

Dissolve From One To Two

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After years of using a single Carousel projector, I switched over to two new projectors and a dissolve unit. What happened from there on has been a learning experience I didn't expect.

After sorting my slide shows into single trays for so long and becoming somewhat smug about usually getting the slides right side up and not reversed, I didn't realize how easily I could louse things up with two projectors and the dissolve unit.

My first use of the new equipment came when I made a slide show out of the trip my wife, son and I made to the Orient in the summer of 1977. I have a departure sequence from San Francisco where I show the progressively upward curvature of the aircraft wing as we sped down the runway and became airborne. I sorted the slides on a viewer and alternately placed them in trays one and two. When I projected them the first time, the wing eased upward like it was supposed to do. But subsequently I forgot and put tray number two on projector number one and the other tray on projector two.

I didn't realize why at first and wondered why the wing went down when it had gone up so nicely. This became particularly vexing when I had the takeoff scene in place, the flight and some Japanese scenes placed in the trays and then discovered I had to dismantled the whole thing.

So I muttered a little, resorted the slides and then a day or two or a week later, I might reverse the trays again, mutter some more, and then resort. So now I have big numbers on the tray labels so I can see them in the dark and without my reading glasses. I also numbered every surface of the boxes in which the trays are stored.

I also discovered that I should put the show together sequentially. I made sub-groups out of the slides I took at various locations. That is I took each sequence that I made at places like the Ginza, the Bullet Train, shrines, street scenes in Taipei or Hong Kong and sorted each group in just the order I wanted. Subsequently, I took the individual group, put it into the trays and projected the sequence to see if I had it in the order I wanted. If so, fine. If not, I had to break down only one sequence. Then I put it back and checked again. After that it was on to the Bullet Train or Mt. Fuji.

Of the 800 pictures I took, a little over 300 landed in the wastebasket and the show came down to six 80-slide trays. As the shows are logically presented in subdued light, I took pieces of silver tape and laid them vertically along the outer side of each tray where the 80th slide is positioned. Then I placed a corresponding piece of tape on each projector where the slide is positioned when projected.

When the tape over slide 80 lines up with the tape on projector number one, I know I will change that tray after projector number two drops and projects slide 80. Then as slide 80 on projector number two is being projected, I change the tray on projector one. Subsequently, as projector one projects the first slide on the new tray, projector two gets changed. Works fine for me and I can make pretty fast changes without interrupting the show. I also keep my dialogue going and people are mostly unaware of what I am doing with the equipment. Of course I am pretty careful to stack the trays in the order to be used also.

To prepare for the show, I always align the two projectors by projecting a slide from each of them. That, of course, comes out as a super or double exposure on the screen. That way I can line the projectors up both vertically and horizontally. Then I back off projector number two to zero and turn it to fan. Projector number one with the first slide remains on and I am ready as soon as the audience is seated.

I mentioned that I am careful to stack the trays in the right order. I didn't always do that. Now I do. The tape on the trays is again quite helpful in changing. As I know where slide 80 is, I can quickly feel the positioning notch as I replace the trays. Although I can do this pretty well from the lights of the projectors, I carry a flashlight. The flashlight also helps late comers find a seat in the darkened room. I can also point out the room lights if necessary.

I am enjoying the dissolve unit as quite a creative item which affects things like beautiful sunsets. We enjoyed a remarkable evening scene and sunset as we flew from Osaka to Taipei, especially since we were between two layers of clouds. Thus with the dissolve, I achieved a progressively darker scene. I took a little artistic license by using one picture I had taken with a colorburst filter and another with a cross screen.

The dissolve works well with people too. I got an interesting sequence of a cute Japanese 3-year-old girl examining an object at a souvenir store. She looked at it, examined it, consulted her mother and then put it back.

The dissolve works well with wing flaps too. As we approached Hong Kong, I photographed the water, ships and islands below and included the progressively lowering wing flaps. So I have a nice bit of action as we got lower, closer, and finally with the flaps about into full landing position and framing the scene below. I also found that my viewers were quite interested in such effects.

Since I give my shows at various places, I discovered a three-suitcase works awfully well for transporting the equipment save for the slide trays and projection stand. To transport the projectors, I remove the lenses from each of them and then wrap the lenses and the projectors separately in bath towels. After that, I cradle them in one half of the case.

Into the other side goes the dissolve unit, the projector rack that goes on top of the projection stand, two extra projection bulbs, the flashlight, a battery operated pointer, an extension cord and an adapter for outlets which do not accept three-pronged plugs. The projection stand easily breaks down to a briefcase sized unit and it has a carrying handle.

The show done, I disconnect the dissolve control cable to projector number two. That leaves the fans operating in both projectors so I can cool the projection bulbs.

While much of the narrative of the show is related to what we did and saw, I also did some research on the places and thus embellished my narrative. The audience is quite responsive to historical tid bits and a few interesting facts such as Hong Kong has an area of $398\frac{1}{4}$ square miles, 230 islands and 10,000 people per square mile.

So I am having fun with two things I like. Writing and photography and trying new effects with words, film and equipment.

Now I wonder what I will do when I move to four projectors.