



exr Trader

User Manual

Version 2018.1

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This plugin uses zlib:

zlib general purpose compression library

version 1.2.3, July 18th, 2005

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Jean-loup Gailly jloup@gzip.org

Mark Adler madler@alumni.caltech.edu

This plugin uses Cryptomatte:

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This plugin uses LightWrap++, a C++ wrapper for LightWave

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Software Design and Development

Michael Wolf

Management

Dagmar Bornemann

Documentation

Michael Wolf

Product Marketing

Dagmar Bornemann

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db&w Bornemann und Wolf GbR
Seyfferstr. 34
70197 Stuttgart
Germany

www.db-w.com
info@db-w.com

Table of Contents

Trademark and copyright information.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi

Introduction	1
Buffers & Channels – a Basic Introduction.....	1
exrTrader Pro.....	2
Compatibility.....	2
Features.....	3
Setting up exrTrader	4
Installation.....	4
Windows.....	4
MacOS.....	4
Included Plugins.....	4
Registration.....	6
exrTrader – OpenEXR Layered Export	7
Help.....	8
Presets.....	8
Save in Layout.....	9
Store all Buffers (F9).....	9
Show Buffers Preview.....	9
Preview Scale.....	10
Output Path.....	10
Use Prefs Render Path.....	10
Layered Output.....	10
Layered Output File.....	10
Single Layer Files.....	10
Compression.....	10
DWA Compression Level.....	12
Cryptomatte (exrTrader Pro only).....	13
Cryptomatte File.....	13
Compression.....	13
Cryptomatte Type.....	13
Save As.....	13
Levels.....	13
Name.....	13
Separate File.....	14
Compression.....	14
Manifest.....	14
Manifest File.....	14
Write all Manifests.....	14
Write Manifest.....	14
Metadata.....	15
Embed Preview.....	15
Scale / Width / Height.....	15
Comment.....	15
Author.....	15
Buffers.....	16
Individual Settings for Buffers.....	18

Review Settings.....	23
About exrTrader.....	23

Show Buffers Preview (Image Viewer) 24

Title Bar.....	24
Toolbar.....	25
Buffer.....	25
Channel.....	25
P.....	25
N.....	25
CS.....	25
Zoom.....	25
Fit.....	25
Navigation.....	25
Keyboard Shortcuts.....	25

Basic OpenEXR Loader and Saver Plugins 26

OpenEXR Settings.....	26
Compression.....	27
Pixel Format.....	28

Special Plugins 29

OpenEXR Dummy Saver.....	29
exrTrader.....	29
OpenEXR Settings.....	29

Appendices 30

Notes about Buffers.....	30
Network Rendering.....	32
Third party LightWave 3D plugins with exrTrader support.....	32
OpenEXR support in third party applications.....	32
Older Applications.....	32
LScript.....	34
Recommended Reading.....	34
Supported Metadata.....	35
Basic Metadata.....	35
Maker Metadata.....	37

Introduction

Quoted from www.openexr.com:

OpenEXR is a high dynamic-range (HDR) image file format developed by Industrial Light & Magic for use in computer imaging applications.

OpenEXR's features include:

- *Higher dynamic range and color precision than existing 8- and 10-bit image file formats.*
- *Support for 16-bit floating-point, 32-bit floating-point, and 32-bit integer pixels. The 16-bit floating-point format, called "half", is compatible with the half data type in NVIDIA's Cg graphics language and is supported natively on current GPUs.*
- *Multiple lossless image compression algorithms. Some of the included codecs can achieve 2:1 lossless compression ratios on images with film grain.*

exrTrader makes the OpenEXR file format available for users of LightWave 3D, providing basic image loading and saving as well as supporting the advanced features of OpenEXR, such as multiple buffers stored in a single image file.

This manual covers the usage of exrTrader only.¹

We are planning on publishing further tutorials of how to use OpenEXR in various pipelines in the future though; please check www.exrtrader.com for updates.

The capabilities of OpenEXR itself are explained extremely well at www.openexr.com. The "Technical Introduction to OpenEXR", available for download as a PDF, is well worth a read.

Buffers & Channels – a Basic Introduction

Let's start with some definitions:

A **Channel** is a single image component, such as the red channel of an image.

A **Buffer** consist of one or more channels, for example:

Final Render is a buffer consisting of the red, green and blue channels.

Depth is a buffer consisting of one channel: Z

Motion is a buffer with two channels, X and Y (this is velocity in pixels)

OpenEXR is quite a complex, extensible image format, and many compositing applications only support a subset of its features, such as the following basic channels:

R	Red
B	Blue
G	Green
A	Alpha / Mask
Y	Luminosity
Z	Depth

Blackmagic Fusion for example expects the following channel names by default (fortunately this can be changed in the Fusion image loader):

R, G, B, A, Z, pixelCover, objectID, materialID, U, V, NX, NY, NZ, velX, velY

This is why we decided to include a preset system to cater for the needs of different applications and pipelines.

If the buffers are saved to a single file they are named as follows:

"LayerName.ChannelName"

¹ It has come to our attention that some of our customers regard this documentation, including assorted footnotes, as being "entertaining". Let me assure you that this is not the case. We're Germans. If you, for whatever reason, have the urge to take any part of this manual humorously, please re-read the entire license agreement as an exercise to regain your composure.

Either the layer or the channel name may be empty (in that case the "." is omitted) - but never both of them. You cannot have duplicate channel names within the same file.

The "Review Settings..." option tries to catch as many errors and omissions as possible.

If your application only supports the most basic channels, you can use one of the options to save a buffer to an individual image file.

In that case the Layer Name is omitted from the channel name, but is used as part of the file name. Make sure that the channel names are R,G,B (or Y in the case of a single channel image), otherwise more limited applications that expect the default channel names won't be able to read the image!

Some OpenEXR savvy applications, such as Nuke, can group the channels by their layer name, so they see "LayerName" as a group of channels (or a layer).

The appendix contains a list of applications and their support for OpenEXR as well as an overview of all the buffers provided by LightWave 3D.

exrTrader Pro

As of version 2018.1 there are two license levels of exrTrader. An exrTrader Pro license additionally unlocks the Cryptomatte functionality.

Compatibility

exrTrader 2018 is based on OpenEXR 2.2.1

exrTrader is compatible with LightWave3D 2018 on Windows and MacOS.

Please visit <http://www.exrtrader.com> or <http://exrtrader.db-w.com> for more up to date information.

Features

exrTrader has been thoroughly tested in production by us and our trusty beta testers. The main features of exrTrader are:

- Standard LightWave Loader supporting RGBA, does not require a license.
- Standard LightWave Savers, supporting all save-able image types except for palletized images, does not require a license.
- A scene type master plugin for setting the image saver options, which are saved in the scene file.
- A dummy saver to enable network render managers to find saved files for success checks.
- An image filter plugin that allows to save arbitrary buffers to a single OpenEXR file that:
 - Either uses a custom output file, or the RGB output file defined in the render globals.
 - Supports all compression schemes defined by OpenEXR including lossy schemes.
 - Supports all output buffers generated by LightWave and exposed through the SDK.
 - Supports buffers that may consist of one (i.e. Depth), two (i.e. Motion), three (i.e. RGB) or more channels.
 - Offers separate naming options for channels and buffers in the OpenEXR file, this will translate to buffer.channel as defined in the OpenEXR specs. Either may be blank.
 - Supports different pixel types per channel.
 - Offers the processing of buffers (invert, min, max, scale, offset).
 - Supports OpenEXR metadata, including aspect ratio, comments, previews.
 - Data window support (for limited region renders).
 - Optional un-multiplication by the image alpha
 - Advanced preset system with “default” presets and custom preset directories
- Cryptomatte support with an exrTrader Pro license.
- Network rendering support.
- Plugins consist of one file per platform.
- “Q Approved!” and SWELL.
- Support for LightWave 3D metadata starting with LightWave 3D 9.5
- Options to customize the export to match a variety of compositing workflows.
- Additionally save single buffers using any image format supported by LightWave 3D
- File and buffer names may contain variables that are replaced with the current values when saving.
- Support for naming the files created by stereoscopic rendering.
- Automatic creation of a data window within the exr files to speed up loading and filters in compositing applications that support a DoD This is transparent to most other applications.
- A custom image viewer to inspect individual buffers
- Free point upgrades, free support, free beer².

² O.k., so we're still joking about the beer...

Setting up exrTrader

Installation

The download contains ZIP compressed files for all platforms supported by exrTrader. Extract the appropriate ZIP file for your platform.

Windows

The **exrTrader2018.p** file can be copied to any directory where you keep your plugins. We recommend using a manually created plugin directory to separate third party plugins from plugins shipped with LightWave 3D. This will simplify upgrades of LightWave 3D.

Now use the **Edit Plug-ins** panel (alt-F11) of the **Add Plugins** menu item to add the plugin file **exrTrader2018.p** to LightWave 3D.

