

The Kick-Start guide to Vegas.

Editing Basics.

By Mike Jones

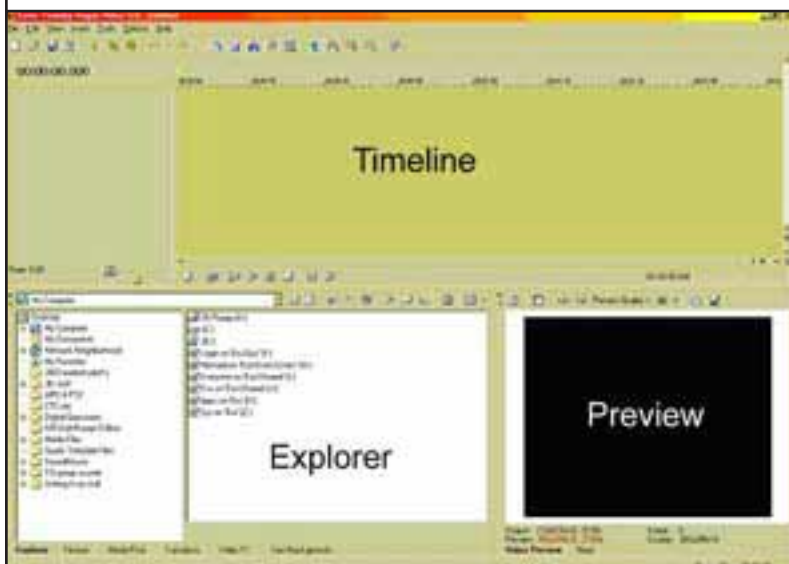
Vegas Video is an extremely powerful multimedia non-linear editing program. Vegas allows for an enormous amount of creative freedom in the construction of video and sound projects and yet is very easy to use with a logical and accessible interface.

The Vegas Video interface is divided into three main window sections :

The Timeline. This is where the various video, text and sound elements are arranged and sequenced.

The Preview Pane. This area is for previewing media files. (video clips, sounds, still images) When graphic files (jpeg, avi, etc) are selected in the Explorer window they will be displayed here. When the Play button on the Transport bar is pressed the Preview pane will display the constructed project as it is on the Timeline.

And the Explorer window that allows the editor to navigate to media files stored on the hard drive. This window also contains the Effects, Transitions and Generated Media (such as text) that can be added to



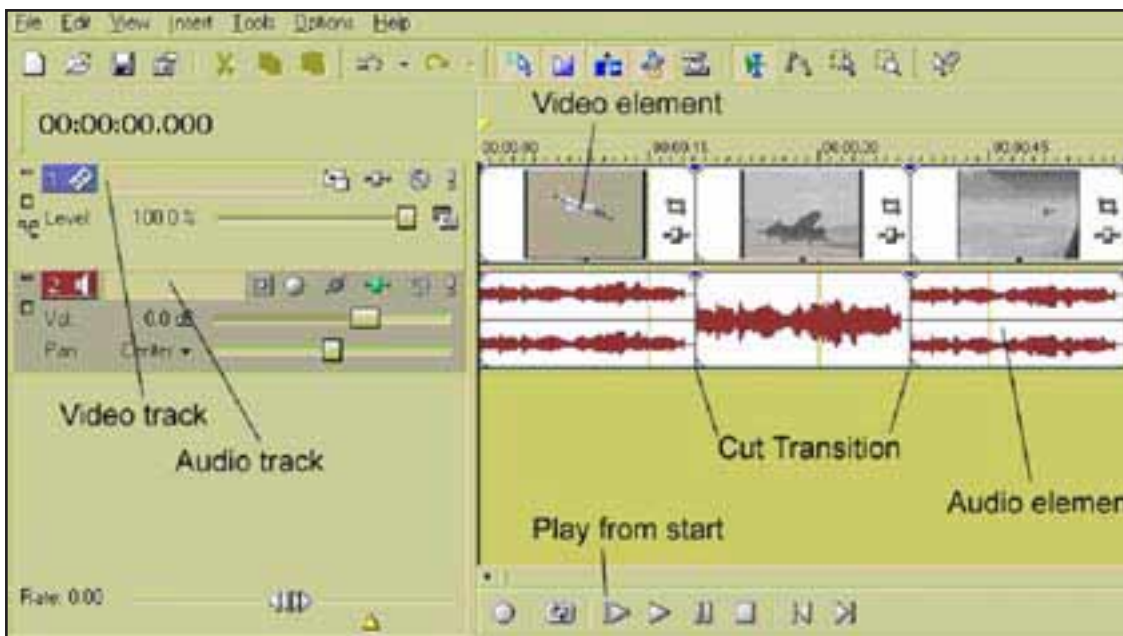
elements on the Timeline.

