

Sounds & Narration

Adding sounds to your ProShow Shows

WEST COAST ANIMATOGRAPHERS GROUP

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Authored by: Shona LaFortune

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Level 1 – Basic Options

You have prepared shows with music and transitions. Now you want to add some sound effects, such as church bells or birds chirping. Or maybe you have a travelogue you need to narrate.

You may or may not want music in the background, but let's assume you do. You put the music file in place as usual, but where do you put the sounds? That's where slide sounds come in.

For example, at slide 2 you would like a spaceship landing sound. While that is playing, you want to say "In the beginning..." (OK, this is a silly show. What do you want for a tutorial?) The advantage of attaching the sounds to the slides is that they are always in the right place, no matter how you move them around or change their timing.

Sound effects

First, you need to find some sound effects. If you already have the sound file(s), that's great. It's handy if you move a copy into the same folder as your photos and sound and show... stay organized with everything together.

You might want to use part of a music file that you have edited in a music editing software. Otherwise, the Internet is full of sound effects sites, so type "spaceship landing sounds" or whatever sound you are looking for (traffic, animal noises, whatever...) into Google (or your choice) and browse away. (If you have software that denotes "safe" sites, all the better. You just want a sound file, not a bunch of crawly scary virus things.) Usually the files will be wav or mp3 format. Either is OK for your sounds, but mp3 may keep the show size a bit smaller if you are adding a lot of sounds.

Thinking old-time radio? You can certainly record your own effects, although the spaceship might be a bit challenging. However, if you want to add bells or harmonica or anything else, you can experiment with recording, similar to recording voice.

Let's leave the sounds in the file for now and move on to the voice part.

Voice

All you are really doing is recording your own sound file that happens to sound like you (although you might not think so if you haven't heard your recorded speech before). You can record your sound into any digital device, like your MP3 player, but you will likely get better quality recording into your computer. You will need a microphone to attach to your computer. A decent USB microphone shouldn't set you back too much and the quality is best, or try the headset you use for conversations. But if you have a microphone that came with your computer, or that you have had around, and it will plug into your computer, test it out. Likely the quality will be adequate unless you plan to play back your show on your brother's state of the art home theatre system. Since many of us will use the cheesy speakers that came with our first computer... see if what you have will work before slapping down your credit card

OK, microphone plugged into the computer? You have options for recording:

1. Record into Audacity (free) or other sound recording/editing software, giving you better editing options than choice 2. If you use Audacity, **export** the file as wav, ogg vorbis (PSG can read those) or mp3 (to

export to mp3 you will need to download and install, if you haven't already, LAME MP3 for Audacity. You only have to do this once. <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/faq?s=install&i=lame-mp3>. Windows has a built-in sound recorder. Not the best, but useable. Consider it as your last resort.

For those two options, save the sound file with your other show files, either with the photos or in an “audio” or “narrative” folder in the same folder as your other show files.

- Record directly into PSG. This will create a file for you (with an “ogg” extension) which will save in the location of your choice. The sound file will also be attached to the slide you dictated it on, but you can remove it and place it somewhere else. PSG will give it a title that includes the name of your show and the slide it is attached to. You may wish to rename this file to avoid possible confusion later.

To record directly, find the slide where you want the sound to start and double click (or click and select Slide Opt from the toolbar). Click on Record Voice-Over (figure 1) and you will get a Record Sound window. Get ready to talk, click the Record Button and the Stop button when you are done. Then where it says Save, make sure you browse and save where you can find it. Again, it is simpler if you keep sounds with your show file, ideally in a folder named “audio” or “narrative”.

