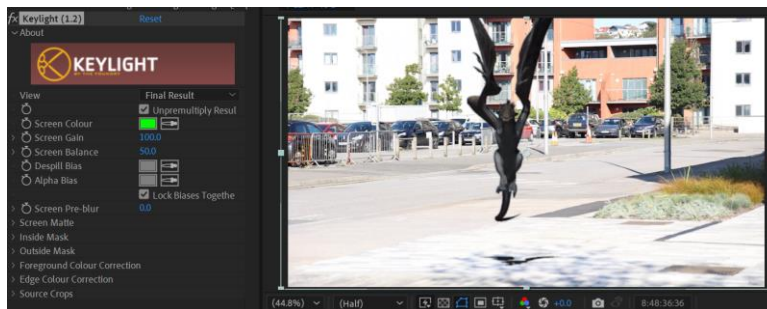


Fig. 4 (Green Screen Teleport)

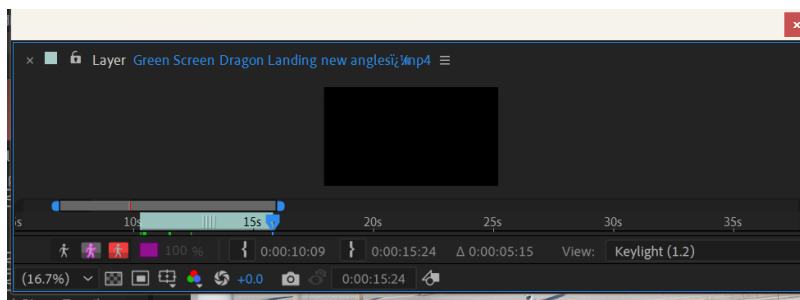
- 1- First, I import the videos of the background and the dragon green screen. The green screen layer will be placed above the other layer. Then I will add the **Keylight** to the dragon (it is found in the Channel Box on the left side) that will make the green screen disappear when the green screen color of the video is selected.



(Keylight)

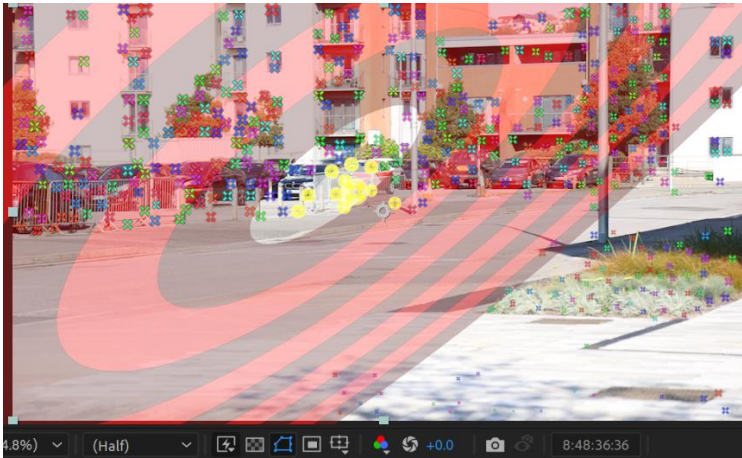


- 2- Next, I will adjust the length of the video (green screen dragon landing) that I want to edit for this project. By moving the blue marker on the timeline of this layer and marking the **Set IN & OUT** (from beginning to the end of the video).



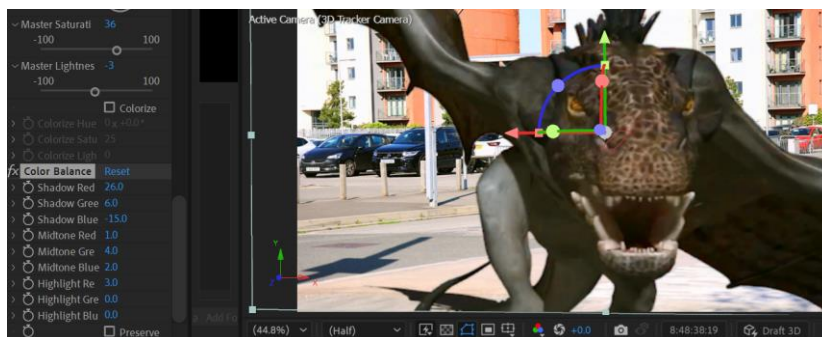
- 3- To make the dragon stay in one place while the video moves to the left, first, on the background layer (**Fig. 1**) I go to **Animation to Track Camera** and let it load. Many small points of different colors appear, in this case I will increase the size in **Track Point Size** on the left and thus correctly select several points in the middle. Once the points are selected, I right click on create **Null and Camera**. In the dragon (**Fig.2**)

the **3D Layer** (cube) will also be included so that the tracking camera can be seen finally working.



