

CREATING SLIDESHOWS USING PICTURES TO EXE

Workshop – 21st October 2023

This workshop will use ‘Pictures to Exe’ (PTE) software to create a slideshow of images accompanied by music, sometimes referred to as an AV (Audio Visual), and show how to export the finished show to various formats that can be viewed on various devices.

‘PTE’ is just one of many such programmes and an internet search will bring up links to them. Some are free, some are demos that then require purchase and some are quite expensive professional tools. As with all such things you pay your money and take your choice, although the adage that you only get what you pay for is relevant.

Planning

Consideration needs to be given as to why you want to produce a slideshow and what you intend to do with it upon completion. Is it to be an easy way to view your images, is it to create a holiday memory that can be shared with friends and family or is it intended to be shown to a discerning audience?

Do you have a theme or subject in mind, or a particular set of images? Is there a favourite piece of music that you want to use to enhance the experience?

Think about how long you want the show to be. If it is your holiday record, time is not as important but a show to an audience needs to take into account attention spans and sitting still for a period of time. A show to an audience is best limited to no more than 7 – 8 minutes.

Images: - Once you have decided upon your topic, you need to gather the requisite images into a convenient folder. Although they don’t have to be “winning” images, they should still be technically proficient, i.e. well exposed, pleasing composition and in focus.

Ideally, the images should be similarly sized and proportioned. Use an image editing programme to make the images as good as you can and then resize them. Whilst the images don’t need to be of the highest quality, they still need to be of a size that shows them to their best, but without creating a large unwieldy file. Image size of 1024 x 768 pixels is a good compromise, but you can experiment to find what works best for your requirements and output; videos intended for use on the web don’t need as much quality as a show to a photo group.

Music: - The choice of music is important and it should enhance the viewing experience, not fight against it. If your show has a definite theme, can you find a piece of music that fits well with that theme and that is appropriate to the subject?

Conversely, if you have a piece of music in mind, can you find the images to fit with it, or is the music really just a background and not an essential element of the show?

If the music is not long enough for the show you have in mind, it is possible to blend 2 or more pieces of music into the one show.

Do you want to use a classical piece or something more contemporary? Is it to be calm and tranquil, or upbeat and lively? Bear in mind that if the music is loud, it might be off putting to the audience, but if it is too soft, then its impact may be lost.

Don't forget that unless you have sourced Royalty Free music, you should not use any music in a public arena without an appropriate license. However, for individual or select use, acknowledgement of the composer and musicians is considered acceptable by most.

Software

The software used here is 'Pictures to Exe', version 9, as supplied by WnSoft. The current version is version 11 and is titled 'PTE AV Studio' and is 64 bit programme, in 2 versions, that requires at least a 64 bit Windows edition; Mac versions are available.

The software can be purchased as a download from the website www.wnsoft.com and currently retails at \$75 for the basic version or \$149 for the Pro version.

You can also download older versions from the 'Download' page by scrolling to the bottom. It is not known if these are free or demos that require purchase after a set time.

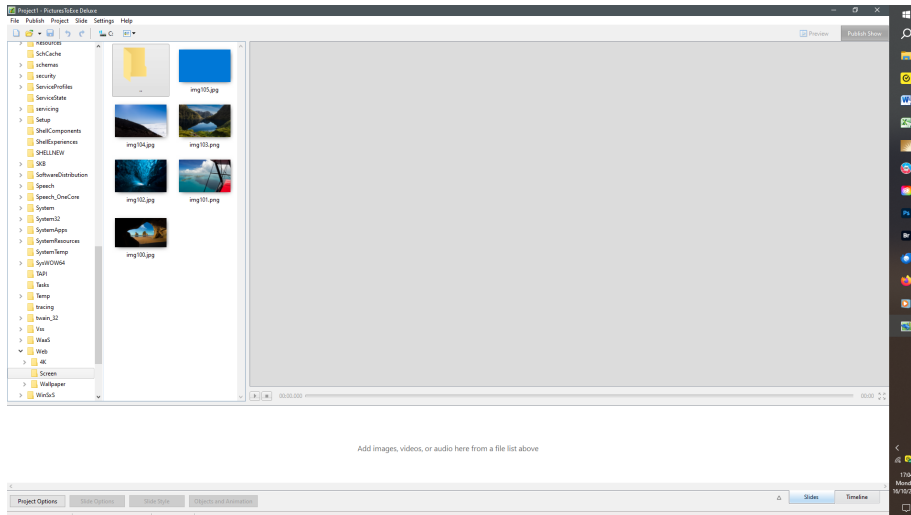
The website also includes user guides and video tutorials to help you get started. There are also some sample shows that may be useful in giving you an idea of how the shows look when completed.

