



CREATING a DIGITAL AUDIO VISUAL **compiled by Trish McAuslan APSNZ**

These guidelines are primarily aimed at helping those photographers who are interested in entering the Jack Sprosen Memorial Competition but will also be of interest to anyone creating AV's especially for club competitions.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL AUDIO VISUAL PRESENTATION?

An Audio Visual is a sequence of still photographs with accompanying audio built around a storyline or theme. An effective sequence will have unity of these elements - the storyline, the visuals, the audio and transitions. These elements should reinforce each other, such that any one without the others would be inadequate. The sequence should have an introduction, an interesting development of the storyline and a close. Narrative, text and graphics may be used. The Audio Visual medium is very flexible and artistic expression within it can take many forms. It is much more than images to music.

JSMT

This is an annual competition for Digital Audio Visual Sequences open to individual members of PSNZ and members of Photography Clubs affiliated to PSNZ.

Programmes are to be no longer than 5 minutes and can be on any topic.

Details, rules and entry form will be available from the PSNZ website:

<http://www.photography.org.nz>

PROGRAMMES

Entrants are required to use a stand alone programme. This is an AV that doesn't require the programme it was created in to be on the computer in order to play it.

There are a number of programmes which will create slideshows but people interested in digital audio visuals are recommended to consider a programme especially designed for creating AV's.

The most commonly used programmes are:

PicturesToExe (Windows) <http://www.wnsoft.com>

ProShow Gold or ProShow Producer (Windows) www.photodex.com

FotoMagico (Apple) <http://boinx.com/fotomagico>

CREATING THE AUDIO TRACK

While much of this can be done successfully in the programmes listed above, there may be times you want to create a more complicated soundtrack. The commonly used programmes are:

Audacity (Windows) free <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Garageband (Apple) free with a new computer but can be updated as part of the iLife Suite

RESOLUTION AND ASPECT FOR JSMT

The JSMT AV's will be displayed on a data projector in a 4:3 format with a resolution of 1024px by 768px and a black background. (NB This may change in the future as technology improves).

VIDEO EDITING PROGRAMMES

It is possible to use still images in a video editing programme but the resolution of standard video is lower than that of the dedicated audio visual programmes listed above. (NB Video clips are not allowed in the JSMT competition but may be acceptable in other situations).

To meet the standalone requirements they may need to be saved to a video DVD.

Saving as a video DVD is not recommended. Standard DVD is saved at an image resolution of 720px by 576px (PAL) which is a lower resolution than the AV programmes (ProShow Gold and Pictures to EXE for Windows and Fotomagico for Apple) which are displayed at a resolution of at least 1024px x 768px. The lower resolution often results in poorer quality images when they are played from a computer. Note that this may change in the future with the introduction of high definition video and computers that can play it at an affordable price.

PREPARATION

1. Start with an idea before you take any photos
2. Plan it out on a story board. A story board is a visual outline of what you are planning to say in your AV and how you are planning to organise your information so that the sequence is clear. It can be as simple as some stick figures with some notes or it could be a series of notes. This will help you to sort out what photos you need to find/take.
3. At this stage it may help to rough out any dialogue if you intend to use in your AV.
4. Start thinking about the soundtrack - what sort of music you want to use to support the story/theme. This may also suggest some of the photos you will need to take because music and photos should work together.
5. Once you have collected some or all of your photos, some people find it an advantage to print out small copies eg use the contact sheet function in Photoshop, and set them out in order on board so they can see how their AV unfolds. Others set out the photos in order on a light-table in a programme like Bridge, Aperture or Lightroom. This helps to see if more photos are needed and to see if there is a beginning, the development of the idea and an ending.

