

## **Media Presentation Made Easy with Vegas Video**

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Vegas Video is a product made by Sonic Foundry. It is a digital video editing system. One might wonder how a system like this can be very useful in an educational realm. I have found it to be extremely useful and easy to use. I will discuss how to get started using Vegas Video as well as give examples of how I have used it in my teaching. I will talk about the equipment needed as well.

### **What is Vegas Video?**

As I said, this is a digital video editing system. That means that it allows you to seamlessly put together sound, video, pictures, and effects to produce professional looking presentations. These presentations can then be delivered in many different formats. They can be streamed over the Internet, burned to CD, recorded on VHS, or now with the new version, made into DVDs. The beauty is that you can decide later. Once you produce a presentation, it can be rendered into the various formats as you need them. That was one of the main attractions for me. Create once, produce any format I need.

### **Why do I need multimedia presentations?**

Many instructors don't see the need for flashy multimedia presentations. But let's face it; we are competing against DVD, TV, Internet and video games. That is where our students are getting their information. We cannot assume that they understand a three dimensional concept when they just read it in a book. We may have to enhance it a little. Now in the day and age of online learning, we must be able to address all the learning styles of our students. With video we can let them "see" us even though we are not in a formal classroom. They can feel more connected. I teach an online physics course. They deserve some demonstrations and lab experiments to complete their experience. I can give them that via video.

### **Is Vegas Video simple to use?**

Most of us don't have time learn fancy software. I have stated before in other ASCUE presentations that two things attract me to a particular software title: how easy is it to learn and where does it fall on the power/cost continuum. I have a limited budget and I do not have a lot of time. Vegas Video is easy to learn and inexpensive for the number of features that are included. Currently Vegas Video is only \$150 academic pricing. It is so easy to learn, I had made a little video clip in 10 minutes. Now of course the video was nothing I could use in the classroom, but it was pretty intuitive. As you further explore the product you will find there are many more features that you can integrate as you grow. Everything is pretty much drag and drop. It has a great pre-

view feature that allows you to see how it looks before you render the final product. But let's slow down for a minute.

### **What is the first step?**

Once you are serious about starting a project it is important to plan. Choose a small concept or demonstration that you want to make a presentation about. As in Hollywood, I recommend a script. Choose whether you want pictures, video, narration, music, or any combination. Make a storyboard of each "scene". Write a narration if you need to for your presentation. Now, collect your media. If you need video, get a video camera and shoot your video. I recommend digital video but you can use VHS also. If you can, use video that is already available, that is even better. (Watch for possible Copyright infringement!) Take still shots if you need them. I recommend a digital camera. Make PowerPoint slides if you have some notes or steps that you want to illustrate. These can be integrated with your other media.

After you collect all your media, get them all on the same computer with the Vegas Video. If you have digital video, you will need a FireWire card to transfer the video. If you want some simple video, you could use a video cam and save directly to the computer. All digital cameras are different. Get the pictures on the computer as your camera manual instructs. If you have PowerPoint slides you need to save them all as individual JPEGs. In PowerPoint select SAVE AS and choose jpeg in the drop down list. It will save all the slides in a new folder. Now you can add them as you wish either together or separated by video or other visuals. There is no need to add your pictures and video to the PowerPoint slides themselves. You just use PowerPoint if you need outlines or notes in your presentation. I highly recommend that you put all the parts of your presentation in the same folder of your computer, but it is not necessary.

### **Now what?**

Now we can look at the Vegas Video interface. I like the desktop for Vegas Video. All the controls are right at your finger tips. Let's start with the bottom left corner. Here we have the **Explorer** window on top. It is just like the explorer window you are used to. It shows all the folders and files on your computer that are available for you project. That includes sound files, pictures, videos, etc. If you highlight one of the files, you can preview that file before you even add it to your project. Perhaps you are like me and do not remember what each file is. This is a handy feature.

