IMATCH 5

The Next Generation of Digital Asset Management

Welcome to IMatch 5, the *Next Generation* of our beloved tried-and-true digital asset management system of choice.

This Beta Teaser is intended to give you an insight into the upcoming beta test phase for IMatch. I've collected some information and screen shots to show you what's coming and what to expect.

Many of the new and exciting features in IMatch 5 are shown in this document. Please understand that I cannot reveal everything at this time. *The competition is watching* and I don't want to spoil all the surprises.

On the following pages I will try to demonstrate the general workflow in IMatch 5 — which is a bit different but much more streamlined and flexible compared to what we have now in IMatch 3.6.

Without too many dry explanations I present a number of screen shots of various aspects of IMatch 5. This should give you a good impression of what you're all waiting for, and why it took me so long to create it.

As you all know, I'm working really hard on this new product. No one on this planet is keener than I am to see this baby fly — but I cannot and will not rush it.

We all trust our valuable image library and metadata to IMatch and I have to make sure that everything is working just as flawlessly and solidly as you have come to expect from IMatch 3.6.

The current private alpha test phase and the subsequent public beta test phase will help weed out as many bugs as possible and to make sure that every feature works as intended. I can also incorporate your feedback before the final version is released.

IMatch 5 is the successor to IMatch 3.6[1].

You will discover IMatch 5 operates much as you're used to, although there are new and extended features. Besides looking much slicker, IMatch 5 also implements a much more streamlined workflow.

Based on the rock-solid Core IV database engine of IMatch 3.6 I have implemented a new database system for IMatch 5. This new system is much better suited to today's hardware with multiple processors and heaps of memory.

The new core allows IMatch 5 to perform many functions in parallel and to process long-running tasks in the background. This means that IMatch 5 **interferes much less** with your work than previous versions.
For example, scanning folders or metadata updates are performed in the background, while you can continue to work.

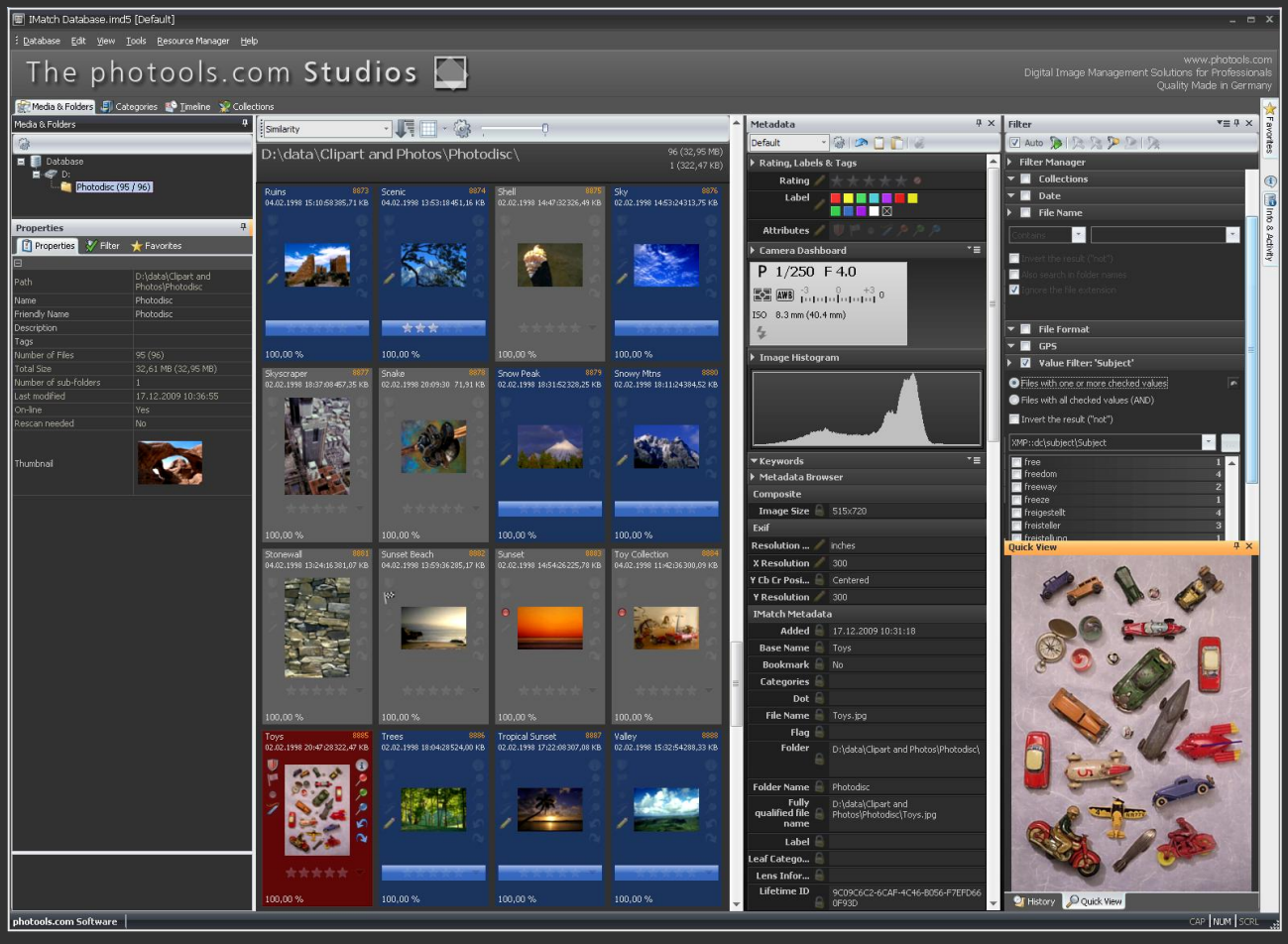
The new database system is also faster than the 3.6 system and scales even better for larger collections of 100,000 or more files.

