

Getting the Photos onto Your Hard Drive

Before you can begin to use Photo Story, you need to get your photographs off your digital camera and onto your hard drive. One of the features of Windows XP are the wizards that pop up when you attach additional devices to your computer. There is one for importing images from your digital camera to your hard drive.

All you need is a digital camera with either a USB or a FireWire connection. Connect it to your PC. Wait a couple seconds, and you should see this window



Figure 1 The AutoPlay Wizard gives you various options for how you want to view your files.

Select the first option, Copy Pictures to a Folder on My Computer Using the Microsoft Scanner and Camera Wizard. The first screen on the Camera Wizard then comes up

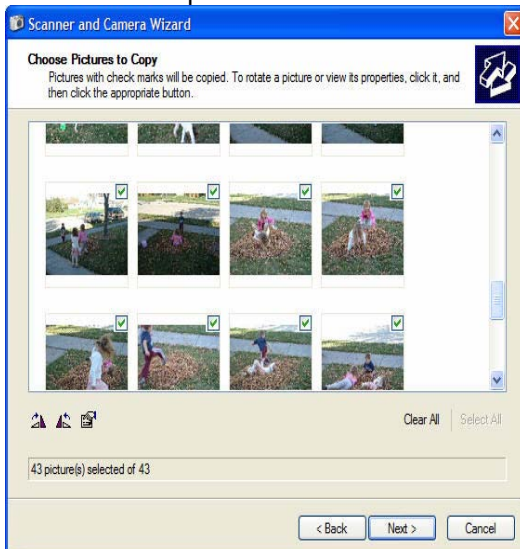


Figure 2 The Scanner and Camera Wizard is one of those dark little secrets within Windows XP that is really useful. Here you can see 43 images being imported to your hard drive.

The Camera Wizard is a great feature. It does not do much, but it is a real lifesaver. The first good feature for importing your images is what you see in Figure 2: a tool that shows you what is on your camera. The viewer lets you choose which groups of images to move off the camera. You can also select any one image and rotate it using the Rotation buttons (see Figure 3). This is useful if you do a lot of landscape and portrait images. By changing the rotation, you eliminate having to do this later inside Photo Story.



Figure 3 The Rotation buttons rotate images.

Select the Next button to categorize your images. First give your images a name (all the imported images will then have that name followed by a sequential number), select the folder where you want your images to be stored, and then choose whether you want the images to be deleted from the camera (Figure 4).

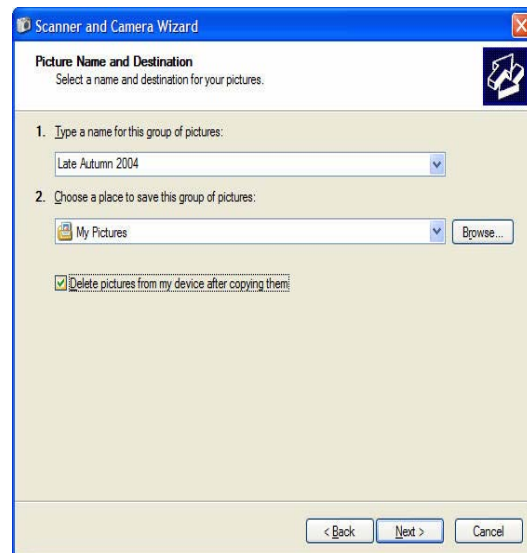


Figure 4 The Scanner and Camera Wizard labels all your images with names that make sense to you.

The Scanner and Camera Wizard then moves everything over. It is as easy as that. Now on to making movies!

Getting Started with Photo Story 3

Photo Story is a product that Microsoft shipped with Windows XP Plus! Digital Edition (Figure 5). The role of Photo Story is to create movies with your images. The movies can then be shared by email, through a web site, or on video—CD or DVD.