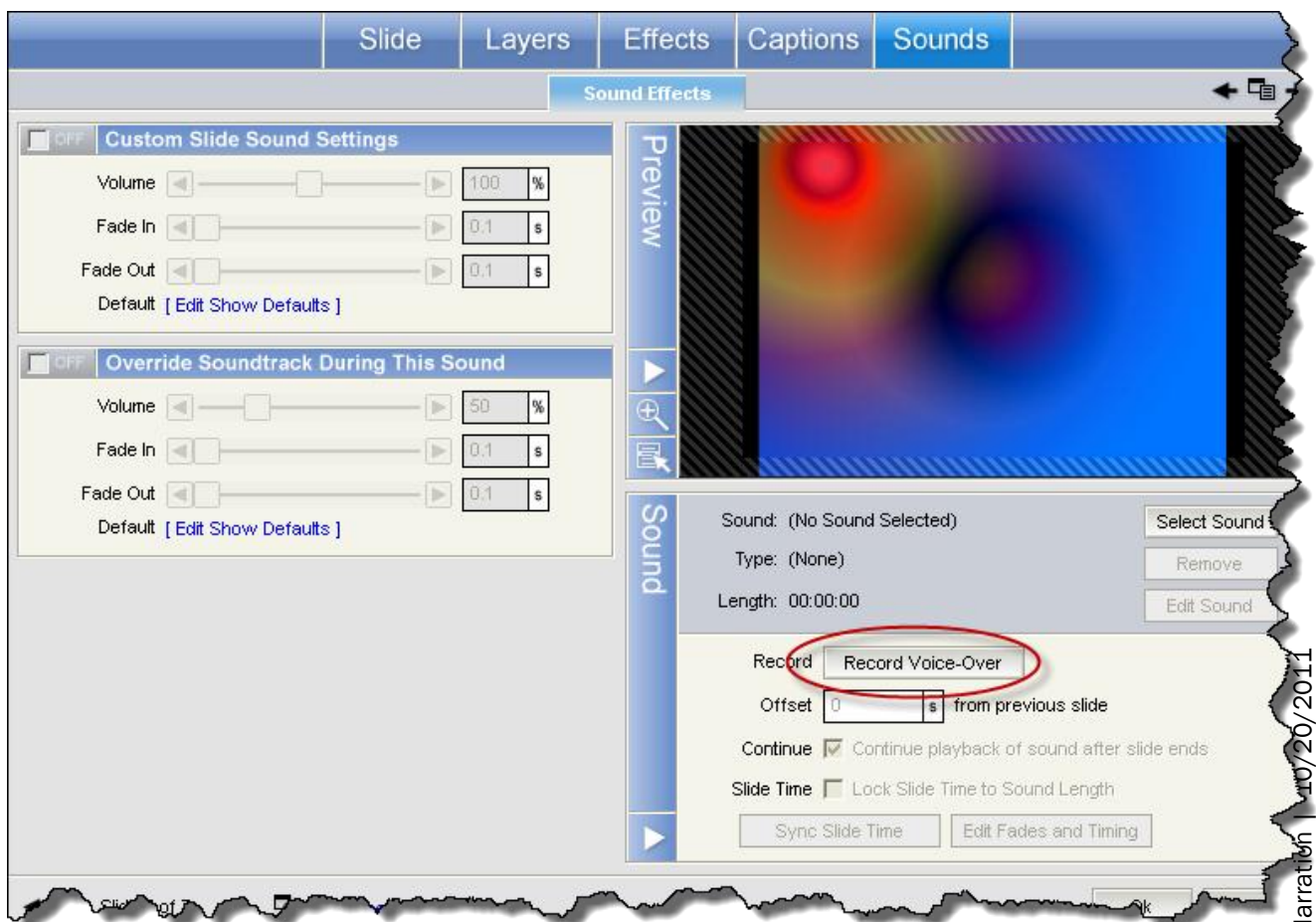


FIGURE 1

Before we go any farther with this, think about what you want to record. Is it just a few words, such as in our example (“In the beginning”), or is it a longer story?

For longer pieces, you can get out your script and read it front to back. But that means that if you make a mistake, you have to live with it or re-record the whole thing. Also, it means you have to time your slides exactly to the narrative, decreasing your flexibility. To make it easier to start certain parts of your narrative with certain slides, you can trim your recorded voice into sections in an editor like Audacity. If you rename each section, you can attach them to slides where you want the narrative to begin.

Another, perhaps easier way is to break your script into logical sections (such as sentences) and record each separately. Give each recorded section a file name to hint of its content and save the files with your show. With this method, make sure you are speaking at the same volume and at the same distance from the microphone, or you will be adjusting volumes constantly (more about that later) as you put the show together. For our example, we will assume that the voice recording is short.

Putting it together

Now you have a show, with a music track, that looks something like this (depending on your PSG choices, and your music and pictures will be different):

