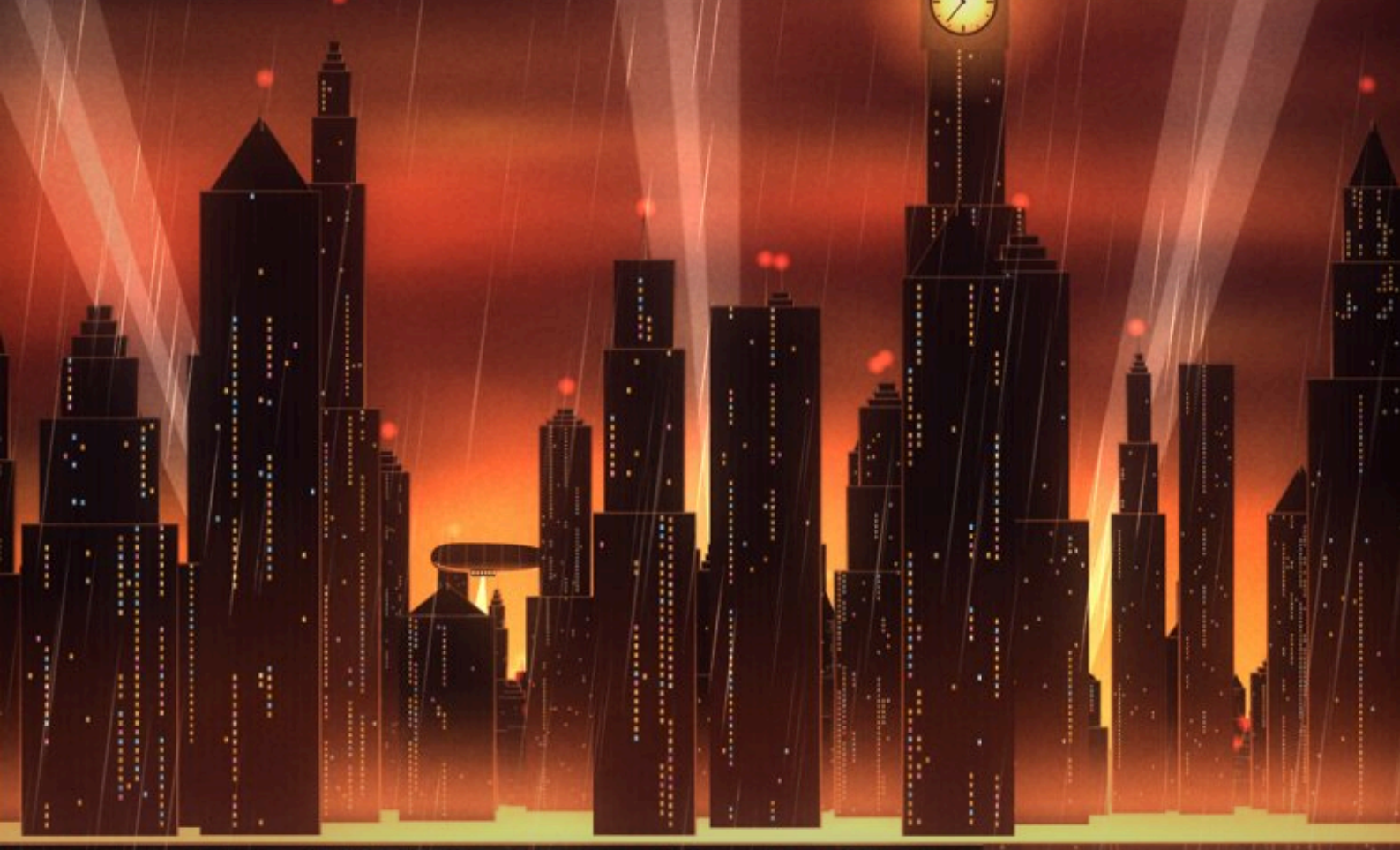


THE FULL GUIDE · NOIR

Claude drew every frame.