Whilst IMatch 5 has been completely re-designed from the ground up, you will find your way round quickly. Wherever possible, I retained the established workflow and metaphors, just extending them to incorporate all the new features.

The new user interface is much more adaptive, and supports the standard user interface bells and whistles—with moveable, dockable panels, preview panels you can move to a second monitor, multiple workspaces for different phases of your work etc.

You can even open multiple views at the same time, e.g. the folder and category view. Moving, copying or assigning images could not be easier; just drag and drop.

IMatch 5 finally supports **multiple** user interface **languages**. The first version will be shipped with the default English and the new German (Deutsch) language files. IMatch 5 can be translated by editing one XML file, so we may see other languages soon. Any *Volunteers?*



The IMatch main window. And *yes, the big caption on top can be changed to your liking. Or hidden to save screen estate. ;-)*

*1 Which was actually version 4 in my internal versioning — just in case you wondered.

As with all previous IMatch versions, IMatch 5 allows you to view your digital asset collection in many different ways using *Views*.

The Media & Folders View

This view orders your file collection based on their physical location on your hard disks, CD/DVD/BR, external USB disks or remote servers.

This view is pretty similar to what you know from Windows Explorer, but it has some unique features only available in IMatch 5.

The new Media & Folder Browser gives you much better feedback about the current state of the folders you manage in your database. At a glance you can see the number of files per folder, the total size of the files per folder, if a folder is currently on– or off-line, if a folder needs to be rescanned or is currently **rescanning in the background**.

Folder properties can be shown and changed in the retractable property window directly under the Folder & Media tree. The filter feature allows you to find specific folders, show only folders matching a mask, show or hide hidden, off-line and network folders.

