

St John's HowTo No 4:- Producing Video Montages

Revision 1.00 18-8-2020. Andy Copsey.

1 Index

St John's HowTo No 4:- Producing Video Montages	1
1 Index	1
2 See also	1
3 Summary	1
4 The process in detail	2
4.1 Step 1- The guide track	2
4.2 Step 2- Participants recording	2
4.3 Tricks and tips on recording a part.....	2
4.3.1 Recommendation for a perfect guitar and vocal recording.....	2
4.3.2 Here is another suggestion for a perfect piano and vocal recording:-	3
4.4 Step 3 – sending the parts in	3
4.5 Steps 4 – 2153. The editing.....	3

2 See also

See other documents in the St Johns Church series of How To. These can be found in the church sharepoint Projection & Visual subsite here: (Permission needed.)

(<https://stjohnschurch809.sharepoint.com/Projection/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>)

These can also be found on the public website (www.benrhydding.org.uk) in pdf format.

As of today 29/6/2020 the following documents exist:

1. How to No 1. Zoom meetings
2. How to No 2. Recording and streaming tips and tricks for computer audio and video
3. How to No 3. Recording talks, prayers and readings.
4. How to No 4. Video Montages
5. How to No 5. Including videos in church service sheets
6. How to No 6. Using OBS for streaming and broadcasting

3 Summary

A video montage is a compilation of several video or audio recordings done by different participants in their own environment and then pieced together with an editing package to produce the final result. The clever bit in this is the initial guide track that everyone follows when recording their own part. This is what enables each contribution to be kept in time. Some recent montages done for St Johns Church are here: [Good good Father](#) or [Amazing Grace](#) or [Hosanna](#)

4 The process in detail

4.1 Step 1- The guide track

Typically this is a simple recording of the song melody recorded with a click track (metronome track) for timing purposes. Quite often, this initial recording is not used in the final mix as its only purpose is to provide the framework for the song.

It is also possible to use a rhythmic instrument such as a guitar for this purpose but the click track does provide tighter timing. Attempting to create a compilation from multiple participants without some definitive click or rhythmic timing in the guide is almost impossible.

My favourite method to produce the guide track is to first generate a click track using Audacity (Audacity calls this a rhythm track.). This just sounds like a metronome ticking away.

I then record simple guitar and vocal accompaniment to the click. I mix this so that the click is in the left channel and my voice and guitar in the right channel of a stereo mix. This audio recording is then emailed out to participants along with lyrics and maybe chord sheets.

4.2 Step 2- Participants recording

Each participant plays the guide track using headphones and records themselves on another device playing or singing along to the track. This is done in their own time and may be the result of several trial run through until they are happy with the recording. The purpose of headphones is that their recording does not contain any of the guide track in it. (If they were to play the guide track on speakers this would not be the case.)

One key thing here is use the best piece of kit you have to do the recording on. Most audio capable devices are good enough to play the guide track on.

Be critical but **NOT TOO** critical of the end recording. Very few people are ever satisfied with their own voices or instruments on a recording. If necessary walk away from it and listen again a day later – you may be surprised!

4.3 Tricks and tips on recording a part.

How to Document No 3 has a lot of useful info on recording but there are a few specialist tricks good to know for a good result. Here is one very useful suggestion:-

Record each part separately and focus mainly on that part. Eg if singing and guitar playing, record twice – at least. The editing phase can split audio and video and move things around easily. It cannot split a voice and instrument once it has been recorded.

There are many ways of achieving this and the following suggestions are just one way around the problems.

4.3.1 Recommendation for a perfect guitar and vocal recording.

The sound the audience hear is not the one recorded on the video they see. Most folk will not notice the slight timing errors, especially if you have practiced and know the parts well.

- Part 1. Video of you singing and playing whilst listening to the guide track. The sound doesn't matter but appearance does so you don't need to wear headphones as we will throw away the sound on

this track. You need to sing and play because the audience will think this is the one they can hear but the visual appearance is everything here. The actual sound will come from parts 2 and 3 below.

- Part 2 Audio only of you singing, no guitar. (You can then wear headphones to listen to the guide track as this visual will not appear in the end result.
- Part 3 Audio only of you playing, not singing. You can wear headphones to listen to the guide track – they won't be seen.

4.3.2 Here is another suggestion for a perfect piano and vocal recording:-

- Part 1. Video of you singing and playing together along with the guide track. The sound doesn't matter but appearance does so you don't need to wear headphones as we will throw away the sound on this track. You need to sing and play because the audience will think this is the one they can hear but the visual appearance is everything here. The actual sound will come from parts 2 and 3 below.
- Part 2 Audio only of you singing. (You can then wear headphones to listen to the guide track as this visual will not appear in the end result.
- Part 3 Audio only of you playing. Wear headphones to listen to the guide track

Don't attempt to record just one track of you singing and playing as it is unlikely the audio from this will be usable. It is unlikely that the balance of voice and instrument will be right and this forces the producer to fade the audio input down to virtually nothing. If it was just an audio recording you have completely wasted your effort. This is especially true for piano and voice.

4.4 Step 3 – sending the parts in

It is likely you will finish up with one or more video files that are quite large in size and too big to email. There are many ways to send large files and some of these are listed in How to Guide No 2. We recommend WeTransfer or Google Drive or for church related videos – the sharepoint site (login needed) here: [Media needing preparation](#)

4.5 Steps 4 – 2153. The editing

I use a package called VSDC to do most of the work piecing together all the participant's videos together with other items such as text or still images. The audio capabilities of VSDC are a little limiting and I also use Audacity for some of the audio tweaks. Both of these are free software though I use the commercial version of VSDC as it has extra capabilities.

The editing is a very painstaking process and typically takes anything from 4 hours to 20 or more on a complex video. The final result is very much a labour of love and can end in me not wanting to hear that song again (ever!). Some parts such as a tricky chorus may have been played 50 or more times through during the tweaking.

It is actually very useful to have input from the musicians on arrangements as they may have ideas that wouldn't occur to the editor when head down in all the detail.

The process I follow is roughly as below:

- Import each video and make sure about lipsync
- Line up videos so the sound is in sync between contributions
- Split all videos into sound and video tracks

St Johns CofE Anglican church, Ben Rhydding, Ilkley. Yorkshire

www.benrhydding.org.uk andy.copsey@benrhydding.org.uk

- Do the sound mix, usually applying a level control track to each contribution.
- Start to arrange the videos in the montage.
- Create copies of videos to do zooms/fades/visual tricks etc
- Add text such as lyrics and titles/credits.
- Top and tail the whole thing add fade in/out
- Use audacity to clean up the resultant audio track and put it back into VSDC
- Export the video

A lot of time is consumed in the video arrangement steps as truly – the possibilities are endless. I tend to use overlay copies of main videos with zoom, fade and movement to create interest. I joke about this being steps 4 -2000 plus – but it is a very iterative process.

Some of the videos for St Johns church had only a single video recording. Overlays and zoom tricks in VSDC created the impression of more than one camera operator.

Some recordings done within a family environment were of just one play through the song, but recording on multiple devices at the same time. This allowed different views to be used on the video though it did not allow freedom to adjust the sound that multiple discrete recordings could achieve. It does avoid the need for a click track though.

Here are the websites for the packages I recommend:

[VSDC video editor](#)

[Audacity](#)

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