

Audio Visuals or Slideshows.

Good photography and appropriate music is the starting point. The 'Audio' side of things includes; music, sound effects and narration and how these link into the *overall production of the show*. The 'Visual' side of things; includes almost all aspects of photography and how these, in turn, also link into the *overall production of the show*. The golden threads entwining 'Audio' and 'Visual' are, clearly, the *overall production of the show*.

The easiest slideshow to create is to take some of your best holiday pics and add some music. You can do this with many software products with just a few clicks. At the end of this article, I will describe how this can be done. Consider your audience, if it's Granny living in America, she will be delighted with anything you send. Sharing slideshows with family is great. However; if you want to let your friends at your camera club know of a recent trip, you may want to think more about the quality of the photos and the appropriateness of the music and sound effects.

Folks that have a first go, will bang in loads of photos and then add any music they can find. Which is fine for Granny in America, but probably not for the camera club. Camera club members will see (and probably point out) blown highlights, wonky horizons and wonder why you have used your favourite Eminem rap song to go with photos of the mountains and valleys of Switzerland. But this how we all start out. We learn, through feedback. For example, that you should pick the best photo of the castle rather than include 10 variations of the same thing. More on this later.

Bringing your photos and music together highlights the need to find 'appropriate' music. This is a big and important step. You need to evoke the right emotion from the combination of the music, sound effects and the mood of the photography into the *overall production of the show*.

You will learn that if you could match the beats of the music to the flow of the photos, it will improve the things. Suddenly you are the 'director' of your production. You watch countless slideshows and recall all the aspects that work, and those that don't. Just like your journey with photography, there will be things that you simply just like, but maybe can't really describe exactly why. You will pick these up with experience.

Here's a helpful list of things that can interrupt the flow of the show. Some are big distractions and others not so much. I have also included some comments and tips and a brief explanation on how to create your first show.

Photography

- Poor photography. Each image does not have to be competition standard, but think of what the judge might say if you had entered it in a competition. Wonky horizon, blown highlights, over or underexposed, bland empty skies, colour casts, the list could go on.
- Similar photos are a wasted opportunity and duplicate images are a mistake.
- Conflicting, changing of ratio's, portrait, square, landscape, portrait, etc. Going from to another upsets the smooth flow of the show. Many AV workers will only use landscape images for this reason. Landscape ratio photos use most of the available projector space on the screen. Portraits will leave black bars on either side.
- Speaking of flow, get in the way of '*Thinking In Threes*'. TIT, you will not forget it now! Trotters Independent Trading. '*Thinking In Threes*' means carefully considering the slide you are working on, the one before it, and the one after it. '*Thinking In Threes*', will ensure there is a '*Good Flow To The Show*'. Think about the placement of the horizons, the colours of the skies, the overall colour tones.
- Then remember that it all has to be coordinated with the music!

Music, sound effects and narration.

- I always start with the music. I hear something wonderful and I know I have some photographs that will go with it. Others add music at the end, others work from a pre-planned script and

detailed storyboard. It is crucial that the music must be appropriate. Film music works well with AV's. Inappropriate music will completely destroy the mood and emotion of a show.

- It is better to use a piece of music in its entirety rather than fade it out were you need it. Poor fade outs will be noticed and may not use the mood and emotion of the music to its full extent.
- If it is just music and photos, i.e. without a narrated script, be aware that holding folks' attention any longer than 5 minutes can be challenging. The photos will have to be top notch, the music excellent, synced to the images with appropriate supporting sound effects. For these types of show, IMHO, it is the audio that glues everything together.
- Sound effects, again carefully consider '*Thinking In Threes*'. Sound effects can be used on the slide before, it lets folks know of something coming up. A train whistle. Hints at something they should be looking for. Sound effects can linger on the after slide as well. Steam train moving off.
- Inappropriate sound effects can seriously undermine a show. Overdone, over the top, too loud, too many, can also undermine the show. Ask yourself, does the sound effect really add to the mood and emotion of the images? Does it gel well and add to the '*Good Flow Of The Show*'.
- Narration. A show with narration can be much longer than a show without. It is the narration, the quality of the script, the voice of the narrator, that glues everything together. Shows with narration are the hardest type of AV to make. Much work has to go into the careful crafting of the script.
- Give your script to someone to read. Do they get the story you intended? Does it have a beginning, middle and end? Does it deliver enough information? Too much? Too technical? Does it repeat itself? Is it appropriate for the audience?
- Sound production, hisses and pops, the balance of the narration volume to the music. Differences in narration volume, soft and quiet in parts, then too loud in others. All of these can mar the production. Which is why AV's with narration are the hardest to do. And also why they can be the most gripping.