The rainy amber city in my reel is not a video model and not an animator. Claude wrote JavaScript that paints each frame on a canvas, then Chrome and ffmpeg turned those frames into an MP4. This is how it was made, with the real brief, the real code and the parts that still look off.

CREATOR	MODEL	CREDITS FOR THE ANIMATION
@by.jadla	Claude Opus 5.5 · Claude Code	0

What is code, what is AI

OVERVIEW

The caption says it and so does this guide: the animation is code, the talking head is not. Here is the honest split.

City animation	Drawn by Claude in JavaScript on an HTML canvas. Five clips, 24 fps, no image or video model involved.
Reference cards	Four stills from the 1941 Fleischer *Superman* cartoon (public domain), shown as cards that Claude's code animates.
Voice	AI. A clone of my own voice in ElevenLabs.
Lip sync	AI. An older real take of me, re-synced to the voice with sync-lipsync 1.9 on fal (0.69 $ for 37.6 s).
Edit	After Effects: captions, cuts, sound effects.

What I used for the animation

- **Claude Code** with **Opus 5.5**. My run was on medium effort.
- **Google Chrome**, already installed, driven by **puppeteer-core** to render frame by frame.
- **ffmpeg** to encode the frames to H.264.
- **Four reference images** and a written brief. That is all the input there was.

> **Be honest about one detail.** In the reel I say "load the skill, effort on high". That is how I would run it now. The run behind this city used a written brief instead of a skill, on medium effort. The skill in this download is that brief and method, turned into something you can load.

1 Pick a style and four references

REFERENCES

Claude copies a look far better than it invents one. I chose what I call Dark Deco: the painted night backgrounds of 1940s Fleischer cartoons and 90s animated noir. These are the four references shown in the reel.



Stills from *Superman* (1941), Fleischer Studios, public domain in the US. Source: Wikimedia Commons, file "Superman (1941).webm", at 1:59, 5:54, 1:57 and 4:00.

Turn the references into rules

Before any code, write down what the references do. Mine came down to three lines, and they ended up in the voiceover:

- **Black first.** Paint on black. Buildings are near-black silhouettes, never grey boxes.
- **Light second.** Colour only comes from light: amber glow on the horizon, searchlights, lit windows.
- **Windows carry the buildings.** Small hard rectangles of light in irregular vertical rows. They tell you the size and shape of a tower.

I also studied Hugh Ferriss drawings for this look. I do not show them anywhere, because their copyright status in the EU is unclear. Check the rights of every reference you put on screen.

2 Write the brief

CLAUDE CODE · PROMPT

This is the brief my run started from. I wrote it in German; below is a direct translation. I only removed my folder paths. The timings come from the voiceover, so each clip is exactly as long as its sentence.