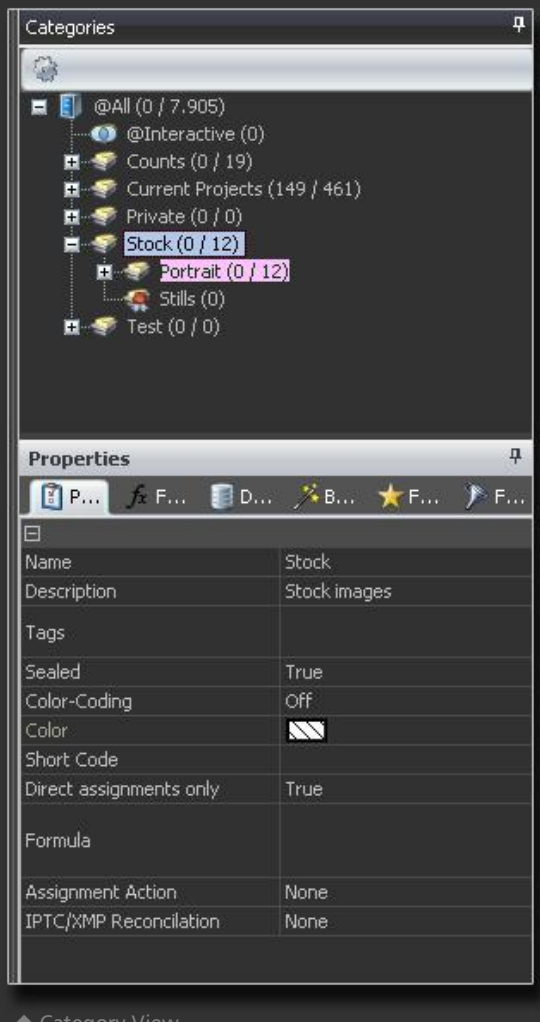
Media & Folders View

The Category View

This view displays the category hierarchy you have created for your database. You can **select multiple categories** and IMatch automatically combines all images contained in these categories in the file window.

Via the property window under the category tree you can view and configure category properties, colors, formulas, data-driven category definitions and much more.

Here you will also discover the new Category Builder which makes it simple to create even complex formulas via mouse drag and drop.



Category View

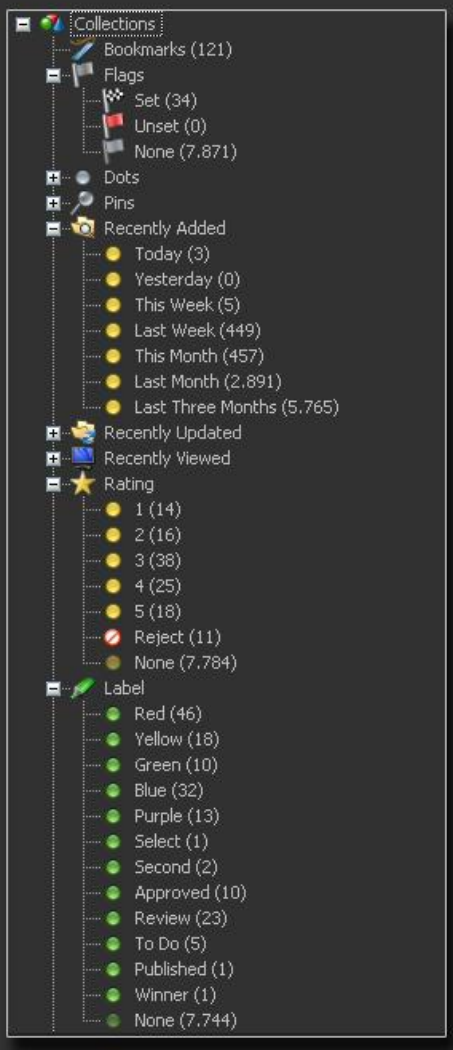
The Collection View

This new IMatch 5 view type contains all the **dynamic** collections available in your database.

A collection is a dynamically managed set of files, grouped by some criteria or attribute. IMatch automatically maintains these collections and makes them available to you.

There are collections for **Ratings and Labels**, **Bookmarks**, IMatch 5's unique **Pins**, **Dots** and **Flags**. IMatch also groups images based on the date and time they were added to the database, last updated in the database and last viewed. Other specialized collections are related to metadata handling, versioning and other features new in IMatch 5.

The **Collection View** is a great way to browse your files by things such as rating, label, or one of the other attributes you can assign to each file. You can also quickly solve questions like "*Which files have been added last month?*", "*Which files did I look at yesterday?*".
Collections are also very useful for **filtering**, where you can use them in combination with other filter criteria.



Collection View

The Timeline View

This is another new view type introduced in IMatch 5. The timeline arranges your images along a time axis in a hierarchical fashion. Depending on the file format and availability, IMatch uses the *EXIF timestamp*, the *last modified on disk* timestamp from Windows, or another suitable timestamp to setup the time line.

You can view your images by year, quarter, month, week and day, and any combinations thereof.

The screen shot on the right shows a part of the timeline in my sample database. Since I work on a German Windows system, the month and day names are in the German language. IMatch 5 of course uses your local date and time formats.

