Beckham Digital

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Bah Humbug

Usually in a December newsletter we will be tossing around Seasons Greetings, but I am guessing that quite often we just need a rest from the hype. A rest from the wall to wall adverts as companies try to separate us from our earnings for that year. Added to that I am suffering Man Flue at the present time and feel dreadful. So, that's it, no more about the dreaded Christmas.

Quality before Quantity in Audio Visual

Digital imaging and Audio Visual software has given us an awful lot, but I can't help looking at some of the slide shows I see and have judged and wonder. Are we blinded by the effects modern software can create to the extent that we feel we MUST use them?

There are times when the KISS principle still works best, but I wonder if some slide show creators would recognise that if it jumped up and bit their backside. There really is a very logical question we should ask ourselves, before we apply a "zoom in" to one image, a "zoom out" on the next one, then another "zoom in" of the next and so on. **Why are we doing that, what does it add?**

I am sorry to break this to some AV authors, but moving an image around the screen doesn't make a dull image exciting. That's not a very politically correct statement, but right none the less.

If you're putting together a Pictorial Slide Show. This is called Photo Harmony these days, which in my view is not a good label for this style of AV. However, whatever you call the AV style, it's strength is the images first, then the music.

That slide show should stand or fall on the merits of the images, the music and how the images are synchronised to that music. That is not to say we cannot introduce a little movement, but when that movement/animation takes over from all else, a warning Klaxon should be sounding somewhere.

Come on Lads and Lasses, lets have more quality, less quantity.
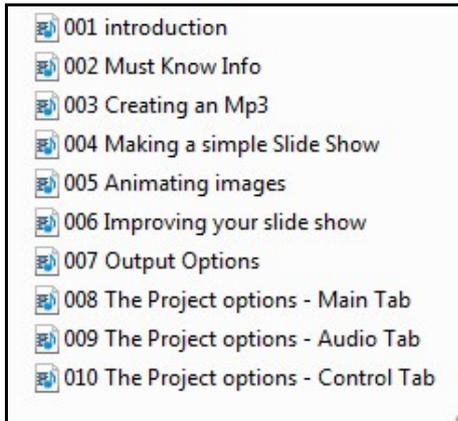
Thoughts for the future

For many years now I have provided my videos within a PC menu system that would be self booting on Windows PC's, but I have no feel at all if these menus are used, or how they are perceived. I find myself in a position where I am considering scrapping menus for one or two practical reasons:

1. From time to time our virus protection software updates and suddenly it finds threats where it never found them before. This is particularly irritating when the software designed to save us from a problem, actually causes us problems. Virus Software suddenly finds a potential threat in my menus when there clearly isn't any. It's very frustrating, could be damaging to confidence and there is little or nothing I can do about it, apart from scrap menus.

2. Mac users cannot run the menus anyway and sometime soon we will see PicturesToExe available for Mac computers, so perhaps I should give Mac users more thought.

3. The menus are time consuming to create, especially making sure all the links work as expected. Far more time goes into the preparation of the menus than can reasonably be justified by my reward.
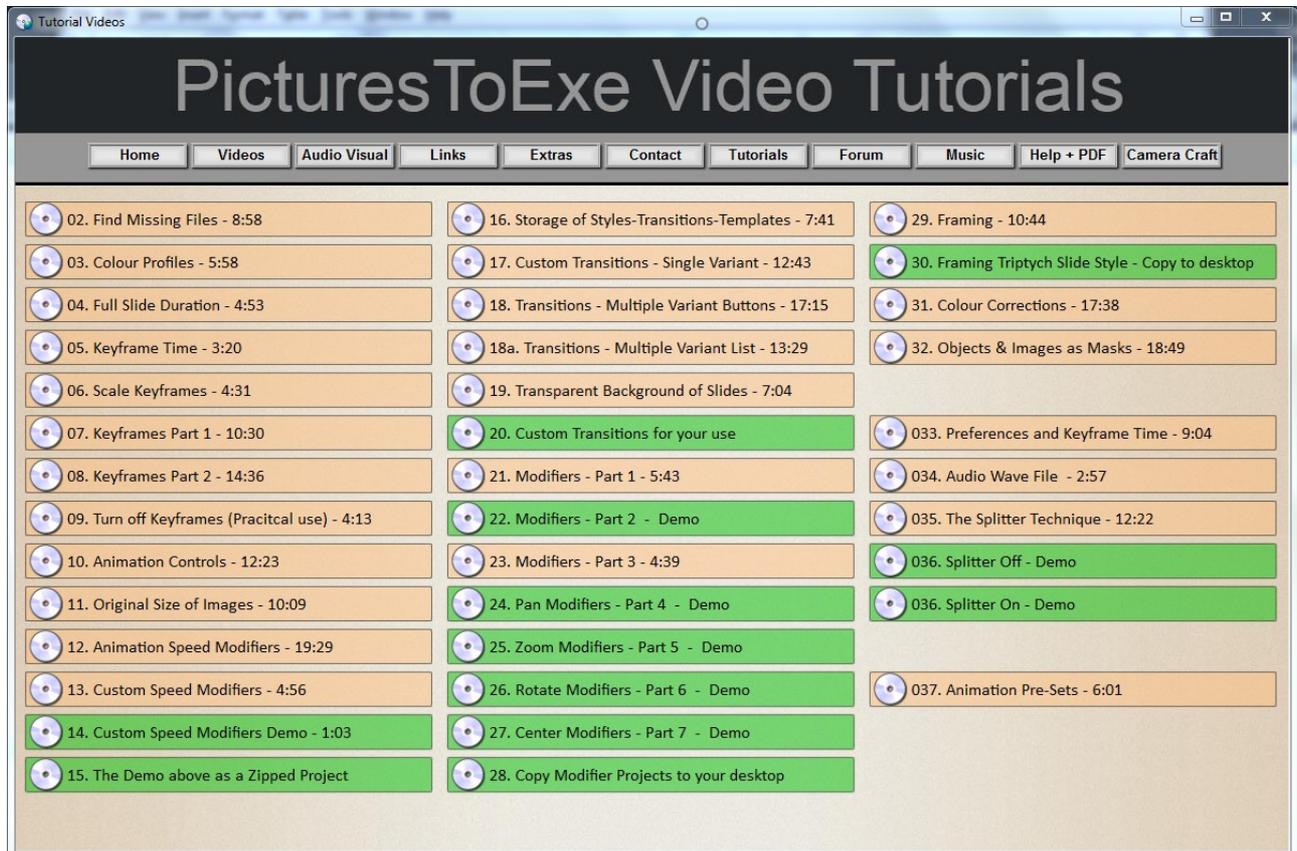
I am thinking of killing off menus altogether and providing named and numbered video(s) in the

