

Video in PTE

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I'm no video expert, but I have tried putting some video into PTE shows, so I thought that I would tell you what I've learned. PTE version 7 has included the ability to include video clips into PTE shows, but each new version brings new features, so rather than give you a detailed account of how to make AV with video (the details will probably change as the versions change), I will try to cover some basic principles.

Capturing video

I had a go at including video because Carole and I occasionally take some video, mainly on holidays and usually with a compact camera. I won't try to get into good videoing techniques, but one important tip is to keep the camera still and let the action take place in front of you.

The cameras we have used to take video record in different aspect ratios and save the files in a variety of formats. My old Canon G9 takes 1024 x 768 files, recorded at 15 frames per second (FPS). On the other hand most others record HD, which I usually set to 1920 x 1080. The files have different file extensions, AVI, MOV and MTS, different recording formats, MJPEG, AVCHD.... different codecs..... different....

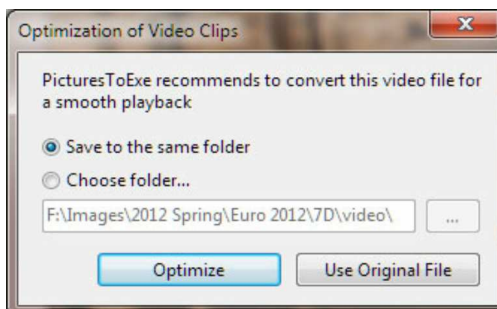
Fortunately, PTE seems to be very good at deciphering almost any format and making it usable, so don't panic too much. Tip2 - just take some video and try it. After all you can't break anything, just waste a few hours of a wet Sunday.

PTE Video Converter

Igor has made life a lot easier for us and tried to guarantee success. With version 7 of PTE comes a free video converter. This takes your raw video, from the camera and converts it for use in PTE, whenever possible optimising the video and often reducing the file size considerably. A quick look at one file from my Canon 7D shows it to be 76Mb out of the camera and 22Mb once converted. The converter has also changed the file format to one which PTE likes best, i.e. an avi file.

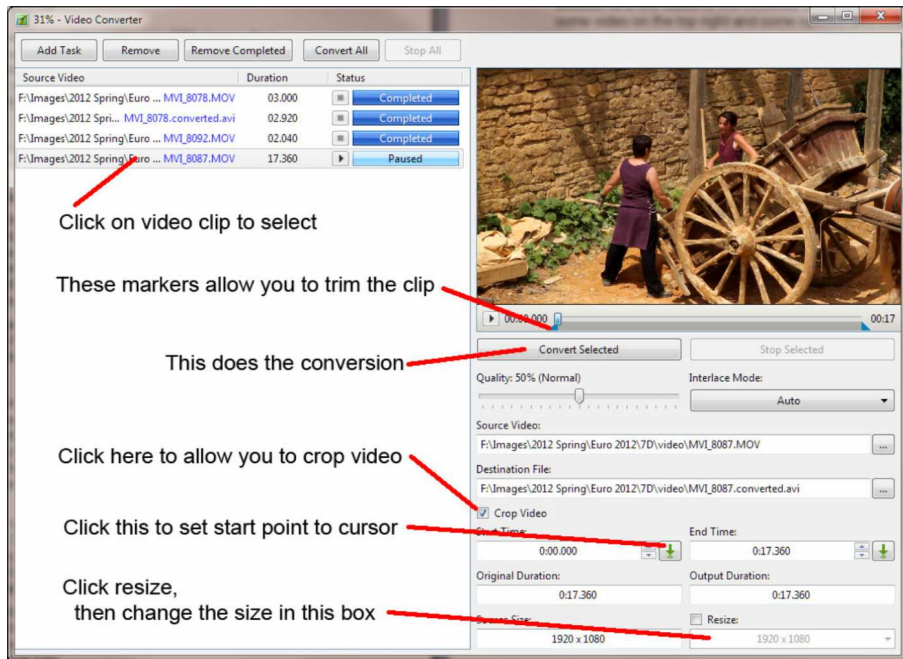
So how do you convert your video? In its simplest form, PTE treats video clips as if they are single images. So I would suggest that you make a copy of the video clips which you might want to use, into a project folder, just as I'm sure you would with images. Again, in the simplest mode, drag and drop a video into your slide list or onto the timeline of a sequence.