You have options to control the look and detail of the timeline view. Interesting features are the comments you can add to each node in the view, and the icons you can use to highlight nodes. This makes it easier to find special events or dates.

Timeline View

The Result Views

As before, IMatch 5 displays the search results in separate windows. This allows you to keep a number of search results open or run searches based on the results of a previous search ("drill-down").

The File Window

The successor to the thumbnail window is the **File Window**. Within these windows you perform most of the file-related tasks.

The new file window supports two display modes:

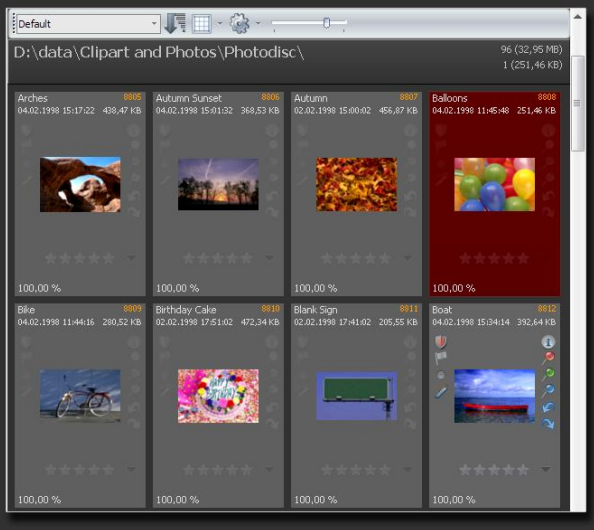
- The **thumbnail mode** displays files as thumbnails in panels. You know this display mode from the current IMatch version.
- The new **tabular mode** (**grid mode, list mode**) displays one file per row, using columns to arrange information. This mode works best when you want to view many metadata fields per file, or your metadata contains longer text elements (e.g. captions or descriptions).

IMatch 5 uses **file window layouts** to configure the file windows. You can create any number of layouts. Each layout defines the type of the file window (thumbnail, tabular), which metadata to display, icons, colors, size of the thumbnails, height of the rows and the width of the columns.

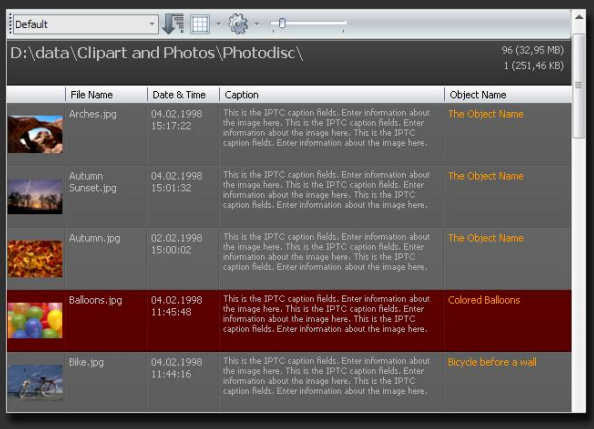
You have access to over 8,000 metadata fields ("tags") that IMatch 5 supports. These include IPTC, EXIF, XMP, camera maker notes, PDF, Office, ID3 and many others.
You decide which metadata fields you want to see inside the thumbnail panel or in the columns of the tabular view. You can display simple things like the file name or the file size as easily as the maker notes your specific camera model writes. Or you can combine EXIF metadata with IPTC metadata within the same row.

The **thumbnail panel** optionally contains controls which allow you to directly set ratings, labels, flags, pins, dots, bookmarks and reject flags.

These controls are displayed as soon as you move the mouse over a panel. They don't interfere at all with the image display.



File window in thumbnail view mode



File window in tabular (grid/list) mode with 5 columns

Thumbnail panels (active, normal). Dynamic color mode

File window layouts allow you to control almost every aspect of how IMatch displays the files in your database.

You can create any number of file window layouts and make them active with a few mouse clicks.

File window layouts are global and can be used in all *workspaces*.

Workspaces

IMatch 5 supports multiple workspaces. A workspace stores the size, arrangement and state of file windows and panels.

You can configure different workspaces for different stages in your workflow and recall them at any time.

Whether you want to reserve as much screen space as possible for the actual image or you want to display detailed image information and metadata, this can be easily achieved using workspaces.