The first step in creating a digital video project is to preview the individual video or sound elements that the editor may wish to use. This is done by first navigating through the explorer window to the location of the media files on the hard drive.

Ensure that the Auto Preview button is depressed and then simply click once on a media file for it to preview. If the media file is a video clip or still photo it will play and show in the Preview Pane. If the media file is a sound file it will play through the headphones or speakers attached to the computer.

When the desired media file has been found it needs to be added to the timeline. This is done by simply clicking and dragging the file from the Explorer window and dropping it on the Timeline. This will immediately create a new Video or Audio track depending on the clip. If the video clip has sound embedded in it, this will create both an audio and video track on the Timeline.

This process is repeated to sequence the media elements into a project. By Butting video elements up against each other a Cut is created from shot to shot. To view the project as a whole in the Preview Pane use the

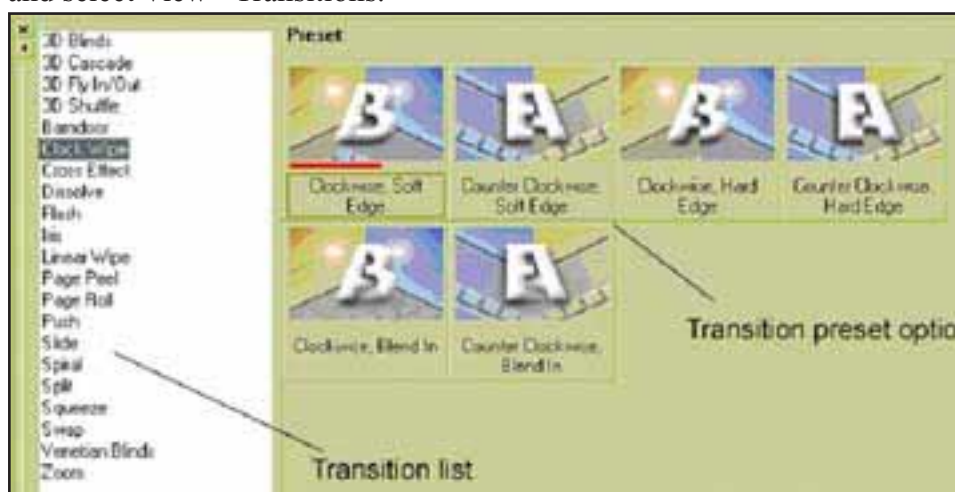


Play from Start button on the transport bar.

Once a media element is placed on the Timeline it is by no means stuck there. Digital editing is non-linear, meaning that the editor can reposition a clip at any time in the editing process. To move a clip, place the cursor within the element on the Timeline, ensuring that the cursor is an Arrow head in shape.

Then click and drag the element to a new position on the Timeline. This action is also used to create Crossfade transitions where one image will be faded into the next. Click and drag to move an element so that it over-laps a second element. A blue cross area will appear showing the area of overlap and the length in time of the Crossfade.

Cuts and Crossfades are two of the most common and universal transitions available but Vegas provides a large suite of alternative transitions to choose from. To access the Transitions Palette click on the Transitions tab at the bottom of the Explorer window. Alternatively, if the tab is not displayed, go to the menu bar and select View - Transitions.



The list down the left hand side of the Transitions window gives the names of all the Transitions available. The icons to the right of this list are Preset examples of the transitions. Roll the cursor over these icons to see get an idea of what the transition does.

All transitions and effects in Vegas video are fully customisable so these presets represent just a few possibilities. To apply the Transition simply drag and drop the desired preset onto the area where there is an existing Crossfade on the Timeline. This will open a Transition Properties window. It is here that

the Transition can be modified to the editor's particular needs. Each transition will have a different set of adjustable properties. When changes are complete close the Properties window and preview the project with the Play button.

Once clips have been placed on the Timeline most fine editing, such as trimming, splitting stretching and looping of video clips, can be done on the Timeline itself.

To Trim a clip bring the cursor up to the timeline and place it over the left or right hand edge of the clip. The cursor will take the shape of a small box with an arrow head in each direction.

By clicking and dragging inwards towards the centre of the clip the editor can trim the head or tail off an image until only the desired part of the clip is showing.

