

Options for creating AV's on a Mac - research by David Eagles 2018

These are the findings and recommendations:

Software Candidates

Following Robert Harvey's Audio-Visual demo at the September Landscape Group, and the interest in the meeting for a Mac equivalent for PicturesToExe I went off to discover what useful alternatives there might be.

After quite a lot of Internet research and discounting a lot of 'holiday snaps' only software, I have landed on two pieces of software that seem to be viable Mac alternatives to the Windows only PicturesToExe, these are.

- Photostage by NCH Software
- FotoMagico by Boinx Software

An RPSview

I also tried the RPS Audio Visuals site - <http://rps.org/special-interest-groups/audio-visual>, and emailed Howard Bagshaw, the groups chair, this is Howard's response.

I'm pleased that your members have developed an interest in AV, but as you say, the straightforward route is to use a PC, Mac is a bit more problematic. Mac users have tended to come up with three possible solutions, all tend to be a bit of a 'work around'.

- The best software which people have reported to me (and I'm not a Mac user so I have no personal experience of this) is '**FotoMagico 5**' (<https://boinx.com/fotomagico/>). I gather that it has similar functionality to PTE. The significant difference with all Mac software is that the output is a video file (MP4 or similar). Fortunately video files these days can be of a high picture quality, and they are usable on both PC and Mac. Alternatively, there is a range of video editing software, including of course **iMovies**. If this doesn't provide the functionality, then there are more sophisticated video editing programs, such as **DaVinci 'Resolve'**, there is a free version of this and it is available for Mac, PC and Linux (<https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/uk/products/davinciresolve/>). **Photoshop** does actually have a 'timeline' facility, so it is possible to create a video AV on that software, but it's hard work.
- Some Mac users chose to create a Windows partition within their hard drive. I'm not sure of the exact mechanics of this, but I hear 'Parallels' and 'Boot Camp' mentioned. With a Windows partition, it is then possible to use the PTE software on the Mac. But of course the cost is high as you have to buy both Windows and PTE.
- A third, and quite popular choice is to find/buy any old Windows PC/laptop and use it just to put together the AV in PTE. The Mac can be used to do all the picture editing in software that people are familiar with. Like wise with sound editing if required. The edited picture/video and sound files can then be imported into PTE on the PC to create the AV. This can then be output as an 'exe' file for use on a PC, or as a Mac 'app' for showing on a Mac, or as a video file. Fortunately PTE doesn't need too much computing power to just create the AV, so older/cheaper PCs can be the solution.

A Recommendation

To cut to the chase, if you are new to AV (as I was), I suggest that you download the free Photostage software, select a small number of slides for an AV presentation, get used to building an AV, then download Fotomagico and repeat the exercise.

The reason for this is that the Fotomagico demo period is relatively short, and by cutting your teeth on Photostage for free, you can go through the learning curve at low cost and decide which software package best suits your needs, or if you wish to pick another option from Howard's note above.

A quick overview of the two Mac AV packages

What follows is a swift overview of the Pros and Cons, that I have gleaned using each of the alternative the software packages in their demo mode.

In each section is a guide to price, and some useful links should you wish to experiment with the software yourself.

Option 1 – PHOTOSTAGE by NCH Software

AV software developed/sold by NCH Software. <https://www.nchsoftware.com>

Product Page <https://www.nchsoftware.com/slideshow/index.html>

If you download the demo version, it will expire after c.30 days and will be basically useless, the link to Free version is here: <https://www.nchsoftware.com/slideshow/download-now.html>, make sure to select the 'Download the Free Version here link from this page, and not the large Download link as I think that downloads the demo version.

Pros

- **Cost** - Free Edition available for Home use from the link above
- **Ease of Use** - Easy to use interface (if slightly clunky)
- **Exports** - Exports to a wide variety of formats
- **Mac** – Mac and Windows versions available
- **Tutorials** – brief Web tutorials on the NCH site NCH <https://www.nchsoftware.com/slideshow/support.html>

Cons

- **Costs:** commercial use requires the Pro version £53.81 from the NCH website, **note** that the App Store has this at £64.99
- **Previews** – are not quick to build/refresh, and are a little clunky
- **Timeline view** - not supported, storyboard only
- **Support** - No 32 bit version as yet (NCH say it's not compulsory yet) – so not sure how well maintained this software might be
- **Exports** - take a **long** time c.8minutes for 13 slides and 1 audio track, this makes any rework very time consuming.
- **Audio** - Audio track tailoring probably best done elsewhere, as controls are fairly rudimentary (See YT Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWD6nLOJYnM>).
- **Version choice** - No comparison between versions
- **Tutorials** – Limited web tutorials for the product. Online Help text is sparse <http://help.nchsoftware.com/help/en/photostage/mac/index.html>

Option 2 – FOTOMAGICO by Boinx Software

Developed/Sold by Boinx Software <https://boinx.com>

Product page is here, <https://boinx.com/fotomagico/>

Pros

- **Demo** available to try before you buy (but its something like two weeks only), not sure what happens once the demo expires (yet to happen)
- **Usability** - Slick interface with excellent previews, snap grids to align zoomed images
- **Timeline & Storyboard** both views are available
- **Mac** - 64 bit, seems to be maintained, and its MacOS Mojave ready
- **Export** - Can generate a standalone App very quickly, and will export to a variety of formats, MP4 export at least twice as fast as Photostage
- **Music** - Selection of cheap Music Pack addons (£2.99 on the buy page)
- **Help** – Reasonably detailed Online Help, Manual and User Forum
- **Tutorials** - There are some useful Internet resources (not to everyone's taste possibly) e.g.
 - Martin Bailey <https://www.martinbaileyphotography.com/tag/fotomagico/>)
 - Ron Martinsen (<http://www.ronmartblog.com/2016/03/fotomagico-5the-best-slideshow-software.html>)
 - Mathew Mitchell (<https://vimeo.com/78486606>)

Cons

- **Tutorials** - Lack of free 'Boinx' tutorials, you can buy tutorials (\$49-\$79 from <http://www.rickrosen.com/fm/fmbuy/>)
- **Cost** – Its £48.99 from the App Store for Vsn 5, but it's the Pro version that has all the bells and whistles, and this costs £99.99 from the Boinx site or £87.99 <http://www.application-systems.co.uk/fotomagico/buy.html>
- **Upgrades** - If you have vsn 4, then there is an upgrade mechanism via the AppStore which looks like it may save money
- **Non-Pro version** looks a little limited, feature comparison is on the 'Buy' page here <https://boinx.com/fotomagico/buy/>

Fotomagico software version comparison table:

Functions	FotoMagico 5	FotoMagico 5 Pro
Storyboard View	✓	✓
Timeline View	✗	✓
Manual Audio Fades and Envelopes	✗	✓
Audio Marker Assistant	✗	✓
Music and Effects Track	✓	✓
Narration Track	✗	✓
Access to OS X Photo Library	✓	✓
Access to Lightroom and Aperture Libraries	✗	✓
Teleprompter	✗	✓
Chapters	✗	✓
Masks and Borders	✗	✓
Text Placeholders	✗	✓
YouTube Sharing	✓	✓
Export to MP4	✓	✓
Standalone Player	✗	✓
Export to ProRes	✗	✓
Export to custom video	✗	✓