

the picture show program

If you need an easy way to produce professional slideshows, whether they be for presenting images to clients or full-blown AV productions, take a look at PicturesToExe Deluxe. Barry J. Colquhoun FBIPP explains

PicturesToExe Deluxe is an amazing piece of presentation software that defies all the usual rules. It's inexpensive, easy to learn, very powerful, undemanding in terms of computer resources – and it produces wonderful results.

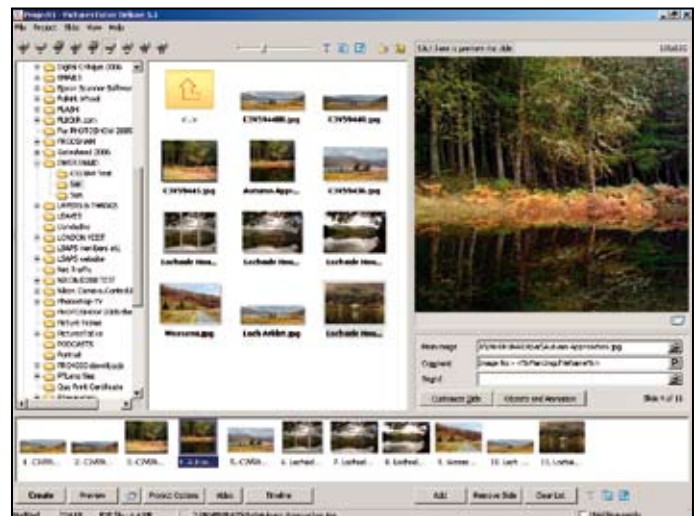
The PC compatible software is designed to create slideshow presentations of the highest possible quality and its results will match those from far more expensive and complex programs. It can produce everything from the most straightforward sequential slideshow through to fully animated corporate or studio promotional output. Little wonder that it is favoured by an estimated 90% of the world's AV community.

The price and file size of this program gives no indication as to its power and level of sophistication. Priced at just \$59 for the fully featured software – or \$39 for PicturesToExe without the

DVD authoring component – the program itself is but a 4MB download. In addition to the amazingly low price, the purchase of PicturesToExe includes all future upgrades to the software free of charge (the VideoBuilder component is upgradeable free of charge for two years beyond the purchase date).

PicturesToExe Deluxe offers a range of options so extensive that it is impossible to cover everything it can do in just one short review. At its most basic, a simple sequential slideshow can be produced in a matter of moments. Select the images you want to use: JPEG, PNG, GIF or BMP (they need not all be sourced from the same folder or drive), add them to the slide list, decide how long you want each image to stay on screen, create the finished file, and the job is done.

Beyond that the end-user options extend almost into infinity. Audio files can be



The main PicturesToExe screen. Making a simple slideshow is a quick and easy task. Select the images you want to use in JPEG, PNG, GIF or BMP formats, add them to the slide list, decide how long you want each image to stay on screen, create the finished file, and the job is done.

added to your slideshows using MP3, OGG, WMA, WAV or MIDI formats. Images can be automatically synchronised to fit exactly into the duration of the chosen audio track, or manually timed to sync with elements contained within the audio to an accuracy of 1/1000 of a second. In addition to an overall backing track, audio can also be attached to individual slides, should this be required.

Images can be displayed automatically in sequence, in random order, or controlled manually. Automated slideshows can have the option of full manual override if required.

Full-screen presentations can be produced at any

screen resolution, as well as windowed slideshows of any screen dimension and/or frameless windowed slideshows.

Presentations can be set to run through automatically and then close, loop constantly, run through and leave the last image on-screen (until escape is pressed), or be set up to start additional slideshows so that as one slideshow ends the next one begins.

There are 15 different image transition styles to choose from (plus variants), all of which are fully user adjustable. These can be applied collectively to all the images in the slideshow or different transitions can be applied to different slides. →



This is the custom synchronisation window where the timing of images can be manually set to an accuracy of 1/1000 of a second, or automatically synchronised to space the images out equally across the duration of the chosen audio track.

You have total control over the appearance of your presentations.

Presentation options

Output options include PC executable (exe), which packages all the images and audio tracks into a single file. (The image files themselves are therefore not directly accessible to the viewer). The standalone exe files do not require any special software to be installed on the playback computer – not even PicturesToExe. The resultant file size of a finished

exe file amounts to little more than the combined file sizes of the images being used in the slideshow, plus any audio files that have been added: the actual program overhead amounts to little more than 250KB.

There is also a PC based screensaver option (scr). Additionally, the newly introduced VideoBuilder feature enables PicturesToExe Deluxe to produce in-house DVD-Video productions. Presentations can be password protected and/or date restricted.



This shows the Navigation Bar option for controlling the slideshow. I have chosen to use a full-screen grey background with the image set to fill 80% of the available screen area with a drop-shadow added within PTE. At the bottom right I have chosen to add the words 'Image No' followed by the automatic inclusion of the actual file name to help streamline the image selection process. The navigation bar has been configured to my own requirements.

USER SUPPORT

- A free trial copy of PicturesToExe (limited to just ten slides per show) can be downloaded from www.wnsoft.com. The software can only be purchased on-line.
- PicturesToExe has an active and informative user forum which you can access at: <http://www.picturestoexe.com/forums/index.php>.
- An extensive help file, in the form of a PDF document, has been produced by members of the PTE community to assist newcomers to the software to understand the variables and options now available in the significantly more powerful Deluxe version 5 of the software. Basic slideshow construction remains simplicity itself. The PDF help file (7.5MB) can be downloaded from: http://www.wnsoft.com/apr/PicturesToExe_v50_UserManual_en.pdf
- Examples of slideshows created using PTE can be downloaded from: <http://www.beechbrook.com/pte/index.asp> – there are approximately 200 slideshows on-line ranging in size from 1MB to 60MB. These are generally zipped to facilitate downloading.

DVD-Video discs produced using PicturesToExe Deluxe and the newly introduced VideoBuilder function can be played on any DVD player on a PC or Mac, or on a DVD player attached to a television set.

The VideoBuilder option in PicturesToExe Deluxe allows you to quickly and easily burn DVD-Video discs from your slideshows. You can adjust DVD menus and customize many parameters of your DVD disc. You can also create AVI video files that can be used by third party DVD authoring programs. Any image can be set to stay on-screen for any length of time and then advance automatically. Manual control includes (among other things) step-forward/step-back on left/right mouse click or via the keyboard. Alternatively, full control is available via the optional (and configurable) navigation bar.

PicturesToExe is under constant development. Improvements, embellishments and updates are available on a regular basis. Beta testing is open to all, enabling the

latest innovations to be used by everyone. Since it was first released in July 1999 there have been, on average, no fewer than seven updates per year.

The software engineers respond directly to end-user requests and suggestions, meaning that the software is being developed in accordance with the needs of those who actually use it, as well as through the creative imagination of the founder creator (Igor Kokarev) and his international team of assistants. A few years ago I made a suggestion for a possible improvement to the program and it was written into the program within 10 days of my asking – beat that for a response to end-user needs.

Conclusion

At this price, no photographer or studio should be without a copy of this software, providing a quick and easy solution to the production of preview presentations, as well as commercial or self-promotion presentations. Highly recommended. □