





Show off with a digital slide show

There's no better way to share your images than by turning them into a slide show. **Andrew Williams** explains how, using PicturesToExe v5.6 software

SKILL LEVEL

BEGINNER

ADVANCED

TIME TAKEN
45 MINS

SOFTWARE
PicturesToExe v5.6

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 getting there early!

It's well worth looking around after the finish too, as there are plenty of detail shots of the equipment and rider portraits to be had; the final shot in my

sequence is a portrait of Olympic Gold medal winner Bradley Wiggins CBE, being interviewed in the car park. I deliberately took a variety of shots with a view to creating a story of the day as a slide show.

You can make slide shows using Photoshop Elements, but dedicated programs such as PicturesToExe (PC only) are much more versatile and very easy to use. There's a 30-day trial at www.wnsoft.com or you can buy it for around £18. ■



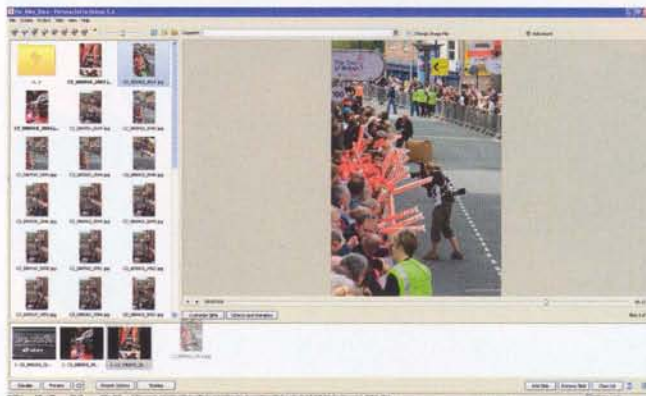
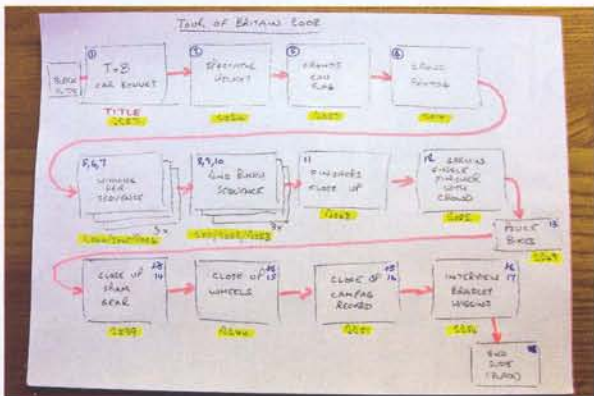
1 Select your images

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 had to think how to present these; for example side by side. Look for good sequences of shots. Number them in order and save in a folder.



2 Resize them for projection

Next consider the end use of your slide show: suppose that you will be projecting the images. Most mid-range projectors have a resolution of 1024x768 pixels, so there's no point in making your images larger. Resize your images using **File>Process Multiple Files**. Select **Resize Images**, enter a width of 1024 pixels and select **Constrain Proportions**. Under **File Type**, select **JPEG High Quality**.



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'll use a series of images as a sequence I show overlapping boxes. You soon develop your own style.

4 Start assembling your show

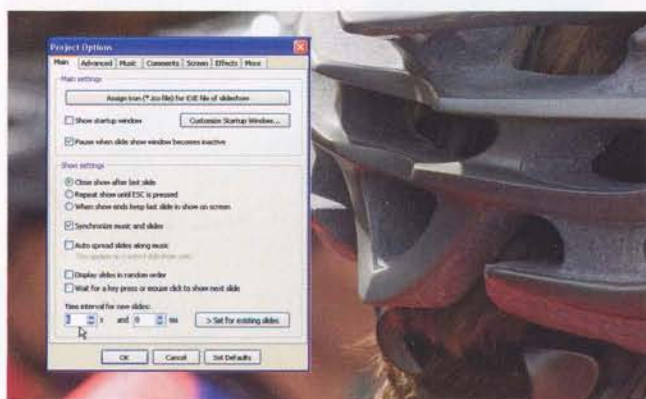
Start up the PicturesToExe software. The interface is divided into a file browser on the left, preview window on the right and slide list along the bottom. You can easily re-configure the layout to suit yourself. Use the browser to display your files, then drag and drop them onto the slide list in the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