You can also copy it to

`%userprofile%.NewTek\LightWave\2018.0\plugins`

to allow LightWave to detect the plugin automatically.

MacOS

You can copy the **exrTrader2018.plugin** file into one of two locations for LightWave to use it automatically.

You can either copy it to:

`~/Library/Application Support/Newtek/LightWave2018.0/Plugins`

for the current user or

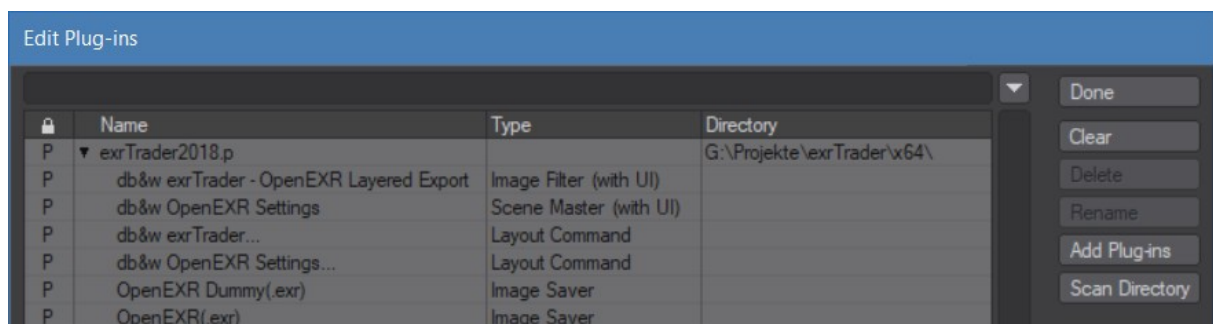
`/Library/Application Support/Newtek/LightWave2018.0/Plugins`

for all users.

In both cases LightWave 3D will automatically pick up the plugins once you launch it.

You are of course free to copy the plugin file to another location and add it manually.

Included Plugins



exrTrader is actually a suite of plugins for LightWave 3D. Currently it consists of the following plugins (these are the plugin names as displayed in the Edit Plug-ins window by LightWave):

exrTrader – OpenEXR Layered Export

OpenEXR Settings

exrTraderLoader

OpenEXR(.exr)

OpenEXR Dummy(.exr)

exrTrader...**OpenEXR Settings...****db&w exrTrader Helper** (used by the Cryptomatte export only)

To be able to use the exrTrader Layered Export you will need to register and activate it with the activation code we will send you after your purchase of a license.

The basic loaders and savers are fully functional without registering.

The last two plugins are convenience tools you can assign to a shortcut, or add to a menu, to quickly apply the respective plugins to the current scene (if they aren't applied already) and open their user interface.

Registration

Registration for exrTrader2018

Purchase your license at:

Lightwave Lock ID:

Full Name:

Company Name:

E-Mail:

Once you've installed the plugin, apply the **exrTrader – OpenEXR Layered Export** image filter plugin to your scene, and the registration window will automatically open.

Enter your full name, company name (if applicable) and e-mail address. Export the registration and attach it to an e-mail to registration@db-w.com. We will mail you an activation code within 24 hours after payment is received, depending on the time difference³.

You can now either import the keyfile attached to the activation e-mail, or copy and paste the activation key into the registration panel (please make sure that the personal information is identical to the one submitted to us for the registration).

Your registration is now complete and you will see the interface of exrTrader, allowing you to use it.

The registration file is stored in `%appdata%db&w\licenses` on Windows, the license file is named `exrTrader2018.key`.

On MacOS the location is `~/Library/Application Support/db&w/licenses`.

You can also copy the `exrTrader2018.key` to be in the same directory as the plugin, allowing for multiple licenses from a shared location.

If you use multiple licenses of LightWave 3D from a single network share, the registration manager will only append/edit licenses locked to the dongle installed on the host machine.

Updating from exrTrader to exrTrader Pro

If you already use a licensed exrTrader 2018 and would like to upgrade to exrTrader Pro 2018, you have to, for now, manually delete the previous license first. Once that has happened, you will be prompted to register again as shown above, this time please import the new exrTrader Pro license.

To delete the existing license, please remove the file `exrTrader2018.key` either from `%appdata%db&w\licenses` (Windows) or `~/Library/Application Support/db&w/licenses` (MacOS).

³ Our key generator needs some sleep every now and then ;)

exrTrader – OpenEXR Layered Export

This is the main plugin. It allows you to export any of the render buffers provided by LightWave into a single, or multiple OpenEXR files.

OpenEXR is a quite complex image file format. The user interface of exrTrader provides full access to the options provided by the image format.

From the top to the bottom it is basically divided into four areas.

The top covers basic workflow options, as well as global options for the exported image files.

The **Layered Output** tab controls where the images are saved and how they will be named.

The **Cryptomatte** tab is only available with an exrTrader Pro license and contains all Cryptomatte related controls.

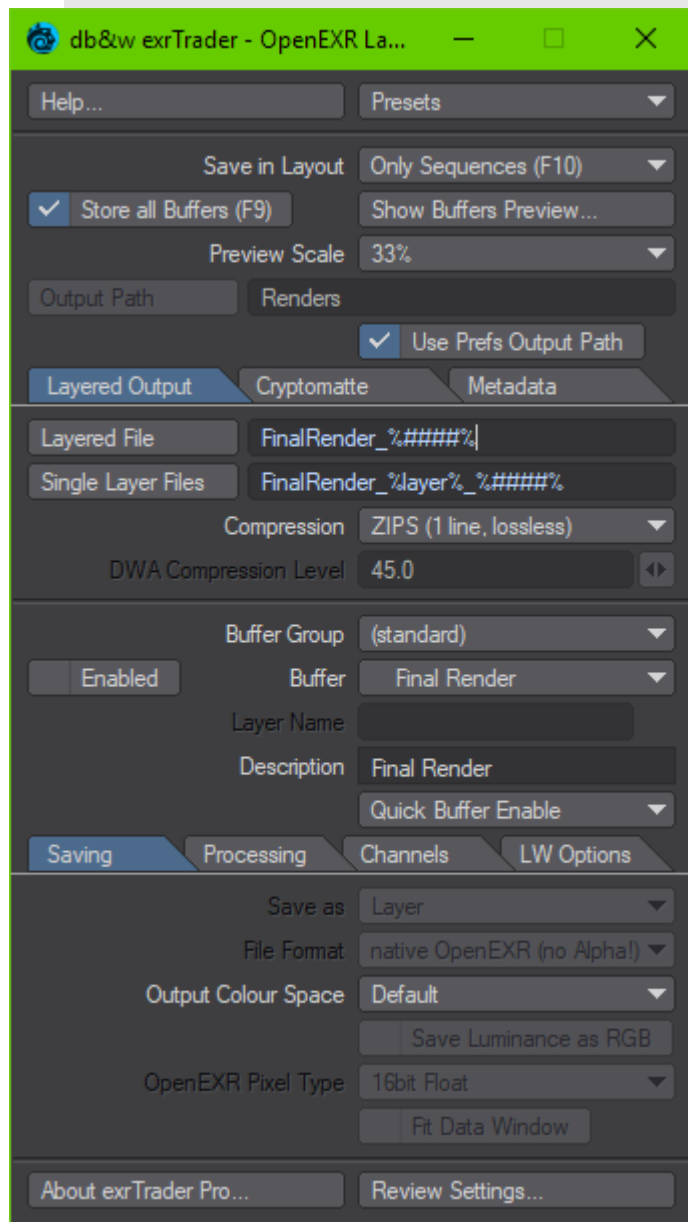
The **Metadata** tab contains options for metadata stored with the image files, such as a preview image, or a comment.

The middle section, starting with the **Buffer** pop-up, contains the controls for the individual buffers.

The bottom section includes the **About...** button to quickly check the version number and **Review Settings...** which gives you a quick overview of the applied settings and also highlights potential problems with the applied settings.

The individual controls will be explained in the following sections:

Originally Posted by **Exper**
 "Parameter 1: use it to change the value of Parameter 1".



exrTrader 2018

Help...

This opens a panel displaying all variable names as well as containing a short description of all OpenEXR compression modes.

Presets

Using the Presets pop-up you can apply any of your presets, save your current settings as a preset or delete existing presets.

exrTrader has its own system to manage presets. The main reason for developing a custom system was to differentiate between user, global and project (content directory) specific settings.

user presets are stored in the same directory where your LightWave3D configuration files are stored, in a subdirectory called "SimplePresets".

global presets are stored in a directory that is accessible to all users on the current machine (and can be mirrored on a server).

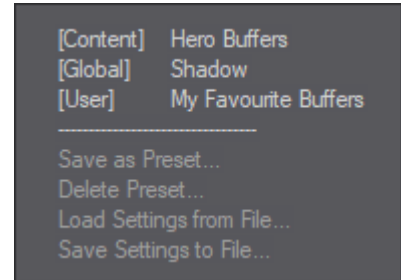
On Windows the location is: %allusersprofile%\Documents\dbw\LightWavePlugins\

On OSX UB it is /Library/Preferences/LightWave3D/SimplePresets/

content presets are stored in the current content directory.