Split Views

For the first time, IMatch 5 allows you to display *multiple views* at the same time (Split View). Up to four views can be displayed at a time.

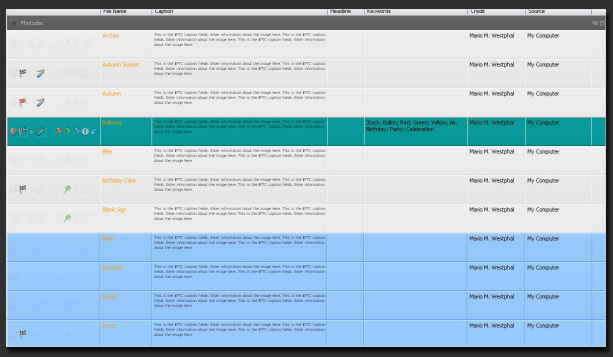
Now you can, for example, display a Media & Folder view and a Category view at the same time.

By using your mouse and drag and drop you can quickly assign images from the displayed folder to a category. You can even drag and drop entire folders to assign all images at once. Or to create a new category from that folder.

Of course you can also copy or move an image you have selected in a category window to a folder via drag and drop.

This works identically for all view types, including the time line view, collection view and even for search results.

↑ File window with small thumbnails (dynamic color)



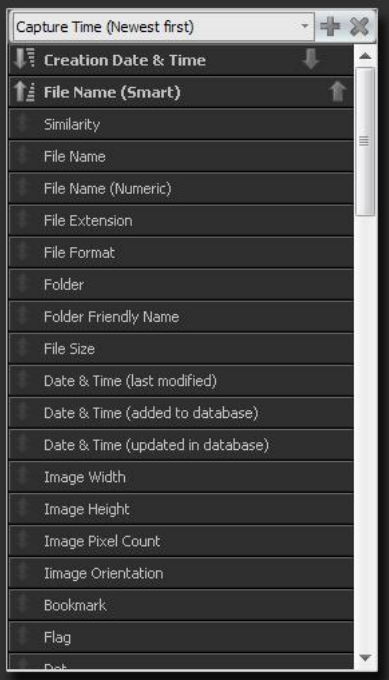
↑ Tabular view displaying heaps of IPTC data

↑ Split View with Categories on top and Media & Folders below. Note that different file window layouts and panel configurations are supported in this mode!

↑ Simple View with maximum space for the thumbnails, preview panel and metadata display.

Sorting Images

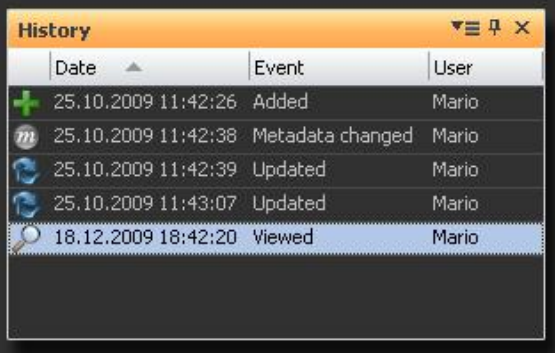
IMatch 5 allows you to sort your images based on a wide variety of criteria, including all metadata fields available for your files. You can create any number of “sort presets” and apply them directly via a drop-down list box in the file window.



Sort Preset panel

The File History

The IMatch 5 database system maintains a history for every file. The history records events during the lifetime of the file (or as long as the file is contained in the database). These events include the date/time the file was added, updated, viewed. There are also special events for “metadata changed” and more.