4- Next, I change the side of the dragon by double-right clicking on the dragon's layer and in **Transform** I select **Flip Horizontal**. Then I will move it to the left side of the video, to finish I just **scale** again to adjust the size of the dragon.

5- For the **Color Correction** I will try to ensure that the background and the dragon have the same shades of warm tones. Above all, I will lower the intensity of the light of the background layer. To do this, I will go to **Effect**, then **Color Correction** and from there I will adjust tones, contrast and light with the **Brightness & Contrast**, **Color Balance** and **Hue/Saturation** options.

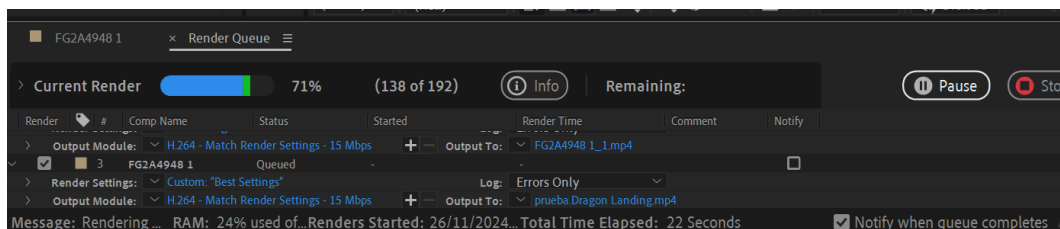


6- I will also add a green screen of dust and like a magical portal appearing suddenly like a bright light. To do that, I search for the **Keylight** option in the Channel Box and drag it to the layer of green screen at **Composition**, selecting its shade of green so that it disappears and only the dust and the portal are there. Next, I will **scale** it and position it in the correct place, also adding it to the **Camera Tracker** with the cube shape that is located at the bottom left of the layers. Finally in **Color Correction** I added more **brightness and contrast** and a bit of **Hue/Saturation**, the same for both. This time I will also include the glow effect found in the **Effect to Stylize** and then to **Glow** option. I will increase the glow level but not that much.

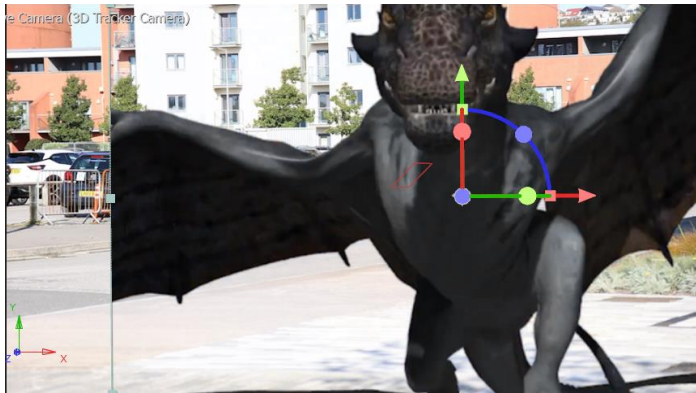


Fig. 3

7- Finally, I **export** the video in **Add to Render Queue** making sure the video length is correct and then wait for the rendering to finish.



- I realized that when adding the camera tracking the movements didn't look well when selecting at first the points in the middle of the bottom background, so at the end, I chose the ones in the middle above.
- Also, after doing the camera tracking, I realized that the dragon's wing was cut out when the scene moves to the left, so I had to change it to the other perspective and scale and move the dragon to the left side from the beginning of the video.



- Another problem that I encountered was that there was still a line on the edges, the square of the green screen dragon landing video, and to solve it I had to go to the **Crop Edges** option found in the Channel Box and select what I want to remove. It can also be deleted in another way with the **Pen Tool**.





(After the edge is removed).

Bibliography

- Adobe, After Effects, 2024
- **Fig. 2:** Green Screen Dragon Landing new angles, Green Screen Magic, YouTube, 2022
- **Fig. 1:** Background video recorded with the Nikon camera.
- **Fig. 3:** Dust Green Screen Dust at Camera HD AAE DUST – Green Screen Nation, YouTube, 2014.
- **Fig. 4:** Green Screen Teleport Effects / Vanishing and Reappearing Effects 4 – Green Screen Magic, YouTube, 2019.