

Faststone Slide Show Creator

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Once upon a time, when the Speed Graphic camera, Sylvania #2 flashbulbs and the Omega D3 enlarger defined the state of the art, all photographs were distributed in the form of enlargements. Now, most photos are captured, archived and distributed on digital media. Slide shows are a popular digital distribution medium, if only because many editors include a slide show builder.

My primary editor is *Faststone*, free to home users and only thirty-five bucks for business and government users, but I have Faststone's "edit with external" option set to call six external programs. All of them have a slide show builder of some sort. I prefer the Faststone builder because it's fast, efficient and it has all the options that I want and none that I don't.



Caveat: Faststone slide shows compile to an executable that must be downloaded to your hard drive before it can be opened. Photoshop and Photoshop Elements slide shows compile to a PDF file which can be viewed on screen. The Faststone demo accompanying this article was a modest 6.5 MB, small enough to be sent as an email attachment.

By way of comparison, the Photoshop slide show demo accompanying this article compiled to a 172.6 MB file using the same photos used in the Faststone demo. I'm sure that I could have whittled this down but not by much. The slide show screens in Photoshop Elements are almost identical to those in Photoshop.

The GIMP slide show builder compiles to a GIF file which I haven't tried. I'm using Lightroom 3.6 which lacks a slide show builder. I believe this option appeared in Lightroom 4.0. Life is too short to waste time on Picasa.

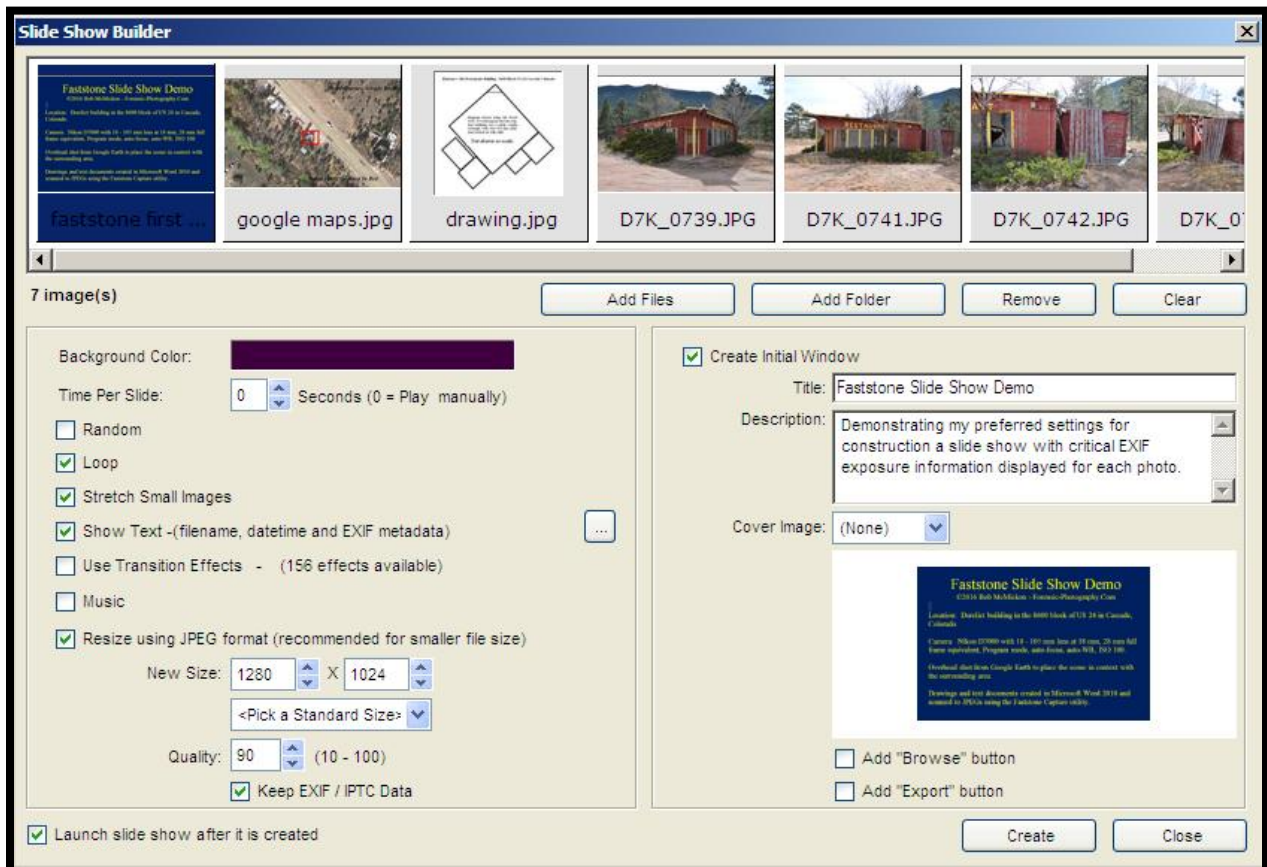
Much to my surprise, Irfanview has more options for creating a slide show than Photoshop or Photoshop Elements. Like Faststone, Irfanview compiles to an executable. However, the Irfanview demo compiled to 127.8 MB versus 6.5 MB for Faststone but better than Photoshop's 172.6 MB PDF file. Irfanview will let