As stated at the beginning, there are many programmes available that will enable you to produce slideshows, and by and large they tend to follow a similar layout and process. If you choose to use another programme, it will still be worth visiting WnSoft's site to make use of the guides and tutorials.

Getting Started

Once you have collected your images and music into an appropriate folder and downloaded the software, it is time to get started.

Opening up the software brings up the 'Story Board' where you will work on placing images, setting dissolves, adding music and timing the show.



Under the 'Settings' menu you can customise the way the software works to suit your own preferences. However, at this stage it is preferable to leave things at Default until you have a little more experience.

The 'Project' menu enables you to set the various elements of the specific project that you are working on; such as appearance, background colour, actions, transitions and project control. These can be adjusted at any time but remember that if you change things part way through then it may affect the wider show that you have so far created.

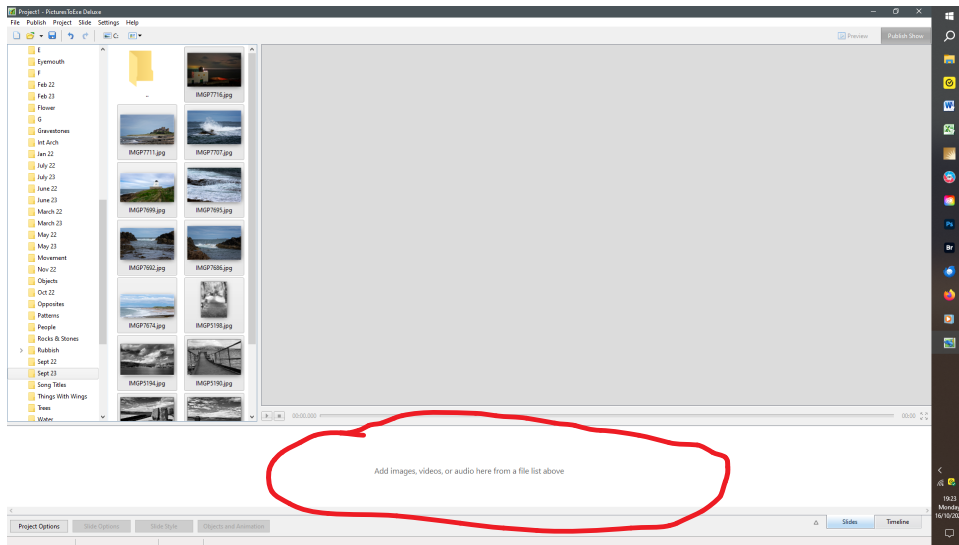
Adding Images: -

Using the file list on the left hand side, navigate to the folder where you have stored your images. Select the image that you want to be first and drag it to into the large area at the bottom of the screen.

Select the image to go into 2nd place and drag that into the Slide area. Do the same for the 3rd and continue until you have all the images in the Slide area.

Whilst it is handy to have the images all in one folder, you can add images from any folder.

N.B. – Don' forget to save your work at regular intervals. You can select 'Autosave' in the 'Settings'/'Preferences' menu.



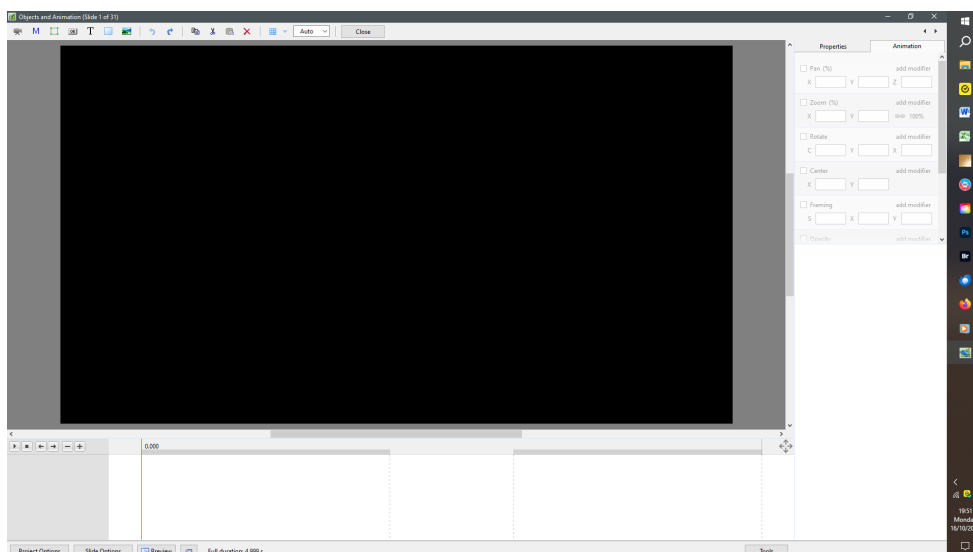
Alternatively, you can select all the images at once and drag them all into the Slide area. You can then move the images around, by dragging and dropping, until you have them in the order you require.