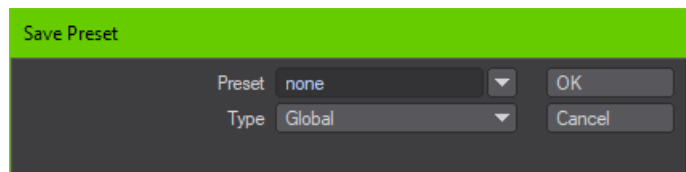
exrTrader supports the concept of **default** presets. If you name a preset "**default**" then it will be loaded automatically if exrTrader is added to a scene.

exrTrader searches for default presets in the **user**, **global** and **content** presets in that order. This means that a default **content** preset overrides a **global** default which in turn has precedence over a **user** preset.



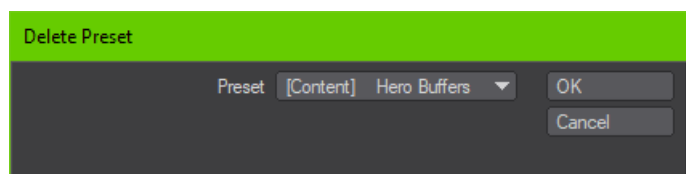
Save as Preset...

This option allows you to save the current exrTrader settings to a preset. Choose any of the three types and enter a name for the preset. You can also use the small pop-up to select any of the currently available preset names.



Delete Preset...

This allows you to select and of the available presets and delete them from the hard drive.



Load Settings from File...

This allows you to load previously saved settings for exrTrader from a file.

Save Settings To File...

This allows you to save the current exrTrader settings to a file.

Custom directories for presets

It is now possible to define user directories to store the presets in. This is done by placing a text file called "SimplePresetPaths.cfg" either into:

- The LightWave/Programs directory
- The directory where the LW settings are located
- and/or the content directory.

The files are read in that order, and preset paths defined in an earlier configuration file can be overwritten.

The text file should be formatted as such

```
# this is just a comment, anything that starts with a # is ignored
# first the name of the path as displayed to the user (without spaces)
# followed by the path
network \\db-w\lightwave\presets
local_temp c:\my_temp_presets
```

The path name is not case sensitive, it will be capitalized automatically. It may not contain spaces though.

You can also overwrite the existing default paths by using **user**, **global** or **content** as path names.

Save in Layout

This setting determines how exrTrader will save images while rendering in Layout. exrTrader will always save images when rendering on lwsn based render nodes.

Always (F9+F10)

Images will always be saved by exrTrader when rendering in Layout.

Only Sequences (F10)

Images will only be saved by exrTrader if the current render is a sequence render (F10)

Never (lwsn only)

exrTrader will never save images when rendering in Layout. However, it will still save when rendering on a, lwsn based, render node.

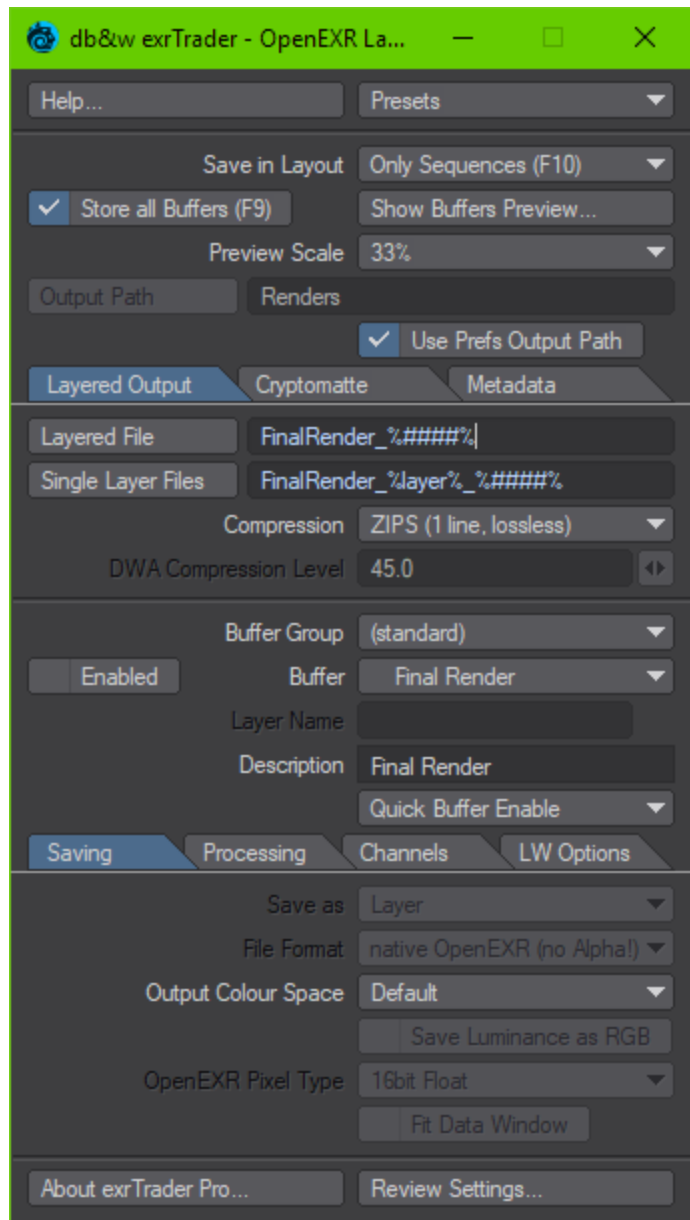
Store all Buffers (F9)

exrTrader can display all buffers using VIPER after an initial render with exrTrader applied to the scene. The amount of memory required depends on the amount of buffers, the image size as well as the Preview Scale.

By default, only the selected buffers are stored in memory for VIPER. If you wish to assess all buffers, this option will request all available buffers from LightWave 3D during a render and store them for the VIPER preview.

This option is only effective for a single frame render (F9), since it can slow down final renders dramatically in some cases.

This setting has no effect while rendering on a render node (lwsn).



exrTrader 2018

Show Buffers Preview...

This button opens or closes the included image viewer. Please have a look at the chapter on Show Buffers Preview to see the possibilities of using the image viewer to preview buffers.

Preview Scale

This percentage defines how much the buffers are scaled down for preview purposes only. Since they will all be stored in memory after render, they can use a few GBs given a large amount of buffers and high render resolution.

Output Path

This defines the base path for all written images. You can either use the path defined by LightWave 3D or select your own.

You can only select an output path if **Use Prefs Render Path** is not activated.

Use Prefs Render Path

If you select this option, exrTrader will use the output file defined in the Lightwave3D render globals.

This option is quite important if used across a render farm in conjunction with the OpenEXR Dummy Saver, described later in this manual.

Layered Output

Layered Output File

This control allows you to select an output file for the buffer saver to write to. The file name extension will be automatically removed, but is then added when saving. exrTrader supports special variables in the path name that will be replaced as the image is being saved.

The currently supported variables are:

%scene%	Name of the current scene, without the .lws extension
%sceneversion%	Version number of the scene (the last number in the scene name)
%dot%	“.” a full stop
%rendertime%	The time taken for the current render in minutes and seconds
%camera%	The name of the current camera
%eye%	“R” or “L” when rendering stereo frames.
%frameheight%	The height of the frame in pixels.
%framewidth%	The width of the frame in pixels.
%fps%	The current frames per second
%time%	The time of the current frame within LightWave in seconds.
%#% - %#####%	The frame number using 1 to 8 digits, zero padded.
%buffer% / %layer%	The current layer name, only valid for Single Layer Files
%cryptoname%	The name of the current Cryptomatte, only valid in the Cryptomatte tab.

You can use the **Review Settings...** option to verify if the file names are created as you'd expect them to be.

Single Layer Files

This control allows you to define the output file names for layers saved as separate files. The options are identical to the **Layered Output File**, the **%buffer% / %layer%** variables contain the name of the current layer.