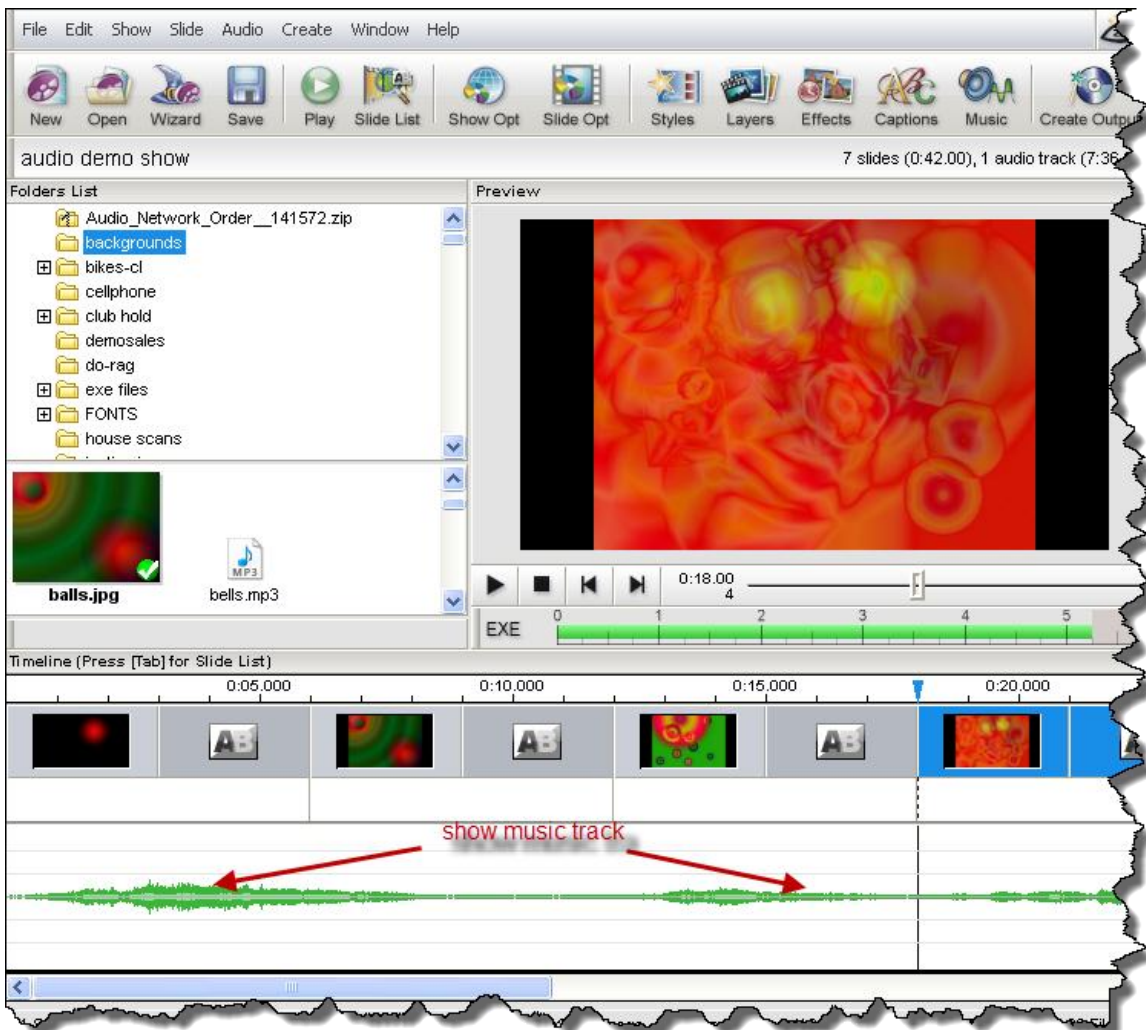


FIGURE 2

See how your music track shows in green (figure 2)?

Let's go back to our example, and insert our first sound file.

Double click on the slide (or click on the slide and then select Slide Opt from the toolbar) where you want the sound effect to start. In our example it's slide 2. This will bring up the Sound Options window. Click on Sounds and Select Sound (figure 3). Then go with the first choice: Select from Sound file (media source is for recording off a CD).