If the file is large, or PTE decides it warrants converting, it will come up with a message **'PicturesToExe recommends to convert this video file for a smooth playback'** and allows you to save to the same folder, to a different folder or not to convert and **'Use Original File'**.



Assuming that you choose to convert, nothing much seems to happen for a while, then the file name changes in the slide list to **filename.converted** and a new file appears in your file list. Job done and skip the rest of this section if you want.

But what has it done? Could you have had more control over the process? Well yes, a lot more control if you desire. By right clicking on a video file in the file list (not the slide list), one of the options will be to '**Convert Video Clip**'. Choose this and a new window will appear, called 'Video converter'.



In addition to a few buttons, the essential areas are a file list on the left, a view of some video on the top right and some options and sliders below that. You may well find that you have a few files in the list, maybe marked 'completed', but at least you ought to have one marked 'paused'. The chances are that this is the one you chose to convert, so select it by clicking on it. The clip should appear in the right hand window and simple controls allow you to play the video, or you can 'scrub' along it, as in PTE or O&A.

If you're happy to use it in it's entirety, at its captured pixel size, then click the button marked '**Convert Selected**'. This will do exactly the same as the automated process will have done if you hadn't intervened.

So what might you want to do? You might choose to change the format of the output file, reducing the quality and file size, or you might want to trim the clip to remove unwanted video at the start or end of the clip.

To clip the video, click on the '**Crop Video**' check box and you will see a couple of new blue triangular markers appear on the video clip timeline. These represent the start and end of the clip. To cut a bit from the start of the clip, you can either left-click/hold and drag the marker, while watching the clip, or you can play the clip, pause it when you get to your start point and click on the little green 'down arrow' by '**Start Time**'. Trimming the end of the clip is achieved in a similar same way.

So why would you want to trim the video clip? As you will see in a minute, we can also start and end the clip in PTE, but by trimming it here, the file size is reduced accordingly and remember, this file is going to be included in your PTE.exe file.

Your second option is to reduce the pixel size of the clip. You might want to do this if your HD video is going to be incorporated into a 1024 x 768 sequence, or perhaps you plan to use the video as a smaller insert into a still image. Click on the '**Resize:**' checkbox and you will be able to use the pull down box to select a new pixel size. Do note however, that you can't change the aspect ratio. I know, this looks like a problem, because you want to produce a 4:3 aspect ratio sequence, but your video is all 16:9. It isn't a problem, honest, we can sort it in PTE later.

Having chosen to trim the clip, or to change it's pixel size, you now chose '**Convert Selected**' and it will produce your new file. Incidentally it does produce a new file, so if you're not happy with it, go back and have another go and get a second new file.

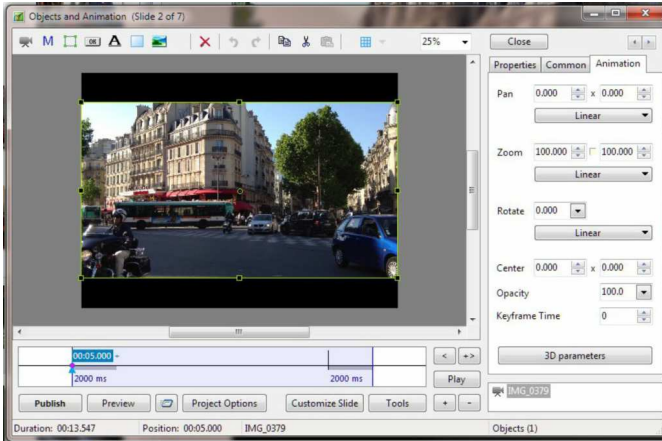
A little warning - Almost every camera seems to have its own video file format and the video converter library may not be totally up to date, especially for the newest cameras. For example, a year ago, I found that if I trimmed a Canon 7D file, the sound and video lost synch. However the work-around was to first convert the complete file and then reconvert, with trims, the converted file.

Including video in the timeline.

Having converted your video clip, or allowed PTE to do it for you, the clip can now be treated just as if it was a still slide image. Use the usual ability to fade in and out of the clip, drag and drop the video clip along the timeline; it will behave just like a still.

So how do we solve this problem of different aspect ratios for stills and video? My solution is to use the facilities available in Objects & Animation (O&A). With your video clip selected on the timeline of PTE, go into O&A and you will see that most parts of this are as you would normally expect. For most facilities O&A treats the video as if it were any other object, just like text, pictures, rectangles or frames.