THE BRIEF, AS IT WAS SENT

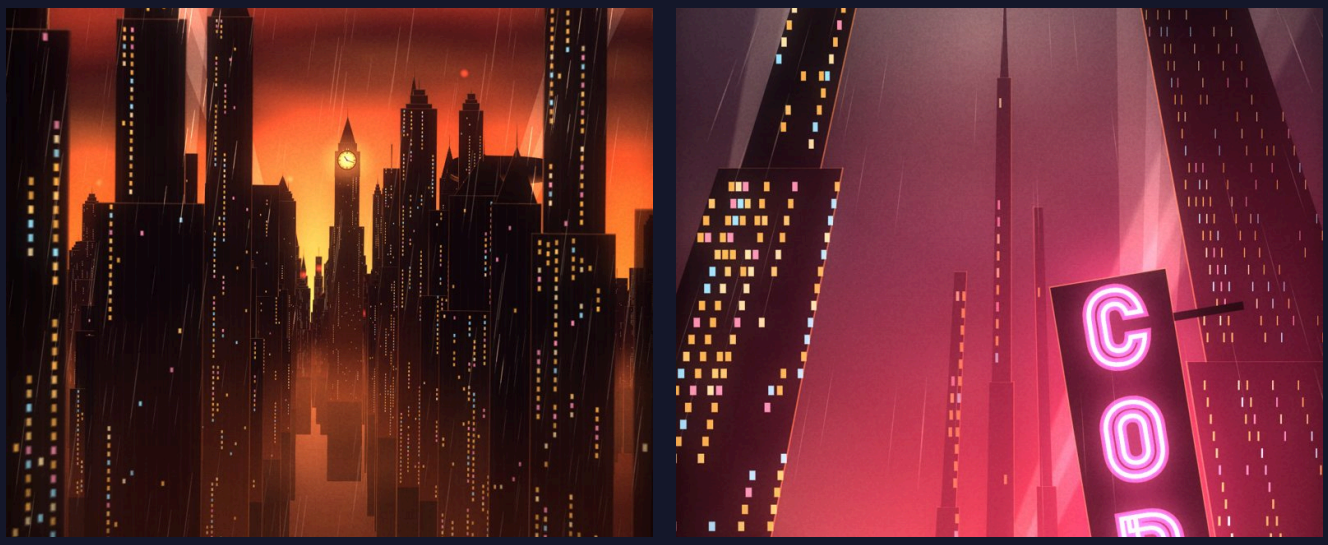
```
Build Dark Deco animations for the by.jadla post "Claude drew it". 0 credits, code only.
Timeline: the voiceover file and its alignment.json (48.1 s).
Base: style test 1 Dark Deco (piece.html, render.mjs, refs).
Important: the hook says "Claude drew it, frame by frame", so EVERY image in these clips is drawn by
Claude in code (canvas/SVG). No AI image, no photos.
Build (1080x1920, 24 fps, no sound, lengths exactly from alignment.json):
 A) 0.0–7.0 s hook: BRIGHT and moving from frame 0 (no black!), camera flight through an amber city
at night, rain, zeppelin with a light cone, clock tower.
 B) 7.0–11.4 s searchlights cross in the fog, a neon sign switches on.
 C) 15.0–19.8 s three quick style examples, about 1.6 s each (ukiyo-e, woodcut, constructivism).
Reuse the code from tests 2/3/4, same motif.
 D) 41.0–45.2 s "finished animation" full frame: the best Dark Deco image, an elevated train rushes
past, rain mirrors the skyline.
 E) top half for the split 20.9–25.6 s: the 4 reference images as cards (only public-domain
Fleischer refs).
Look: Dark Deco = painted Fleischer / animated-noir backgrounds. Black first, light second, windows
carry the buildings, amber/red. Smooth motion, motion blur, no clip art. Before rendering, put a
reference still next to your own frame and compare them yourself.
At the end: one contact sheet of all clips. Say honestly what does not look good.
```

The last two lines matter most. Asking Claude to compare its frame with a reference and to name what is still weak is what makes it fix things on its own.

3 How the code draws a city

DD.JS · CANVAS

Everything lives in one HTML page and one script, **dd.js** (297 lines). The page exposes a single function, **render(f)**, that draws frame number f. Same f in, same picture out, so any frame can be rendered or re-checked on its own.



Left: frame 0 of clip A, already bright and moving. Right: clip B, the neon sign switching on letter by letter.

- **A simple 3D camera.** A pinhole projection with pitch and roll. Towers are flat cards placed in depth, so the camera can fly between them like a multiplane shot.
- **Towers are painted once.** Each building is drawn into its own texture: stepped silhouette, a spire or mast, a rim of orange light on the side facing the glow, and lit windows. Per frame the code only places those textures.
- **Haze by distance.** A second copy of every tower in the colour of the air fades in the further away it stands.
- **Small live details.** Clock hands, blinking red tip lights, rain streaks, searchlight beams and the zeppelin's cone are drawn fresh every frame.

One honest fix: for clip B (looking straight up), the 3D cards looked wrong at a steep angle, like two crooked blades. Claude rebuilt that shot as a flat 2D view with a vanishing point instead.