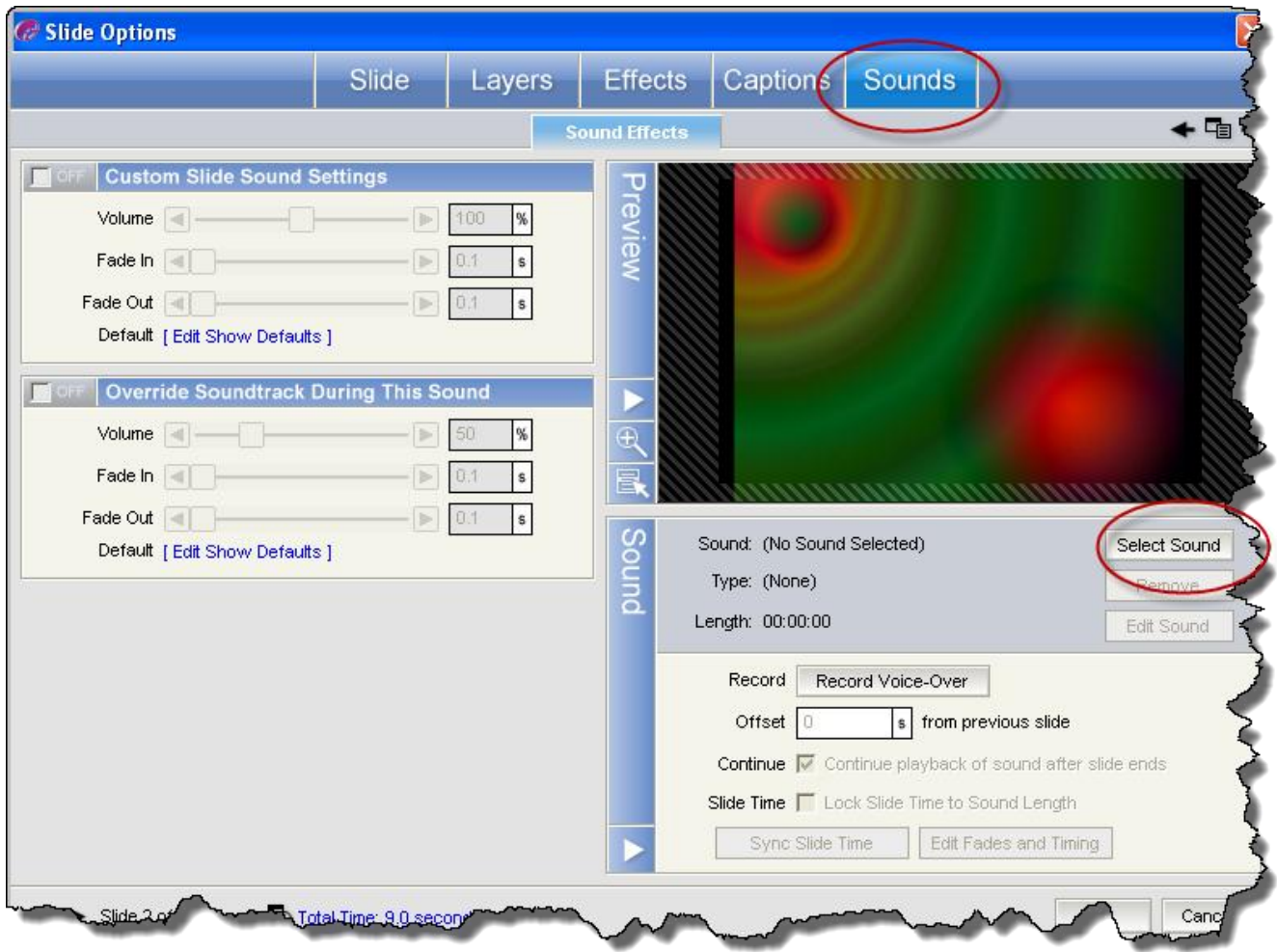


FIGURE 3

Browse to the location of your sound file and select it (figure 4).

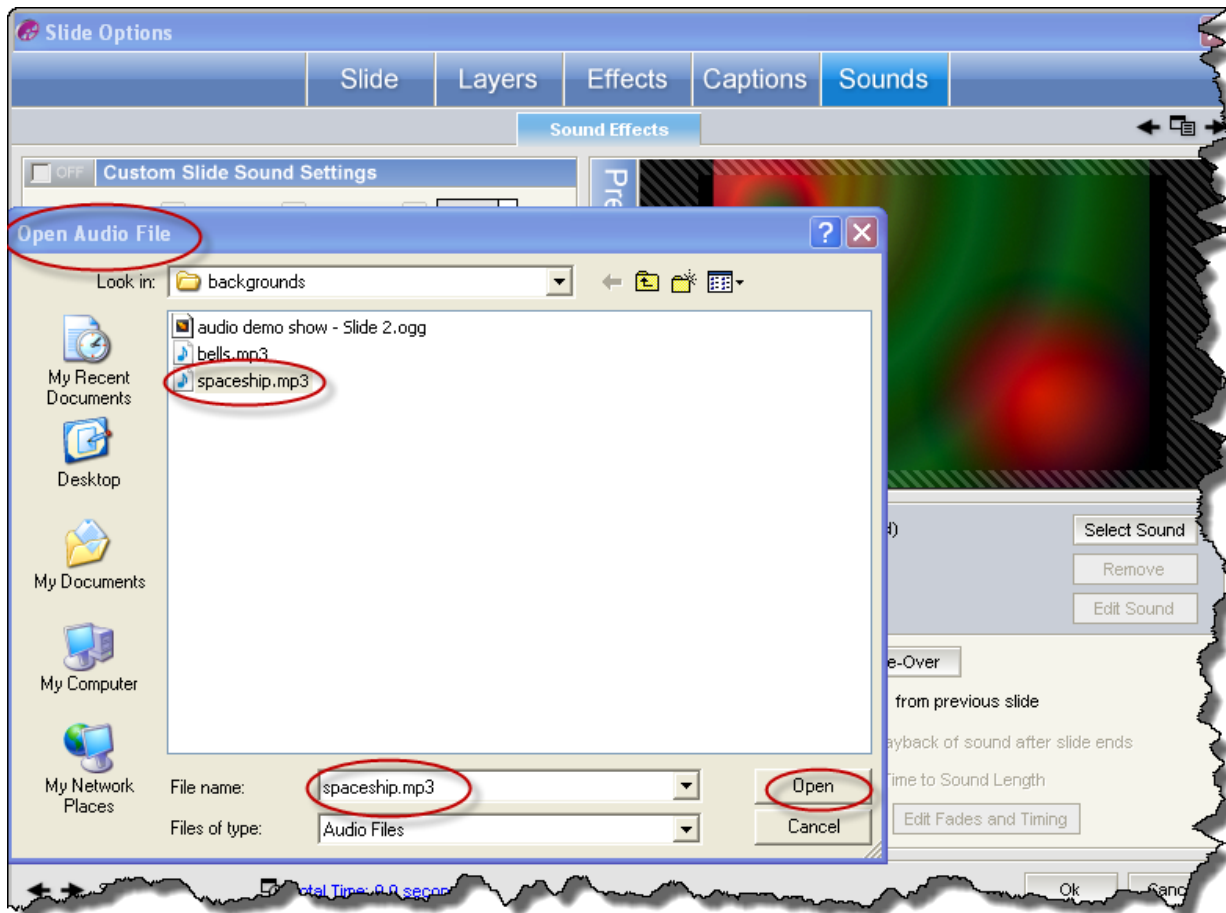


FIGURE 4

After you click Open, you will see your file name and other options (figure 5). Unless the sound is less than a slide length, make sure that the “Continue playback...” button is clicked so that the sound will continue until it ends or you can lock the slide time to the duration of the sound, a choice more appropriate to short sounds. At this point, you may wish to set an offset. This allows you to set the start of the sound earlier or later than the start of the slide. You may wish to have the slide on the screen for a second before the sound starts.

