PicturesToExe Version 8.0
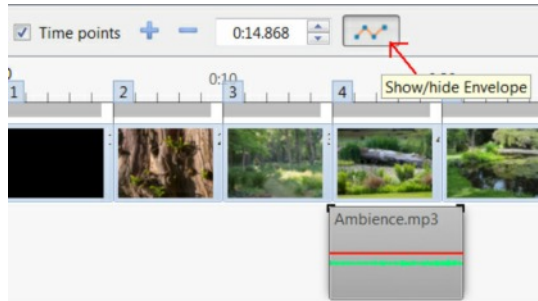
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A first look at PicturesToExe Version 8.0, which is now available in Beta testing reveals a host of new features.
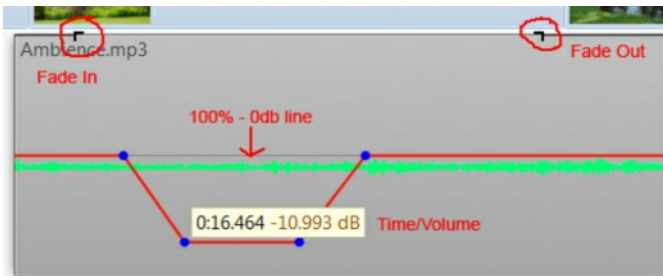
The first of these is an **improved Timeline view**, which includes :-

- **Keypoints for sound volume** of an audio clip.
- Adjusting of **Fade in/out** for an audio clip.
- Audio clip can be linked to a slide.
- Audio comments of slides are displayed on the timeline.
- New design of Audio tab in Project options.
- Export of audio tracks into a single MP3 to reduce the file size of the executable.
- 'Audio Comment' command in the popup menu of the Slide list

Keypoints can now be added directly in the Timeline to adjust the volume of an Audio Clip, by enabling the Envelope. When you add an Audio clip the orange line represents 100% volume ie. 0db. This is half way down the waveform, whereas with other editing programs we are used to
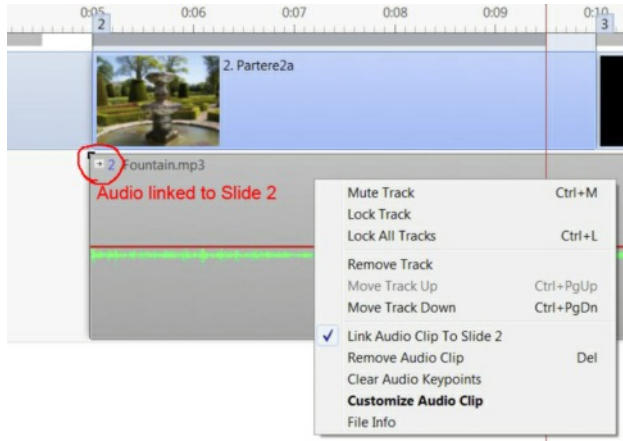

100% being at the top of the waveform, so this may cause some confusion at first. But by being in this position it does allow you to increase the volume to 200% should you ever need to. By clicking on the orange line (you can set the colour in Setting/Preferences/Timeline) you can place keypoints which can then be dragged to the desired volume. When you hover the mouse over a keypoint you will see an indication of the time position and volume either in Percents or Decibels (again set in Settings/Preferences/Timeline).

The two square corners (top left and top right) of the clip can be dragged inwards to **Fade** the Audio In or Out
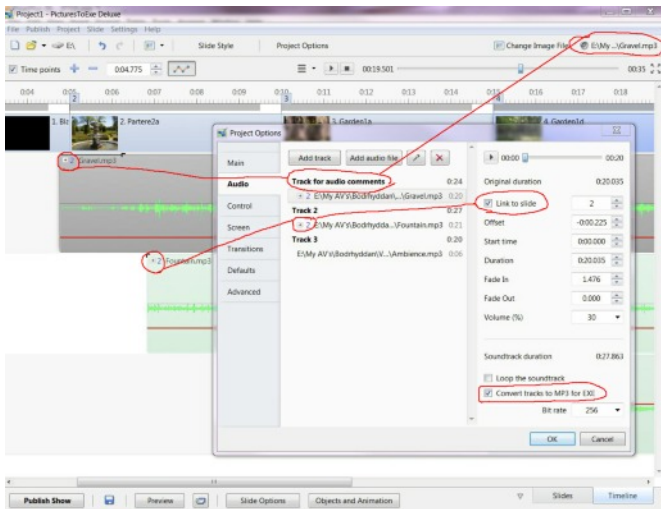
This doesn't alter the appearance of the waveform, so again may be slightly confusing at first to those used to using other programs.

An Audio clip can also be linked to a particular slide, so that if you move the slide to a different position, the audio clip will move with it. This can be extremely useful if you need to associate a sound effect with an image. To do so, simply click on an image to highlight it, then Right Click on an audio clip and from the popup menu select Link Audio Clip. The correct slide number will automatically be shown. The clip can still be moved left or right to the correct position within the slide but will always remain linked to that slide. To unlink the clip simply right click again and untick the 'Link Audio Clip' box.