4 Motion blur, glow and grain

RENDER

A clean canvas looks like a vector graphic. Three cheap tricks make it feel filmed and painted. This is the real render function from the project:

RENDER(F), FROM DD.JS

```
function render(f){const
K=CFG.K,sh=CFG.sh;OX.setTransform(1,0,0,1,0,0);OX.globalCompositeOperation='source-over';
  for(let k=0;k<K;k++){const tk=Math.max(0,(f+
((k+.5)/K-.5)*sh)/FPS);render0(()⇒SCN.draw(X,tk));OX.globalAlpha=1/(k+1);OX.drawImage(WK,0,0)}
  OX.globalAlpha=1;post(OX,f,...)}
```

- **Motion blur.** Each frame is drawn 4 to 6 times at slightly different moments inside half a frame, and the results are averaged. Moving lights smear the way they do on film.
- **Bloom.** The frame is shrunk to 1/6 and 1/16 size, blurred, and added back on top. Windows and beams start to glow.
- **Grain and paper.** Four noise textures alternate per frame, plus a faint paper texture and a vignette.

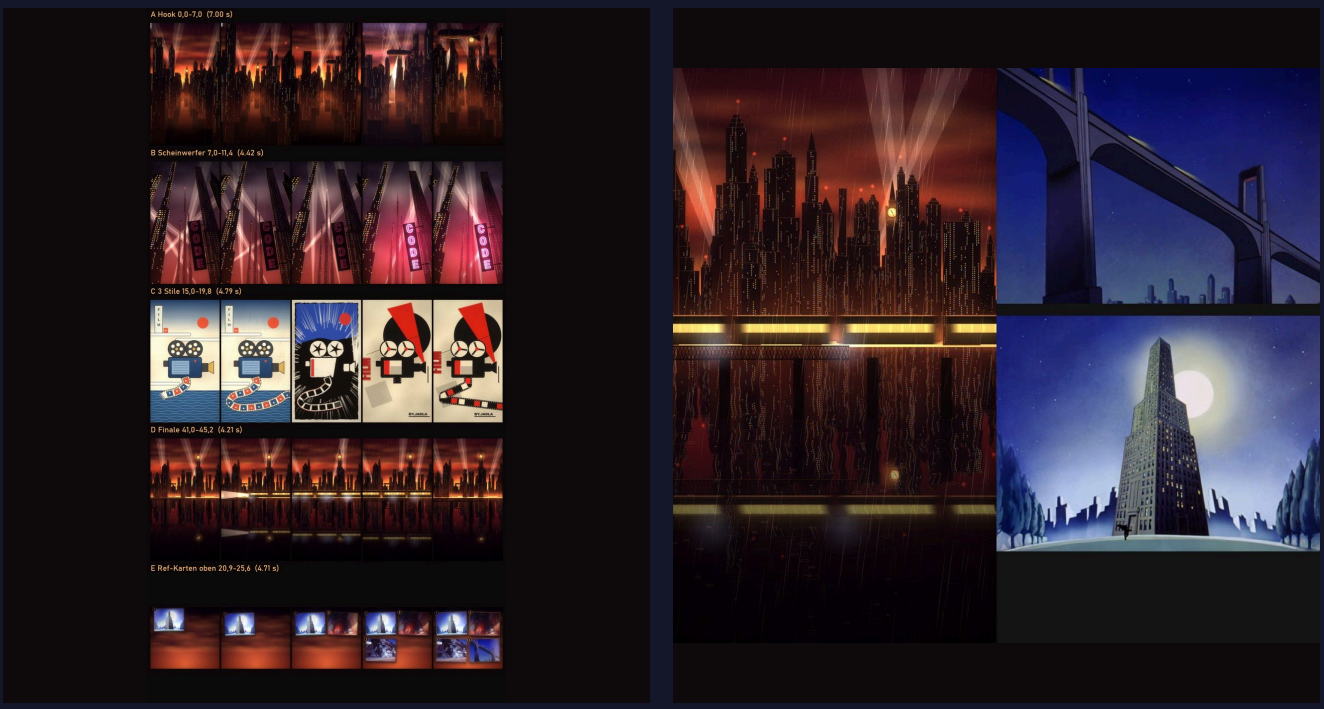
From canvas to MP4

A small Node script opens the page in the Chrome that is already installed (puppeteer-core), calls render(f) for every frame, and pipes the PNGs straight into ffmpeg (libx264, CRF 16). Clip A is 168 frames. No GPU, no cloud, no credits.