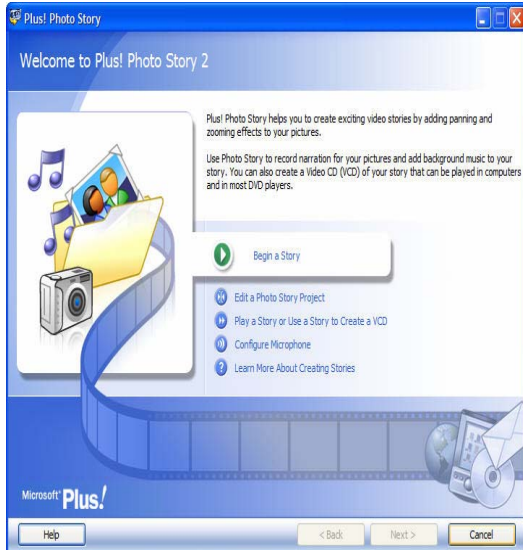


Figure 5- the original Photo Story 2.

If you have Photo Story 2, you can get Photo Story 3 free. All you have to do is go to the Photo Story 3 web site and select the Download button.

The following exercise shows you just how quickly you can create a movie with Photo Story 3.

Importing Images into Photo Story

Alright, roll up your sleeves.

Open Photo Story 3. You will see the welcome screen in Figure 6.

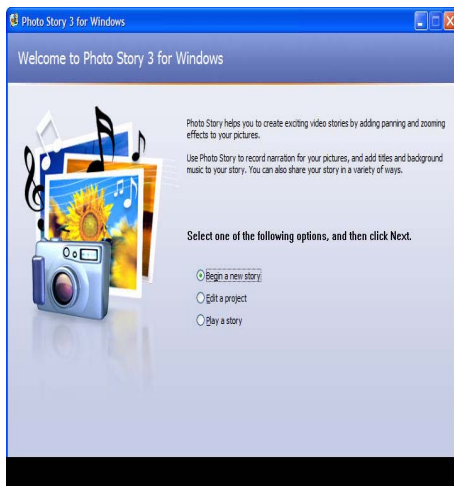


Figure 6 Photo Story 3 welcome screen.

Select the first option, Begin a New Story. This takes you to the image import screen in Figure 7.

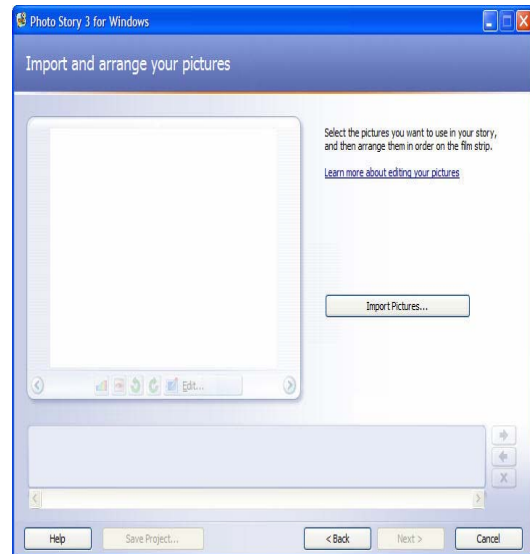


Figure 7 The import screen for Photo Story 3.

You need to import some pictures into your movie. Select the Import Pictures button. The File Browser for Photo Story 3 is unique. (Figure 8). You will also see a slider in the top-right corner that allows you to adjust the size of the image thumbnail.

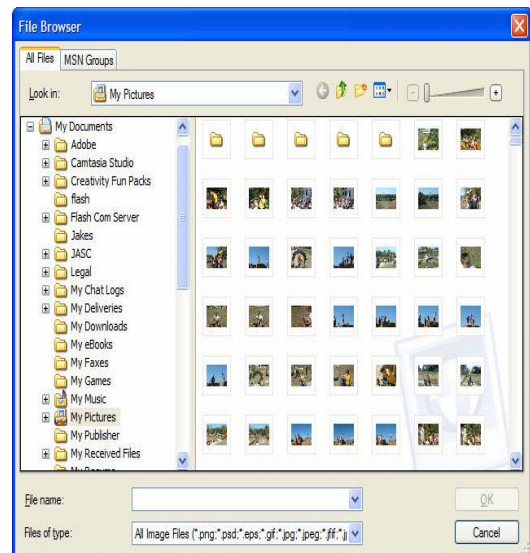


Figure 8 The Photo Story 3 File Browser lets you look for images on your computer and in MSN Groups

You can change the thumbnail preview image size to view more or fewer numbers of images. You can also select whole groups of images in one move. When you have the images you want, click OK to import the images into Photo Story.