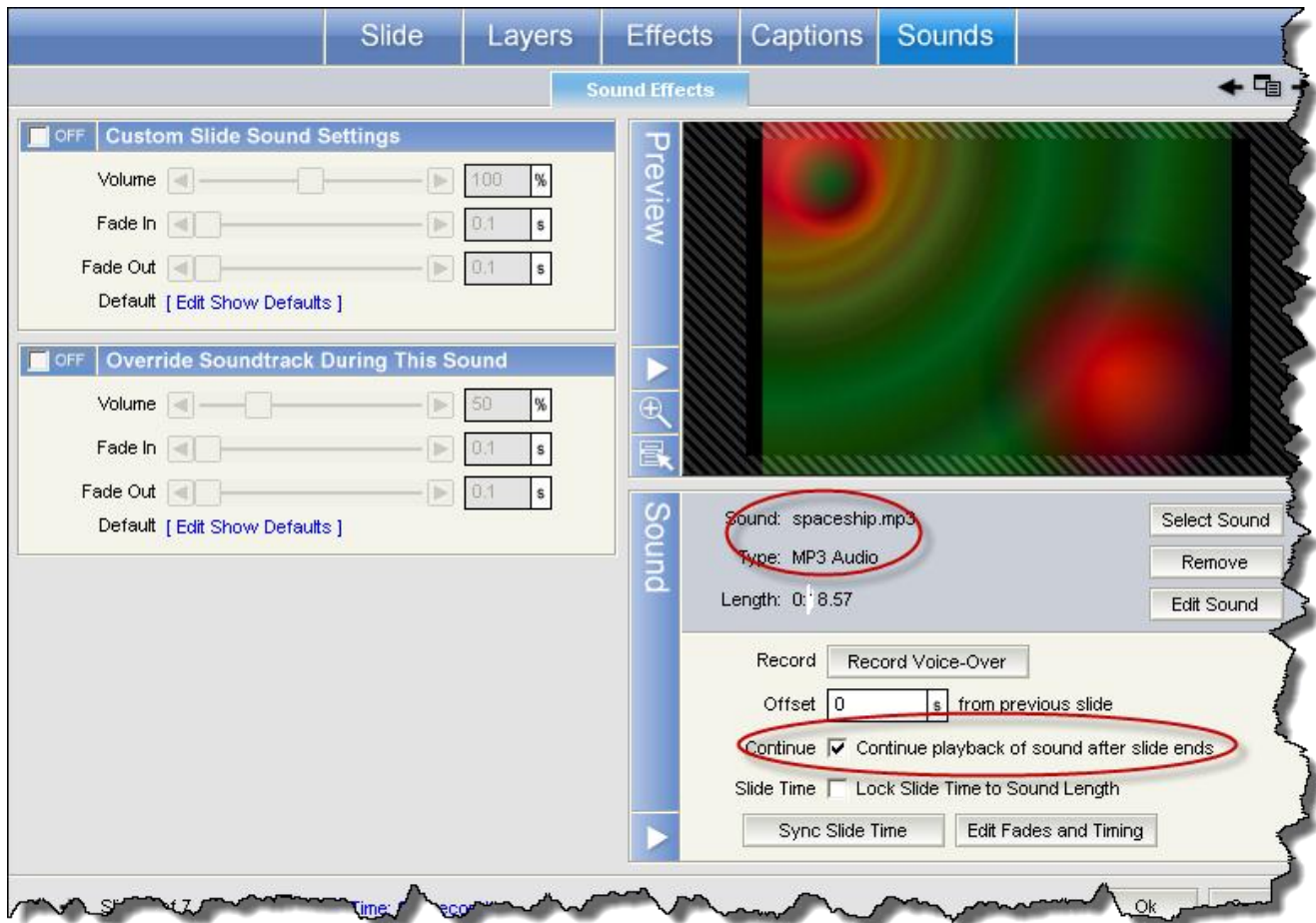


FIGURE 5

When you are satisfied, click OK on the Slide Options window. You should see a **RED** sound file squeezed beneath the slide. (Sometimes that won't show until you move the timeline ahead). See how it starts with the slide and **not** with the transition in (figure 6):

