

Making Video Slides



Combine color slides with video imagery to create some amazing effects. by Mary Ross

Take one color television set, one video cassette recorder, and a color video camera as basic ingredients. Don't stir; just plug them all together, and you have the makings for some very tasty video imagery that you can concoct right at home. To spice things up, throw in your own color slides and black-and-white negatives or prints, and get ready to turn them into a photographic video soufflé, as you rephotograph these images from your television screen.

In a way, slides are the easiest to reproduce on the tube, since the only lighting they require is the beam from your slide projector. But you will have to keep the projection setup isolated somewhat from the TV set to prevent stray light from reflecting off the surface

of the TV screen. And I usually cover the top of my projector with a piece of black cloth (or cardboard will do) for the few moments it takes to make an exposure. With the room light out, the only illumination should be from the slide projection beam and its reflection off the slide screen. You can check for other reflections easily by aiming your 35mm or 2 1/4 single-lens reflex (SLR) camera at the televised image and peering through the viewfinder.

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SLIDES (continued)

When you've selected the slides you wish to reproduce in video, project them on the screen from a fairly close position to gain greater illumination and sharper reproduction. Since video cameras usually focus as close as 3 to 5 feet, the projected image doesn't have to be much larger than a foot across. And many video cameras come with zoom lenses, allowing you to focus on selected portions of the slide. Only a small projection surface is needed, and it is often more convenient to tape a slab of smooth, white artist's board to a wall rather than use a conventional screen.

When you set up, place the video camera on a tripod—locked in firmly—on the same level as and as close as possible to the slide projector. This minimizes the angle of incidence from the screen surface to the camera lens and practically eliminates distortion. Once you've focused the slide, use the image on your TV screen to manually set color and contrast controls. Most color video cameras also

have white-balance and color-temperature controls with settings for daylight, tungsten, and fluorescent light sources. Tungsten is the "correct" setting for slide projection, but you can always experiment to get the effects you like best. Color and contrast can be altered by changing the f-stops on the video lens as well.

When you're satisfied with the televised image, set the brightness level of your TV a little higher than is normal for regular viewing. You may still have to adjust tint or hue controls, but brightening should give you a reasonably good, well-balanced picture for rephotographing.

A TV picture is formed of separate frames, which are transmitted at a rapid rate—30 per second. This would suggest that we need a still camera shutter speed of 1/30 second to photograph one TV picture. Chances are, however, the shutter speed on the SLR will not be exactly that. If it's slightly faster, a dark band (the frame edge) will appear in the finished shot. More than

likely, you'll need a shutter speed of 1/15 or even 1/8 second. With my 35mm camera, best results have been obtained at the latter speed.

Daylight-balanced film is required. Without a filter, a slight blue cast appears on the film in response to the light from the TV set. For better color rendition, I put a Kodak 40 red color-correction gelatin filter over my 55mm lens. For film, I use Kodak High Speed Ektachrome (ASA 200) because it's both faster and less expensive than the Kodachromes.

This allows me to close my lens down and provides adequate depth of field, particularly when I'm shooting a dark scene through the 40 red filter. I focus carefully on the center of the TV screen and use my built-in camera meter to determine exposure. Still, it's best to bracket exposures, shooting one f-stop over and under the meter reading, especially when faced with contrasty images.

Unusual color effects can be generated with and without filters,



You can do it at home. "Danse Macabre" (see page A11) combines projected slide of faintly seen skull, Kodalith of dancers, and "snow" static created by fooling around with VCR tracking controls. "Runaway, Las Vegas" (above) was produced by sandwiching a video-taped face and a shot of the Las Vegas Strip. Both images were rephotographed on 35mm slide film.