Stretching and Looping are done in a very similar manner. Bring the cursor to the same position and instead of clicking and dragging towards the centre, drag so as to extend the clip along the Timeline. This will cause the clip to loop (play in repetition) Where the clip stops and begins again is indicated by the indent marks on the top edge of the clip.

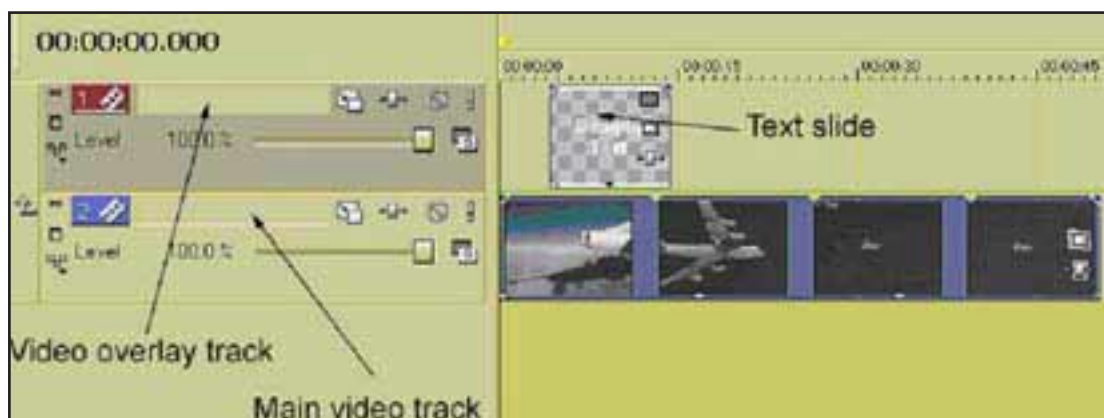
To Stretch the clip without looping, and so create a slow-motion effect, move the cursor again to this position with the two arrowed, box cursor and hold down the 'Ctrl' key on the keyboard whilst clicking and dragging. This will place a small squiggly line beneath the cursor indicating that the editor has engaged the Time-Stretch function.

To increase the speed of a clip (fast-motion) simply 'Ctrl' drag towards the centre of the clip, compressing the length.

To Split a clip into smaller, separate parts (or remove the beginning, end or middle of a clip) place the flashing vertical-line cursor at the beginning of the clip on the Timeline. Use the Forward and Back arrow keys on the keyboard to scrub through the clip, frame by frame, until the flashing line is at the desired point in the clip. Press the 'S' key on the keyboard. This action will Split the clip into two separate parts at the point of the cursor line. Either part of the clip can now be relocated or deleted.

Vegas allows the editor to create as many Video and Audio tracks as desired (assuming the computer is powerful enough). Each track is lined up, one under the other, on the Timeline. Audio and Video tracks can be mixed together in any order. The location of audio tracks will not effect each other or the video tracks. However, the stacking order of Video tracks on the Timeline is very important as it determines the layering order. The Video track at the top of the Timeline is the top layer, the layer that overlays any video tracks beneath. For most basic video editing only two tracks of video are required; the main track and an Overlay track for elements such as title slides.

In order for layers beneath an Overlay track to be seen, the overlay video elements must contain transparent areas also known as Masks or Alpha channels. Text slides are a common instance of this where the text floats

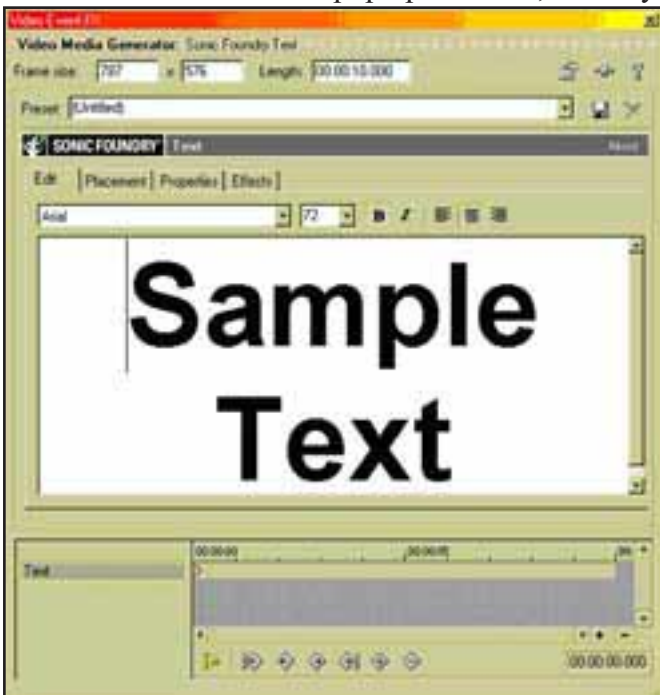


on-top of the action underneath. (The scrolling prologue in Star Wars for example.)

