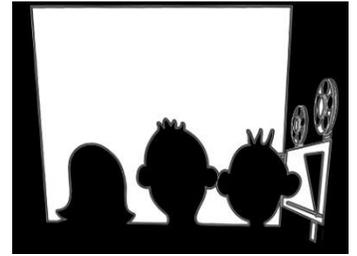# Sight & Sound
How to Create an Effective Digital AV Show
by Kas Stone (February 2015)

An Effective AV Show
- Integrates audio and visual elements into a compelling multi-media production.
- Communicates what the maker wants to say.
- Engages the audience (entertains, informs, tells a story).

Story/Idea – Sources of Inspiration
- A Place: local attraction, holiday destination (your own experience + extra research).
- An Event: festival, concert, wedding, memorial.
- Subject/Project of Personal Interest: geology, birds, sailboats, cloud formations.
- Abstract Idea: colour, shapes, textures, patterns, shadows, reflections.
- Music, song lyrics, poetry, inspirational quote.
- Before you begin, ask yourself 3 questions:
  1) What interests ME?
  2) What do I want to say about it?
  3) What might interest my audience about it?
- Think hard, plan well, be creative, and don't neglect this (most?) important show element.

Visual – Photographs
- Which images?
  → Only your best.
  → Only those that illustrate your story.
  → NO repetitive images (pick the best *one* from a series.
- How many images?
  → Effective shows typically contain 40-75 images, *maximum* 100 images.
  → Be guided by the pace & length of the music (longer, faster soundtrack → more images).
- How to prepare images?
  → High-quality JPEGs.
  → sRGB colour space because output devices use this.
  → Crop or re-size to standard aspect ratio appropriate for device, and to prevent 'edge drift' during playback.

1024 x 768 }	4:3 = older TV/projector aspect ratio
1400 x 1050	
1920 x 1080	16:9 = modern widescreen HD format

  (compared with compact camera 4:3 and DSLR 3:2 aspect ratio)

Visual – Text (title, captions, credits)
- Provides additional information not conveyed by the images or audio.
- Clarity is critical, so limit amount of text to the minimum needed to get the message across.
- Keep text on-screen long enough to read comfortably.
- Use large, clear font against a solid background, and choose a font style appropriate to the show (serious, comic, sinister).

Other Visual – Maps, Illustrations, Graphics
- Keep them simple & legible.
- Leave on-screen long enough to see properly.

Audio – Musical Soundtrack

- Soundtrack can add powerful emotional impact **OR** profound irritation if poorly chosen.
- Musical style sets the show's mood and pace.
- Soundtrack length & tempo determine the number of images needed.
- Choose music that reflects the mood and theme of the show.
- Be bold in choosing strong music from different musical genres and local performers.
- Be cautious about selecting songs with lyrics (your show may end up being a music video).
- Be cautious about cutting or stringing musical pieces together; respect the musician and assume he knows more than you do about music.
- *Caution Re Copyright:* composers, songwriters, performers and recording engineers hold the copyright to their music and sound effects, so it is technically illegal to use without express permission, except for one's own private entertainment in a non-business setting (see www.socan.ca for more information).
- The alternative is royalty-free music, but this 'safe' choice is often dull – or worse!

Audio – Sound Effects, Narration, Voice-Over

- Sound effects provide additional, image-specific information.
- Narration/voice-over are an auditory alternative to captions for providing extra information.
- Narration is longer and flowing (and must be well written and professionally spoken); voice-over is short and image-specific.

Assembly & Production – Grouping, Timing, Transitions, Special Effects

- *Grouping:* keep similar subjects together (closeups, people, landscapes, buildings) and keep images of similar orientation (horizontal, vertical, panorama) together to avoid disjointed appearance around edges; images appropriate for the soundtrack (exciting subject with exciting music; images to illustrate lyrics)
- *Timing:* keep images on-screen for long enough to be appreciated; try to time image transitions to the rhythm of the music.
- *Transitions:* restrict style to simple fade or cut except for occasional impact when a special transition is appropriate; keep fade transitions short(ish) to avoid viewer confusion.
- *Motion Effects (pan, zoom):* creates dynamism in the show; useful for scrolling across panorama images; useful for emphasizing a subject or area of an image; useful when transitioning between groups of images of different orientation (zoom into the last vertical image to transition into a group of horizontal images); motion should be subtle and not too fast or extreme.
- *Caption Entry/Exit Effects:* use simple fade style except for occasional impact when a special effect is appropriate, and keep text on-screen long enough to read.

Avoiding Common Mistakes

1) *Photocentrism:* photographers think their images are the most important element in an AV show; *effective* shows treat the other elements (story, music & production) with equal importance.

2) *The Dreaded 'Holiday Snaps' Travelogue:* a chronological series of (usually too many) images following the photographer's progress across a map; *effective* shows tell a story about the *place*, showcasing features that make it unique, with appropriate local music for the soundtrack.

3) *Show Too Long:* edit ruthlessly; limit the show to 3-8 min or 40-75 images, *maximum* 10 min or 100 images; create several short shows instead of one long show; *effective* shows are long in preparation and short in duration; leave your audience wanting *more*, not longing for the end!

4) *Over-production:* focus is on special effects instead of story, images & music; viewers watch for the next transition or motion effect rather than look at the images themselves, and can easily become confused, distracted, irritated, or even nauseated; *effective* shows limit motion effects and transitions to simple styles and speeds that are slow enough for viewers to appreciate the images, using special effects only occasionally for special impact.