Photo Story now displays a visual timeline of your images (Figure 9). You can use controls to modify each image; we'll explain these in a bit. For now, let's just get the movie working.



Figure 9 Photo Story lays out the order of all your digital images.

Adding Titles and Effects to Your Pictures

Click the Next button, and you are taken to the Add a Title to Your Pictures screen. Here you can add a title to any photograph (Figure 10).

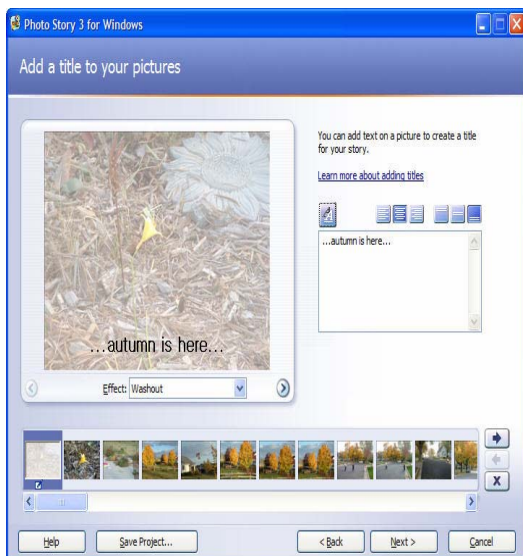


Figure 10 Any photograph can have a title and visual effect applied to it.

Using the scrollbar under the timeline, scroll to the far left. Choose the first photograph. The photograph is highlighted in the top viewer.

You can add a title in the text box on the right side. Alignment tools enable you to

choose where you want the text to appear on the screen. You can also change the text font, size, style, colour, and boldness.

As you add a title, you will notice that it can sometimes be hard to read the title. This is where the Effects drop-down feature under your photograph comes into play. You can apply quite a few visual effects to any photograph. In Figure 10, a Washout effect was added that makes the title stand out better. The following effects also are available:

- Black and White
- Chalk and Charcoal
- Diffuse Glow
- Negative
- Outline, Black
- Outline, Grey
- Sepia
- Washout
- Watercolor

Adding Transition Effects, Controlling Animation, and Narrating Your Show

When you have a title on the screen, jump to the next screen, which enables you to add a narrative to the images (Figure 11).

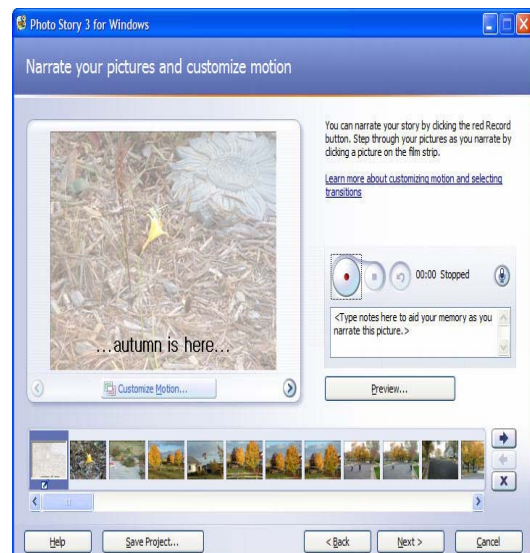


Figure 11 Each photograph can have its own narrative.

Each photograph can have a narrative added to it. Select the highlight the Record button and begin talking into your computer microphone. Try to keep

Photo Story 3 - Basics

your narrations to only a couple seconds for each photograph. If you have a Photo Story that is more than 200 images, each with two minutes of narration, you run the risk of losing your audience; they will likely fall asleep around image 7.