Compression

OpenEXR support both lossless as well as lossy compression modes. In general, lossless compression modes are preferable for compositing, lossy modes are designed for direct playback.

exrTrader is compiled to support OpenEXR Version 2.2.1, which includes the following compression modes:

- **Uncompressed**
Doesn't compress the data at all, recommended for highest speeds (if the hard drive is fast) - but also uses the most storage space.
- **RLE (lossless)**
Compresses the difference between adjacent pixels. Fast to compress and decompress, but in general only works well for images with large areas of solid colour.
- **ZIPS (1 line, lossless) - default**
This uses a ZIP type compression scheme to compress one scanline at a time. Slow to compress, fast to decompress and also offers a fairly high compression ratio. This is the recommended compression mode for compositing tools like **Nuke** and **Fusion**, both of which may read single scan lines.
- **ZIP (12 line, lossless)**
Just like ZIPS, except that it compresses 16 scanlines in one go. This results in a slightly better compression compared to ZIPS, but also slows down reading single scanlines from an image (as some compositing packages might do in proxy or ROI/DOD mode).
- **PIZ (lossless)**
This is a wavelet based compression scheme that has a compression ratio that is comparable to ZIP(S), but is faster to compress ... on the other hand it is slower to decompress.
- **PXR24 (lossy)**
A wavelet based compression scheme similar to PIZ, 32bit float numbers are cut off to 24bit, loosing 8 bits of precision.
- **B44 (lossy)**
A compression scheme designed for the real-time playback of OpenEXR images with a constant compression ratio.
- **B44A (lossy)**
Just like B44, but solid areas (such as alpha channels) have a better compression ratio.

```
Uncompressed
RLE (lossless)
ZIPS (1 line, lossless)
ZIP (16 line, lossless)
PIZ (lossless)
PXR24 (lossy)
B44 (lossy)
B44A (lossy)
DWAA (32 line, lossy)
DWAB (256 line, lossy)
```

- **DWA A (32 line, lossy)**

- **DWA B (256 line, lossy) ⁴**

- This is a lossy compression scheme that allows you to change the compression quality (similar to JPEG).

- DWA is very fast to decompress and can be used for realtime playback of 2K on most computers.

- DWA only compresses the RGB channels using the lossy scheme and falls back to ZIP for other channels. To be more precise, channels named R, G, B, Y, RY, BY 3) will be compressed using DWA, channels named A will be RLE (lossless) compressed, all others will be ZIP (lossless) compressed.

- DWA A and B differ in that A uses blocks of 32 scanlines and B uses 256 scanlines. A allows for faster reading by applications that don't read the whole image, B allows for higher compression.

- Please Note:** DWA was only added in OpenEXR 2.2. Applications based on older version of OpenEXR will not be able to read files compressed with it.

These are explained in more detail in the Technical Introduction to OpenEXR, available as a PDF at www.openexr.com.⁵

DWA Compression Level

This is a floating point value to set the strength of the (lossy) DWA compression. The control is only available if either DWAA or DWAB are selected as a compression.

The higher the value, the higher the compression. A good range is between 0.0 and 100.0, 45.0 is the default.

⁴ DWA has been created by Karl Rasche and is patented by DreamWorks Animation, but available to use within the OpenEXR standard

⁵ I admit it, I didn't want to copy and paste the section over from the OpenEXR website. The document is highly recommended to understand the capabilities of OpenEXR.



Cryptomatte

Cryptomatte (exrTrader Pro only)

Cryptomattes - originally devised by Jonah Friedman and Andy Jones from psyop - allow you to store automatically generated mattes for all items or surfaces in a single OpenEXR image.

These can then be extracted in a compositing application using freely available plugins.

Cryptomatte in exrTrader Pro allows you so save all Cryptomattes in a single or in separate files.

The levels determine how many different mattes may be stored per single pixel. 6 is usually a sufficient number.

You can also decide if the manifest - the file containing the names of the mattes - is stored embedded in the EXR image or as a separate file.

exrTrader also allows you to select any of the OpenEXR compression types that are compatible with Cryptomatte.

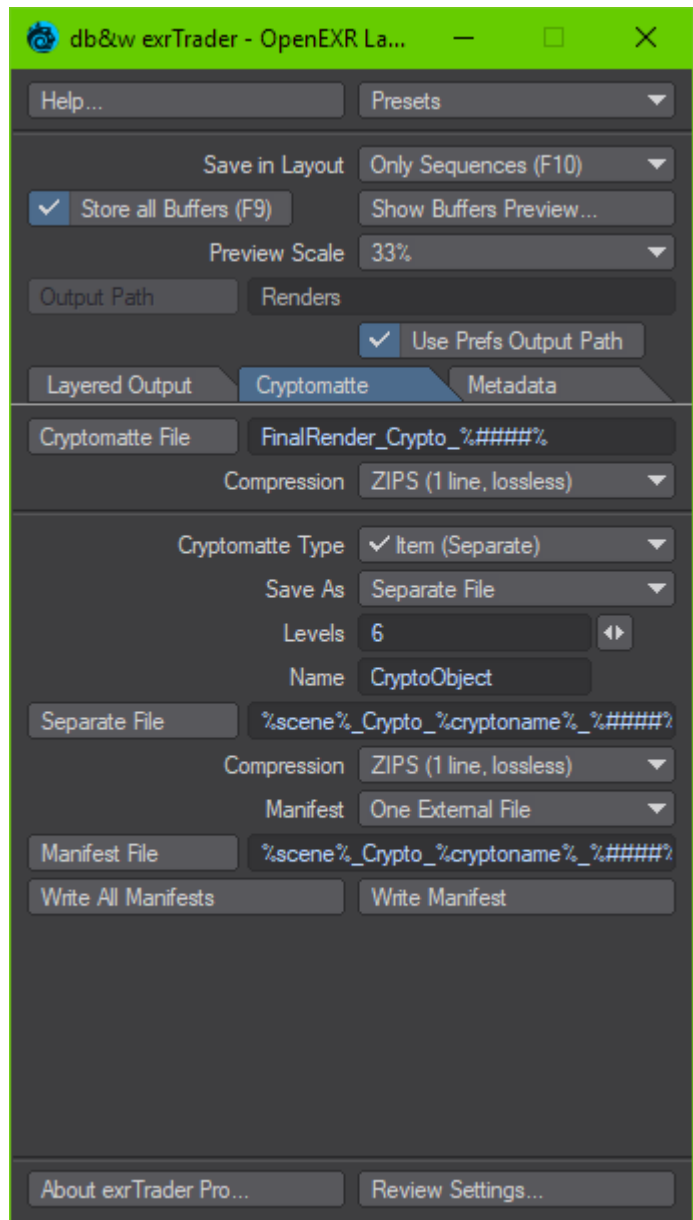
This tab contains all Cryptomatte related functionality and is available with an exrTrader Pro license only.

Limitations

Unfortunately, not all features of LightWave 3D can be used to create Cryptomattes. Currently there are two main limitations to the implementation⁶:

1. The influence of volumetric elements is not seen by the Cryptomattes.
2. Any Reconstruction Filter other than Box as well as any Filter Radius other than 0 is not supported.

While Cryptomattes will be generated with settings other than these, they may not match perfectly.



⁶ We are working with the LightWave 3D developers to see if we can make them work in future versions of LightWave 3D.

Cryptomatte File

This defines the base file for the Cryptomatte export. This is a separate file from the main, layered, export.

It supports the same variables as the **Layered File** control.

Compression

A selection of compression modes to use for the Cryptomatte file.

This selection has been limited to lossless compression modes that will not destroy the Cryptomatte data.

Cryptomatte Type

exrTrader Pro can create three types of Cryptomattes:

Item

This creates one matte per item.

Surface

This creates one matte per surface name. Surfaces on different items with the same name will share a matte.

Hierarchy

This creates a matte for every level in the scene hierarchy.

The settings following the type are used for the currently selected Cryptomatte type only.

Save As

This defines how the current **Cryptomatte Type** will be saved:

(none)

The current Cryptomatte will not be saved at all.

Separate File

The Cryptomatte will be saved as a separate file, defined below.

Cryptomatte Layer

The Cryptomatte will be saved as a layer in the main **Cryptomatte File**

Levels

This settings defines how many different mattes the Cryptomatte will be able to store per pixel. The default of 6 is usually more than enough for most cases, you might want to increase this if you have many different overlapping mattes.

Name

The name of the current layer. This will be used later in the compositing application to select the layer to work with in the extraction plugin.

Separate File

This is the file name if you decide to save the Cryptomatte as a separate file. This supports all the variables.

Compression

This is the compression to use for the separate file, the options are identical to the compression settings for the main Cryptomatte file.

Manifest

The Manifest stores the metadata that allows the extraction plugins in the compositing application to match individual mattes to their names and vice versa. It may be stored within the OpenEXR image, or as a side car file next to it.

You have four options:

(none)

This doesn't store a manifest at all. The Cryptomatte can still be used in compositing but there will be no names available.

Embedded

This embeds the manifest on the OpenEXR image, increasing the file size. However, it does make the OpenEXR image self-contained.

External per Frame

This stores one external .json file containing the manifest per frame. This is written automatically when a Cryptomatte image is written.

One External File

This stores the manifest in a single .json external file, shared by all Cryptomatte images of a rendered image sequence.

This external file needs to be written manually using either the **Write All Manifests** or the **Write Manifest** button.

Manifest File

The file name for an external manifest, used if the manifest is either **External per Frame** or **One External File**.

Write all Manifests

Writes the manifests for all Cryptomatte types that are set to **One External File**.