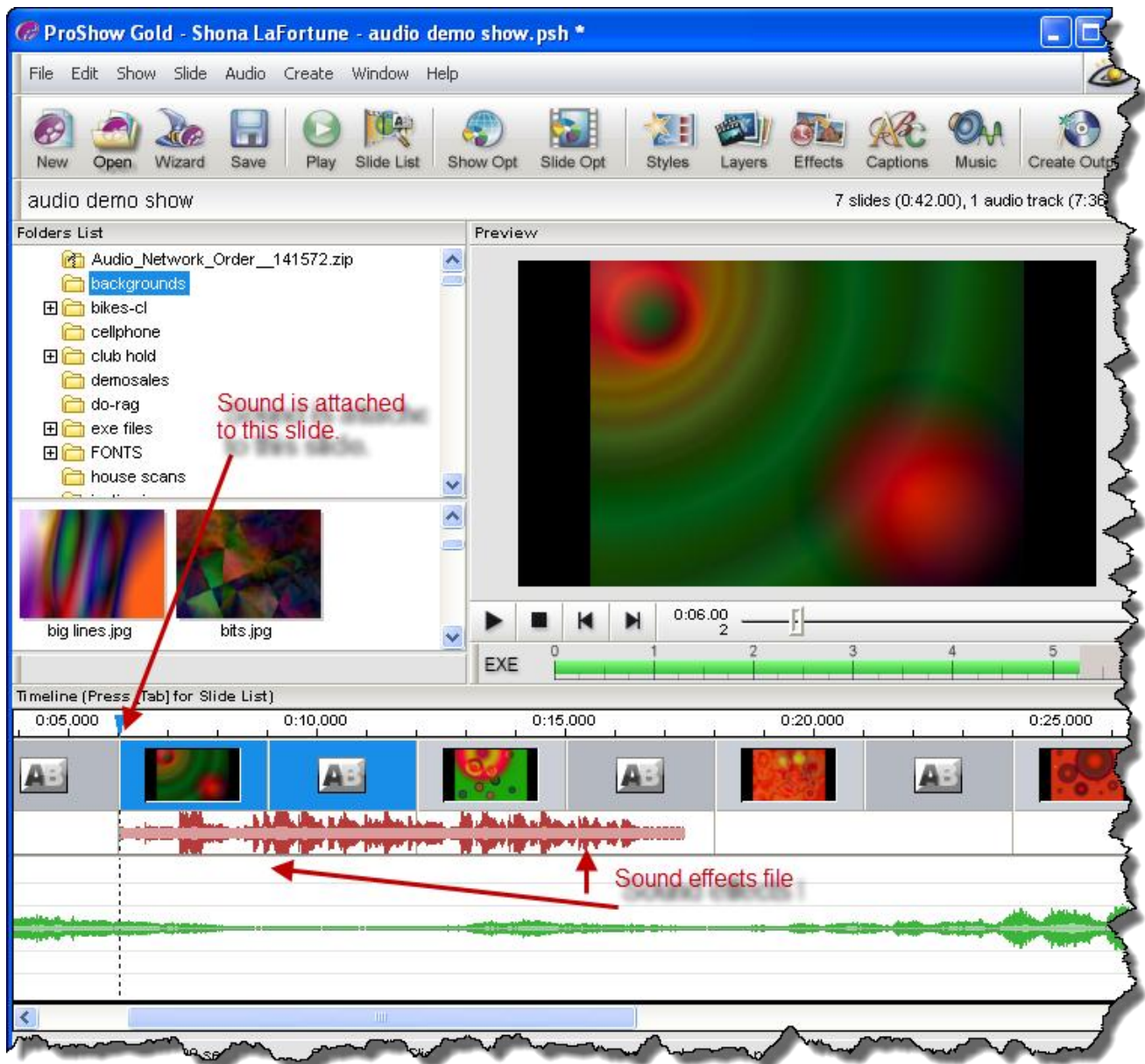


FIGURE 6

Note that the red sound effects file continues over several slides.

Now we want to add the recorded voice file. If you exported your file from Audacity, for example, you can just attach the sound file to slide 3 in the same way you attached the sound effect. If you used the Voice-Over option (record directly into PSG), the file is probably already attached to your slide (unless you changed your mind about the starting point). It is difficult to see where one sound overlaps the other, but if you switch to Slide List (hit tab when timeline is showing), you will see the little icons that indicate a sound is attached to a slide (figure 7). From there, you just have to listen and adjust as you wish.