Production

- The display time of each slide and the transition from one slide to the other is important. The speed and type of transition needs to meet the overall mood and emotion of both the music and the photography. Slow music can have slow fades, fast music can have no fades. Bad syncing can undermine a show.
- The software offers a multitude of transition types. That doesn't mean you should use them all. The transitions should complement the photography, help draw the eye in, in some cases. Fades or dissolves work well and can be used in curtains opening, closing, vignetting from centre out, from out to centre, etc. The key is for it to add to the '*Good Flow Of The Show*' and enhance the photography or the music or sound effect or narration.
- Mad zooms and pans should be avoided, these are a serious distraction.
- On a slow fade type show, the Ken Burns approach of increasing the size of the image from 100% to 102%, is very subtle and works well.
- Subtle panning can give a feeling of movement when there is a focal point in the photo moving one way or other. Subtle is the key.
- If you are using text, the font must be appropriate. Careful consideration must be taken of the font type, its size and how long it is displayed. Get any of these wrong and it will undermine the show.

For beginners, how to create your first show, 'My Holiday'.

If you can use 'Word', 'PowerPoint', or any of photo editing software – then you will be able to create your own slideshow, it's not that difficult. If you have little or no computer experience, then you might need a helping hand. You do not go straight to slideshow software, first, you have to consider:

1. File and folder management.

2. Pre-selection of images.

3. Resizing Images.

File and folder management.

Everyone handles their files and folders differently. The difficulty is that images, sound files, png's, etc. spread all over the place can be difficult to keep track of. This simple approach will keep everything in one place. Some folks use an external hard drive or a Cloud drive so they can move from computer to computer. Create an overall folder called 'Name of Show' and nest in it two other folders, 'org' for the original images and 'av' for the photos, sound files and other files. Copy all your holiday photos to the 'org' folder.

Pre-selection of images.

You could use Bridge or Lightroom on either Windows or Mac. Free image viewers include -
Windows: FastStone Image Viewer <http://www.faststone.org/FSViewerDetail.htm>
Mac: Phoenix Slides <http://blyt.net/phxslides/> As discussed earlier, colour landscape format is best throughout. Delete anything you know will not work, e.g. square and portrait images, and any with obvious problems. Keep all ten shots of the castle, as you will later be working out which one 'fits' best to the flow of the show. The images viewed and deleted within the 'org' folder.

Resizing Images.

Once you have made your pre-selection you need to resize them. You do this to reduce the MB size of the final show. I usually resize to 1920x1200, this is a ratio of 16:10. I use this ratio as it allows me to visualise, at the time of taking the photo, that I will need to slice off a small bit at the top and bottom of the photo. You could do this image by image, but for your first show use an Image Resizer program. The images should be resized to the 'av' folder. Landscapes without people can be stretched, no one will notice. Images with people will have to be done individually. Free Image Resizers include:

Windows: FastStone Image Resizer <http://www.faststone.org/FSResizerDetail.htm>

Mac: Preview <https://www.idownloadblog.com/2013/10/19/how-to-resize-multiple-images-mac/>

Slideshow.

Now go to your slideshow software. There are many programs that will create slideshows. I use 'Pictures To Exe' (PTE), this is not free; but is, IMHO, the very best product for creating slideshows. To borrow some terms from Lightroom, IMHO it produces a show with the best 'clarity' and 'vibrance'. The Essentials Edition costs \$69 and there is a trial version. It only runs on Windows, but you can create shows from PTE that will run on a Mac. If you want to create mp4 versions, you will need the Deluxe version which is \$139. <http://www.wnsoft.com/picturestoexe/> You can run PTE on a Mac. Using Crossover, you can install the PTE setup exe and it all works great. Although you may have to set your folders within your 'My Documents' folder. <https://www.codeweavers.com/products/crossover-mac>

<https://www.codeweavers.com/videos/InstallingUnsupportedApplications>

Open PTE and go to your 'av' folder that contains all the preselected photos. View them in the Light Box (in PTE). This is a great way to visualise the flow of the show. Photos can be moved about to create an order that respects the slide, the one before and the one after. As discussed earlier, think of the colours in the image, especially in the skies, and also take care to align the horizon as best as possible. This is done to create cohesion, which allows the show to flow smoothly. You will want to add a blank black slide the beginning and a blank black slide the end. Move the images you don't want to the right of the black side that marks the end of the show.

