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Rangefinder Magazine October 2004

First Exposure by Jack and Sue Drafaul
ProShow Gold



For decades the slide projector has always been the dominant method for presenting slide shows. Now that we have entered the digital world, the slide projector is quickly becoming a part of photographic history as it is replaced by the video projector. In the early stages of development, the transition to these digital projection devices was slow. Often they were not of very good quality, and they cost several thousand dollars. Thanks to technological advancements, you can now get a great projector that rivals slide-projection quality for under a thousand dollars.

In order to transfer your images to the video projector, you will need a computer system and a software program. The software must mimic a dissolve unit and feature a synchronized programmer and a sound-editing system. This sounds like a tall order that will probably cost a lot, right? Not to worry—Photodex Corporation has just introduced its second version the ever popular ProShow Gold program.

If you enjoyed putting together slide shows, you are going to love this program. When the program first opens, you will find a thumbnail database program that resembles Microsoft's Explorer. Four basic window panes are displayed on the editing screen to help you assemble your production with ease. In the upper left, you have the standard file folder menu system, where you can locate the images you want to put in your presentation. In the middle of the left side you will see thumbnails of each file you select from the folder. When you select a specific thumbnail, an enlarged version is displayed in the large



Main edit screen for ProShow Gold, file/folder pane in the upper left, thumbnail pane is in the center left, enlarged selected view in upper right, and the slideshow timeline is across the bottom.

When you press on one of the transition buttons between images on the timeline, a special menu with transitions appears as an overlay. Moving your mouse over any of the transitions gives you a motion thumbnail of the effect.

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right pane.



Transition menu with icons showing each transition's effect. The standard cut, wipe and dissolve functions are in the lower right of the menu. You will also note that the most recent transitions are also located just before the standard transitions.

The bottom pane is a timeline where you assemble your show. This is where the fun begins as the process is very easy. Look through the thumbnail images and when you find one you want in the show, simply drag it into the slide template at the bottom of the screen. If you find that the images are out of the desired order, just select any image in the timeline and drag it to a new position. You can also select several images at once and deposit them on the time line to speed up the process.

In the past, when you produced slide shows that utilized multiple slide projectors, your dissolve enabled you to make limited transitions between images. You could cut from one image to another or simply vary the length of the dissolve. Now you have many more options with ProShow Gold. Between each slide in the timeline, you will notice a small box that indicates the transition effect. If you click on the transition box, a palette of transitional effects is presented. As you move your mouse over each

effect a small video thumbnail of the desired effect is presented to help you make your selection.

You will see a second box, located just below the transition effect box. This controls the length of the effect and it can be set to thousandths of a second. There is one more box located directly below each image that allows you to set the time that the image is held on the screen beyond the transitional effect.

If you want to add music and narration, you can add a soundtrack to the bottom of the timeline. As you add images you can see how the show is progressing by simply pressing the play button at the top of the screen. The entire show is then projected in the large pane on the right side of the editor. By reviewing as you go, you can easily add or subtract time to an image or adjust the transitions.



ProShow Gold menu screen with the slide options menu overlaid on the screen. This screen allows you to edit the exposure, color, contrast, rotation, zoom percentage and aspect ratios of the image. In this case the image was zoomed to 311 percent of the original size.

ProShow Gold makes it easy to exactly match the soundtrack length to the number of images. You simply use the "Fit to Soundtrack" command, and the program will reset the image and transition times so that the images end at the same time as the soundtrack. This option is really handy if you already have your soundtrack selected and you are in a hurry to get the production

finished.

Much of the power in ProShow Gold is hidden in the Options menu which can be accessed by right-clicking on an image, or going to the slide pull-down menu. You then have controls for zooming, panning, rotation, color balance, brightness, contrast, flipping and aspect ratios. You can also provide a feeling of motion to the still images by using the motion palette and zoom, pan or rotate the image as the timeline progresses to the next image. The Options menu also allows you to add captions, additional sounds for each image, and special backgrounds.



Above and below: ProShow menu screen with Motion and Effects menu screen. This option menu can be applied to both still images and video files that are insert into the show. With this effect, you can pan, zoom, and rotate images over the time the image or video is on the screen.

The Output options for ProShow Gold are even more impressive. When your show is complete, you can save a self-contained executable file that can be run on PC computers that



don't have Pro Show Gold installed. You also have the option of making a Web slide show, MPEG II video file, Screen Saver, or CD/DVD shows that can be run on your television. There is even an option for creating an Autorun CD that starts running your show as soon as it is installed.

This is probably one of the most economical, high quality, and efficient programs we have seen yet for producing digital slide shows. We could easily see this program becoming an integral part of wedding packages, convention presentations and home use, as the possibilities with this program are endless.

ProShow Gold can be installed on Windows XP, ME, 95, 98, NT, and 2000. You can download this version for \$69.95 or receive a boxed copy for \$79.95. For more on Photodex products, log on to the Web at www.photodex.com/.

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