

# **Audio Visual Competitions - Good Practice by Barry Beckham**

This document is offered, not as rules, but as guidance on good practice for those entering Audio Visual Competitions. There is an etiquette of what is generally acceptable in these types of competitions for the benefit of organisers and authors.

## **Final File Size**

It makes no sense at all to create a slide show of 700MB, when it could have been 40MB. There are issues for the organisers and you. For you, the author, the problems are that your slide show may not run all that well on the laptop that is used on the presentation night or even when being judged. A file size of over 700MB demands a lot of computing power and many laptops even modern ones don't have it. If you have added animation too you could be in real trouble.

You may not notice any issues yourself while making your slide show, because you used a powerful desktop that could handle the file size. Is a slide show likely to be that large when it only runs for 5 minutes? Yes, I am looking at one right now that was entered into an AV competition and many others entered were many times larger than they needed to be and it did impact on how they played.

## **Why is the file size so big?**

The author made a slide show with a screen resolution of 1920\*1080 pixels, which is fine, but did not resize the images in an image editor before making the slide show. Lets look at the result of one random image I took from my files, one that contained a lot of detail.

*Example 1 - An image from a 20MP camera (Canon 5D) saved as a jpg at compression level 12 came up as a 16MB file*

*Example 2 - The same image cropped to 1920\*1080 saved as a jpg at compression level 6 = 632kb*

A compression level of 6 or 8 tops is enough for your needs and you will not lose image quality because you have compressed the jpeg to level 6 or 8. You're only doing it once.

So, with example 1 if you put 45 images in your slide show around 16MB each, plus a music track or two at 10MB and you will end up with a 730MB file.

In example 2, the same 45 images are under 29MB + 2 tracks at 10MB and you will have a 39MB file

Which one of those two slide shows will run best on that 5 year old laptop?

## **Slide Show Aspect Ratio**

The aspect ratio you decide to make your slide show is a creative choice for you, but some clubs will still try to make a rule restricting what you can create. Generally speaking the standard in 2015/2016 for audiovisual is HD resolution 1920\*1080.

Try to aim for that size, because it will run OK on all PC screens, laptops, TV's and projectors, even projectors with a lower resolution. This does not restrict your creative right to make a square slide show or a panoramic slide show, as long as you stay within those 1920\*1080 parameters.

## **Music/Sound format**

Some enthusiasts will say they always use Wav music/sound files because they are none Lossy, whereas Mp3a are not. In practice, I challenge you to tell the difference on a set of computer speakers or even a half decent Hi-Fi. In a clubroom on presentation night, no chance, so Mp3 should be your final choice and it keeps your file size down too.

A typical 5-minute music track as a wav file could be 30MB in size. The equivalent as an Mp3 will be around 5MB. Think of Wav -v- Mp3 sound files rather like the difference between a Photoshop file and a Jpeg file when viewed on screen; very different in file size, but visually you can't tell the difference.

## **Slide Show Format/File Types**

The file type you will present your slide show to the organisers should be file types that will play on a Windows computer without the need for other software to be required. The organisers cannot expect judges to download and install software on their own PC to be able to view obscure format types.

Typical file types you should use are:

1. Executable files of the type you can create with PicturesToExe, Pro-Show Gold AV and other AV software. Nothing needs to be added to a Windows PC to run these.
2. An Mp4 video. Most decent audiovisual software programs will have an option to create an Mp4 and in fact Lightroom does this too. It is a universal video format that will play on PCs and Macs without any additional software requirement

## ***Do not create and submit a DVD Video disk from your slide show for two reasons.***

What we are referring to here is a DVD that is created for viewing on a TV. Making your HD resolution slide show into a DVD Video Disk will reduce its resolution to 720 pixels on the long side. So your slide show will lose quality in comparison with others, which is not a great idea in a competition.

The videos a DVD Video Disk produces will not always play on a windows machine and can be a problem for the organisers. Remember they have to extract your slide show from the disk you sent them and prepare it with other slide shows for the judges.

Try to avoid DVD disks entirely. If your slide show requires the 4.7Gig of data that a DVD disk provides, you have done something wrong. Files from a DVD can and have caused problems for organisers. **Be safe and send the organisers your slide show on a CD.**

## **Entries on CD**

The rules may stipulate this, but if you're sending a CD, ensure you place multiple entries in well-named folders and categories as appropriate for what you're entering. If you're entering two entries in an open section and one in a group section, place them in respectively named folders.

Write on the disk face clearly what the disk contains and the name/s of the makers. Don't make organisers have to put the disk into the PC and wait for it to spin up just to see who sent it.