best order to be viewed. Something as simple as the demo list below.

```
001 introduction
002 Must Know Info
003 Creating an Mp3
004 Making a simple Slide Show
005 Animating images
006 Improving your slide show
007 Output Options
008 The Project options - Main Tab
009 The Project options - Audio Tab
010 The Project options - Control Tab
```

They will all be zipped together in just one folder along with any extras included.

How would those who have purchased or downloaded my videos feel about such a change? I would be grateful to know. I have set up a simple Yes/No Poll on my forum here

If you're not a member of the forum, a quick email to me would be great.

Email Barry Here

Changing Image Aspect Ratio in PicturesToExe - Video

We have touched on this subject before, but here is a different way to address it. We generally make our slide shows at 16:9 aspect ratio and if you're not doing that, you need to ask yourself why.

All the screens your slide show will be viewed on are likely to be 16:9, so you would have to have a good reason to use anything else. Of course, SLR users have an immediate problem in how to make a 3:2 image from their camera fit a 16:9 aspect ratio. Especially when the content of the image fills the frame to the degree that cropping isn't practical.

Our video suggests one way to do this in PicturesToExe that also retains a degree of flexibility too. Our video below has been presented as we have suggested in the topic above, no menu, just the video.

Download - Changing the aspect ratio of images in PicturesToExe to match the slide show size

80 Image Wedding Template

During the beta testing of PicturesToExe 9 earlier this year I created a wedding template for 80 images. It was a demonstration to show that a Wedding Slide Show could be created at 16:9 aspect ratio using only 3:2 aspect ratio images.

In addition it shows that the entire Wedding Slide Show could be put together in 20 minutes from a ready made structured template. It doesn't have to be a lengthy time consuming job at all. For wedding photographers or those who have a need to repeat a show, templates are the way.

I had forgotten all about the project, but I re-discovered it on my PC a few days ago and I have posted it on my Photo and AV forum for all to download, use, or adjust as you see fit.

There is quite a bit of animation within it, that could be used for slide styles for those who are into

making those. You don't need to locate 80 images to see the template in action, it will run OK with the default images. The default images do contain some guidance on using the template, but I have included a read-me file and also a couple of slide styles with the zipped folder.

Under-estimating Support

An old friend from the UK stayed with us recently in Australia and one of the interests that we have in common is photography. However, he chose to travel light with just a Panasonic DMC-LX15. While he was here, I took him to a few photographic places of interest and one of those was a local spot, Serenity Falls. I also took a compact camera, my Canon G16

The difference between his images and mine, even though we walked side by side was significant. At a risk of appearing somewhat smug, the quality and appeal of mine were several streets ahead of his and the main reason was I had a bit of an advantage

The first advantage was that I had my Canon G16 firmly attached to a Gorilla Pod (left). We were in low light conditions and once you can steady the camera, all the shutter speeds and apertures open up to you.

in these conditions and without support for the camera, meant (for him) either, very high ISO settings, which brings it's own set of problems. Or, a severe restriction on the shutter speeds and apertures he could use. The difference this made in the images was considerable, but the other advantage was that I was shooting Raw and he was shooting Jpeg and

that meant there was only so far we could take his images in Photoshop. The Raw files as we know have far greater scope with exposure and contrast.

As photographers we talk a lot about the merits of different cameras, lenses and editing techniques. Many are constantly searching for that Holy Grail, but unless things are right when the button is pressed. (and I also had a cable release for that too) you're between a rock and a hard place with image quality, creativity and confidence.

It was interesting to hear from my friend, that on the last leg of his Australian trip, he bought himself a Gorilla Pod too. Now that says an awful lot because he is a canny Scot and does not part with his money easily :-)

Both of the images above are from my Canon G16 and the moral? Less chasing technology and equipment and more thought to those minutes prior to the button press.

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