you dump the entire EXIF file but it obscures the left side of the screen. Since I was already happy with Faststone, I didn't invest much time in Irfanview.

To start with, create a "slide show" sub-folder under your "my pictures" folder. **Copy the JPEG files** that you intend to include in your slide show into this folder. Use the EXIF editor to include pertinent information in the EXIF Comment field. If you're doing a presentation, **have copies of the camera originals** on your laptop or a thumb drive in case one of the images on the slide show is challenged.

Always work with copies of your camera originals, never the originals themselves which should be preserved exactly as shot, without adjustment of any kind, as required by your state's record retention laws.

Create any text documents that you intend to include in Microsoft Word. I like yellow text against a dark blue background because I think this combination shows up well on the larger screens. Create any drawings that you'll need either by scanning a pencil and paper drawing to a JPEG file or by creating it directly in a CAD program or any photo editor with drawing tools. ***I used Faststone Capture, a \$20.00 utility, to convert Word and Google Earth images to JPEG files.***

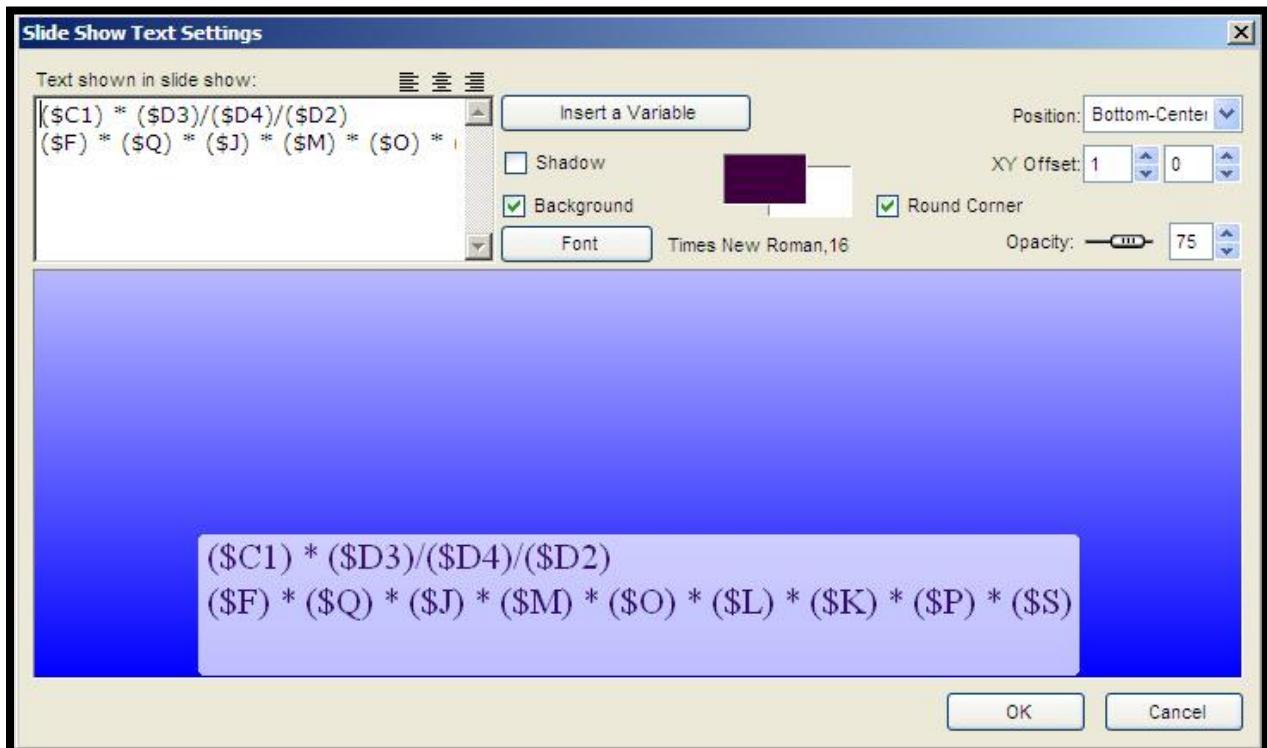


Once you've collected all of the images that you intend to use as JPEG files in your "slide show" folder, start Faststone. Go to **Create>Slide Show Builder**. Set your image size to 1920 x 1080 at 100% quality to accommodate the larger screens and projectors. You might want to opt for a smaller image size or a lower quality setting if you intend to distribute your slide show as an email attachment.

I have the "time for slide" option set to zero so I can manually advance the slides using the page up and page down buttons on my keyboard. Loop means that when you reach the end of your slide show it will loop back to your opening screen.

The slide show demo accompanying this tutorial was created by resizing my JPEGs to 1920 x 1080 pixels but I reduced the quality setting from 100% to 90% to keep the file size below ten megabytes.