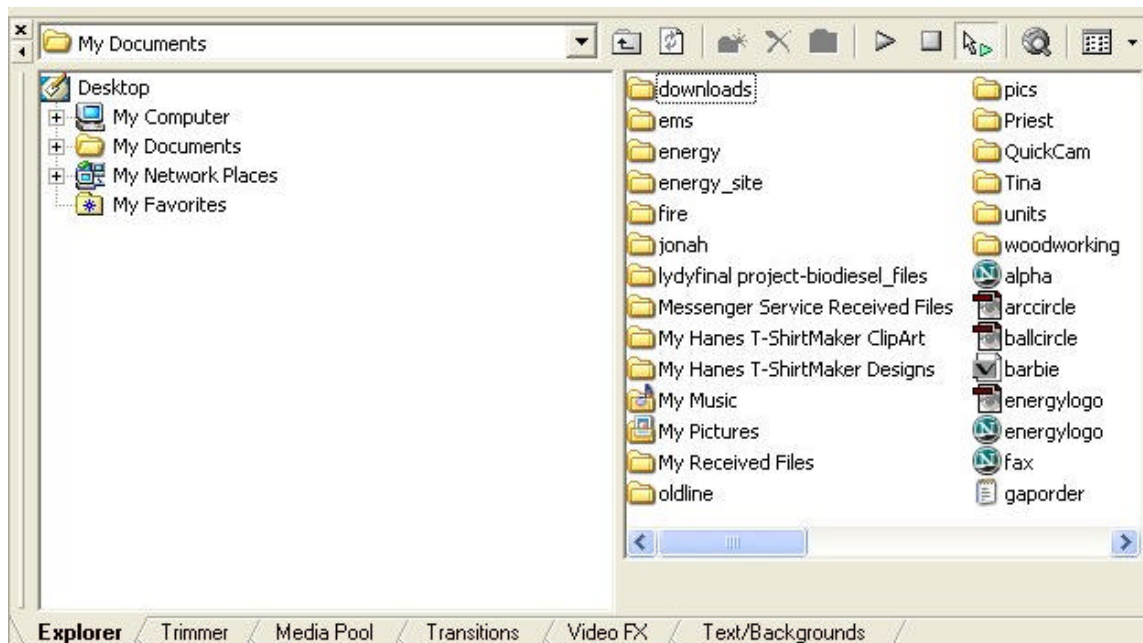


Figure 1

As you see in Figure 1, there are other tabs in the lower left corner to choose from. The **Trimmer** allows you to place a movie clip that you want to use in it first for editing purposes. You can cut portions out and choose just the part you want for your project before placing it in the project. You can do this up in the main workspace but it is probably easier to do it before you add it.

The **Media Pool** contains any file you have added to your project. You can see what you have used. This is especially handy if your project gets big. The best part is that your original files remain completely unchanged. Even if you trim a video clip, the original remains intact while the trimmed copy is used in your project. I like that.

The **Transitions** are supplied by Sonic Foundry (see Figure 2). They are for your use to transition between items in your project. These transitions can make your project look just a little more professional with little effort. You can move your cursor over the transition for a preview and simply drag and drop what you choose into your project. If you are more advanced, you can make adjustments to their transitions to make them your own. Simply double click the transition after you have added it to your project. Overlap your media to make the transition more effective.