The time of each slide will show as the default from the options settings but this doesn't matter at this stage, if you are adding music to the show.

Objects and Animations: -

You will probably want a Title Slide, to prefix the show. Select the first image and right click. From the list select 'Insert new slide'. If it puts it between slides 1 & 2, just drag it to in front of 1. You can also do the same thing at the end to create a closing slide, which can contain a closing image, if you wish, or just "The End" and all due credits.

Select the Title Slide and click on 'Objects and Animation' from the menu list below the Slide area. A new screen shows where all sorts of manipulation can be undertaken. Simply, you can add text and/or an image, or more, and add movement effects.



This can be as simple or as complicated as you like and it is worth getting to understand how it works and what impact it will have on the viewer. Note that you will need to set the duration of the slide to suit any animations that you have included.

The effects that you create can be seen in real time by pressing the 'Preview' button on the menu at the bottom of the screen. Alternatively you can select a position on the timeline and click the start button at the bottom of the image screen.

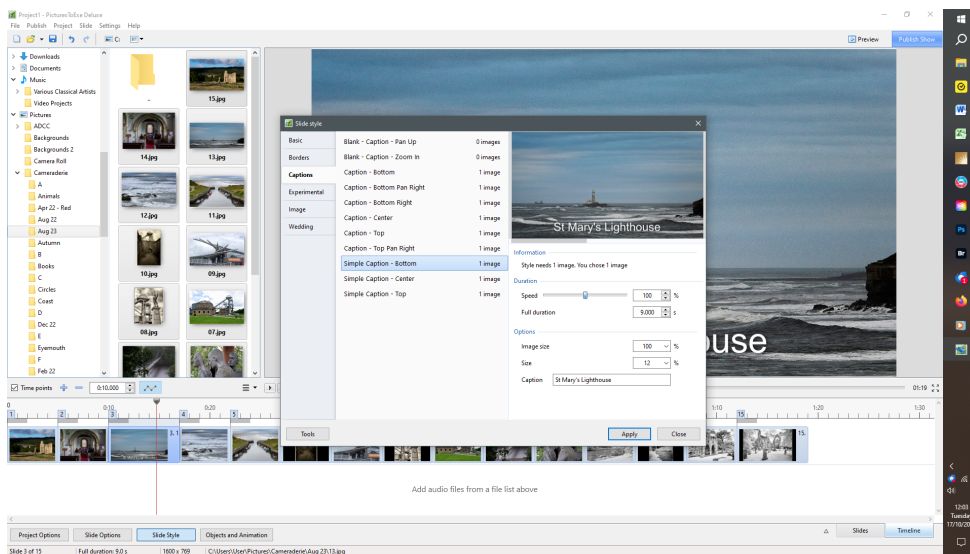
Once you are happy with your effects, select 'close' from the top menu.

Captions: -

A caption can also be added to individual slides, which can be used to inform viewers as to the nature of the subject, be it the name of a flower or the location of the place in a travelogue.

Select the slide that you want to add the caption to and click 'Slide Style' from the menu at the bottom of the screen.