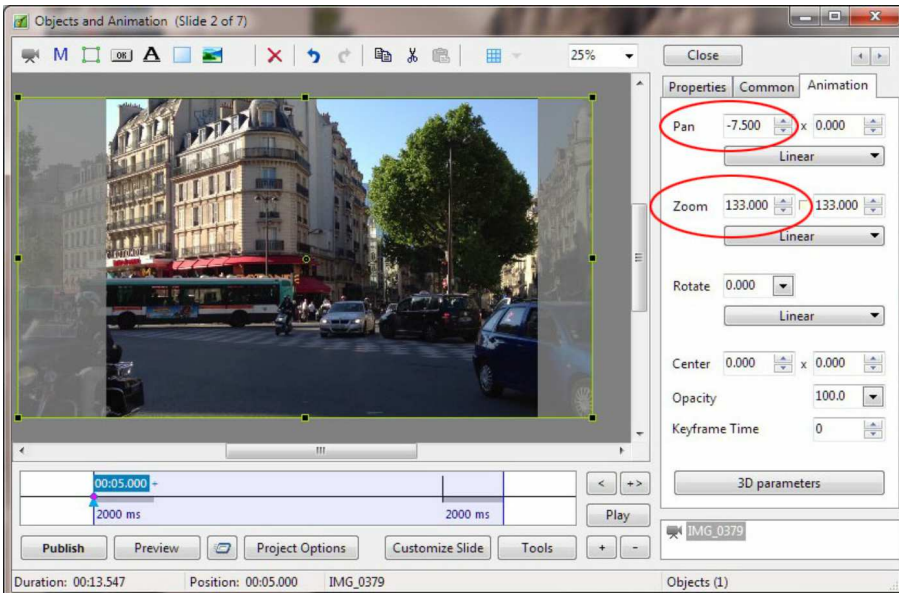
If your chosen video is 16:9 format in a 4:3 show, then it will have been inserted to fill the width, but leaving black bars top and bottom. If you don't like this (and I wouldn't) there are a couple of options, you could put some background to fill the black bars. This could be an image or a colour filled rectangle.



However, if you want to fill the screen with video then you will need to change the physical size of the video clip.

You could Shift/click and drag the top and bottom bounding boxes of the video in O&A to cover the black bars. But, of course, in doing that, you have changed the aspect ratio of the clip and it is likely to look horrible.

A better solution is to change the size of the clip, but keep its proportions, by dragging out a corner, or use the 'zoom' control in the '**Animation**' tab. Now, of course, you have lost the sides of the video, as shot, but you can slide it along, or use the first 'pan' control in the '**Animation**' tab to have the important part of the video on screen.



One thing that you might find annoying is that the sound track from the video will play over the music track you have included. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to fade that in and out, or drop its volume down a bit? Unfortunately that isn't possible at the moment. You have two choices, you can let it do its own thing or mute it completely. In the '**Properties**' tab in O&A you will find a check box which allows you to mute the audio for this clip.

Hopefully in future versions we will be able to adjust the video sound in PTE. For the moment, where I want to mix the video sound, then I've extracted the audio in a separate program and then mixed it into my normal sound editing software. You then have the task of sliding the video up and down the timeline to get exact lip-synch.

Adjusting the appearance of the video

As the video clip is just another object in O&A, then all the facilities of that processor can be used. We have already seen how the clip can be sized and panned, but this can also be done dynamically. Using keyframes the video can be made to change size as it is playing, moved about the screen, or even moved in three dimensional space, using the same facilities as you would for still images. (Rotating cubes with different video on each face is possible !)

You may want to refine the start and end points of the video and in the O&A 'properties' tab you will see the ability to trim bits from start and end (**Start time and duration**). You can also delay the start of the video within that slide by setting an 'offset'. For example, setting the offset to 2 seconds will mean that the slide will fade in, but the video will only start to play two seconds after the start of the slide.

Masks can also be used to show parts of the video. I saw an example of this recently in an Italian AV, called 'Tee9', where, at one point, video flames appeared above the irregular skyline of a the still image of the burning villa. I won't go into the detail of making and using masks in this article (it needs an article of its own), but suffice to say a mask made from the original villa image in Photoshop would have a black cut out where the flames are to appear. In O&A a new mask object is created, with the video placed in the mask object and the image of the villa above it. A .png of the villa might work just as well, on consideration.

