Simple Animation in Sony Vegas

Vegas provides an interface for animating effects parameters and controlling 2D virtual cameras. This tutorial gives a brief introduction to animation before guiding you through the tools that Sony Vegas provides.

The Basics of Animation

This section is not about how sequences of still images fool the eye into perceiving motion. It instead briefly outlines the production of animated sequences by a team of two or more animators.

- The lead animator draws the images 'key' to expressing the action or emotion that a sequence, scene or character should convey. These images, known as key frames, capture a single instant in time. See Figure 1.

- Assistant animators produce the images that fill in the moments falling between key frames. Animators and computer animation programs refer to these frames as tween frames. See Figure 2.

- When using a computer for animation, you become the key animator. You set the key frames; the computer does the tweening.

Figure 1: The lead animator draws the key frames.  Figure 2: An assistant animator—the computer in our case—draws the frames in between.
Animation in Vegas

- Animating the position or effects of a clip starts with opening the parameter window for the type of property you wish to animate. See Figure 3.

- An animation timeline runs along the bottom of whatever parameter window you currently have open; the window could control an effect, a transition, a text clip, the Crop/Pan tool, etc. See Figure 4.

- Be sure to first select the particular effect you wish to animate when working with FX. Because you can apply multiple effects to a clip, the FX window can sometimes have multiple 'pages.' See Figure 5.

- Engage the sync button to coordinate the movements of the animation and main editing timelines' cursors.

- Use the add or remove key frame buttons to create or destroy key frames explicitly.

Vegas also creates key frames whenever you move the animation timeline cursor to a new position and change the settings of an effect or other parameter. For example, adding an effect to a clip implicitly sets a key frame for that effect at the clip's first frame. Moving the animation timeline cursor ahead by one second and clicking the add key frame button creates a new key frame with the same parameters as the key frame before it. Moving the animation cursor ahead by another second and changing a parameter—but not pressing the add key frame button—creates a third key frame with different parameters than the two previously set.

- Use the key-frame-traversal buttons to step through each key frame in sequence.

- If you wish to refine an animation at a particular key frame, make sure to click on the key frame to select it ( ) first. Select multiple key frames by dragging a selection box around them.
You can simply click-and-drag key frames to relocate them on the timeline. You can also copy and paste key frames from one position on the timeline to another.

An Example
One possible use of animation in Vegas is the addition of motion to still images.

First, open the pan/crop tool for the particular clip to which you would like to add motion. See Figure 3 for the location of the pan/crop tool button.

Because Vegas has automatically set the first key frame to the default settings—the picture fits the screen without distortion—the next step is to modify the initial key frame. Click on it to select it, and then modify the frame (the 'F' box) while watching the video preview window. See Figures 6 and 7.

Move the animation timeline's cursor to a new position and click the add key frame button. Adjust the 'F' box until you see something you like in the preview window. See Figure 8.

Repeat the previous step until you've set the key frames necessary for expressing the motion you would like to see on-screen.

Preview the animation often. You can adjust its timing and motion by sliding key frames to earlier or later positions on the timeline.

Reveal the 'Key Frame Interpolation' menu by right-clicking on a key frame. The items on this menu refer to the methods by which Vegas can calculate the position settings for this animation's tween frames. See Figure 9.

- **Linear** interpolation produces motion at a constant rate across tweened frames.
• *Hold* interpolation produces no tweened animation.
• *Fast* interpolation produces motion that begins quickly and decelerates.
• *Slow* interpolation produces motion that begins slowly and accelerates.
• *Sharp* interpolation produces motion that begins and ends quickly, but slows in the middle.
• *Smooth* interpolation produces motion that begins slowly and accelerates, then decelerates and ends slowly.

➤ The various key frame interpolations can make a drastic impact upon your work.

Arriving at the best possible animation involves a lot of trial and error. Preview your work frequently!

**Odds and Ends**

*Here are a few brief descriptions of other possible uses of Vegas’s animation capabilities.*

➤ Vegas can apply motion to an entire video track. The tool looks and acts similar to the pan/crop tool, but you’ll find its activation button along the left side of the track. See Figure 10.

➤ Create a text track with a duration equal to that of the entire project. Animate the contents of the text track—in other words, the text itself—to produce subtitles or other timed text.

➤ Animate the applied color of *Sepia, Color Correction* or other similar effect to add interest to a video clip or still image.