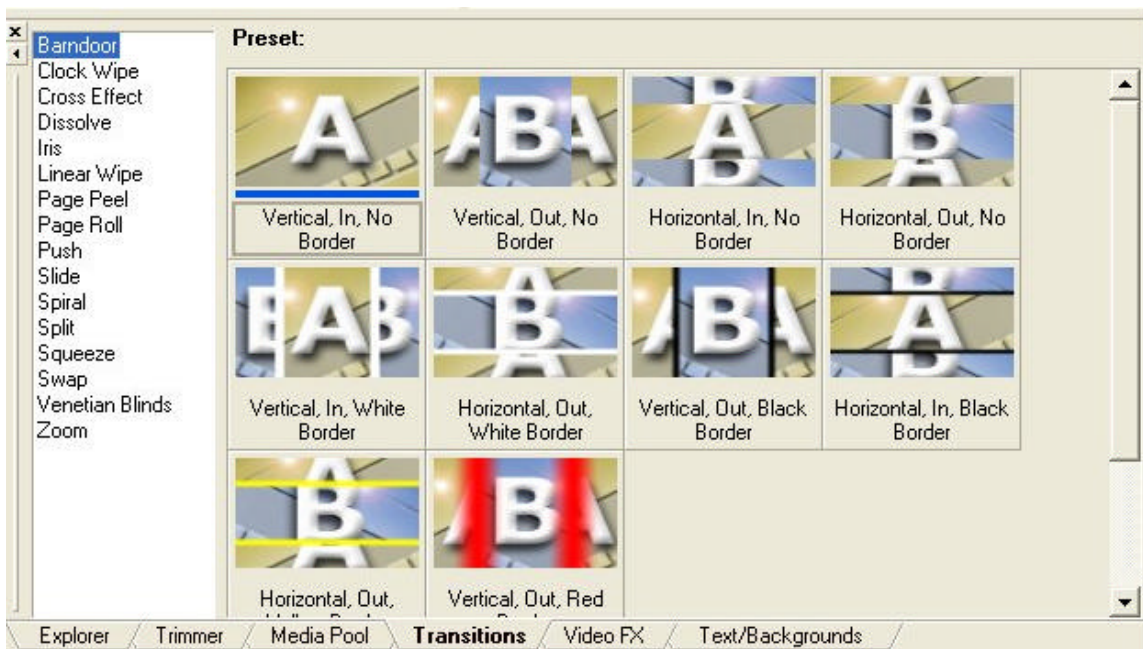
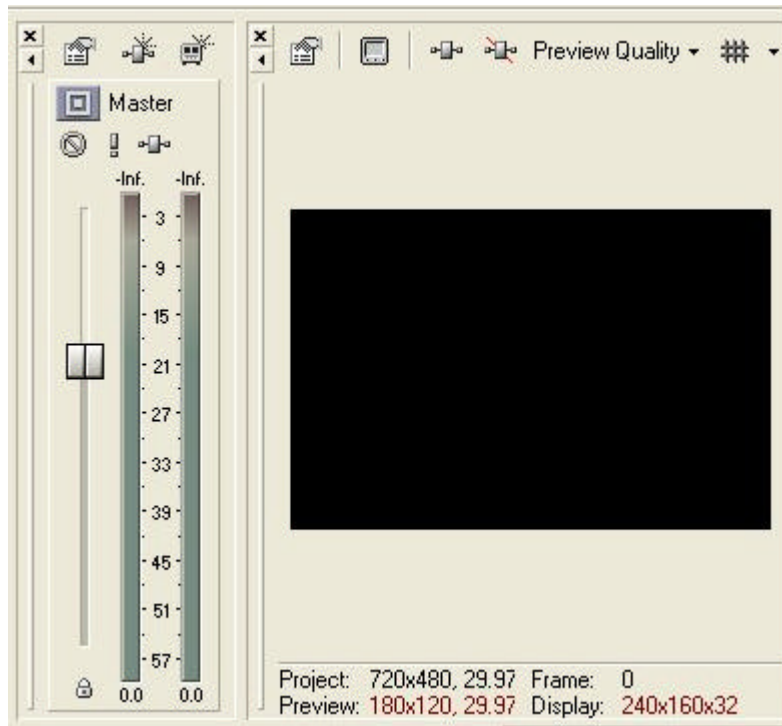


Figure 2

The **Video Effects** are some more “canned” effects provided by Sonic Foundry. They allow you to add different art effects to your video and pictures. I do not find them terribly useful for my purposes, but they are fun to play with.

**Text/Backgrounds** are useful. They are also provided by the company. You can use these to add credits, bylines, or small bits of color or text to a video or set of pictures. Again this is a simple way to make your presentation look very professional. As you teach your name can flash up in front of you or perhaps the date of the lecture. The possibilities are endless.