The Project Options/Audio Tab has also been redesigned to give a cleaner interface, with all audio options now directly available in one place. Double Clicking on an audio Clip also displays these details. Audio clips can be linked to a slide from this window by selecting the clip and entering the appropriate slide number in the right hand panel. (See Track 2 in screen grab below.)

You can also now add Audio or record voice comments onto a slide which will automatically be placed on their own track. By selecting a slide and then clicking on the Add Audio speaker icon, (top right of the main window) you can add a sound comment which will be linked to that slide. (See track 1 below).

Tracks can now be converted to a single MP3 file for output, which will reduce the size of the .exe file. This is useful if you normally work with .wav files or have multiple MP3 files in your sequence.

You can select an output bitrate of between 64 to 320. The default value is 256.
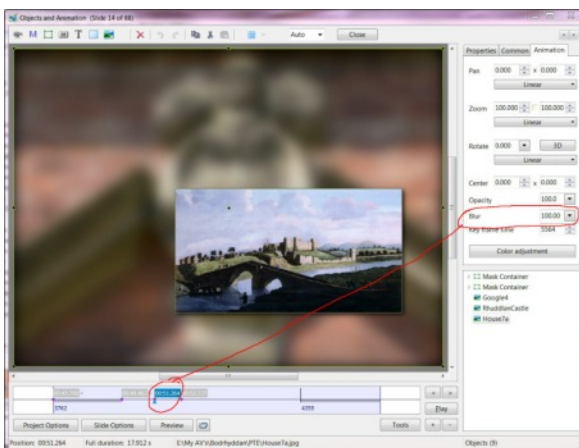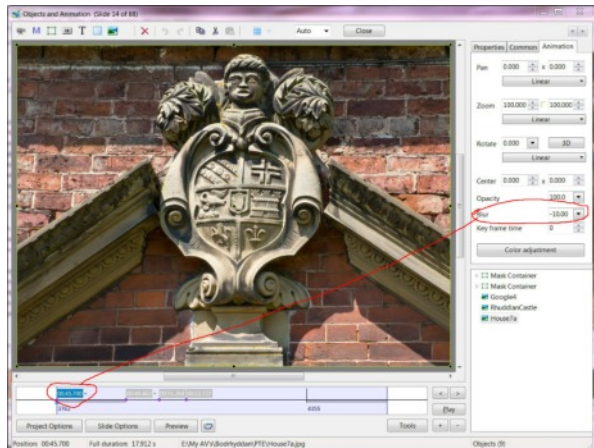
Some important improvements in **Objects and Animation** are :-

- **Blur** can be applied for keyframes of any objects.
- **Color adjustment** for keyframes of objects (grayscale, sepia, custom)
- **Crop** tool
- **Mask container** can be inserted into another mask container.
- **Video masks**.
- Optimized performance of Masks objects.
- **Adjustable speed of video** clips.
- **Chroma Key**.
- Support of video clips with alpha channel
  (requires video clips in RGBA format).
- Transparent background of slides for custom transition effects.

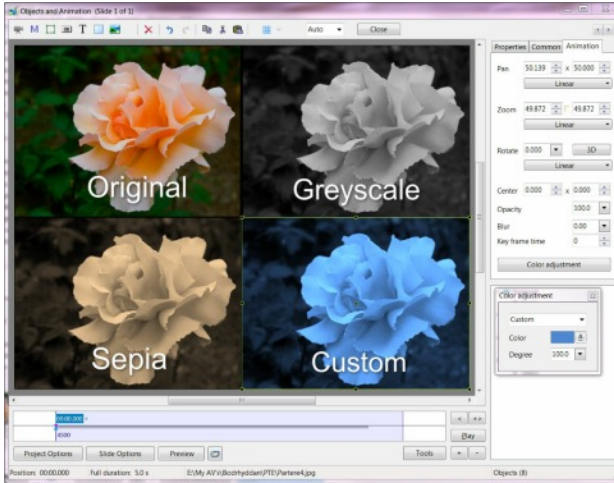**Blur** can be applied in the Objects & Animation/Animation tab, to keyframes for both still images and video. If you apply a negative amount of blur (from zero to -20) this sharpens the image. Useful if you don't have time to go into image editing software to sharpen each image.

Blur can be useful to give a diffuse background on which to overlay other images, such as vertical pictures or several smaller images.

Blurring by keyframe, gives a smooth transition from the sharp image to the blurred image. This saves having to create a separate blurred image in a photo editing program and also reduces the overal .exe file size as only one image is needed.
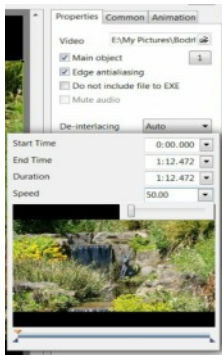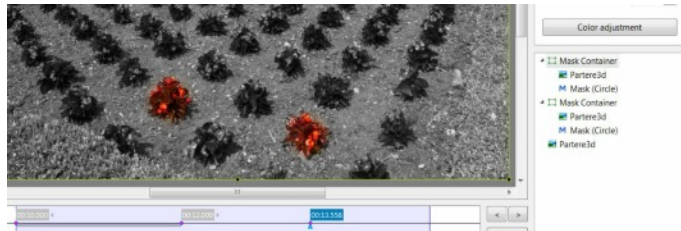
If a parent object has child objects, this group of objects will be blurred together.

