

MAKING SLIDESHOWS USING PICTURES2EXE

by Andrew Williams



INTRODUCTION

Last year I watched a couple of stages of the Tour of Britain cycle race. Even for the non-enthusiast there are some great photo opportunities and you can get really close to the action. These shots were taken with no special access; just get there early!

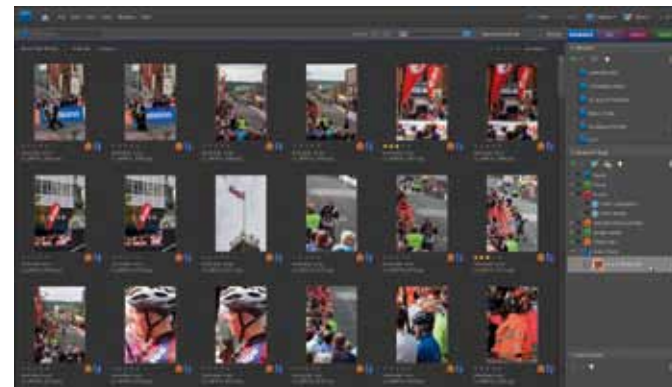
It's well worth looking around after the finish as there are plenty of shots of the equipment and riders to be had; the final shot in the sequence is Olympic Gold medal and fourth placed Tour de France rider, Bradley Wiggins CBE, being interviewed in the car park. Watching this year's coverage you wouldn't get so near this time without a press pass! I deliberately took a variety of shots with a view to creating a story of the day as a slideshow.

You can make slideshows using Photoshop Elements but dedicated programs such as Pictures2Exe (P2E) are much more versatile and very easy to use. There is a 30-day trial at www.wnsoft.com or buy it for around £18. One feature of P2E that I find invaluable is the way it packages the whole show into a single executable file which makes distribution to your customers so much easier. You can password protect the file and even give it an expiry date.

This step-by-step article shows how to make a short basic show without music and only uses a fraction of Pictures2Exe's capabilities.

STEP 1 SELECT YOUR IMAGES

Use your favourite software to select images for your show; I use Adobe Lightroom but Elements Organizer or just your operating system will do just fine. Consider the orientation. Landscape fills the screen better but most of mine are portrait so I need to think how to present these, for example side by side. Look for good sequences of shots.



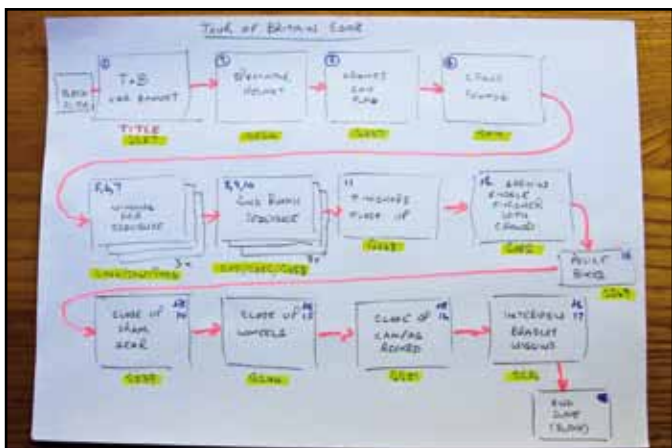
STEP 2 RESIZE THEM TO SUIT

Next consider the end use of your slideshow. Suppose you will be projecting the image. Most mid-range projectors have a resolution of 1024x768 pixels so there is no point in making your images larger. Resize your images using File > Process Multiple Files tick Resize Images, width 1024 pixels, Constrain Proportions ticked. Under File Type select JPEG High Quality.