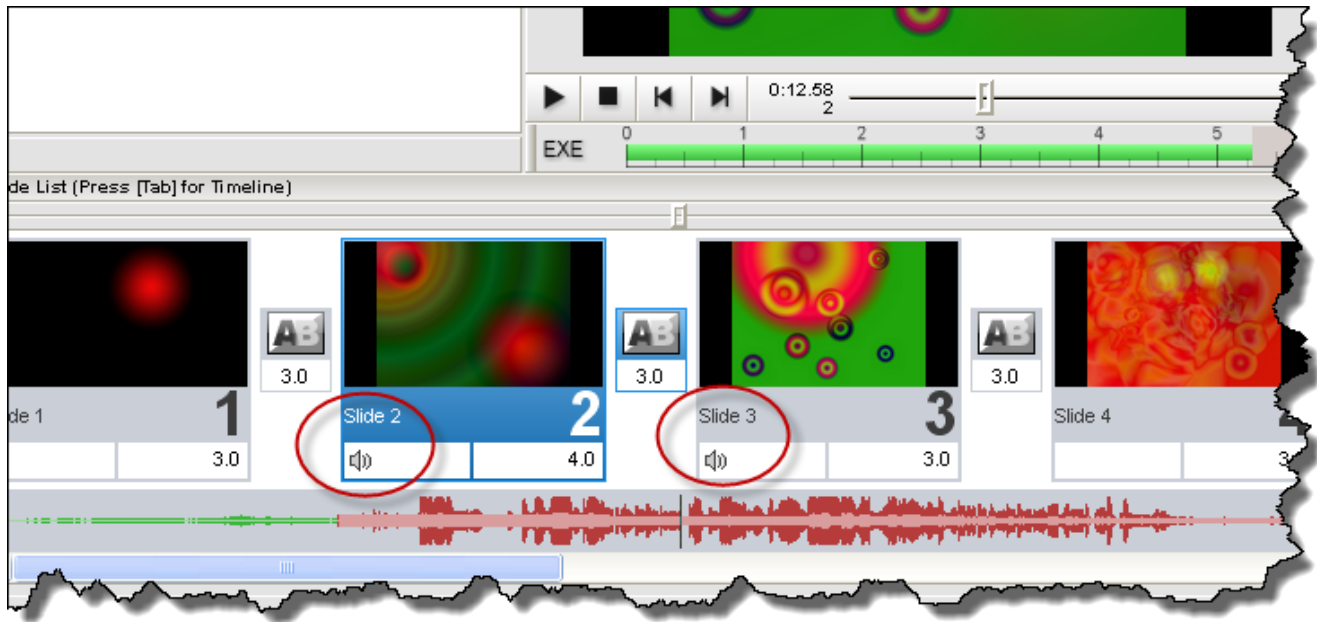


FIGURE 7
There is just one more thing to consider.

Volume

Some music is quiet and some is loud. Some of us have loud voices and some have soft voices. The mood of your show may dictate one or the other, but the most important point is that you want to hear the sound effects and voice over the music.

PSG has some options for sound, both for the overall show and for each slide. Select Show Opt from the toolbar and select the Music Tab (or Show/Show Settings/Music from the menu). Note that the Master Volume defaults to 100%, as does the default for other sounds. The Soundtrack During Other Sounds defaults to 50%.

That means that the music will play along, and when a sound/speech comes in, the music track volume will drop to half. If you only have the very odd sound in the show, that can be fine. But if you are narrating fairly consistently, the music will rise and fall in the background and can be somewhat distracting. In that case, you might want to have the sound track volume stay lower throughout the show, leaving the other sounds at 100%. Play your show a couple of times to see how it works.