I checked the "**show text**" option and used the boxed ellipsis to take me to a screen that will let me code to display the JPEG file number, the date and pertinent information from the EXIF file. I specified "bottom center" because that looked good on the slide shows that I've done to date. The screen looks like this:



These codes give me the JPEG file number and the date that the picture was taken on the first line. The codes on the second line give me, from left to right:

- The camera make and model
- The focal length of the lens
- The shutter speed
- The lens aperture
- The ISO setting
- The exposure compensation value
- The exposure mode
- Flash on or off
- The metering mode

This answers just about all the questions that an instructor, a supervisor or an attorney on cross might ask. The information including the date and time comes from the JPEG's EXIF table. This is a good reason to verify your camera's date and time settings against your cell phone or a time hack from the dispatcher. *If you want to know more about EXIF tables, see <http://www.forensic-photography.com/EXIF-Metadata.pdf>.*

If you're obliged to use a Windows computer other than your own, you can download a copy of your slide show, copies of the camera-original JPEGs and a copy of the Faststone "Portable" version that can run off a DVD or a thumb drive.

Faststone is free for home users and only thirty-five bucks for business and government users. I installed the full Faststone executable on my desktop and my laptop but I keep a copy of the Faststone Portable version in my Disk Utilities folder in case I need to burn a copy of everything that I might need to a thumb drive or DVD, *including a standalone copy of Faststone.*

Keep an eye on your file size if you intend to distribute by email. If your slide show is larger than ten megabytes, either edit it down to a maximum of ten megabytes or use an FTP service such as mailbigfile.com. I sent an early 30 MB version of the demo to Hayden Baldwin via an FTP service and he had problems with the download, which forced me back to the drawing board.