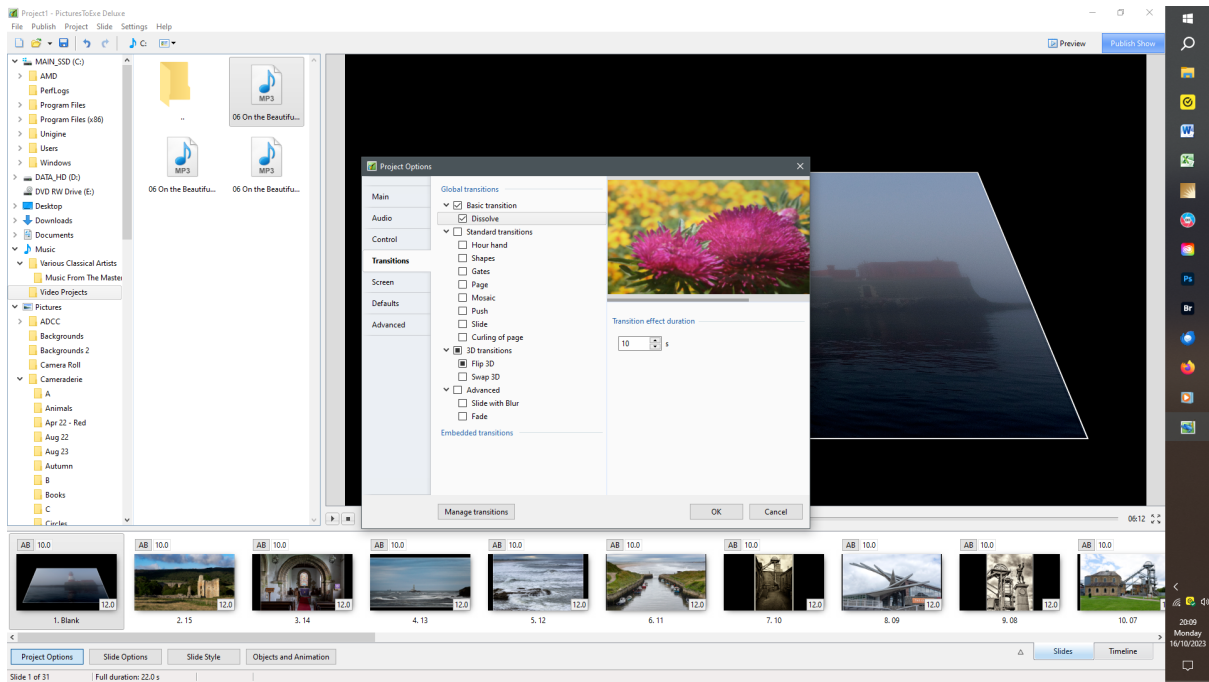
From the pop up window you can select the wording of the caption, its place in the frame, timing etc.



Transitions: -

There are numerous in-built transitions that effect the way that one slide ends and the next starts. Whilst it is possible to set a different transition for each slide change, that is a bit over the top and it is best to use a simple transition for the whole show.

Using the shift key, select ALL the slides and from the menu at the bottom of the screen, select 'Project Options'/'Transitions'. A menu screen appears –



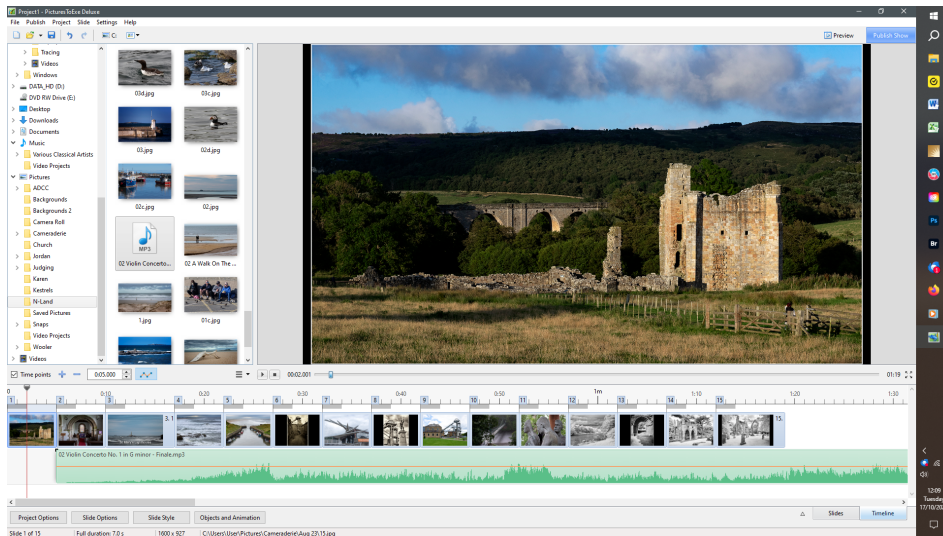
You can select the transition that you want and the time of that transition. Note that if the transition is only short, the effect may not have time to complete and it may not look good.