Write Manifest

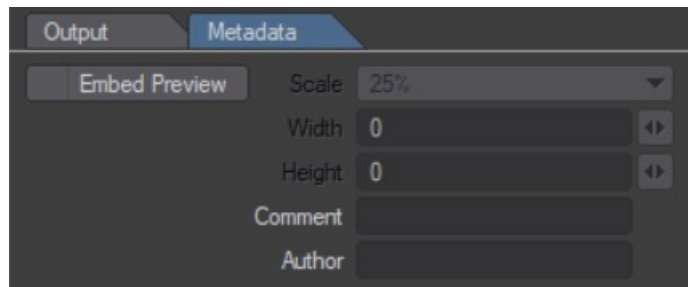
Writes the manifest for the Cryptomatte type if it is set to **One External File**.

Metadata

The metadata section of the interface allows you to store some additional information within your images.

Please feel free to contact us at support@db-w.com if you require other metadata to be stored with your OpenEXR files.

In addition to the metadata exposed by the user interface, exrTrader will also save the information listed in the appendix as metadata in your image files.



Embed Preview

Select this option to save a small preview image within the OpenEXR image files. This will be saved as 8bit data.

Scale / Width / Height

This option defines the scale of the preview image. You may select any of the pre-defined percentages, or Custom Size to manually enter a **Height** and **Width** for the preview image.

Comment

Here you can enter a comment that will be stored within the OpenEXR files saved by exrTrader

Author

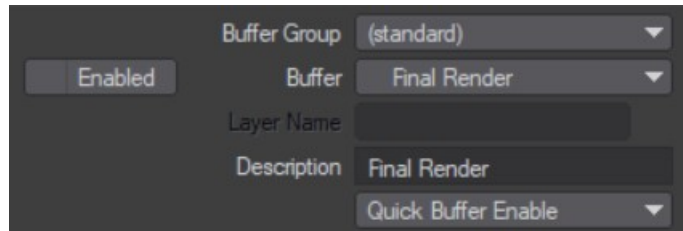
You can use this control to enter the name of the person that created the images rendered with exrTrader in this scene. The name will be stored in the image files as the "owner".

Buffers

This section of the interface allows you to individually select and edit buffers for exporting.

The section above the dividing line allows you to select the available buffers.

The section below the dividing line contains the individual settings for the selected buffer.



Buffer Group

The buffers in LightWave 3D 2018 are set up in groups. Selecting one of them will show a different set of buffers in the following pop-up control.

The following buffer groups are available by default:

- **(standard)** This is a group of the basic buffers the renderer produces.
- **(extra)** These are mainly shading and volumetric related buffers created by the renderer.
- **(custom)** Any custom AOVs added by the user.

Light buffer groups will show up in this pop-up as well.

Buffer

This pop-up displays all buffers currently available to exrTrader via the Lightwave3D SDK.

Buffers that are enabled for export have a check mark in front of them, Buffers that are written to a single file have the text "(image)" behind them.

A list of buffers is available in the appendices.

Enabled

This check box enables the buffer for saving.

Layer Name

This is the base name for the current buffer.

If the buffer is saved as a channel in the main output file, the channels will include this base name as a prefix, i.e. "Specular.Red".

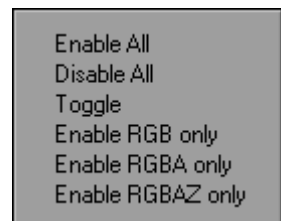
If the buffer is saved as a single image file, the base name will be a part of the image file name if you use the %layer% or %buffer% variable.

Description

A short description of the currently selected buffer is displayed here.

Quick Buffer Enable

This pop-up allows you to quickly enable/disable some of the more commonly used buffers.



Individual Settings for Buffers

The following settings are per buffer, and define how a buffer will be processed by exrTrader.

These are organized into three tabs, Saving, Processing and Channels

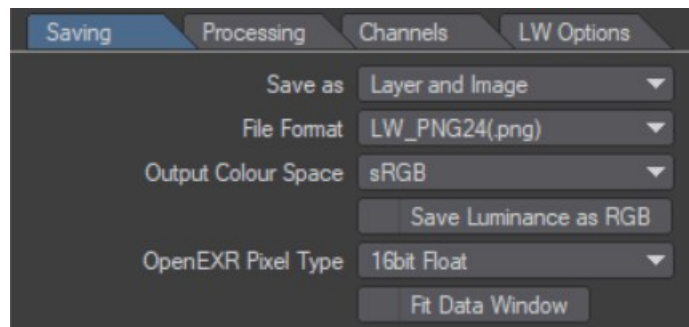
Here you can also name the buffers, specify their pixel type and save them as single image files.

Saving

Save as

Due to popular demand we've extended the ability to save a buffer as a separate image.

A buffer can now be saved as a separate image of any type supported by LightWave 3D, as well as being a part of the main OpenEXR image.



Layer

This option will save the current buffer only as a layer in the main OpenEXR image file.

Layer and Image

This option will save the current buffer as a layer in the current OpenEXR image file and as a separate image file. The file format for the separate file is determined by the **File Format** option.

Layer and Image+Alpha

This option will save the current buffer as a layer in the current OpenEXR image file and as a separate image file including the alpha channel. The file format for the separate file is determined by the **File Format** option.

Image

This option will only save the current buffer as a separate image file. The file format for the separate file is determined by the **File Format** option.

Image+Alpha

This option will only save the current buffer as a separate image file, including the alpha channel. The file format for the separate file is determined by the **File Format** option.

File Format

This pop-up allows you to select the file format used when saving the current buffer as a separate Image (as determined by the **Save as** option).

The **(native OpenEXR)** saver is equivalent to the option **Save as Single Image** in previous releases of exrTrader. It uses the settings for the main OpenEXR file (such as the compression settings) and uses an internal saver as opposed to using the LightWave 3D image plugins.

Please note that the **(native OpenEXR)** saver will not save the additional Alpha channel if you select any of the **Image+Alpha** options.

Output Colour Space

This pop-up allows you to select which colour space the buffer should be converted to prior to saving it as a separate image.

This does not affect the layer as saved in the main OpenEXR image and it is also not available for saving using the native EXR saver.

Default uses the Output Colour Space as defined in the LightWave preferences.

Currently LUTs can not be loaded directly using this pop-up control due to SDK limitations. You can however designate a LUT as the default Output Colour Space in the LightWave preferences.

Save Luminance as RGB

This option is only available when “Save as Single Image File” is activated.

By default exrTrader saves single channel OpenEXR images with a channel names “Y”. As defined in the OpenEXR specifications this is a luminance channel that should be interpreted as greyscale data by reading applications.

Unfortunately this isn't the case, some applications do not handle Y channel only images (or don't handle them well). This option will save the greyscale data as RGB data instead.

This increases the size of the image threefold, but also maximizes compatibility.

OpenEXR Pixel Type

This option allows you to define how the pixels of the current buffer will be saved in the OpenEXR file. OpenEXR allows for all pixel types to co-exist in a single image file.

The Float pixel types allow for HDR buffers to be stored.

Integer is currently of little use with the available buffers. It is designed to be used with precise, discrete values such as object or surface Ids.

We recommend to use 16bit Float for all buffers, except for the Depth buffer which profits greatly from saving it at 32bit Float.

For more colour precision in compositing you can always switch buffers to 32bit float.

Fit Data Window

This option shrinks the data window of the layer to only encompass pixels that actually contain values within the layer.

OpenEXR images use the data window to define a rectangle that actually contains pixel values. This may be smaller than the actual size of the image.

This is basically like saving a limited region of the final image, but computed again every time an image is saved.

If this option is off, then the current layer is not used to compute the data window.

If it is on, then the smallest data window for the current layer is computed. If a multi-layer OpenEXR image is saved, then the data windows of all layers as well as the current limited region settings are used to compute an optimal data window for the image.

If the native OpenEXR saver is used to save the current layer as a separate image, then the data window for the current layer is taken into account as well.

All other image savers ignore it.

This option only slows down saving a little, but can speed up loading the saved OpenEXR files in compositing applications a lot.

Fit Data Window is disabled by default as some applications (notably Photoshop and After Effects) don't load images with a data window properly (they only load an image as large as the data window itself).

If you use a compositing application that supports OpenEXR data windows (such as Fusion, Shake or Nuke), we recommend you to enable the data window for all buffers once and save the setting as a **default** preset.

Processing

Invert

This option will invert the current buffer.

Minimum / Maximum

These two options allow you to change the range of the data saved in the buffer.

For most buffers, the Minimum and the Maximum define the range of values written out that correspond to the range of 0 .. 1.0 the the buffer as passed by LW (or "raw" buffer).

For the Depth buffer, these are handled differently, the Minimum and Maximum define the distances in metres from the camera that correspond to the 0 .. 1.0 range in the written buffer.