I used twelve shots of an old derelict restaurant that was a hodgepodge of home-built add-ons, without a straight line or a 90° angle to be seen anywhere. I tried to create a scaled drawing but forty mile an hour mountain winds, the prelude

to a blizzard that dumped more than a foot of snow on the surrounding area, shredded my graph paper and blew my heaviest tape measure around like the tail on a kite.

I took an additional eight or ten shots of the surrounding area but decided not to use them. For demo purposes, the original twelve shots told the tale.

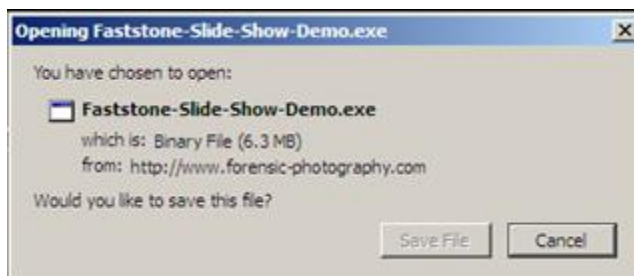
From force of habit, I started at the entrance and worked counter-clockwise around the building, trying for perpendicular and oblique views of each wall. This is easy if you're shooting an ordinary rectangular home or place of business. It can be a little complicated if you're shooting a structural collapse, the aftermath of a major fire or an accident with multiple vehicles scattered hither, thither and yon.

I've never been involved with a sketching an outdoor scene that didn't require at least two people, three or more at night because one person will be obliged to hold a flashlight if you don't have really good headlamps. There are times when I'd have killed for a laser rangefinder accurate to the nearest inch at three hundred feet under favorable conditions.

I carry both a 1075 lumen Coast HP550 flashlight and a 225 lumen Coast HL55 headlamp in the truck at all times, handy if only for changing a tire or looking for a lost dog on a dark night. Both are available at Walmart.

In the real world, the ability to prepare properly scaled drawings is as important as your ability to take a sufficient number of properly focused and exposed photographs, day or night, in weather fair or foul.

To run the Faststone slide show, go to forensic-photography.com/tutorials and click on the **Faststone-Slide-Show-Demo.Exe** link towards the bottom of the page. The following popup will appear:



Click on **Save File** to download the 6.5 MB executable to your hard drive. Navigate to the Faststone-Slide-Show-Demo.exe file, which will probably land in

your My Documents\Download folder, and click Run. The demo will open and you can play with it to your heart's content.

The same considerations apply to the Irfanview-Slide-Show-Demo.exe with one difference. The Faststone file is a modest 6.5 MB. The Irfanview file is a large 128 MB. It will take much longer to download.

The Photoshop-Slide-Show-Demo.pdf file is a rather large (172 MB) Adobe Acrobat PDF file. You can open it on screen and, if you want to peruse it at your leisure, download it to your hard drive.

I included the Irfanview and Photoshop demos for those who might be interested. However, you'll want a fast Internet connection to work with these files. Perhaps an experienced Photoshop or Irfanview operator could whittle these files down to something that can be downloaded on a slow dial-up or Wi-Fi connection but I put as much effort into them as I thought they were worth.

Faststone's slide show builder does everything that I want a slide show builder to do, including creating a small file.

In addition to the slide show creator, Faststone has a rather limited image strip building. I couldn't think of a good use for it but it's there for those who might be inclined to experiment.

Once you've proofed your slide show and made any necessary corrections, copy the executable to a permanent home on your hard drive, distribute copies of the finished executable to your end users and, if desired, delete the leftovers (*which should all be copies of your masters rather than the masters themselves*) in your slide show folder, to await the next slide show project.

Or, if you're a little paranoid, compile the material in your slide show folder to a ZIP file and archive it in a slide show zip folder against future need. I use the [free 7-ZIP utility](#) because it includes a high level encryption option, *handy if you want confidential information to remain confidential*.