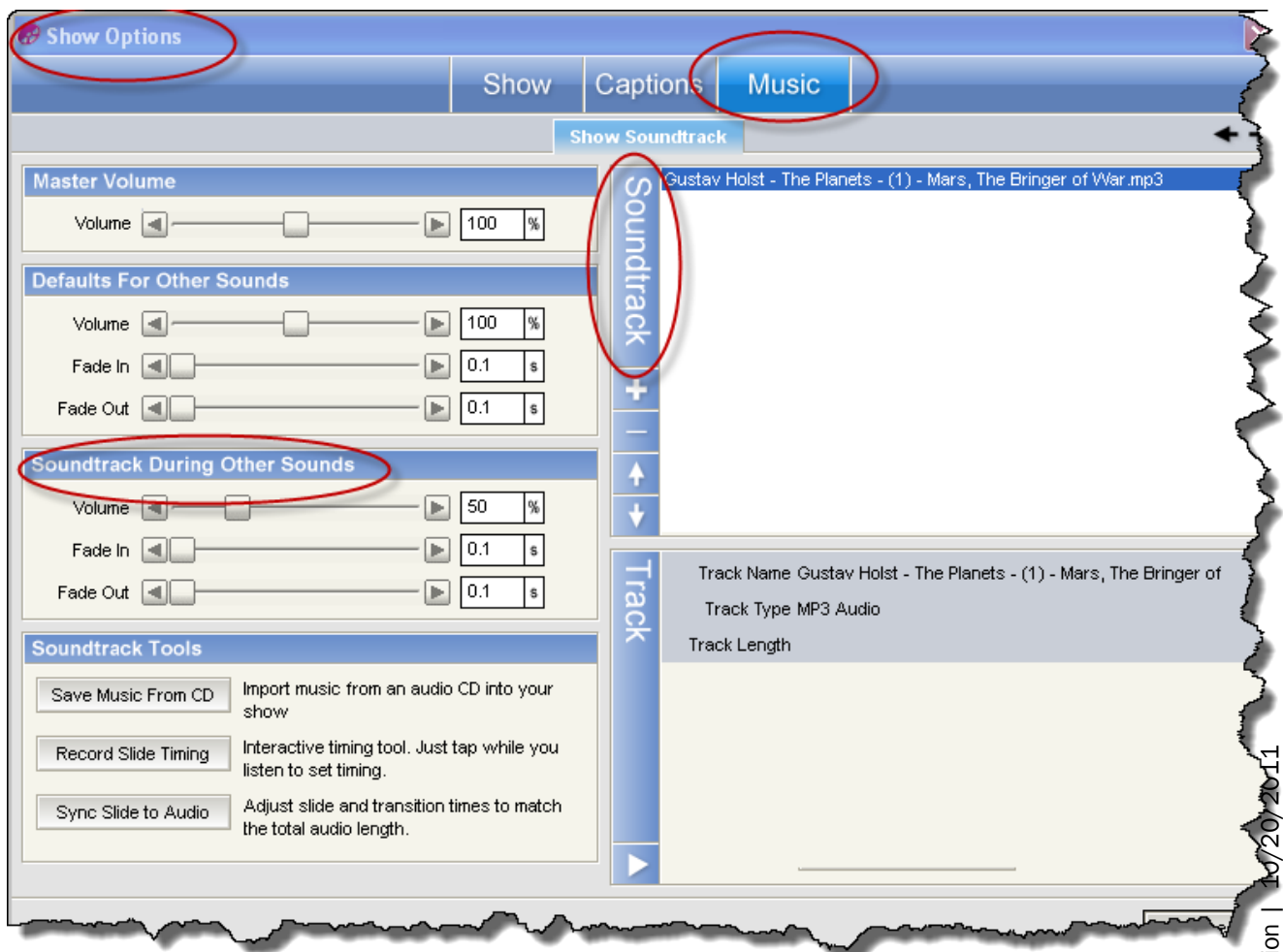


FIGURE 8

If there is one particular slide where the music/sound mix is not quite right, go back into the Slide Options for that slide and select Sounds. Figure 9 shows that you have the option to edit the show defaults for that slide only.

Clicking on either of those will launch the Show Options window (same as figure 8) but the settings you make will apply to that slide only.

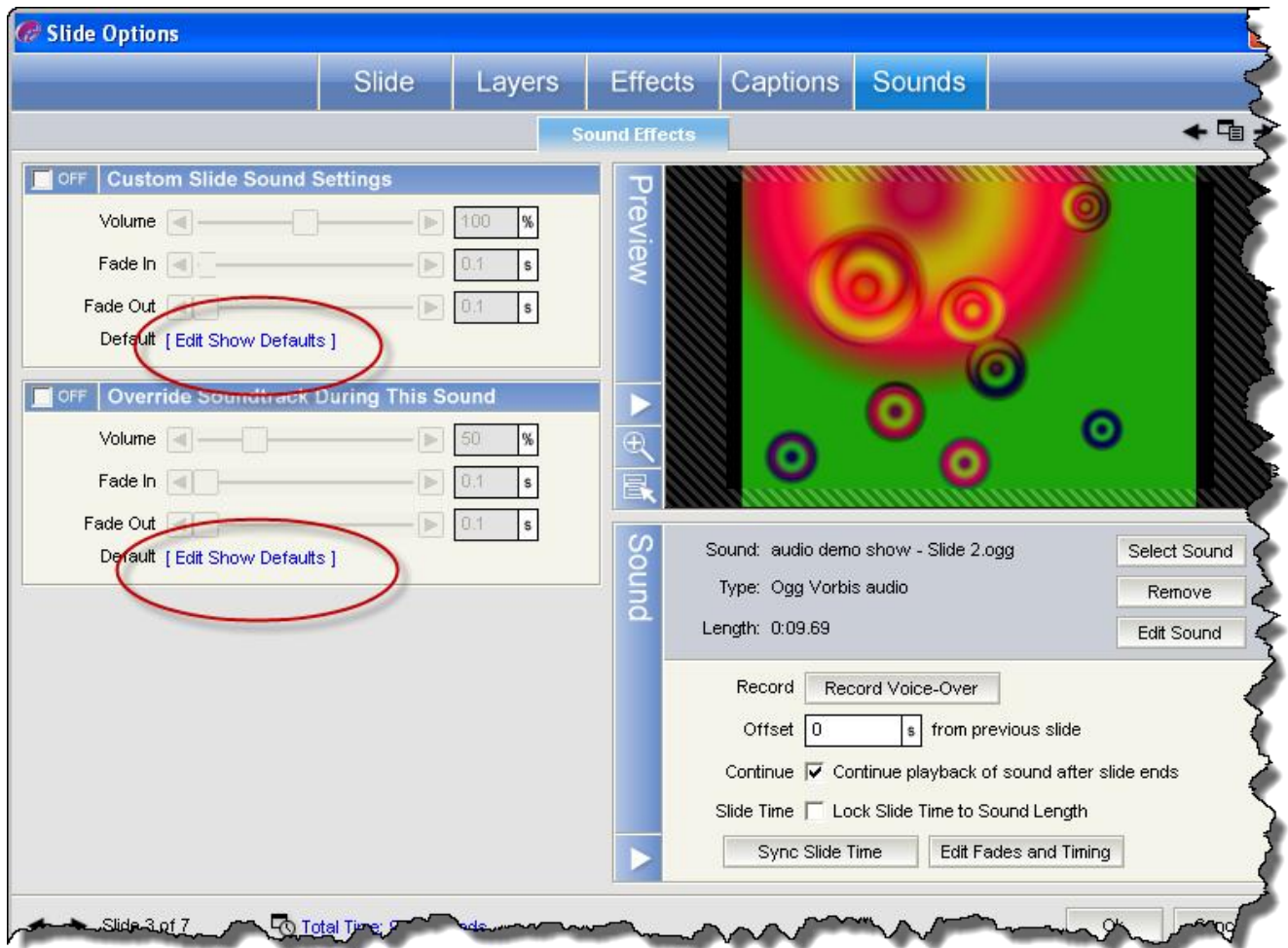


FIGURE 9

Now you have some basic tools for adding sounds and narration to your shows. These powerful tools can enhance your shows, so get familiar with them and add a whole new dimension to your presentations.