Expressed mathematically:

$output = Minimum + buffer * (Maximum - Minimum)$ for all a buffers except Depth

$output = (buffer - Minimum) / (Maximum - Minimum)$ for the Depth buffer

Offset / Scale

Offset and Scale allow further tweaking of the buffer values.

Offset is just added to the buffer values, Scale scales the range of values in the buffer by the entered amount. The Offset is applied before the Scale.

Gamma Correction

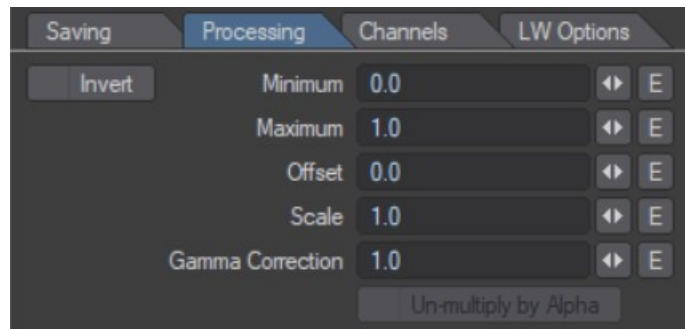
This setting allows you to apply a gamma value to a buffer.

To remove gamma applied to the buffer, enter "1/gamma_value". As an example: 1 / 2.4 = .4167 removes a gamma of 2.4 from the buffer.

Un-multiply by Alpha

This option un-multiplies the current buffer by the alpha channel. This setting is needed for compositing applications that don't support the additive merging of images.

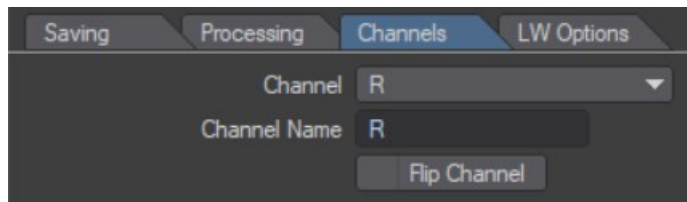
This option is only available for buffers that contain three channels.



Channels

Channel / Channel Name

Since OpenEXR allows for the naming of every channel saved in the file, you can use the **Channel** control to pick a channel, and **Channel Name** to give it a new name.



Channels can be renamed for single channel buffers as well. This was implemented to increase compatibility with Nuke, which expects single channels to be named “A” (mask/alpha) as opposed to “Y” (luminance).

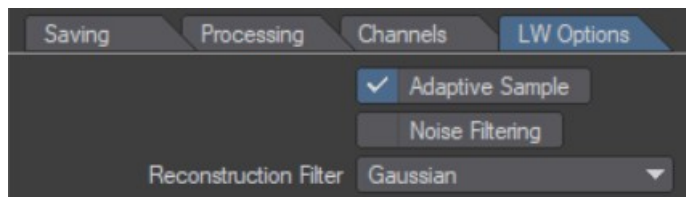
Flip

This is a per channel setting. It will flip the values within the channel around the 0 value. This is different from inverting a channel.

This is designed to flip the X/Y motion channels to match the expectations of different compositing applications.

LW Options

These options allow you to edit the per buffer settings that LightWave provides in the Render Properties/Buffers tab.



These settings are saved by LightWave with the scene and are provided here as well for convenience.

Adaptive Sample

This determines if the buffer is used by adaptive sampling to check if a pixel needs more samples. This is done by comparing the pixel values in the buffers using the Adaptive Sampling Threshold set in the Camera Properties.

Noise Filtering

This will allow the noise filtering in LW to affect this buffer as well. Noise Filtering has to be active in the Render Properties/Render tab as well.

Reconstruction Filter

This allows you to pick a different reconstruction filter on a per buffer basis

Review Settings...

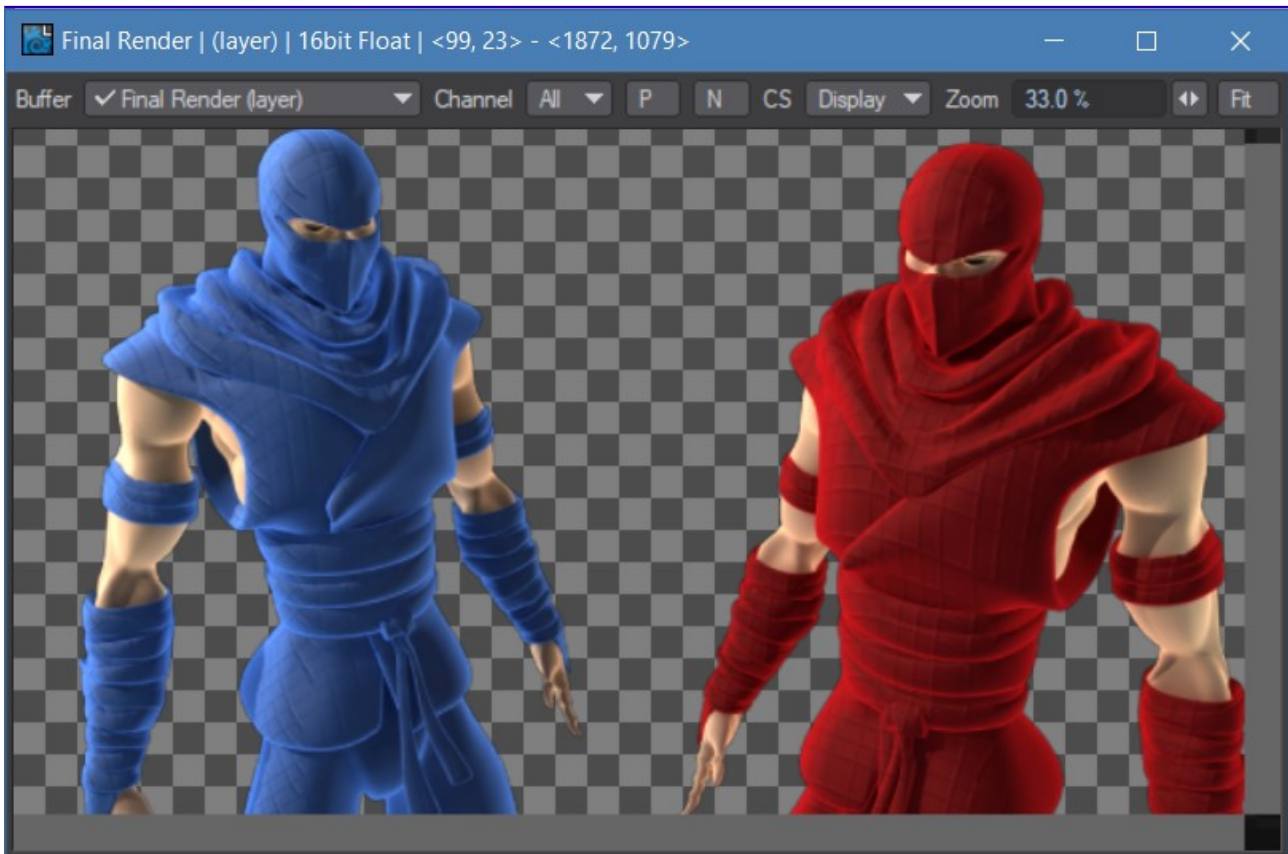
This option will show you a window with a summary of all buffers that are being saved out. Any potential errors will be highlighted in red.

Review Settings tries to cover all potential issues when saving an image. It may not succeed in all cases, though.

If it reports no error, and you still have problems saving, please create a preset of the settings and mail them to us at support@db-w.com, we will update Review Settings to catch those issues as well.

About exrTrader...

This shows the about box of exrTrader, including the version you are using.



blue_red_ninja.lws by William Vaughan

Show Buffers Preview (Image Viewer)

VIPER, which was used by exrTrader to preview buffers, has been removed from LightWave 3D. This is why we added a custom viewer for rendered buffers.

Title Bar

The title bar of the window displays:

- The name of the current buffer
- The way it is saved
- The pixel data type (when saved as an OpenEXR image)
- The extent of the data window of the current buffer
- The values of a picked pixel if the user has clicked on the image

Toolbar

Buffer

Selects a different buffer to view.

Channel

Selects a single channel, or all channels, to view.

P

Toggles the processing of the buffer. This uses the settings of the processing tab of the buffer.

N

Normalises the view. Basically this makes sure that the pixel values within the image are completely distributed in the visible range.

CS

Allows the selection of a different colour space. By default, the Display colour space is used.

Zoom

Changes the zoom factor of the image

Fit

Toggles automatic fitting of the image to the viewer. Even if the window is resized. The image will be made to fit proportionally, leaving blank space if required.