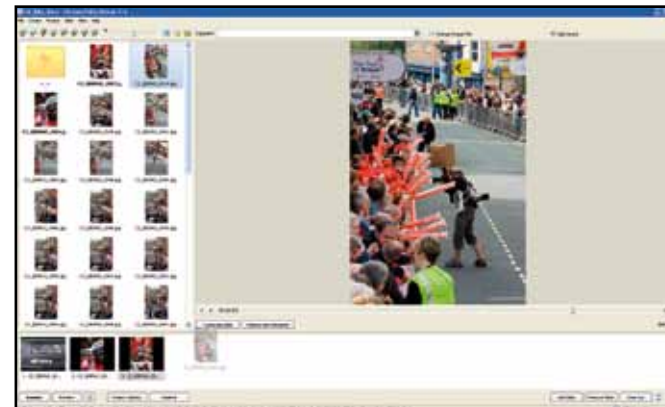
STEP 3 STORYBOARD YOUR SHOW

This doesn't need to be a work of art! Take a piece of paper and sketch your show. I like to write a brief description of the image in the box and the file numbers below. Where I think I will use a series of images as a sequence I show overlapping boxes. You soon develop your own style.



STEP 4 START ASSEMBLING YOUR SHOW

Start Pictures2Exe. The interface is divided into a file browser on the left, preview window on the right and slide list along the bottom. You can easily re-configure the layout to suit yourself. Use the browser to display your files, then drag and drop them onto the slide list in the order you want.



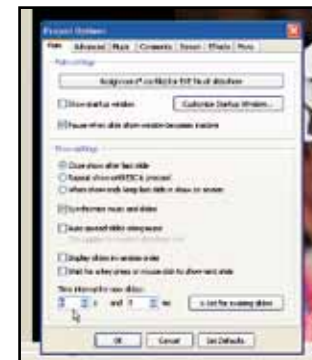
STEP 5 PREVIEW YOUR SHOW

That's all you need to do for basic show. With the first slide selected, click on the play icon below the preview window and your slideshow will run or, to see the show full screen, click the Preview button at the bottom left of your screen. Hit Esc to stop the show. But we can do better than that!



STEP 6 CHANGING THE TIMING

This basic show uses the default options. Let's start by looking at the slide display timing. The default is 4 seconds for each slide. I decided to slow things down so each slide is on the screen for 6 seconds. Click the Project Option button and set the Time Interval for New Slides, then click Set for Existing Slides.



STEP 7 TUNE THE TIMING

Save your project using File>Save As. To vary the pace I want to shorten the display time for the sequences I identified on the storyboard. Double clicking a slide in the slide view brings up a dialog where you can override the defaults. I set the timing for the first two slides in each sequence to 2 seconds.



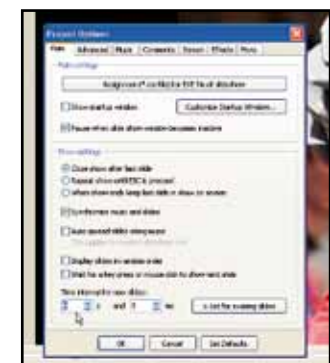
STEP 8 SET THE TRANSITION EFFECT

By default you get a variety of random effects which is a bit overwhelming. It's best to keep to one or two effects or they become the star of the show! Click the Project Options button and choose the Effects tab. Click the icon top right to deselect all the effects, then select the main effect for your show.



STEP 9 ADD A BLANK TITLE SLIDE

Create a new file in Elements, File > New > Blank File. Set the size to 1024 x 768 pixels at 72 pixels/inch. In Pictures2Exe drag this to the beginning of the show. Click on Objects and Animation which opens an editor where you can add images and text as well as more sophisticated items such as masks and buttons.



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STEP 10 ANIMATE THE TITLE

For a simple title add an image by clicking the Add Image icon at the top of the screen. To zoom the image out from the centre to fill the screen; add a keypoint by dragging the blue triangle along the timeline to approximately midway and clicking the + icon. Drag the image 'handles' to its final size and position.



STEP 11 ADD TEXT

Click on the start keypoint (00:00:000) and on the Animation tab set the Zoom value to 0.001. Clicking the Play button (bottom right) will preview your work. Click the border to deselect the image, then click the Text icon (A) to add the title text. Type the text in the Properties box. Add new keypoints at approximately 3.5 and 5 seconds. With the first keypoint selected alter the Opacity to 0%. Click Play and the text should fade in.



