

A BIT OF MAGIC...

In the previous episode we learned how to use editing to create simple illusory effects. By cutting and reinserting scenes, we could make people and objects suddenly disappear or reappear on the screen. Now we're going to go a step further and see how we can make some more complicated special effects.

As always, we're not going to need super computers or expensive professional equipment: a few simple items will be enough to make some powerful magic. Many of the special effects that you can see today at the cinema are created with the use of a green screen. As the name suggests, this is simply a screen – or a big cloth or drape used as a background – which is green.

But how does it work? In theory it's really very simple – and luckily it is in practice, too! Any scenes that we shoot with a green screen as a backdrop can then be edited on a computer, and the green screen can be replaced with a different background, or with special effects. As Luca shows us, with a snap of the fingers you can be instantly taken from your room at home (where you set up the green screen), to a wild prairie, a jungle, or into space. Let's see how it works, step by step...

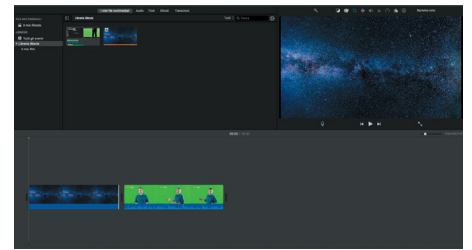
The first thing you need is a large green cloth or drape. Why green? In actual fact a blue screen, or even some other colors, could work equally well. However, the bright green that you see in Luca's video is the color that gets used most often because it's rarely found in nature or in our homes. Also this green color gradient is the one most often recognized by special effects software and technologies.

Your backdrop must be uniformly lit and completely smooth, without any folds that could create shadows and spoil your special effects.

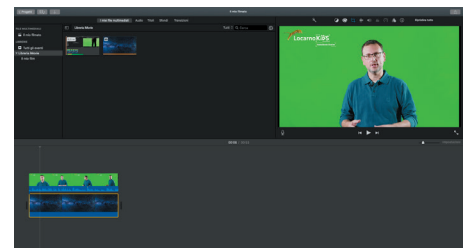
Once you've set up your backdrop you can film your scene, keeping the right distance from it so as not to cast any shadows or reflections on it.

It's very important that none of your clothing or other objects in the scene be of the same green color, or even similar – otherwise, when it comes to creating the special effects, you and those objects might be confused with the backdrop and disappear! On the other hand, that very technique could come in useful if the superpower you want to create is invisibility...

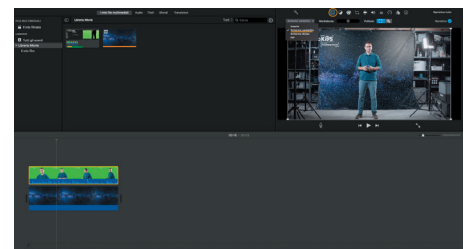
Once you've finished filming, you're ready to go on to the editing stage. As in the previous lesson we'll use the iMovie app, and in just a few steps your magic will be ready to amaze your viewers!



1. The first thing to do is to add a background in your iMovie timeline. It could be a prairie, a ruined city, a space station, but also a real landscape that you previously filmed. Then you add the scene you filmed with the green screen.



2. Next overlay the two scenes.



3. Choose "Blue/Green Screen" from the "Video overlay settings" menu. At this point you've cast your magic spell and you'll have your first special effects.

Using the same method you can also add to your movie any of the ready-made special effects that you can find for free on the Internet.

Enjoy making your movie!

