AV or AV Not - Jim McCormick

Some confusion seems to exist as to what Audio Visual is, or is not.

Prior to the digital revolution most photographic societies had a number of photographers who concentrated on good photographic technique to produce first class photographs. There would usually be a small group of individuals who were interested in AV; they too produced good quality photographs.

With the advent of digital technology many of the so called "good photographers", are assembling simple sequences of their photographs, changing nicely to music and presenting them as AV's. My main concern is that people new to AV see this type of presentation and think that this is what AV is all about.

AV presentations come in different styles, two that I've witnessed spring readily to mind:

1. A lecture presented by Professor John Wilson (anthropologist) about the dinosaur era. His presentation tool was a flip chart.

2. Page one introduced us to his subject, "The Dinosaur".

3. Page two had a list of date going back millions of years which he referred to, to plot the story.

4. Page three was about the demise of the species.

5. The second lecture was one that I saw in Malta, it involved 12 synchronized carousel projectors and told the history of the island, from the Roman era up to the end of the 2nd world war.

Two completely different types of presentation style, but both utilized good Audio Visual techniques. The spoken word introduced us to the subject; they proceeded to tell the story and had appropriate endings.

So what is Audio Visual?

All AV presentations start in the same way, with an IDEA. The idea is converted into a script that will introduce us to the subject, tell the story and bring the sequence to a conclusion.

The script is then recorded using the media of your choice. A series of photographs are taken to support the script.
The various elements of the recorded script are selected and inserted into the timeline to support the photograph.

Finally a selection of music to compliment the story line is added at an appropriate level.
This is the ideal way to produce an AV, but writing your script around a set of photographs you've already taken, can also give acceptable results.

The production of an AV presentation involves many skills:

Inspirational skills, photographic skills, script writing skills, recording skills, track mixing skills, editing skills etc. etc
A piece of music on its own won't inspire an audio visual presentation.

Unfortunately the messages being giving to people new to AV are misleading. e.g.

"Don't worry about having a narrative, no need to research your subject".
"Don't bother to find out about script writing, sound recording, editing or mixing".
"Don't concern yourself with the use of dissolves or effective changes in pace".
"Don't even bother about having a beginning, middle or an end".

A set of photographs changing nicely to music is not Audio Visual.
The Royal Photographic Society's AV Group apply a separate category to this type of presentation; they call it: "Photo Harmony", distinctions can only be attained to Licentiate level.