Vegas allows text to be easily created within the editing system. First a new Video Track needs to be created that will overlay the main track. Go to the Insert menu and select Video Track. This will insert a new, empty Video track at the top of the project Timeline.

Select the Text/Backgrounds tab from the bottom of the explorer window. (View menu - Text/Backgrounds if the tab's not showing.) From the list on the left hand side select Text. Again there are series of preset options to the left of the list, click and drag one of these and drop it into the newly created, top layer, Video track.

From here a window will pop open that is, in many ways, a mini word processor for adding text slides.

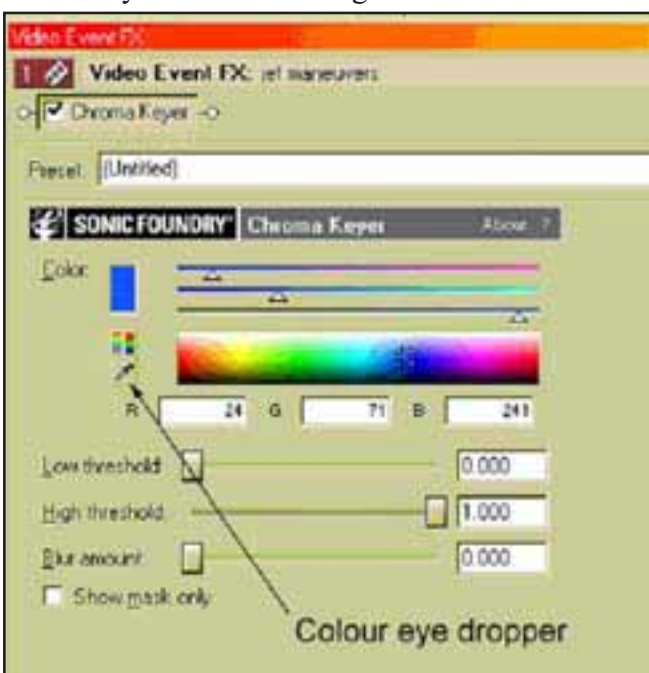


To see your text in the Preview window as you enter it, ensure that the vertical, flashing, position cursor is placed through the newly created text slide on the Timeline.

The Placement, Properties and Effects tabs in the Text generator window will allow you to shape and customise the text as it will appear on screen: colour, placement, drop shadows, tracking and scaling.

When the slide is finished simply close text generator window. The new text slide will be on the Overlay track and can now be moved, manipulated, stretched or effected as if it were any other video track. The transparent area on the text slide, that allows for the other layers to show through, is depicted on the Timeline as a patchwork of grey squares.

Layer transparencies can also be created through the use of effects on video elements. The Chroma key effect, found in the Video FX tab at the bottom of the Explorer Window, is used to make pixels of a selected colour transparent. This technique is also known as Blue Screen effect. For the Chroma key to work effectively the selected image needs to have a consistent background colour that can be 'Keyed out'.



From the list of Video effects select 'Chroma keyer' and from the presets on the left drag and drop the Blue Screen onto the video element in the Timeline that you wish to effect. To select to correct colour to be 'Keyed out' click the Eye dropper on the Chroma Key effect properties window and then click on the a part of the image on the Timeline that contains the colour you wish to make transparent. This will allow any clips on the track below to be seen through the overlay.

Once a video project has been completed it has to be Rendered in order for the computer to convert all the different media, edits, effects and transitions into a single audio/video file. Rendering is, in itself,

somewhat of an art form so it is vitally important to ensure the best possible quality, that the editor chooses a video format appropriate to the medium which will display the video. For example, a video for broadcast would require nothing less than full frame rate, PAL DV compliant files in the *.avi format. But these files would be far too large for use on the web or even Cd-ROM. For these media a compressed format such as Quicktime, Real media or Windows media would be the most appropriate. The trade off here being some quality in exchange for greatly reduced file size. The key to good rendering is understanding the limitations and advantages of the different video formats.

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