

Nothing beats a beautifully bound collection of prints—long live the three-dimensional album.

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Now and forever

THE PRINTED ALBUM WILL ALWAYS BE IN STYLE

During the recent natural disasters, we've seen families evacuating their homes with their most valuable possessions, among them, wedding and family portrait albums.

It's a poignant reminder of the importance of our work as professional photographers and the printed images we create.

The oldest photos in my family album

dates from the late 1800s. My grandfather used photo corners and heavy black paper to assemble this priceless collection of photographs, and bound the pages under a leather cover.

Today, we have more options than ever before in how we format those treasured collections. We can place prints into book-style traditional albums or in specially designed photo boxes. We can print individual or collaged images to become pages in permanently bound books, and create digital albums, slideshows or movies.

Many photographers and their clients love the idea of telling their stories through totally unique scrapbook albums. They can include memorabilia with the photographs on the pages, and enhance the layout with overlays, borders and other decorative elements.

Library-bound albums are a high-end format for discriminating clients. Certain album companies handle the layout, mounting and binding, and at least one company I know of makes library-bound albums with slip-in mats so the photographer can assemble the album in-house.

Costing less than library-bound albums, matted albums have been extremely popular. The photographer positions his or her photographs under manufactured die-cut mats, which come in a variety of designs and configurations, then binds the matted photographs between a cover set, with screw posts, pins or wire. The result is a clean, finished-looking album. The covers also come in variety of styles, fabrics and sizes.

Most manufacturers also offer design

WHERE TO BUY

A directory of album and frame manufacturers is located in the November's Bonus Content at www.ppmag.com.



software to expedite the layout process. Fujifilm's Studiomaster PRO, for example, has layout templates called "smart pages" that allow the photographer to assemble the digital images in the correct position for each matted page, then print the images on one sheet, ready for insertion.

Photo boxes hold individual matted prints. Because the capacity is limited, they're better suited for limited collections of images. Photo boxes come with hinged or removable lids and a range of styles and colors.

The digital revolution ushered in perhaps the most exciting changes in image presentation. With magazine-style albums—also known as coffee table or art-book albums—photographers have the creative freedom to custom design every presentation. The images inside can be of any size

and in any position on the page. Panoramic images can flow across two pages or be bound in as double-page fold-outs, without clunky posts or wires to distract the flow.

Service industries have also emerged to create and generate custom album pages for the photographer. Many album manufacturers also offer custom design services. Some firms will design an album for you and deliver it on CD, ready for outputting on your own printers.

Many photo labs have album templates that allow photographers with limited design skills to create beautiful magazine-style album pages by simply dropping in their own images. They can print the pages in-house or by a lab, then have the pages book-bound.

New collaging software such as LumaPix FotoFusion allows photographers

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HOW WE DO IT AT POWERS PHOTOGRAPHY



After the wedding images are edited and chronologically numbered, we send the digital files to Natural Color Lab for processing. The lab uses advanced software to correct color and density of images—which came from multiple cameras—until they look consistent and are print-ready. To that set, we add the images that we've converted to black and white or sepia, as well as the images we've digitally mastered at the studio.

We have used the MonacoEZcolor system to calibrate and profile all of our studio displays, so when the lab prints our digitally mastered files, they'll look the way we saw them on our monitors. Natural Color Lab combines the three sets of files, prints an image catalog for our client, and returns the entire set of corrected files to us. The client returns with a list of selected images, which we copy into a folder for the album design.

We design our matted albums with Fujifilm Studiomaster Pro software, which creates "smart pages" for digital templates supplied by Art Leather. All the images for a given page are printed

in the correct positions on one 10x10-inch sheet. A staff member then inserts the sheet under the appropriate matted page in the Art Leather Futura album. We no longer have the chore of numbering, matching and mounting each individual image that goes into the album.

For magazine-style albums, we create our pages in LumaPix FotoFusion software, which allows us unlimited creativity. Our dual-monitor setup allows us to drag the images for each page from our image browser, ACDSee, into the design software. We control the properties of the images individually or in groups, and can use our saved templates as the basis of new custom designs.

The design complete, we render the files and upload them to Eventpix for the client's approval. Changes are simple because LumaPix saves a working file that allows you to fix or change things in an instant. The approved pages are printed on Fujicolor Crystal Archive paper and sent to Leather Craftsmen, where they're bound in a 3500 Series magazine-style album.

to custom-design entire albums quickly, yet maintain creative control. Users can also save their page layouts as templates for future use.

Digital publishing on demand has also found fans in the wedding industry, with magazine-style page files being printed on thin, non-photographic paper and bound into slim volumes. The main drawback here would be guaranteeing the longevity of the inks and paper used.

ENSURING THE FUTURE OF THE ALBUM

As new photographers enter the profession, they seem to be bringing a growing trend toward selling their digital files to clients, without creating a finished product in the form of an album. It's quite tempting to cash-strapped couples to simply buy the images with every intention of creating their own album. But experience shows that most of them never will. And what a shame that will be for the couple.

The public loves digital images, cheap consumer grade CDs aren't designed for permanent archiving, and a crisis is coming. Countless family histories will be lost forever because they were never printed and housed in an album designed to be passed on to the next generation. Now is the time for professional photographers to tout the immense importance of the three-dimensional photo album! ■

See Susan Powers and Dave Johnson present "The 2006 Wedding Album Unveiling," at Imaging USA 2006 in Austin, Texas, January 22-24. For more information on the conference and expo, call 800-786-6277 or visit www.imagingusa.org.