More than one clip?

As a video is treated like an object, it is quite possible to have more than one video on the screen at a time, This could be a video inserted over a video, two videos side by side, or something similar.

All that is needed is to go into O&A for that slide and add video clip(s), then resize and position them. I have found that two simultaneous clips work fine on my lap top, but after that it starts to depend on the computer power. Mind you, I do think that this could be the source of some outstandingly bad visual effects !

Master video clip

The only other thing worth noting is the ability to have a single instance of a video clip played on a number of slides. Why would you want that? Well, let's imagine the situation where you have a background video of breaking waves. Onto this you have a number of changing slides. (Yes, I know, a bit tacky). If you create this with a number of separate slides, then the bit of video will be repeatedly added to the exe file and each time the slide changes, the video will restart.

To overcome this, make your first slide with the video background and overlying still image. Select the video clip and in the 'properties' box of O&A you will find a pull down list which allows '**Single Video clip**' or '**Master Video track**'. Select the later. Now make your next slide, but in this case, you will see an option to '**Link to:file name**'. Select this. If you do it right, the slides will change from one to the next and the video will continue without pause.

Saving and making an exe

The project should be saved in the usual way and when you come to making your exe file, the video components will be incorporated into the single exe file, just like any other AV show. You can chose to keep the video clips outside the exe file (in O&A, 'Properties tab' chose '**Don't include file to EXE**'). I guess that it might make a really big sequence run smoother as the video clips will only be loaded when required, but I haven't tested it out yet.

Version specific information is available as part of the help file for PTE, have a look at it, it might make more sense to you than this article.

You may well feel that video is not for you. But for me, the ability to make a holiday show which includes mainly still images, but also those bits of video that Carole and I take, is useful.

Have a go yourself, and have fun.

See the Links page of www.avnews.org.uk for a link to the PTE help files.

N.B. If you exclude the video clip from the EXE, then you must make sure it is in the same folder as the EXE. Otherwise it will not run and all you will get is a blue screen instead of your video. Eds.

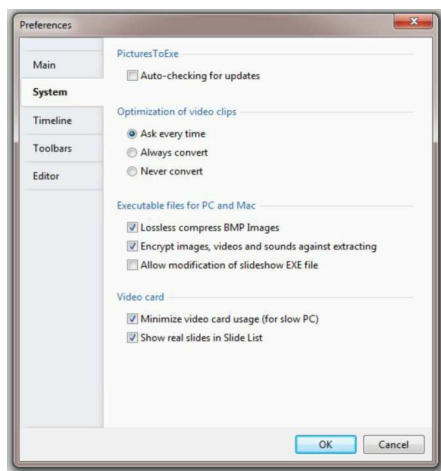
To download the latest version of PicturesToExe go to www.wnsoft.com

First look at PicturesToExe Deluxe v7.5

Peter Appleton

This new version, which is due for release in the autumn, is primarily a re-work of the user interface. There is very little new function that will be actually apparent in a finished sequence.

So what will it be like? Well, these two screenshots give you a flavour.



Note here that, having chosen your transition and set its values, you get a 'mini preview' within the tab.

Also new in this release will be 'Custom Effects'. You can now create your own custom effects using two given slides. You build your effect using the function of the Objects and Animation editor window. The effect can be saved for future use in other sequences. When applied to a slide in your sequence, the two given slides are replaced by your two slides. This undoubtedly adds a whole new set of creativity options for us to come to terms with (and I haven't caught up with video yet!).

The major change will be in the **Timeline view**. It is being enhanced to show multiple tracks of sound, and to allow the items in these tracks to be trimmed and enveloped via a visual interface. This feature was not part of the code provided for review.

Protection from loss of work, such as when the power fails or the PC crashes, is being introduced via an '**Auto Recovery**' feature. This will take regular copies of the .pte project file into a temporary folder. On restart after a failure, the most recent file copy will be presented to the user.

The new style adopted by PicturesToExe, as seen in the **Preferences window**, (left) gives a much 'cleaner, crisper' feel to the product. It no longer looks like a product whose roots lie in Windows 95.

One interesting point based on the content of Preferences: at some future time, the program will support automatic updates. It is possible that this option will be 'greyed-out' in the initial release of v7.5, pending the setting up of the required server infrastructure.

The other example shown is of the **Customize Slide | Effects window**.

