

Maureen Platts

An Audio Visual Journey



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If you are an audio visual enthusiast you probably would have viewed the work of others via various web sites, one of which is the [PicturesToExe Slide Show Club](#). Slide Show Club is a place where you can post your audio visual presentations for others to view and comment.

These days we seem to be living in a world where almost everything is over hyped. So, it really is nice to see a slide show title posted and before you even view it, you know you will enjoy it. You know that because the author demonstrates a skill and consistency that others never quite achieve. I don't think its controversial to say that many presentations lack quality, appeal and often rely on quantity or gimmicks over quality of production. Not those of Maureen Platts. (LakelandLass)

So, when we do see an author who seems to have found the right audio visual path with a consistent level of expertise, we should sit up and take notice.



It's with this in mind I asked Maureen Platts if she would allow me to interview her and publish the result in my newsletter, but in fact I think this article has outgrown the newsletter and can quite easily stand alone. Some readers may know Maureen as Lakeland Lass on [PicturesToExe Slide Show Club](#)

Maureen lives in the Lake District (Cumbria) a particularly beautiful part of the UK, but don't run away with the idea that this is the secret to her success.

The consistency of her presentations and the quality of the photography is important here, but that has to be balanced with the right music and tempo. Then the music and images have to be woven together to create an emotion and the charm that makes her audio visual stand out. Maureen not only does that, but does it with a degree of consistency few can match.

Maureen, when did you first take up photography?

Many years ago but I have only taken it seriously in the last 13 years after we retired and moved to the Lake District. Cumbria or the Lake District as its affectionately known is in the North West of the UK on the borders of Scotland and is known for its outstanding natural beauty

What first inspired you to take up a photographic hobby?

I always loved being out in the countryside, first as a cyclist and later as a hill walker. I found I wanted to try and 'capture' something of what I was experiencing, so I could take it home with me.

Has photography ever been more than a hobby for you?

It is just a very enjoyable hobby.



Image above from the [Audio Visual called Orta](#) shot in Lake Orta Northern Italy

What was your first camera?

My first 'proper' camera was a Ricoh range-finder. It was very small and light enough to wear around my neck whilst walking in the hills. It got me started.

How did you learn photographic and image editing skills?

A male friend who was a keen hill walker and photographer, who had recommended the Ricoh to me, took me out with my camera to help me. He explained about f stops and other technical controls on the camera and made me aware of how important the quality of light is to photography.

After managing to ruin my Ricoh during a very wet Outward Bound course, I 'graduated' to an SLR, a Pentax ME Super and from then on I read every photographic magazine I could get my hands on. At that time, I was using slide film so image editing skills were not something that was on the radar at all.

When I somewhat reluctantly moved to digital I was initially disappointed with the results but then watched a few of your early tutorials. After that I read a lot about editing in photographic magazines. It also helped me when I joined a camera club, looking at other people's work and having my own photographs critiqued.

You obviously have a love of landscape, where did that come from?

When I was in my early teens, an uncle bought me a bicycle. I took every opportunity to escape from the city where I lived to venture into the countryside of the Yorkshire Dales. I felt an immediate connection to this open landscape with its hills and dales and realised that this was for

me. After a cycling accident I abandoned the bike and turned to getting off road and really into the landscape.

What camera are you currently using and what is your favourite lens and why that lens?

I now have Nikon cameras, a D300, D7000 and D7100 and love and use them all. The lenses I use most are the Nikkor 16-85 3.5-5.6 VR and Nikkor 18-140 3.5-5.6 VR. I probably use the 18-140 most, because of its longer reach, but actually prefer the 16-85 due to the slightly wider angle.

Do you use a tripod much?

I very rarely use a tripod, mainly because I cannot now carry the extra weight when hill walking. There are occasions where I miss out by not having a tripod, but I can usually find something to help. A rock or fence, something like that to enable me to improvise in order to steady my camera.

The light is often extremely changeable and there are times when the shot has to be taken right then. If I had to set up a tripod, I could lose a lot of the shots I do get. So it has pros and cons with the Hill Walking.

I notice that your images are always pin sharp where they need to be and many people struggle with this. Can you give us an idea why your images always look right? What are your secrets

Most of the time my camera is set at f16 or f11 for landscape, focusing approximately one-third into the picture. The small aperture allows a great depth of field and helps to ensure sharpness.



Image above from the [Audio Visual called On Foot in the Yorkshire Dales](#)

Many of your images could be adversely affected by the cameras inability to get exposure right every time, so what is your approach to exposure? Snow scenes, misty days, harsh sunlight etc.