After you have added a narration, you might notice that under the highlighted image is a button called Customize Motion. Selecting this screen opens the Customize Motion window.

The Customize Motion window has two tabs that enable you to control the animation for each screen and the transition between frames.

By default, all images fade in and out and do a funky zoom in and out. This gives your movies a sense of movement. The Motion and Duration tab lets you control the movement of the animation (Figure 12).

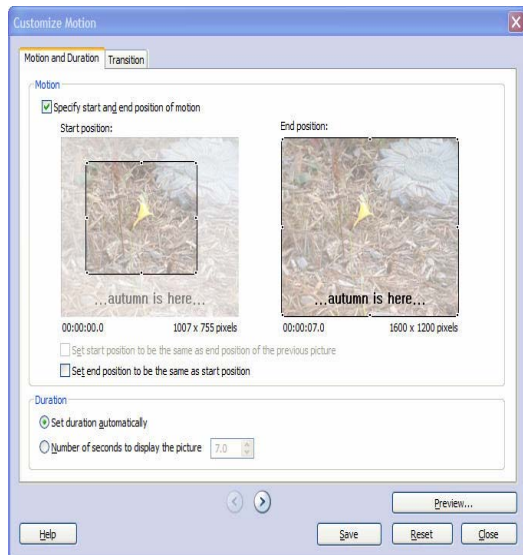


Figure 12 The Customize Motion window controls motion and duration plus frame transitions.

To control the motion, select the Specify Start and End Position of Motion check box. The resize handles let you change where you want the animation to start on the left side. On the right side, highlight how much of the image you want the viewer to see. You are forcing the image to be zoomed in and then panned out.

Beneath this, you can override the default 5.0-second duration for the photograph to any time you want. If you added a narration, Duration defaults to the duration of your narration. Press the Preview button to take a quick look at

the final edits in Windows Media Player (Figure 13).

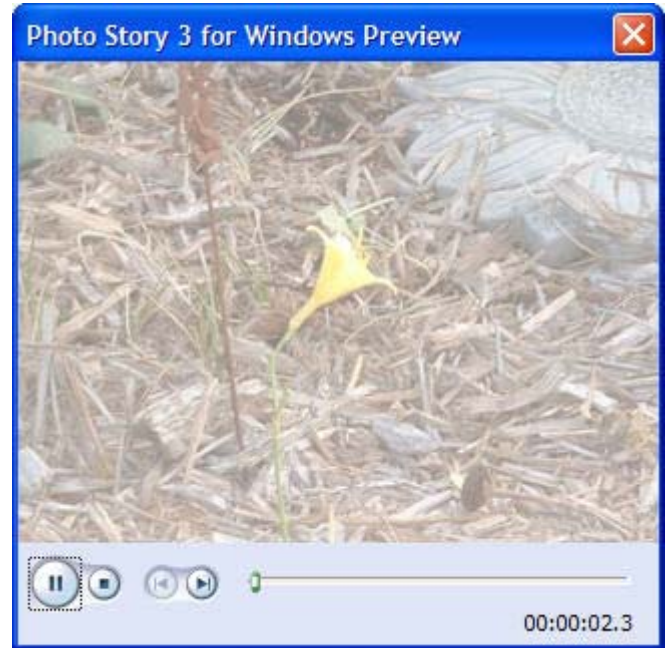


Figure 13 The Preview button gives you the chance to take a quick look at the motion and duration modifications you made.

In addition, you can modify the Transition effects. The Transition effects replace the default fade effect used to transition each frame. If you have used Windows Movie Maker, you will see some strong similarities. You can apply 48 different transitions, ranging from simple cross fades to complex image flipping (Figure 14).