PHOTOS

1. Photos should be of a very good standard but not necessarily exhibition standard and they must support the story.
2. While the 'rummage in my virtual shoebox' approach works sometimes, the best productions come from taking the images to fit your idea. It maybe that you already have some images that fit your idea and you need to work out what others you need to take to finish it off.
3. Take a series of photos so you can chose the ones which tell your story best. One beautiful photo with different colours and lighting from the rest of the photos is not useful.
4. A series of images taken at the same time have the advantage of similar lighting and colours which allow them to blend together more easily than a collection of photos taken at different times and in different places.
5. By taking photos in landscape format it is easier to blend them together but it is not essential - this is a personal choice.
6. Take photos with a little more space so that you have cropping options when you want to blend the images into the story.
7. Try to keep the image size the same throughout the AV so the edges match as one image moves into the next one.

8. Be prepared to spend some time enhancing your photos in your imaging software - sharpening, tidying up unwanted bits and adjusting the tones if necessary so the photos sit well together.
9. As a rough guide you will need somewhere between 40 and 60 images for a five minute AV.
10. To achieve the best possible quality you have to make sure that your image files are large enough to cover the entire screen space available. A simple rule of thumb is to make sure your image files are at least as wide and high as the display you are using for the presentation. If you are using pan & zoom animation (Ken Burns effect), then the image file should have even larger dimensions than the display in order to be able to zoom into the picture without sacrificing quality.
11. One thing to remember, while the final display must conform to a projected image maximum size, most AV creation applications will accept an image of almost any file size. If you include a jpeg image of say 10mb, this will be accepted and displayed in the program, but because of its size, will slow down the editing process and lengthen the rendering time of the final product considerably. It is also a waste of file space on the computer and will make the final AV bigger than it needs to be. If the final projected display is no bigger than 1280x960 pixels when you have finished editing an image, save it so it to these dimensions (unless you plan to pan/zoom). (Maybe a little larger incase the data projector used has a higher resolution). In Photoshop, using the Save for Web function and its ability to 'optimize' an image to a certain file size (of your choice), is even better. Saving in this way strips off the metadata attached to the image, thus saving more bytes of file size. For a sequence of say 200 images, this time and space saving could be considerable.

CREATING THE SLIDESHOW

1. Try to match the tempo of the photos to both the music and the mood of the story. Images should flow gently from one to the next if the mood is quiet but they may be quite jerky to portray drama
2. As a rule of thumb show images for 5-6 sec but to maintain interest have variety - some images may move through very quickly and others will be on for longer.
3. Avoid having too many moving effects such as zooming and panning. If the movement is either too fast or panned or zoomed too much, the movement becomes jerky or the images break up as the programme tries to keep up.
4. Credits should be included at the end of the show - this includes any part of the audio visual that is not your own work. With music it is acceptable to name the artist but it is not necessary to name the composer. NB For the JSMT do not include your name at the end but if preparing an AV for another forum you may wish to include your name with the copyright symbol.
5. Text can be used to help tell the story. Make sure it is easily read and on the screen long enough for the audience to read all of it easily. (This will take longer than it takes you to read it)

TRANSITIONS

1. Avoid the temptation to use a variety of transition styles. Keep to one or two transitions. A change of transition can be used to break the flow of the AV to make a point or change the mood
2. Transitions need to fit the story and also fit with the music.
3. For more advanced users, try to create some third images as you move from one slide to the next.

AUDIO (Music, sound effects and voice overs)

- 1 Think about the audio to ensure it fits with and enhances the story/theme. This is just as important as choosing the right images.
- 2 Look for music which creates a mood or reflects what is happening on the screen.
3. If several pieces of music are used then take care that the cross fading is seamless.
4. If you are using sound effects, blend them into the overall audio.

5. Check the volume of the audio track. It should remain at the level you want the audience to hear it through out the show.
6. If your audio is different from what would normally be expected eg it is louder because that suits your show or if it starts with no audio for the first few slides it is important to include that information on the entry form.

Recommendations from overseas judges:

1. Avoid using well known classical music. People may already have mental images that they associate with that music and this may not be the same as the imagery you want to portray.
2. Another experienced overseas judge recommends avoiding well known music - the choice is yours.