How the whole show will look can be checked at any time by selecting the 'Preview' button at the top right of the screen.

Adding Music: -

At the bottom right hand of the Story board, click on timeline. The view then changes to show the timing of each slide and the overall time.

Using the file list on the left hand side, navigate to the folder where the chosen music piece is stored. As with the images, select the one you want and drag and drop into the time line.



Right click on the music track and from the menu select 'Link audio clip to Slide 1' and it will move the track to the start of the show. You can adjust the time the music starts by dragging the track to your desired position.

Using the handle at the top left of the track, you can adjust the fade in of the music, and at the other end of the track the handle at top right adjusts the fade out.

You can set all the slides to the length of the sound track by clicking the drop down menu just above the slides and selecting 'Fit all slides to soundtrack'.

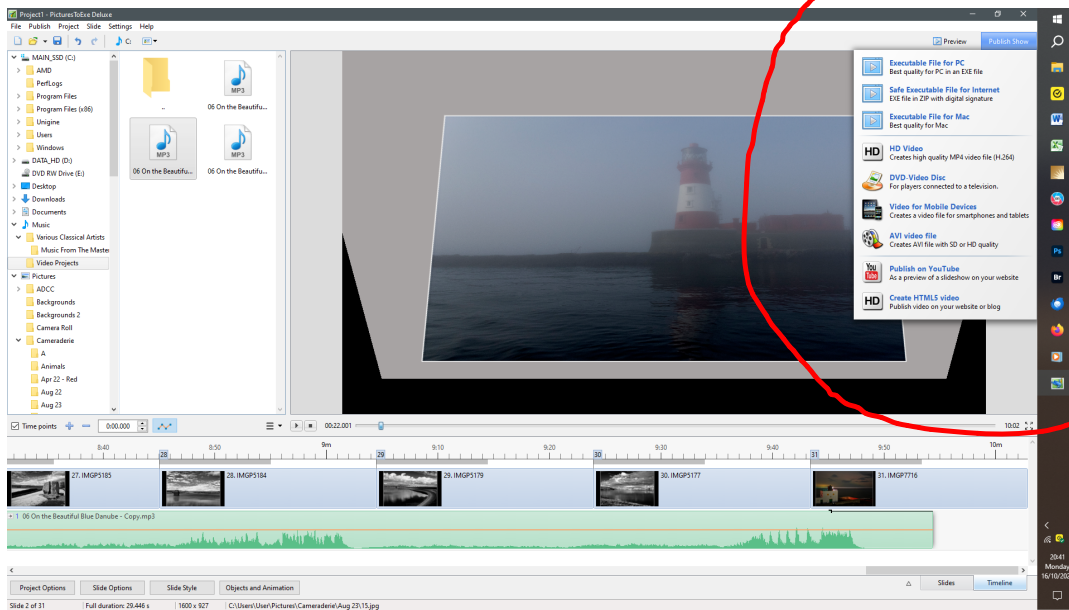
The Audio Track can be manipulated by right clicking the track and selecting 'Customize Audio Clip'. Here you can fine tune fade ins and outs and the volume.

Publishing: -

You now have a completed slideshow, ready to be published. Check that you are happy with the results by clicking 'Preview'. Don't forget to turn on your speakers.

N.B. – Don't forget to save your work.

Click on the 'Publish Show' button, in the top right hand corner. A list of options appears that enables you to export in differing formats, for different purposes.



Selecting 'Executable file for PC' will generate an 'exe' file that should be readable by any PC, the size of which will be dependent on the number, and quality, of the images and the size, and complexity, of the sound track.

Other options allow you to generate a file that is suitable for publishing on the Internet, by compression.

If you have numerous shows that you want to combine into a holiday storybook, for example, then select 'DVD-Video Disc'.

The preceding illustration has outlined the basic premise of creating a slide show, with accompanying music, using WnSoft 'Pictures to Exe'. As always, the Devil is in the detail, and there is so much more that you can achieve with experimentation and practice. Do go to WnSoft's website and review the resources available, such as sample show, user guides and tutorial videos to help you create your own masterpiece.