ProShow Gold

What is ProShow Gold?

ProShow Gold is a digital audiovisual software program, it allows you to synchronise images and music in a tremendously powerful package designed to run on a Windows platform unfortunately it is not suitable for Apple users unless run through MS Windows.

The current version of ProShow Gold is designated V4.52, it can be downloaded from the Internet as a free trial version and once payment is made, the program can be unlocked to give you a full working version. Current cost is US$69.95 (or approximately AUS$67.00).

ProShow Gold is available from:
http://www.photodex.com/products/proshowgold/

Tonight I will give a practical demonstration of some of the features of ProShow Gold, please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Getting Started

Basic Housekeeping

ProShow Gold does not save all of the image and sound files associated with the audiovisual production, it simply stores the information required to run the show and the location of your images and music on the hard drive. For this reason it is advisable to store your images and music in an efficient manner, preferably in a special folder for each production on the main "C" drive. Remember, do not rename your folder or the images within once you start creating your show or else you will have difficulty replaying it.

How fast does your computer need to be?

ProShow Gold is a very power hungry program as far as video generation and RAM are concerned. Ideally a 1 Gb gaming style video card and 4 Gb of RAM will give the best performance however basic shows can be played on older stye machines provided they have a minimum 512Mb of RAM and the motion effects of the show are kept at minimal levels.
It is also advisable to close all other programs whilst working with ProShow Gold.

Themes and Image Formats

In my opinion shows convey a more powerful message when made along a theme of common interest.

Create a new folder then enhance a selection of your images and save them to this folder. If you intend playing your show on your PC or television as a 4:3 format I would suggest you crop and save your images as .jpg at 2048 pixels in width and 1536 pixels in height. This will allow you to zoom in on parts of the image at up to 200% without suffering any image degradation or pixilation.

Show Options

There are four show options tabs, they are:

Show Options
Which is used to change the Show Title and Aspect Ratio for other formats.

Whilst the standard computer and television format is 4:3, most digital SLR's follow the format used in 35mm film, i.e. 3:2.

When shooting images specifically for a 4:3 format production you should allow some space on the side, which can be readily cropped.

However there are other formats which can be used for ProShows, home theatre systems more commonly use a 16:9 wide screen format in line with the current trend in cinemas. To create a wide screen (panoramic) format ProShow simply crop your images accordingly (2048 pixels X 1152 pixels), naturally it would be advisable to shoot your images with a panoramic format in mind or alternatively you can digitally stitch images together to create a panorama.

Show Captions (Adding text to your show)
This function adds text to all slides in a show and is rarely used.

Soundtrack (Adding the music)
ProShow Gold also has the ability to do basic music editing by allowing customised start and stop times for each track as well as the ability to close the gaps between tracks and cross fade the join. Although, with the current version, it is now possible to use music loaded from a CD, I find the use of .mp3 files allows me to store and readily retrieve sound files. Currently I have almost 5,000 .mp3 music files on my hard drive making it relatively easy to select suitable music to accompany the images.

Older versions of ProShow Gold (V2.0 and earlier) only allowed the use of .mp3 or .wav files in the production.

Another advantage of .mp3 format music is the reduced size of the file compared to CD; this enables a much slower computer to successfully run ProShows than would otherwise be possible.

The best way I have found to build up a database of .mp3 music tracks is to download Windows Media Player version 11. It is a free download and comes with a user-friendly interface as well as the ability to "rip" (convert) music to the desired format.

Windows Media Player 11 can be found at:
http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/download/AllDownloads.aspx?displang=en&qstechnology=&wt_svl=20513a&mg_id=20513b

Setting the .mp3 defaults for Media Player 11
Once you download Windows Media Player 11, you will need to change the default settings for ripping the music to .mp3. The standard default creates Windows Media Player files, which are not suitable for use with ProShow Gold.
Go to Tools>Options>Rip Music then select mp3 from the drop down box, adjust the quality and hit OK.
To really enhance the presentation of your shows you should consider improving the sound output from your computer. I no longer use the on board sound card and have installed a 7.1 surround sound card and a set of 5.1 surround sound speakers.

Selecting Music
This is a personal choice but in most cases try to avoid tracks with excessive vocals or strong music that will dominate the images. The music should enhance and support the images, which should be the focal point of your production.

Background
The background colour/image can affect the presentation, the default setting is plain black but it can be changed to a different colour or added image.

Slide Options

First you must highlight the slide you wish to work with, there are five slide options tabs, they are:

Image/Video
As I work with still images only, this is not an option I use but it is possible to combine video and still images in the one show.

Motion Effects
This is one of the major advantages ProShow Gold has over most other audiovisual programs, it is possible to pan, zoom or even rotate an image.

Captions (Adding text to your slides)
The function for displaying text, such as titling, over an image is simple to use. There is a wide range of fonts and some of the options available are text colour, drop shadow, bold and italic. There are three settings, giving a variety of options for the way the text appears on the screen, what it does then how it disappears.

Sounds
This tab is used for adding a sound effect to a slide.

Background
This tab is for changing the background on one slide at a time.

Transitions and Timing

Transitions
Transition is the term used for how slides appear to change from one slide to the next; with ProShow Gold there are 277 different transitions available. Everything from simple cross fades to complex multi direction wipes are available with just the click of a mouse.

Timing Your Slides and Transitions
Slide length and transitions can be given individual times in as little as 0.1 second increments. This enables you to synchronise the images to the sound with very fine precision.
There are also options that will allow the program to automatically synchronise the music and images, I do not use this feature.

Finishing the Show

Outputting
ProShow Gold allows the production of shows in various outputs, DVD, Video CD, Video File, Autorun CD, Executable, You Tube, Screen Saver and Web Show.

Show Thumbnail
To change the show thumbnail, just right click on your selected image to bring up the drop down box, then select your image. This image will then appear as the title image for the show.

Saving Different Versions
Because ProShow Gold does not actually save your images or music, it is possible to make different versions of your show by modifying an existing show and saving it as another file name. The data required for this process is a relatively small file.

New for 2011 - Released October 10 - ProShow Devices plug-in
This plug-in enables you to run your show on iPhones, iPads, Android, Blackberry etc.

If you have any questions I can be contacted via the email address below.
jalessiphoto@froggy.com.au

John Alessi