5 Preview your show

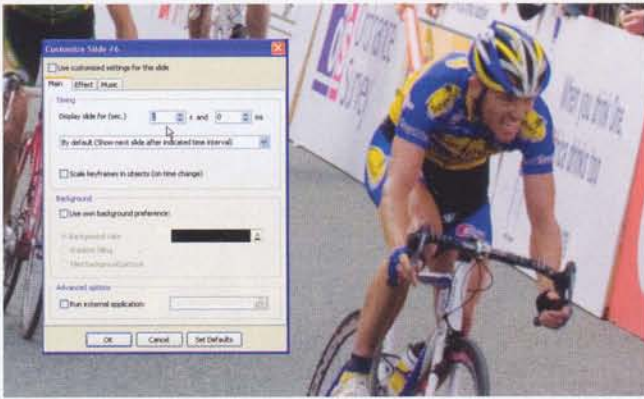
For a basic slide show, with the first slide selected, click on the play icon (forward arrow), which is below the preview window, and your slide show will run. Alternatively to see the show full screen, click the Preview button at the bottom left of your screen. Hit Esc to stop the show.

For a more elaborate slide show... read on!

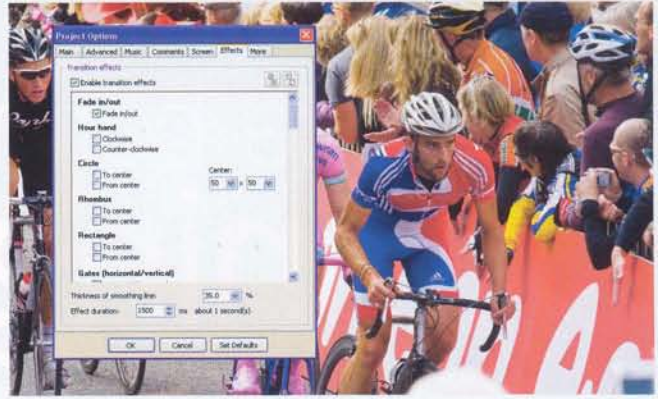


6 Change the timing

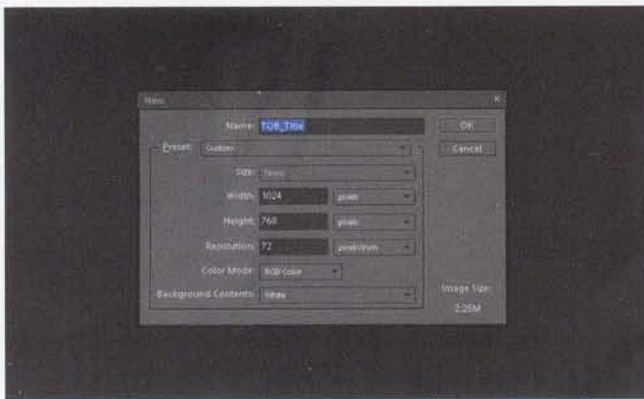
The basic show uses the default options; to improve on this, let's start by looking at the slide display timing. The default is four seconds for each slide. I decided to slow things down so each slide is on the screen for six seconds. To do this, click the Project Option button and set six as the Time Interval for New Slides, then click Set for Existing Slides. Click OK.



7 Fine-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 my storyboard. Double-clicking a slide in the slide view brings up a dialogue box where you can override the defaults. I set the timing for the first two slides in each sequence to two seconds.



8 Set the transition effect
 By default you get a variety of random effects which can be 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 this time choose the Effects tab. Click the icon top right to deselect all the effects, then select the main effect for your show.



9 Add a blank title slide
 Create a new file in Elements: **File>New>Blank File**. It can be plain black or white (or another colour). Set the size to 1024x768 pixels at 72 pixels/inch. Save as a JPEG file. In PicturesToExe drag this blank JPEG 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.



10 Animate the title
 For a simple 'zooming' type title, add an image by clicking the Add Image icon (blue and green square). To zoom the image out from a dot in the centre to fill the screen, add a keypoint by dragging the blue triangle along the timeline (bottom of screen) to approximately midway and click the + icon. Drag the image by its 'handles' to its final size and position.



11 Add title text
 Click on the start keypoint (00:00:000) and on the Animation tab (right) 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 any title text. Type the text in the Properties box (right panel). Animate the text similarly to step 10 if you like.



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 friends, click the Create button and select Executable File for PC. This tutorial only scratches the surface of PicturesToExe, so take a closer look. Or try one of the many other slide show software packages.