Barry, not too many years ago you created a free tutorial video on exposure. I believe you included it in one of your Newsletters. I use the method you described there. I always have my 'Blinky' warning on the cameras LCD screen, which I find invaluable. I also check the histogram and try to expose as much to the right as possible. I adjust my exposure via the compensation button accordingly.

Editors note: The Blinky Maureen refers to is the ability many camera have to display on the LCD areas of the image that may be over exposed and therefore lacking in detail. Areas burnt out will flash and with only a little practice you can use this option to be much more accurate and therefore more confident with your exposure. Especially when you are trying to expose to the right, but not go too far and cause more problems than you're trying to solve.

What is your approach to composition? Is it something that comes natural to you now?

I learnt early on the importance of having something in the foreground to help give depth to an image. It helps because when you view the image on screen, its like you're looking into the scene rather than at it, on a photograph

I think composition is now intuitive, but I am aware that I often break the rules, e.g. horizons often in the centre instead of on the third. Difficult sometimes, especially when you are photographing reflections.



Image above from the audio visual called - [Return to the Highlands](#)

Your images always look to me that they were taken at the right time of day. Am I right about that? Is this something you plan?

I can't honestly say I plan anything. I don't drive so I can't always be where I would like to be at the 'right' time of day. Probably that is why I much prefer the autumn/winter months in the Northern Hemisphere where you can get good light at any time of the day, if you are lucky.

I see many landscapes where the image has been over saturated with colour. Yours always seem to be well balanced with natural colour What is your approach to this?

I don't really know how to answer this one. I always shoot in Raw and set the camera Picture Control to 'Standard' and White Balance to Daylight as I often find these settings give a more pleasing result. I then just tweak colour saturation in Adobe Camera Raw.

Your slide shows are very pleasing to watch, so when your out with the camera, is audio visual on your mind as you're pressing the shutter, or are you shooting enough images to select from later, or a bit of both?

I regard myself as a bit of a snapper really, as I do take a great many photographs, not always with an AV in mind. I will usually try to make a slideshow with images taken on our holiday trips. Otherwise I tend to wait until I am inspired by a particular piece of music, and then endeavour to put something together using images from my files.

Do you shoot Raw images or Jpeg and why?

When I first switched to digital, I shot jpegs but was unhappy with results. Photographer friends strongly advised me to try RAW. This opened editing up for me and I noticed a vast improvement in results giving me much more control on how I wanted my final image to look.



Image above from the audio visual called – [Winter Days in the Highlands](#)

What is your chosen image editor?

Adobe Photoshop and have recently started experimenting with Nik filters on the advice of photographer friends.

What made you choose that editor and presumably stay with it?

An early version of Photoshop Elements came with my first digital camera. I then tried the full Photoshop and am now on Photoshop Creative Cloud. I have never felt the need to try anything else as it does everything I want and much, much more besides.

What is your personal favourite slide show that you have made?

My favourite is usually the one I have just finished. However, I do go back over shows I have made earlier and often think that I would do them differently now having developed and learnt more. Maybe a job for the future.

What made you choose PicturesToExe slide show software, why not Pro Show Gold or one of the others?

A 90yr old man (a keen AV-er) at my then Camera Club gave me some pages torn from a Photo Magazine in which YOU had written an article demonstrating how to make a slideshow using PicturesToExe and he said to me 'you should try this'. I went into your website, studied your shows and the ones on the old Beechbrook site and was hooked. I also tried Pro Show Gold but was unimpressed. PictureToExe is everything I need and more as my use of it is very basic.



Image above from the audio visual called – [Autumn Days](#)

What is the biggest mistake you think AV enthusiasts fall into. Generally speaking, where do you think they need to spend more time? Image quality, sound, techniques, length of show et?

For me, good image quality is a prime concern. Also, it is very easy when starting out to create a sequence which is too long, a trap maybe we have all fallen into at some time.. We all enjoy our own photographs otherwise we wouldn't contemplate including them in a show, but sometimes we need to be a bit ruthless.

I don't like too much animation, neither am I a fan of narration unless absolutely essential as I would prefer to let the images and music speak for themselves, but that is just my personal opinion. Each to his own.

There are many avenues our audio visual creativity can take us, but what makes Maureen's work stand out is quality, sensitivity, superbly worked transitions and above all else consistency. She manages to select an almost perfect choice of music every time.

There are other slide shows created by Maureen on the [Slide Show Club web site](#) that you can download and enjoy.

We have just linked to a small selection of her slide shows above, here are one or two others:-

[Winter](#)

[Autumn Passes Winter Arrives](#)

[Descent into Winter](#)

[Spring Days in Scotland](#)

[Ilulissat and the Ice Fjord](#)

Maureen, Thank you for your time.



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