Navigation

Keyboard Shortcuts

F1	Displays the help window
↑ / ↓	Previous / next buffer
alt-LMB, MMB	Pan the image
ctrl-LMB, <Scrollwheel>	Zoom
+, -	Zoom in / out
0	Reset the Zoom to 100%
f	Toggle fitting the image to the view
r,g,b,a	Only display the respective channel
c	Display all channels
n	Normalise the view
x	Toggle transparency
p	Toggle processing
LMB	Display the colour values of the pixel under the mouse in the title bar

Basic OpenEXR Loader and Saver Plugins

exrTrader includes basic LightWave image loader and saver plugins that allow you to load and save OpenEXR images in any part of LightWave that loads and saves images.

These are included in exrTrader for free, and may be used freely without registering exrTrader.

To change the settings for the OpenEXR Saver, we've included a Layout Master plugin that can be saved with any scene to change the saving options.

OpenEXR Settings

OpenEXR Settings is a Scene Master plugin that gets saved with a Lightwave3D scene.

It allows you to control the settings used by the OpenEXR saver, since a Lightwave3D image saver does not have a way to display an options panel.

The available settings are:



Compression

This defines the compression method used by the saver. Please refer to the section on the layered saver for details.

DWA Compression Level

Only available if the **Compression** is set to DWAA/DWAB. Please refer to the section about the layered saver for details.

Pixel Format

The defines the pixel format for saving. Again, please refer to the previous Pixel Format documentation for details.

Special Plugins

OpenEXR Dummy Saver

The dummy saver has been designed to be used in conjunction with the exrTrader Buffer saver and third party render controllers that check render jobs for successfully rendered frames.

It doesn't save any image data, but allows a render controller to retrieve the output file path and extension from a Lightwave3D scene. If the scene only saves image data from the exrTrader Layered Export the render controller will still be able to check for rendered frames.

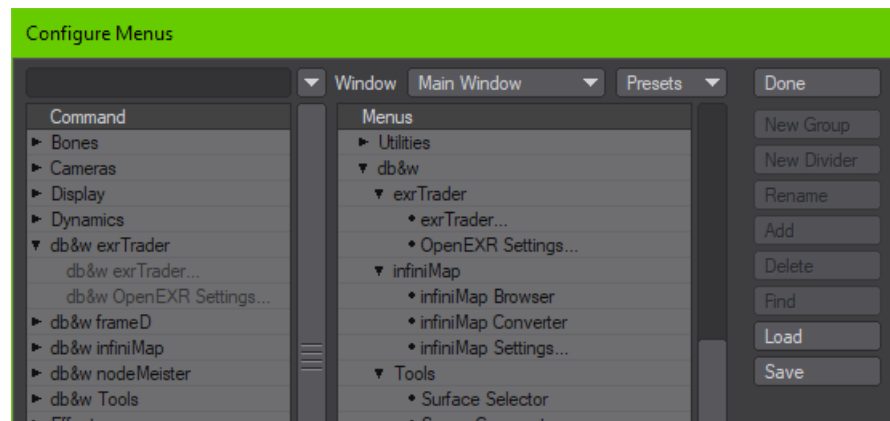
To use it, use the OpenEXR Dummy(.exr) image saver as the RGB Files saver in the render globals, make sure that "Use Render Path" is activated in exrTrader, and that the Format option of exrTrader matches the Format option in the Lightwave3D render globals.

exrTrader...

This is a Generic Layout Plugin that has been designed to be assigned to a short cut, or added to a menu.

It will first check if exrTrader Layered Export is assigned to the current scene as an Image Filter. If not, exrTrader will be added.

Then it will open the user interface of the exrTrader Layered Export attached to the current scene.



OpenEXR Settings...

This is a Generic Layout Plugin that has been designed to be assigned to a short cut, or added to a menu.

It will first check if OpenEXR Settings is assigned to the current scene as a Scene Master. If not, OpenEXR Settings will be added.

Then it will open the user interface of the OpenEXR Settings attached to the current scene.

Appendices

Notes about Buffers

LightWave 2018 comes with a massive change in buffer management. Previously, there was a fixed set of buffers. as of LightWave 2018, the amount of buffers can vary since both materials as well as the user can add buffers if needed.

exrTrader 2018 will build a list of available buffer on the fly. It also tries to name the corresponding OpenEXR layers and channels as smartly as possible. Both the layer names and channel names can be changed at any time.

Please refer to the LightWave documentation for a full list of buffers supplied by LightWave.

Some buffers will get special treatment by exrTrader 2018:

Buffer Name	Description	Channels ⁷
Final Render	This buffer contains the final, rendered image. This is identical to the image save by using the LightWave 3D render globals.	RGBA
Special	<p>The special buffer is quite ... “special” indeed⁸. In the surface editor, under the Advanced tab, there is a button to edit the Special Buffers. LightWave 3D provides 4 of them. These are applied on a surface by surface basis. A value of 0.0 in a special buffer is equivalent to black, 1.0 is white (values can go beyond those limit as they are stored in float/HDR buffers). The tricky bit is the fact that image filters can only read one of these special buffers. Which one depends on the location of the image filter plugin in the list of applied image filters in the Processing tab of the Effects panel in LightWave 3D. The first image filter in the list will only be able to read special buffer #1, the second image filter can only read special buffer #2, the third one bufer #3 and the fourth one only buffer #4. All image filters beyond that only have access to special buffer #4. Practically this means that exrTrader will need to be applied four times as an image filter to the list to be able to access all four special buffers. In this case we'd recommend using the first instance of exrTrader in the list to save all the other buffers as well, and only use the slots 2-4 to save the special buffers – to separate image files. Please note, given the AOVs in LightWave 2018, this buffer is essentially obsolete nowadays.</p>	Y
Depth	<p>This buffer stores the distance of a surface from the camera. Due to the fact that the depth is stored as a proper float image and the pixels represent the distance to the camera in metres, there's a few facts to remember. The first image to the right shows the normalized depth buffer for the sample render. There isn't much to see because the top of the image is the backdrop. In LightWave the backdrop is always rendered at an infinite distance⁹. A normalized view looks at the highest and the lowest value in an image</p>	Y

⁷ RGBA are four float channels, RGB/XYZ three, XY/UV two, Y is one float channel. I is a single luminance channel

⁸ Yes, sorry, I couldn't resist.

⁹ Well, not really infinite... but very, very, very far away.

	<p>and then tries to display anything between them in the visible range from 0.0 to 1.0. In this case the backdrop compressed to be at 1.0, and all other values are compressed respectively. This means that the actual items are relatively close to the camera (at least in relation to the backdrop) and thus displayed as being black (which corresponds of a distance of 0, or something very close to it).</p> <p>If you intend to composite in an application that handles float images (and the tools that are used to actually work with a float depth buffer) then there should be no need to change anything.</p> <p>If you intend to save the depth buffer as a low dynamic range image then you can use the Minimum and Maximum settings to define a range which should be normalized into the visible range.</p>	
<p>Motion</p>	<p>This buffer stores the motion of a pixel during the current frame in screen space. The motion is encoded in the R and B channel.</p> <p>Since LightWave 3D creates float channels, the values represent the movement in pixels. This implies that the values may actually be negative as well, depending on the direction of movement.</p> <p>If the compositing package can deal with floating point motion buffers this is the best way to export them.</p> <p>Some plugins require the motion vectors to be normalized into values from 0.0 to 1.0, where 0.5 is equivalent to no motion at all.</p> <p>The Offset and Scale processing options allow you to change the motion buffer to be acceptable by such plugins¹⁰ - as a downside one needs to estimate how far the any of the pixels actually travel (in pixels) – or use an arbitrary value, such as the largest dimension of the image in pixels.</p> <p>As an example, using 1920 as the largest distance an pixel could travel: The Offset would need to be 1920 - to basically push the negative values into the positive range. The Scale would need to be $1 / (1920 * 2)$ (roughly 0.00026) – to compress the values into a range from 0 to 1.0.</p>	<p>XY</p>
<p>Surface ID</p>	<p>This buffer contains a unique number for every surface in the scene. To get a better view on the values stored in this buffer you should normalize the preview.</p>	<p>ID</p>
<p>Object ID</p>	<p>This buffer contains a unique number for every object in the scene. To get a better view on the values stored in this buffer you should normalize the preview.</p>	<p>ID</p>

¹⁰ However, you may be able to edit it in your compositing package prior to sending it to those plugins as well. This would be a little less dangerous and more flexible.

Network Rendering

exrTrader is ScreamerNet compatible and allows for network renders. You can install the plugin on any render node and it will render as expected. It has been tested with a variety of third party render controllers, including Butterfly NetRender and Spider.

The OpenEXR Dummy Saver has been designed to allow render controllers to check for saved frames from rendered scenes, even if only the exrTrader Layered Export is actually writing frames.