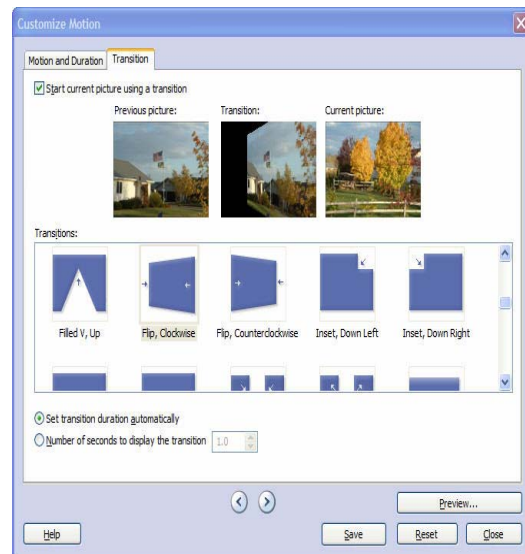


Figure 14 Each frame can use any of the 48 different transition effects.

Giving Your Movie a Theme Song

Selecting the Next button takes you to the Add Background Music screen. This screen enables you to add any MP3 or WMA file you have on your computer or to create your own music.

To add music that you have already on your computer, just press the Select Music button and search your hard drive for the song you want.

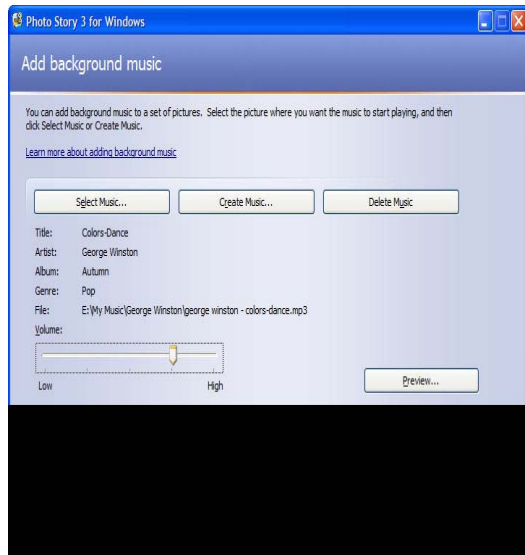


Figure 15 Photo Story enables you to add a sound track to your movie.

The song automatically loops and fades out when it reaches the end of your movie. Or you can have some fun with the Create Music button. This opens the Create Music window, where you can create your own royalty-free music (Figure 16).

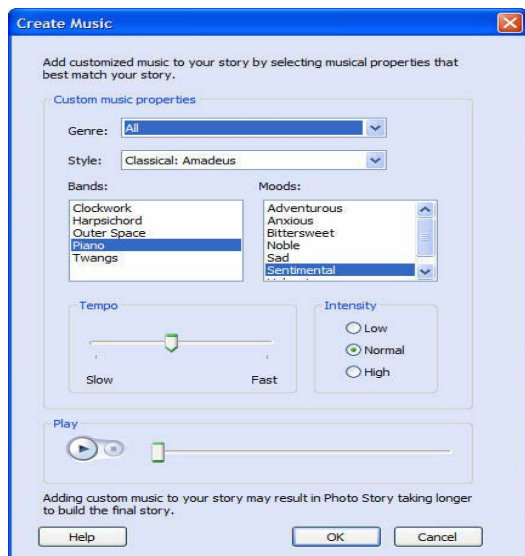


Figure 16 The Create Music window lets you create your own music.

The problem is, I am not very good at creating music. This seems like a cool tool, but it is pretty much wasted on me because I can only make music sound bad. You, on the other hand, may have different luck.

When you have whichever type of music you like selected, you can also choose how loud you want the music to sound in the background. The volume slider can be drawn back and forth. Press the Preview button to view the movie with your soundtrack at different levels.

Creating Your Movie

The final step is to create your movie. You do this in the Save Your Story movie (Figure 17).



Figure 17 Default templates in Photo Story control how you create your movie.

You can choose from several default settings when you get the final screen. The first is to save your video to your computer. The second is to send your Photo Story through e-mail. Microsoft has included support for saving your stories to Pocket PC, SmartPhone, and Portable Media Center.

In Figure 17, we have selected the second option of e-mail. This creates a video 160 pixels by 120 pixels in size. This translates to 1MB for each three-minute section of video.

After the video has been created, you are taken to a screen that enables you to e-mail your video (Figure 18).