Colour Adjustment can easily be applied to an image by keyframe. Presets are Greyscale and Sepia, or you can select your own Custom colour from the colour picker.
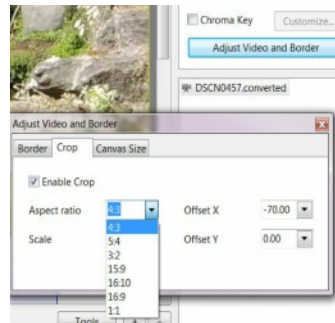
By reducing the degree of the colour adjustment you can acheive an 'old faded' photo effect should you need to.

Again so much easier to do in PTE than in a separate photo editing program and only needs the one image. Also by careful use of Masks,

you can easily 'colour pop' a suitable greyscale image by keyframe.

Adjustable speed of video is another major new feature. Under the Properties Tab of O&A, click on the down arrow next to the video 'Start Time' to open up the video preview window. Here you can set the speed of the video using the slider, from 50 - half speed, to 200 - double speed. You can also type in a number to go as low as 10%, useful to slow down fast moving subjects such as flowing water or wildlife.

Crop, allows you to reformat a video or still image to the Ratio of your Project. Found on the Properties Tab by clicking 'Adjust Video (Image) and Border'. The set ratios are 4:3, 5:4, 3:2, 15:9, 16:10, 16:9 and 1:1. So no matter what format your images or Project it is now easy to ensure they are all in the same ratio. By using the sliders under Offset X and Offset Y you can position your image within the frame exactly as required.
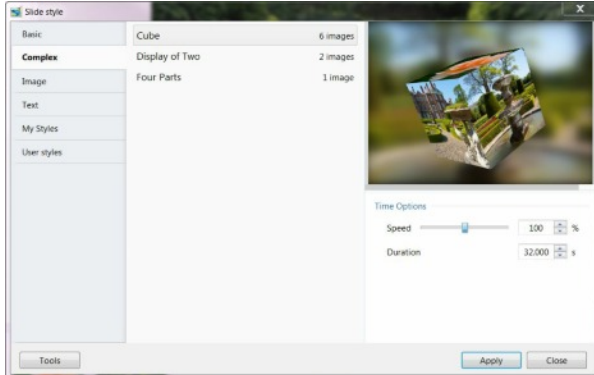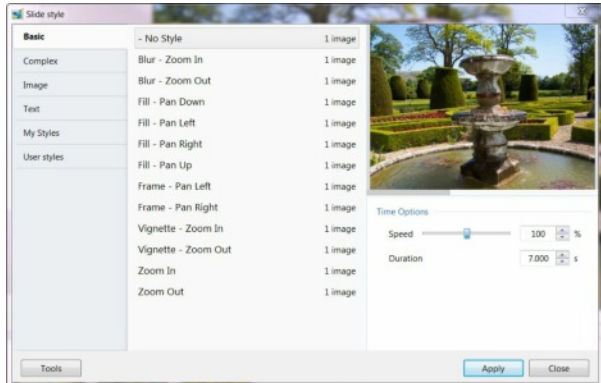
Slide Styles are the final major new feature we have room to cover in this issue. You can Create your own styles or Import/Export Styles from/to other users. A set of 'Basic' Styles are included in PTE8 along with some 'Complex', 'Image' and 'Text' Styles.

So what exactly is a Slide Style? It allows you to quickly perform a set 'animation' or 'effect' without needing to fully understand the process behind it, extremely useful for beginners or new users of PTE. Simply highlight an image(s) in the slide list and click on the 'Slide Style' button, then select the 'Style' you wish to apply. The button can be placed wherever you choose on the Toolbars in Setting/Preferences/Toolbars.

You can set the 'duration' of the style using the speed slider or by typing in a time.

Click 'Apply' and the selected style is applied to your images.

Simple Styles only require a single image. Complex styles may require several images to make up the animation.

An example is the 'Cube Style' which requires you to select 6 images. This then produces a rotating cube with your images on each face of the cube.

Creating your own Styles can speed up a workflow, if there is a particular 'animation' or effect you use often.

Something as simple as adding a Title that fades in on one slide and out on the next. By creating a Style to do this, you can simply apply it to future sequences and just amend the text, duration or position, without having to set it up from scratch each time.

This new version of PicturesToExe has many improvements that help to speed up workflow and improve creativity within your sequences. Although still in Beta Testing, it is a stable version which is almost complete. Log onto the PTE Forum **http://www.picturestoexe.com/forums/** and download the latest beta so you can familiarise yourself with all the new features before the final version is released. Any small bugs that are still to be ironed out can then be reported and quickly fixed by the WnSoft team.