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# Meet the ScreenFlow-er: Peter Swartz with MacProVideo.com

## ScreenFlow in Online Training

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Peter Swartz is a composer, orchestrator, arranger, pianist, synthesist, and musical director.

He recently designed and produced a four-hour in depth video tutorial for MacProVideo.com created in ScreenFlow called [MIDI 101: MIDI De-Mystified](#). He's got some great insights, and tips on using ScreenFlow for online training.

### What do you do for MacProVideo.com, and how did you get involved with this?

Here's the backwards progression...My real job is that of film composer, orchestrator, and keyboardist, and I compose and record music using software called Logic. Through one of the online Logic forums I met Steve Horelick, publisher for MacProVideo. We got to know each other both online and offline, and at one point he approached me with the idea of doing a tutorial video. After mulling over several concepts we settled on my doing a tutorial on MIDI, which for those who may not know, is a system that allows all manner of digital musical instruments to be connected to each other or to a computer. Anyway, four months later, **MIDI 101: MID Demystified**, is now on the virtual store shelves at MacProVideo!

### How do you go about creating a tutorial video?

I started by creating a curriculum in which the progression of the various topics would, hopefully, lead towards a natural understanding of the subject by the end of the course. It was to be my master plan, my road map. I started creating the videos in order of the topics listed in the curriculum, and things were going according to plan until I got to about 75% of the way through production. That's when I got the nagging feeling that I was leaving a key aspect of how MIDI works to be divined from information I previously covered, as opposed to stating this information outright in another video episode. I really struggled with whether to make that episode or not, even though my gut instinct told me to do it. On one hand I didn't want to poten-

tially insult the serious student of MIDI by stating what might be obvious and repeating information, but at the same time I didn't want to leave it to chance that someone taking a more casual approach to learning about MIDI would miss out on those concepts. In the end, I went with my instincts, and that episode turned out to be one of my favorites, not only in terms of content and delivery, but also in terms of the imagery I created for it.

I think this points out one of the challenges, for me, anyway, of being very close to a subject and then over the entire course of production, trying to maintain a perspective that isn't clouded by 30 years of experience and familiarity with the topic. Anyway, the curriculum I made at the beginning, with one or two diversions, proved to be the most important part of the production process.

As far as actually making the tutorial, the majority of it is animation, done right in ScreenFlow. There's very little screen capture stuff. There's a bit of live action footage which I shot with a Sony video camera, but for the most part my tutorial is animated using movement of still images, text items, and dingbats. Anyway, I'd start by writing a script. Then I'd open a blank ScreenFlow document, to which I'd start adding the still images I thought I'd be using. From there I'd recite the script in my head while placing images and text elements or dingbats on the timeline.

From there I'd record my voice over in Logic, export a WAV file, and add that to the timeline. From there I fine-tuned the timing of the various elements to the timing of the VO, add additional elements, and animate what needed to be animated. So that's more or less how I approached making each video.

**“Finding the balance between showing and telling is very important to making an effective video presentation.”**

**In your opinion, what are the most important elements of a tutorial video?**

That's a hard one to answer! OK... Every video has to tell a story that's interesting on two levels: the spoken



The setup

word and the visuals. One thing that I find distracting in some videos are the use of too many clichéd transition effects. Another would be finding a good balance between explaining things and showing things. In filmmaking, there's a kind of rule: “show, don't tell”. On the extreme side of “show” you can look at Stanley Kubrick's 2001, or Vanilla Sky. On the extreme side of “tell” you have any episode of CSI. So I'd say that finding the balance between showing and telling is very important to making an effective video presentation. Now, that's not to say that I'm any kind of expert, or even that I found the perfect balance in my own video, but those are two things that I had in mind during the course of production on my MIDI tutorial.

**What do you find to be the most challenging aspect of creating your tutorials?**

Finding my voice as a narrator was really difficult! Not only did I have to get used to hearing the sound of my voice, but there was also the matter of finding a voice over “personality”. I found that if I just read the script, it sounded totally flat and boring. And it's not like I have a monotone voice, and it's not like I lack enthusiasm for the subject, but I just felt like my voice over needed to have a different personality from my normal speaking voice. At the same time, I wanted to be able to talk in a natural, relaxed way and not put on an air about it all. So it took a while, but I found a way of modulating my voice and putting emphasis on words in a way that felt natural to do. And the proof of whether or not I was

effective towards this standard would be to play back the video and distract myself by doing something else, like read the news online. If I didn't get that "don't talk, teach!" feeling from hearing the sound of my VO in the background, I'd go back and re-do some lines of script to improve the delivery.

I think with this tutorial under my belt I've found my VO voice, which my wife and friends tell me sounds very much like my normal conversation but in "teaching mode"!

#### **What kind of equipment or set up do you have?**

I'm using a Mac PPC Quad 2.5, with dual 27" monitors, one rotated 90° vertically. That's my normal setup for writing music, where I'll view the score in normal page orientation on the rotated monitor.

As for microphones, I used a Shure KSM-27. I've had it for years as a general purpose mic, and it sounds great but isn't the most flattering one for my voice. For my next project I'm going to get something else, probably an ElectroVoice RE20.

#### **What advice would you give to someone just starting out creating tutorial videos?**

Try and envision a visual style in your mind's eye before just digging in and starting to create a tutorial. This means experimenting with the software to see if you can achieve what you want.