

## QUICK & DIRTY - BUT NOT BAD

by

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The term, "Quick and Dirty," is used by the motion picture industry to describe low budget productions. While those of us in wildlife oriented jobs are probably not familiar with this term, we do know about low budgets. However, low budget productions do not necessarily have to look like quick and dirties, nor does the description apply only to motion pictures.

By necessity, most slide presentations fall into the above category; they, too, need not look quick and dirty. The difference is extra effort with existing materials and, of course, some money. Of the three, extra effort is the most important. Many of us have a tendency to take the easy way out—shoot a straight photograph, use ineffective art work, and wonder why the audience yawns throughout the presentation.

Most, if not all, wildlife agencies employ a staff photographer, or someone proficient in the use of cameras; and many have extensive files of slides, but photography, or straight photography, is just the beginning of a good presentation.

One of the biggest gremlins in a visual presentation is poor art work. It's easy to lay a chart on the floor and stand over it with a camera, but the results are usually less than satisfactory. Charts are dull and uninteresting at their best, and when done poorly only compound a problem. Charts should be kept simple and made attractive. The use of colored tape and transfer letters is inexpensive and very effective. Titles are another bugaboo to the Low Budget producer. Hire a commercial artist, and you may blow your whole budget. Use plastic letters, and it may look "Quick and Dirty." If you must use plastic letters, line them up, choose an attractive background, and light properly.

A unique method of titling I have used was introduced by Eastman Kodak in the Kodak work sheet number 17. This system begins with black letters on white backgrounds.

Typewriters with changeable type styles work well, or transfers, such as Art Type. Prepare the art or title with a clean ribbon on good stock paper, watch for the watermark. The copy is then photographed on Ektachrome Daylight film rated at ASA 650 through a colored filter, and developed in Kodak process C-22 following the normal instructions. These are the chemicals for developing color negatives. This is a simple process and can be done in a black and white darkroom without any special equipment. A positive film has been developed in negative chemicals; and that's what we get, a negative with white letters on a background color complimentary to the filter used, a red filter—a green background, a yellow filter yields a blue background. This works well when copying art or line drawings from printed materials also. In all written material, keep it simple and large enough to be read by those people in the back row of the audience. Titles, written copy, or photographic effects are only on screen for a few seconds - don't confuse your audience with too much copy, or a photograph that's too "busy."

Cartoons may also be used to enhance a slide show. Many times, they are the easiest way to convey a message; for example, a portion of the script in a hunter safety lecture reads: "Gun handlers and archers must learn how to do the same thing in exactly the same way at all times. This *RHYTHM* can make the difference between the good and the mediocre shooter." The key word here is *RHYTHM*. We illustrated it with a cartoon of a piano player. Cartoons are good, but don't overdo it. One need not use a commercial studio or artist, enlist

the aid of art students, or do it yourself. One might be surprised at the hidden talents of someone on the staff.

## PROPS

Props may be scrounged, borrowed, or built. When in need of a country store, we nailed 1" x 2" wood strips on 4' x 8' sheets of plywood, cut a window in one panel, bought old fixtures from a store for \$40.00 and stocked it with empty food containers, put a colored photograph behind the window, and enlisted employees for actors.

Why not go to a real store and shoot on location — time, logistics, getting actors and equipment to the site and working within the storekeeper's hours and not our own. Also, our store has been used several times since.

Remove the store props, add furniture and you have a cabin, total outlay less than 100 bucks.

In another case, we needed a camp scene at night, and the weather did not permit location shooting. A background of black paper was hung from the wall of the studio; leaves, twigs, and a log were gathered from the yard and strewn on the floor; a tent and camping gear were added. A dead tree limb fastened overhead to a microphone boom; a lantern hung from the ceiling on twine; add actors and - a good scene - the expense—only a little time. The props were our own. Though this set was constructed for one photograph, it sparked several ideas for television spot announcements and one short television feature for the educational station.

Props need not be this elaborate, however. In another case, a slide was needed for a sign. Normally, it would have looked a lot like everyone else's pictures of a sign, so we tacked the sign to a stump, sat it on a card table with artificial leaves, added a rear projection screen and a mounted owl, then a slide of the moon was projected on the screen and the foreground lights were connected to a dimmer and adjusted to match the light on the screen, and we came up with a better slide. The investment—extra effort. The same technique was employed for another sign. This time we changed the background slide - removed the owl, replaced the sign, added some grass, and the end result was a better slide with less effort than shooting outdoors.

Quality of the slide itself should not be overlooked; for no matter how clever your material is in its original form, it is worthless if not photographed properly. If the slide is over or underexposed, out of focus, or poorly lighted, it should be discarded and redone or replaced.

Music may be added in the background on tapes or the complete script can be taped and cued for slide changes. There are recorders designed for this purpose which will activate a carousel projector using an inaudible signal which is put on the tape while recording.

There is also a device built by Eastman Kodak which will operate similarly on a conventional stereo recorder—the narration is put on one channel and the signal on the other.

Add a fade and dissolve unit and you have a polished presentation at less expense than a motion picture, still a "Quick and Dirty," but not bad.

In all probability, we must make "Quick and Dirty" - but let's not let anyone know.