Third party LightWave 3D plugins with exrTrader support

The following plugins for LightWave 3D support exrTrader natively:

ButterFlyNetRender ButterFlyNetRender is a network render controller.
<http://www.liquiddreamsolutions.com/>

OD überPäss Passes, States and much more for LightWave 3D.
<http://www.origamidigital.com/odtoolsOrder.html>

OpenEXR support in third party applications

Here is a short list of third party applications, mainly compositing applications, and a summary of their ability to read OpenEXR:

Blackmagic Fusion 9.x	Reads RGBA and “deep” channels, R, G, B, A, Z, pixelCover, objectID, materialID, U, V, NX, NY, NZ, veIX, veIY Any channel of the file may be assigned to any of the deep channels used by Fusion. Fusion is available for free at http://www.blackmagic-design.com (also for commercial use) and highly recommended by us.
Nuke	Extended OpenEXR support, reads up to 64 arbitrary channels of an OpenEXR file, supports layers/grouped channels. Single channel buffers should be saved using “A” as the channel name, Nuke will then interpret them as masks and read them properly. You can use the layer name to differentiate between different buffers.
Blender	Supports OpenEXR images with arbitrary channels for compositing.
After Effects CC	Includes advanced support for OpenEXR due to the inclusion of plugins from http://www.fnordware.com/
PhotoShop CC	Uses the same loader as After Effects 7, so basic RGBA support only. Advanced support for OpenEXR is available from http://www.fnordware.com/ProEXR/ http://www.exr-io.com/ Provides an alternative loader that seems more modern and is free as well.
Affinity Photo	Ships with very good native OpenEXR support.

Older Applications

Digital Fusion 4	Reads RGBA only.
Fusion 5+	Reads RGBA and “deep” channels, R, G, B, A, Z, pixelCover, objectID, materialID, U, V, NX, NY, NZ, veIX, veIY Any channel of the file may be assigned to any of the deep channels used by Fusion 5. A channel may only be assigned once in version 5.01 or earlier of Fusion.As far as we’re aware it only reads RGBA, but allows the user to define which channels of the source file to use

Shake 4	As far as we're aware it only reads RGBA, but allows the user to define which channels of the source file to use
After Effects 7-CS3	Basic RGBA support Advanced support for OpenEXR is available from http://www.fnordware.com/ProEXR/
After Effects CS4	Includes advanced support for OpenEXR due to the inclusion of plugins from http://www.fnordware.com/
Combustion 4	Basic RGBA support
Toxic	Only handles RGBA buffers, but allows the user to pick which OpenEXR buffers are loaded into the RGBA channels.

LScript

The following commands can be issued from LScript or as a LightWave command:

Generic_Open_exrTrader – Applies the exrTrader Image Filter (if needed) and opens the user interface

Generic_Open_OpenEXRSettings - Applies the OpenEXR Settings Master Handler (if needed) and opens the user interface

Recommended Reading

The OpenEXR website at www.openexr.com is packed with information about the OpenEXR image file format.

We recommend downloading the “Technical Introduction to OpenEXR” PDF and at least having a quick look at it. We believe it explains some of the reasoning behind the design of exrTrader, and also give a great introduction to the capabilities of the image file format.

Further information on Cryptomattes is available at <https://github.com/Psyop/Cryptomatte>, this also includes links to all available plugins for compositing.

Supported Metadata

LightWave 3D can read and write metadata embedded in images as of version 9.5

exrTrader supports all of the metadata provided by LightWave 3D when using the exrTrader image loader and saver, the exrTrader image filter supports a selection of metadata.

The metadata written by the exrTrader image saver is provided by LightWave 3D. The metadata written by the image filter is generated by exrTrader.

The following two tables list the metadata tags as documented in the LightWave 3D SDK, their content and the equivalent attribute as saved and loaded by exrTrader.

The metadata supported by LightWave mirrors EXIF tags which have been designed for digital photography. Tags that don't apply to OpenEXR images have been omitted.

Basic Metadata

LightWave metadata tag	Description	OpenEXR Attribute	Written by exrTrader image filter
LWIMPAR_ASPECT	x / y Pixel Aspect.	native	✓
LWIMPAR_PIXELWIDTH	Actual (scanned)Pixel Width in (mm).	xDensity	✓
LWIMPAR_FRAMESPERSECOND	Number Of Frames Per Second.	FramesPerSecond	✓
LWIMPAR_BLACKPOINT	Black Point Of Layer.		
LWIMPAR_WHITEPOINT	White Point Of Layer.	WhiteLuminance	✓
LWIMPAR_GAMMA	Linearity Of RGB Color.	always 1 ¹¹	
LWIMPAR_PIXELXDIMENSION	Valid image width.	native	✓
LWIMPAR_PIXELYDIMENSION	Valid image height.	native	✓
LWIMPAR_EXPOSURETIME	Exposure time (reciprocal of shutter speed). Unit is seconds.	ExpTime	✓
LWIMPAR_FNUMBER	The actual F-number(F-stop) of lens when the image was taken.	Aperture	✓
LWIMPAR_ISOSPEEDRATINGS	CCD sensitivity equivalent to Ag-Hr film speedrate. (int)	IsoSpeed	✓
LWIMPAR_DATETIMEORIGINAL	Date/Time of original image taken. This value should not be modified by user program.	CapDate	✓

¹¹ According to the specs, OpenEXR stores linear images only-

LightWave metadata tag	Description	OpenEXR Attribute	Written by exrTrader image filter
LWIMPAR_FOCALLENGTH	Focal length of lens used to take image. Unit is millimeter.	FocalLength	✓
LWIMPAR_MAKERNOTE	Maker dependent internal data. Some of maker such as Olympus/Nikon/Sanyo etc. uses IFD format for this area.	See table of Maker Metadata	✓
LWIMPAR_USERCOMMENT	Stores user comment.	Comment	✓ editable
LWIMPAR_APERTUREVALUE	The actual aperture value of lens when the image was taken. To convert this value to ordinary F-number (F-stop), calculate this value's power of root 2 (=1.4142). For example, if value is '5', F-number is $1.4142^5 = F5.6$.	Aperture	✓
LWIMPAR_SUBJECTDISTANCE	Distance to focus point, unit is meter.	Focus	✓
LWIMPAR_MAKE	Manufacturer of recording equipment.	Make	✓
LWIMPAR_MODEL	Model name or model number of recording equipment.	Model	✓
LWIMPAR_SOFTWARE	Name and version of the software used.	Software	✓
n/a	Name of the computer that has written the image ¹²	ComputerName	✓
n/a	Timezone offset for the capture date ¹³	UtcOffset	✓
n/a	Username	Owner	✓

¹² Not available on OSX

¹³ Unfortunately also not available on OSX

Maker Metadata			
LightWave metadata tag	Description	OpenEXR Attribute	Written by exrTrader image filter
LWMN_COMPANYNAME	Company Name	LW.Company	✓
LWMN_FRAMENUMBER	Current frame number	LW.FrameNumber	✓
LWMN_FIRSTFRAME	First frame number	LW.FirstFrame	✓
LWMN_LASTFRAME	Last frame number	LW.LastFrame	✓
LWMN_RENDERTIME	Render time	LW.Rendertime	✓
LWMN_CAMERANAME	Camera Name	LW.CameraName	✓
LWMN_CAMERATYPE	Camera Type	LW.CameraType	✓
LWMN_ANTIALIASING	Antialiasing	LW.AA	✓
LWMN_LENS	Camera lens name	LW.Lens	
LWMN_PARTICLEBLUR	Particle blur On/Off	LW.ParticleBlur	✓
LWMN_MOTIONBLURTYPE	Motion blur type	LW.MBType	✓
LWMN_MOTIONBLURAMOUNT	Motion blur amount	LW.MBAmount	✓
LWMN_MOTIONBLURPASSES	Motion blur passes	LW.MBPasses	✓
LWMN_TOTALPOINTS	Total points	LW.TotalPoints	✓
LWMN_TOTALPOLYGONS	Total polygons	LW.TotalPolygons	✓
LWMN_TOTALMEMORY	Total memory	LW.TotalMemory	
LWMN_FRAMESTEP	Frame step	LW.Framestep	✓
LWMN_RECONSTRUCTIONFILTER	Reconstruction filter	LW.AAFilter	✓
LWMN_FIELDRENDERING	Field rendering	LW.FieldRendering	✓
LWMN_RTREFLECTIONS	RT reflections	LW.RTReflections	✓
LWMN_ADAPTIVESAMPLING	Adaptive sampling	LW.AdaptiveSampling	✓
LWMN_STEREORENDER	Stereo render	LW.Stereo	✓
LWMN_RTREFRACTIONS	RT refractions	LW.RTRefractions	✓

LightWave metadata tag	Description	OpenEXR Attribute	Written by exrTrader image filter
LWMN_RADIOSITY	Radiosity	LW.Radiosity	✓
LWMN_RTTRANSPARENCY	RT transparency	LW.RTTtransparency	✓
LWMN_CAUSTICS	Caustics	LW.Caustics	✓
LWMN_RENDERTHREADS	Render threads	LW.RenderThreads	✓
LWMN_DEPTHOFFIELD	Depth of field	LW.DepthOfField	✓
LWMN_OUTPUTFILES	Output files	LW.OutputFiles	