STEP 12 CREATE THE SHOW

Click the Close button to return to the main screen, save your work then click the Preview button to check your show full screen. To create a '.exe' file to share with your friends click the Create button, select 'Executable File for PC'. This tutorial only scratches the surface of Pictures2Exe, for more information see www.wnsoft.com and click on Forum.



Andrew will be presenting a Masterclass 'Rev up your slideshows with Pictures2Exe' at the Convention on 15 January from 3pm until 5pm, where he will cover the subject in much more detail; he hopes to see you there. ED.



Andrew runs regular one-day workshops on improving your photography and digital editing.

For details see his website at www.InspiringImages.co.uk

or email andrew@InspiringImages.co.uk to subscribe to his newsletter.

Andrew also provides 1:1 tuition sessions where you set the agenda.

FOR MUSIC? try SPOTIFY

by Mike McNamee

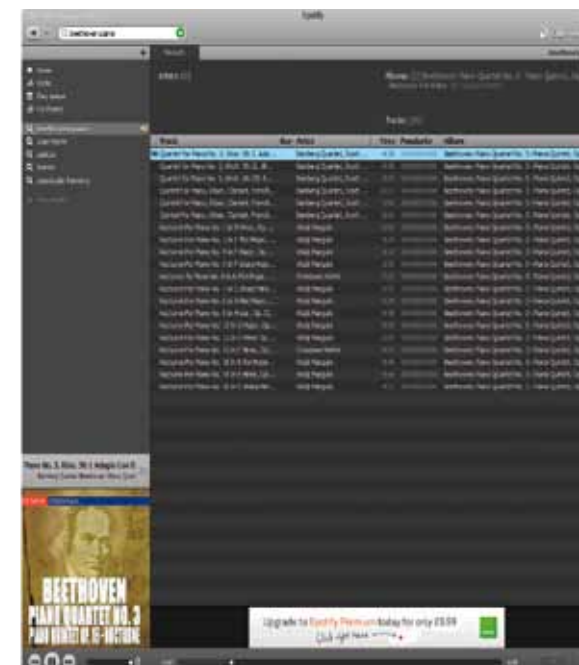
Hailed in the *Guardian* as one of the ten most important developments in IT, *Spotify* is a music streaming service which allows you to play a near limitless list of music, a bit like a radio station where you choose what you listen to. For the minor irritation of a short advert every other three pieces (or movements in classical music) you get to hear music of your choosing (or if you pay for the pleasure you can have your music devoid of any interruptions). There are six million tracks to choose from.

This, however, is not the real power for the photographer casting about for a suitable piece of music to attach to their slideshow. All the pieces of music are searchable by name, artist or subject title. For example if you are looking for a piece of sacred music, Spotify offers you 1,568 tracks from 63 albums and if you have the time you can play the lot! If you refine your choice and type 'sacred mass' you get 170 tracks from the sacred music of this genre. If you refine the choice yet further with 'sacred mass credo', you are offered just 17 tracks. On a more modern theme, typing 'Rolling Stones' offers you 1,173 tracks from 27 albums; 'Beatles' offers 3,800 tracks.

It helps if you have a little music terminology to hand. For example, following the sacred music theme, if you type F Minor you get tracks from all sorts of music, either in a minor key or by people called Minor. However, under the 'albums' list you see Bruckner Mass No 3 in F Minor and clicking on this brings up all six tracks of that album. Clicking on the conductor's name (Celibadachi) then brings up all of his 17 albums.

So far, so good, you now need to sort out the legals! You are not at liberty to download any tracks and use them for commercial purposes; you remain bound by normal copyright law. However, as a way of searching through music to find something suitable for legal purchase and use, Spotify takes some beating. To listen to a piece you simply double click its name in the list. We listened to 10 tracks in about 50 seconds; the adverts butt in on a time and track basis so you don't get bugged by them too much if you need to search through a very long list. Even if you have no interest in using the facility for identifying suitable music, it makes for a great way to listen to the music of your choice, while you work at your computer.

www.spotify.com



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