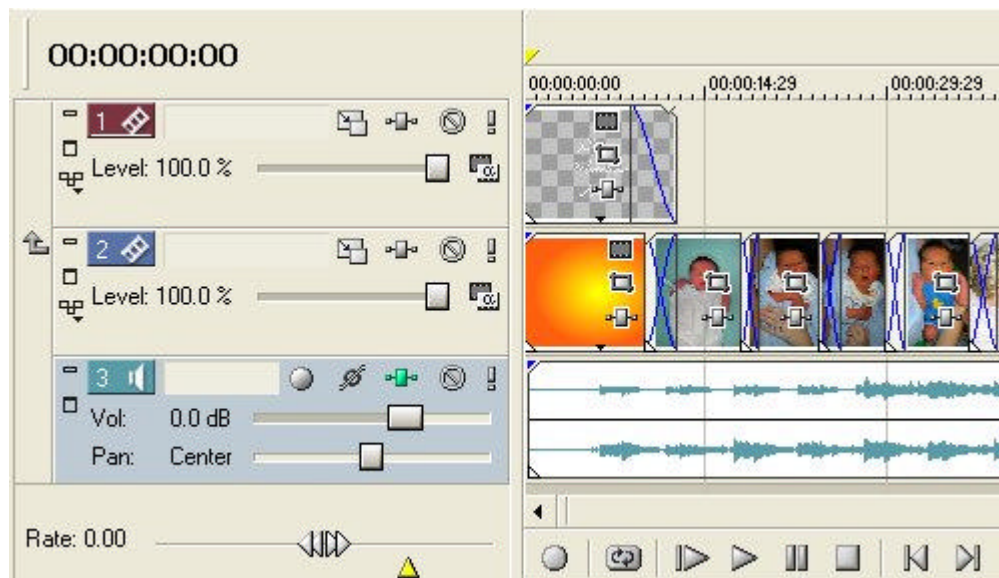
The lower right corner of the desktop is the **Preview** area (see Figure 3). It also contains the sound controls. This live preview area is fantastic to watch part or all of your project as you create it. Sometimes things are not as they appear. This area helps you adjust timing and effects before you spend the time rendering your final presentation. This is one feature that sets Vegas Video apart from other products.



**Figure 3**

The window sections on the desktop are fully adjustable so that you can emphasize the areas you are working with. You can shrink the sound master or make it bigger. The same goes for the preview pane.

Finally, the most important part of the desktop is the timeline workspace. This is where you drag and drop all your elements. As you see in Figure 4, each type of media has its own line.



**Figure 4**

The first two lines in this project are for video. The third section is for sound. You can have unlimited sound or video lines in your project. The lines are actually layers. The top most layer will cover the next, etc. So you can do some simple layering that can produce some dramatic effects. For example, it is easy to overlay a small video of the instructor lecturing over some PowerPoint notes. The first layer in the project above is simply some text that will appear over the video below it. The possibilities are endless. I like the ability to have a narration in one sound layer and perhaps some music in another. I do not have to worry about playing the music while I narrate. They are completely independent. I can then control the levels of each sound layer individually as well. At some point I could even change the narration and not affect the rest of my hard work.

Now that you know the basics you can start dragging and dropping media onto the timeline workspace. As you drag and drop the program knows whether you have video or sound elements and places them accordingly. In the lower right corner of figure 4 you can see the controls for the time line and preview. They are just like VCR controls. You can play, pause, stop, or loop.

### **Ok, my first presentation looks great! Now what?**

Now, it is time to render. This is where you create a movie or file for playback. There are so many choices for rendering that I cannot talk about the pros and cons of each here. Besides, I am not an expert. The beauty of all the choices is that you can create multiple presentations in multiple formats without changing your projects. First a decision has to be made as to whether you want to stream your presentation over the Internet. If this is your purpose, then your two choices would be Real Media or Windows Media. These are the most common types of streaming media. If you just want to put your media on a CD or run it from a computer, then you have many choices. The common formats include: QuickTime (.mov), Microsoft (.wav), Video for Windows (.avi), MP3 audio, .mpg. Decisions also have to be made as to how big you want your presentation to be versus how large and clear you want your video and audio to be. Obviously if you want a full screen, high resolution video with stereo sound, you will need lots of space to save the large file.

### **Suggestions for Use**

I use Vegas Video to enhance my online physics course *Energy and the Environment*. One of my deterrents to online teaching was that the student/teacher interaction was not as dynamic as in face-to-face courses. We could have chats and discussions online but they never saw me, experienced a demonstration, or saw how exciting physics can be. I solved some of my dilemma by making short video clips and putting them on CDs for all the students. Throughout the course they could watch demonstrations and lectures that went with the current module they were working on. As more people get high speed connections, I can stream some of the material. That would make it possible for me to create material during the class and stream it immediately without worrying about having the CD completed before the class begins.

Another possibility is to video a lab experiment and then have the students analyze and write formal lab reports as if they had been there. It is always better for the students to do this on their own but this would be an alternative. If what you teach is procedural such as nursing, this would

be a great way to show a procedure or lab before the students have to do it themselves or as a refresher later.

The possibilities are endless. Vegas Video was a lifesaver for me and my online class. I hope it can help you too.