This will take some time. You will want to identify which of the ten photos of the castle best fits the flow of the one before and the one after. Having ten will give you plenty to choose from. Clearly, the same applies to every other view that has multiple images available. There will be much

moving about in the Lightbox and this is an important first step. Don't delete the images at the end, to the right of the black end slide, as you may need them.

For a slow relaxing holiday show, aim for around 25 images, not counting the two black blanks. Set the display time for each black blank to 5 seconds and the transition, a simple dissolve, to 3 seconds. Set the display time for all the other images to 10 seconds and the transition, a simple dissolve, to 6 seconds. The overall time for such a show will be around 4 and a half minutes.

Music Selection. For a slow relaxing holiday show, a slow classical piece will almost always work. Or you could go for some local music that sets the location. Go to your Windows Media Player, or Mac iTunes, click on all music and then on the 'length' column. This allows you to check out music tracks according to the length. Clearly, in this case, you are looking for something around 4 and a half minutes. This is normally a trial and error routine, some music will be obviously unsuitable. When you find something appropriate, copy the sound file to the 'av' folder.

Alternatively, you can go to YouTube and search for the music you want. Remember you can search using terms like 'slow and relaxing', 'greek music' or even 'dark and menacing'. <https://www.youtube.com/> This may take some time to get the track that you think will work. You then will have the option of buying it.

All music is copyright, UK camera clubs need to obtain a licence from the IAC: <http://www.theiac.org.uk/iac/copyright/copyright-clearance-scheme.html> Clubs affiliated with the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB) are able to apply under this scheme. All UK Audio Visual Competitions will expect you, as an individual, to have a licence with the IAC. These cost around £45 per year. In the vast majority of cases it's just the MCPS and BPI licences that are needed, and these can be obtained for about £8 from the IAC for members of a PAGB affiliated club (or RPS member). You only have to join the IAC if you also need the PPL licence. This covers playing back the music in unlicensed premises, but in practice most halls will have their own PRS licence rendering the PPL one redundant. It doesn't cover you to publish your work to the Internet.

At some stage, you will want to delete all the unused images to the right of the end blank slide. Save often and get in the habit of backing up, under File | Create back up as ZIP. PTE will zip up all the images and sound files used, along with the .pte file, but not the .exe file. This allows you to bring the zip file to the camera club, or give it someone if you need help. The zip will unzip correctly and retain the important file location information. Simply copying the 'av' folder will not work, you will get 'file not found' messages.

Where to get further help, advice and inspiration.

- YouTube is a wonderful resource. Simply search for what you need to know. There are 195 hits searching for just 'Pictures To Exe'. <https://www.youtube.com/>
- The WnSoft Pictures To Exe Forums. <https://www.picturestoexe.com/forums/>
- PTE Forum help page <https://www.wnsoft.com/en/picturestoexe/help/>
- Barry Beckham has loads of useful advice on offer. <http://www.beckhamdigital.com.au/store/pc/Audio-Visual-c52.htm>
- Keep up to date with the AV News <http://www.avnews.org.uk>
- Royalty Free Music, I like Kevin's work, but there are hundreds of sources out there. <https://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/>
- Free Sound Editor, Audacity is free and runs on Windows or Mac. <https://www.audacityteam.org>

Watch and Learn

Finally, you can learn a lot, just by watching slideshows. This is a similar approach to learning about photography, especially composition. What do you like about the show? Is it how the beat of the music is subtly synced to images? Or is it the emotive blends from one image to the next?

Did you see a third image during the transition? All of this can be researched, via YouTube. There are hundreds of shows on the PTE Forum, with links to YouTube, Vimeo and Slideshow Club.

<https://www.slideshowclub.com/files/category/1-slideshows/>

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