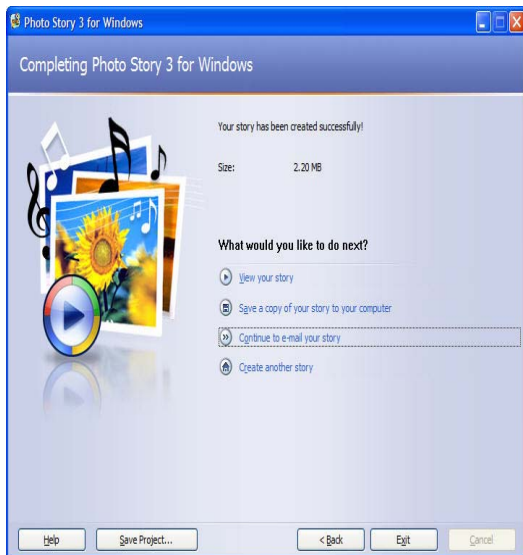


Figure 18 The final screen for Photo Story.

You can choose other ways of saving your story. Click the Back button and go to the Save Your Story screen. Choose Save Your story for Playback on Your Computer.

The first thing you should do is name your file (Figure 19?).

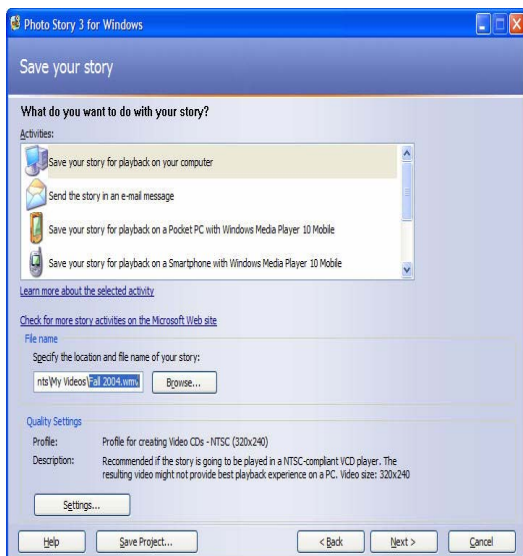


Figure 19 Naming your file is important—you need to find it later.

You can save your stories to your hard drive in a lot of ways. Click the Settings button to see all the different settings you can choose. Remember when you are choosing settings for your video that the wider or higher the final video is, the larger the video file size will be.

The most commonly used settings are provided in the drop-down list. There are other settings, which include DVD and video CDs (Figure 20). You can also

choose other e-mail settings and settings for new video playback devices, such as Portable Media Centre devices and Smartphones.

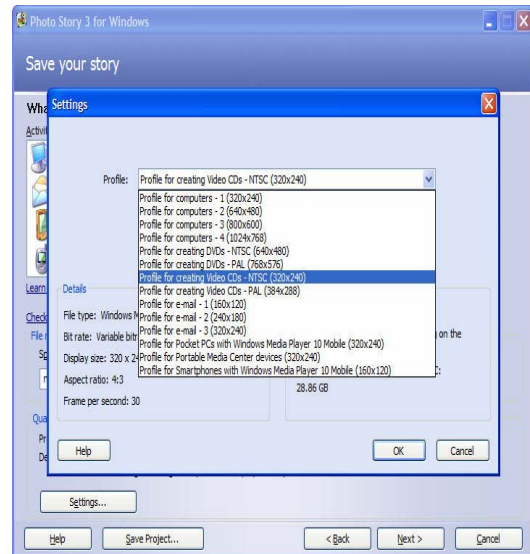


Figure 20 Choosing from the many different profiles for Photo Story.

The final step you need to take after you have created all your desired videos is to save your project. Click Save Project. You then can save your file as a Windows Photo Story 3 file. At any time, you can open the file in Photo Story 3 to tweak and edit the movie.

The great thing about Photo Story is that you can use collections of digital images to rapidly create a slide show. If you want to add video or more effects, however, you will need to check out Movie Maker 2, the grown-up version of Photo Story. With that said, Photo Story really fills a niche area, and you will use it more often than you might have originally thought.