5 Let it check itself

CONTACT SHEET

Claude cannot watch a video, but it can look at pictures. So every clip becomes one contact sheet: five frames per clip in a row. It looks at the sheet, compares it with a reference still and fixes what is off before the final render.



Left: the real contact sheet of all five clips. Right: clip D next to two Fleischer stills, the comparison Claude made before rendering.

What it said was still weak

I asked for honesty and got it. These notes are from the end of the run, and I agree with them:

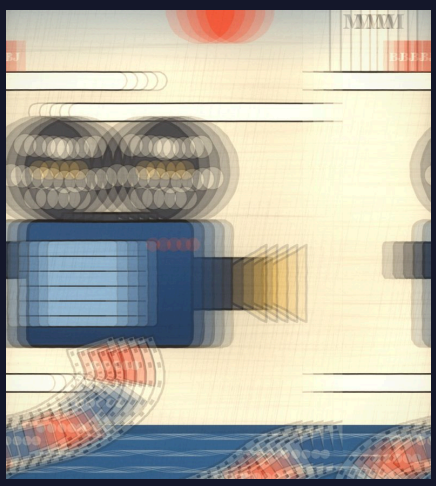
- The city in clip A is a bit too busy and brownish. Fleischer used fewer, bigger shapes.
- The train in clip D is very simple: a box with a band of windows.
- Clouds and fog look more like airbrush blobs than painted sky.

The five clips

SHOT LIST

All clips 1080 wide, 24 fps, no sound. Their lengths come straight from the voiceover timing.

A · 0.0–7.0 s	Hook, 168 frames. Multiplane flight through the city, zeppelin with light cone, clock tower, lightning on the word "Claude". Bright from frame 0.
B · 7.0–11.4 s	106 frames. Searchlights cross in the fog, the neon word CODE switches on letter by letter.
C · 15.0–19.8 s	115 frames. Three style tests (ukiyo-e, woodcut, constructivism) with a whip pan between them.
D · 41.0–45.2 s	101 frames. Skyline on the water, every building mirrored with ripples, an elevated train on a lattice bridge.
E · 20.9–25.6 s	113 frames, 1080×960, the top half of the split screen. The four reference stills fly in as cards.


A at 4.74 s (the lightning), C (one of the style tests), D.

Use the skill

DARK-DECO-MOTION

Next to this PDF you get **dark-deco-motion.zip** (byjadla.com/free/dark-deco-motion.zip). It is a Claude skill I wrote from this exact run: the style rules, the render(f) structure, motion blur and bloom, the render script and the contact-sheet check.

Install

- Unzip it into your Claude skills folder, so you have **~/.claude/skills/dark-deco-motion/SKILL.md**.
- You need Node.js, ffmpeg and Chrome or Edge on your machine. Claude sets up a work folder and installs puppeteer-core there.
- Open Claude Code, pick Opus, set effort to high.

A STARTING PROMPT (TEMPLATE, FILL THE BRACKETS)

```
Use the dark-deco-motion skill. Here are four reference images of the look I want.
Make a [15]-second [9:16] animation about [your topic]. Every frame drawn in code, no image or video model.
First write the style rules you see in my references, then the shot list. Show me stills of every shot next to a reference before the full render, and tell me honestly what still looks off.
```

Where the idea comes from

The format of my reel follows **@buck.the.aikami** and his reel "Claude drew every frame" (instagram.com/reel/DeZ3P_8NeHT). He made a general skill called **motion-studio-by-buck** that does this for any style. It is his work, so I do not pass it on here. Get it from the guide in his reel.

NOW MAKE YOUR OWN

Four references. One brief.

Pick a look you love, write down what it does, and let Claude paint it in code. Then ask it what is still wrong.



Made by **@by.jadla** on Instagram & TikTok. Tag me when you post yours.
Want this for your brand? **byjadla.com**