



PSNZ HELP SHEET No 40

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Digital Audio Visuals

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In recent years there has been increasing interest in digital AVs, probably prompted by some excellent displays at PSNZ Conventions. There has also been a great deal of development in both the hardware and software to support such programmes. As a once avid AV producer I was keen to learn something of the new medium with a view to re-making some of my old AVs and putting together a few new ones.

This turned into a major journey of discovery but the rewards have been worthwhile and I hope that the experiences of our own small AV group will be of help to others. With data projectors becoming more affordable and the image quality vastly improved, a number of clubs are investing in these projectors to provide members with the facility to share their digital images.

Our first step was to find a suitable software programme that would give satisfactory results using a typical PC. There are a number now available, all with their particular foibles, but after some experimentation we have settled for PROSHOW GOLD. Accordingly, this is the programme we will discuss. It can be viewed on the *Photodex.com* website and the recently released Version 2 can be downloaded on a 15 day trial basis. On payment of about US\$89 you will receive a registration key number to unlock this as a fully operational version.

It is relatively simple to make a very basic 'sound/slide' programme and from that point there are many options in ProShow Gold that will turn such a show into a sophisticated programme.

This help sheet is not intended as a manual on the programme, but to give some indication of the work involved in making your first AV.

Preparation is the key, and planning is essential. You will need a clear idea of what sort of show you wish to put together. The story. The images. The music. The script. Sort all this out before you begin and make notes as you go.

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So let's take an example step by step. You have had a trip to Australia. You have taken dozens of slides or digital files, and you want to make an AV to show to friends or at club. As any self-respecting audio visual presentation should be no longer than 3 to 5 minutes, it is preferable to make several short shows rather than a 30 minute opus. Let's start with the best pictures you took around Ayers Rock. These will form the basis of your show, but equally important is the choice of good music. We will leave a spoken commentary out of the equation in this exercise.

If you have slides, these must first be scanned into jpeg files. These should be 1024x768 pixels at 72dpi. A narrower format than the original 35mm, so some cropping will be required. The programme automatically sizes files from a digital camera.

Place the images into a specific folder designated 'Ayers AV.' (You need not use all of them). You may then wish to enhance some in an editing programme. Try to stick with 'landscape' as the screen or monitor best suits this format. A printed page of thumbnails will help sort the sequence as you can write on each image its position in your proposed sequence. In this way you do not have to rename images and can keep the original camera numbering if you wish.

Next step is to find the right music. This can be difficult but is one of the most important aspects of a good AV as it establishes a 'mood'. If this is on CD you will need to copy the selected track to your hard-drive as a wav. or MPEG3 file. I prefer the later as the file is smaller. Save in '*my music*' as '*Ayers.mp3*'.

You are now ready to compile your show.

Open ProShow Gold and select 'NEW SHOW'. Browse through your folders until you find 'Ayers AV' and double click. This will bring up the selected images. If they are already in the order you wish to show them, 'select all' and drag them into PS Gold to the area '*drop photo here*'. Or select the pictures individually in the preferred order and drag them across individually.

You can now use the *slider* that appears below your pictures, to scroll through the slides to check the sequence.

For any that need shifting or deleting, use SLIDE/SHIFT SLIDE or DELETE SLIDE. You can use a slide several times and even add a blank slide. Double click a slide and a drop down menu will enable you to add a caption, or you can put a caption on as a separate image in your editing programme.

Now for the music. SHOW / SHOW OPTIONS / SOUND TRACK / ADD. Browse to find music you have saved as a *wav* or *mpeg* and DOUBLE CLICK. Now below the images you have inserted, the name of the track will appear and also the length of this music track.

The easiest option at this stage is to go to SHOW / SOUND TRACK and click 'sync the images to length of sound track'. A box will open showing the number of images and the length of sound in your programme. It will for instance tell you that you have 30 slides and 180 seconds (3 minutes) of sound. Thus each slide will automatically be screened for 4 seconds plus a 2-second transition time between each slide. Click *Yes* then *OK*.

Now the big moment, go to SHOW / PLAY and you can review the result of your work. Slides should start and finish in sync with the music.

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If you are happy with the result go to CREATE/OUTPUT OPTIONS, where you can make an exe file to run on your PC, or an auto run CD which can be played by anyone on their PC, or on a data projector through a laptop. It can also optionally produce the show as a VCD or SVCD to be played through the TV on a DVD player. The programme uses your existing CD writer.

Having successfully made a very basic show you will probably now want to make the fancy enhancements. This is where you can alter the time the image is on the screen or the length of the transitions. Remember that you have synchronised your show to the length of the music so any addition or reduction of time must be balanced otherwise the ending of the slide-show will not synchronise with the music.

The programme features a wonderful variety of transitions but these should be used sparingly. Default is a pleasant 2 second fade. Click the fade (AB) transition and a host of options will appear. Move the mouse pointer to any one of these and the resultant transition effect will appear in a small box. Click to implement your choice. Return to PLAY SHOW regularly to check your progress. Use the top slider to find a starting point to play the sections of programme that you have adjusted. This enables adjustments to be made and checked.

At this stage you may wish to caption certain slides. SHOW OPTIONS / CAPTIONS and you can type titles in. Similarly in BACKGROUND you can change the colour of your backgrounds. Useful if using verticals that do not occupy the full screen. At this stage give the show a name SHOW/SET SHOW TITLE.

There is a facility once the show has been assembled to record a commentary or sound effects directly into the programme using the PC microphone or selected *wav* or *mpeg* files. There are other options and facilities including the ability to put in additional sounds, e.g. sound effects for particular images. However, like most programmes it is best to begin modestly and learn by trial and error. It's even permissible to use the HELP files although they are not particularly comprehensive. The 'tip of the day' in HELP is useful.

This help-sheet only touches the surface of this versatile programme and as you work through it you will discover a host of other features that will enhance and individualise your show. Like any programme, you have to spend the time on it to get the maximum advantage.

Footnote: Funny how we still use the word 'slides', when talking about digital images.

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