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

- 1 Recorded music can be used without infringing copyright for personal use.
- 2 Copyright law allows you to make one copy of each piece of music for each player you own as long as you own the original CD and as long as they are used by members of your household.
- 3 Incidental copying of a musical work, or words spoken or sung with music, may infringe copyright if the music is deliberately copied. For example, permission will be needed to include music on a film soundtrack, even if it is not an essential feature of the scene.

For more information: <http://www.copyright.org.nz>

- 4 If you choose to use music which you do not have permission to use, the responsibility is yours.

Two solutions are to write your own music or to use royalty free music.

Royalty Free Music/Copyright Free Music

1. This does not necessarily mean it is free - just that it's use is not limited by copyright. However it may have limitations on its use such as acknowledgments - check the documentation carefully.
2. Check out the review clips before you buy - a lot of it will not be suitable.
3. There is free music on the internet but you are likely to get better music if you are prepared to pay for it's use.

<http://www.beckhamdigital.co.uk>

(NB: If any one else finds a similar source of reasonable royalty free music that you have tried and found useful, please let me know so we can share the information - Trish- address at the end of these notes)

VOICE OVER (Optional)

1. Aim for a well written, original script.
2. The voice/accnt should suit the story. The voice should be expressive and not be too quick.
3. Avoid 'talking to the slides' ie don't describe what we can see on the screen but rather tell us something we cannot see.
4. If you want the audience to listen to your audio, avoid having attention grabbing photos on the screen at the same time.
5. Aim for a conversational style rather than giving the impression of something being read.
6. Where the story is spoken, the voice needs to be easily heard, The volume of the music and background sounds should be lowered so the words can be heard without interference.

PREPARING TO SAVE

(a) For JSMT or other club competitions

- 1 It is not necessary to have an AV which is almost 5 minutes long. Some AV's would have been more powerful and held the viewers' attention better if they had been shorter. Go through the AV

and remove images that do not contribute to the development of the story/theme. Have someone else look at it critically as it is easy to get too close to your own work.

2. Remove the producer's logos that sometimes show when the disc is loaded.
3. When the disc is loaded onto the computer, it should immediately show the button for the start of the programme. It should be able to sit there until the Judges are ready for the organiser to click the button to start the show.
4. As soon as the organiser starts the programme it should immediately go to full screen view. Do not leave it up to the operator to change it to a full screen mode.

(b) For sharing with family and friends

1. If you know that the person you want to send it to has the same type of computer as you do and that they want to show it from their computer, then the same instructions as those for the JSMT will be fine.
2. If you don't know what computer they have or if they may want to show it on a TV set you will have to save your programme in DVD format. This option is possible from programmes like Proshow Gold, Pictures2Exe and Fotomagico.
3. If you are planning to send the programme to countries such as USA, Canada or Japan you will need to save it in the NTSC format.

FINAL COMMENTS

All competitions have rules which outline what is acceptable in that competition and it is up to competitors to become familiar with and to follow the rules for the particular competition. Every effort is being made in the JSMT to follow common practice internationally so that entrants can develop the skills needed to take part in other competitions. However, as PSNZ is a photographic society, there is a greater emphasis on the use of images and image quality than is the case in some international competitions.

Not all AV's you produce will be competitive ones. There are many other opportunities to create AV's or slideshows or to combine still photos with movie clips to share with family and friends. It is a lot of fun and another way of sharing your photography with others.

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References:
Ron Davies FRP, FIPF, AV-FIAP: Judging Audio Visual Sequences
www.photography.org.nz/helpsheets/46_judging_audio_visuals.pdf

Ron Cork: Audio-Visuals and the VAPS Interclub Competition
www.vaps.org.au/

Royal Photographic Society
<http://avg.rps.org/Distinctions.htm>

Judges and Organisers Comments from previous JSMT Competition