File history panel

Metadata

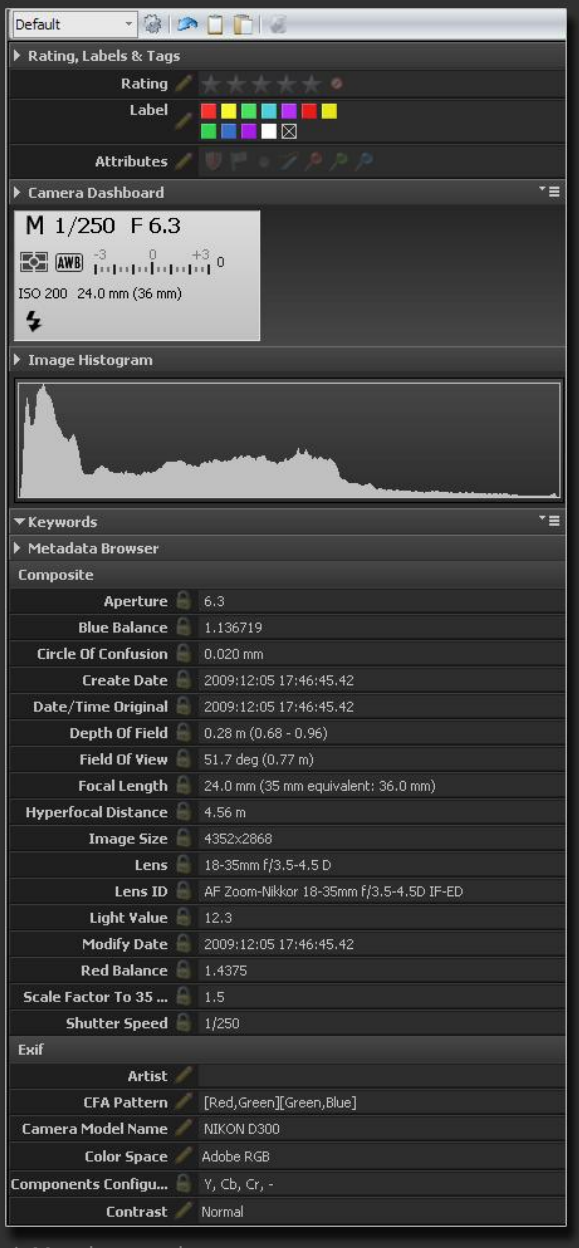
IMatch 5 uses a totally different approach to metadata than previous IMatch versions. It exceeds anything I have seen so far in other applications when it comes to reading, writing or displaying metadata.

IMatch 5 understands thousands of metadata fields ("tags"), including IPTC, EXIF, XMP, ID3, PDF, Office and more. It can read and write to these tags.
Furthermore, IMatch 5 uses a newly developed metadata storage engine which enables it to keep the metadata efficiently cached inside the database, reading and writing metadata in the background and searching this data at amazing speed.

Instead of the separate IPTC, EXIF and XMP editors used by IMatch 3.6, IMatch 5 uses a combined **metadata editor panel**. This panel is fully configurable and has lots of options. This allows you to display only the fields that interest you and match whatever workflow steps or usage scenarios you have in mind.

Special panels like the **Rating**, **Labels** & Icons panel, the **Camera Dashboard** or the **Image Histogram** can be added to the metadata panel. The metadata panel is so smart that it can show/hide panels based on the file type (it will recognize, for example, that there is no need for a histogram when an MP3 file is selected).

You can configure the rows per field, the colors (even dynamic colors based on field contents), there is a "fit-to-content" option to automatically extend fields containing longer text and much more.

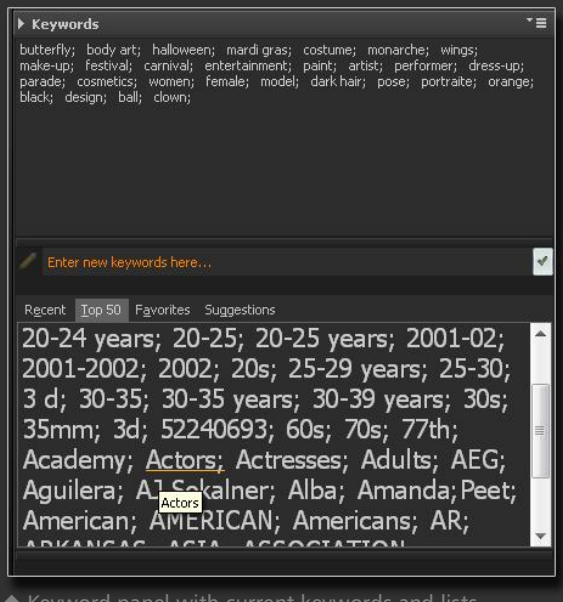


↑ Metadata panel

Keywords

Since keywords are so important, IMatch 5 treats them in a special way. In addition to the standard keyword field that you can display with the other metadata fields, a special **keyword panel** can be added to the metadata panel.

This panel makes it really easy to add and remove keywords, look up keywords in the **thesaurus**, select keywords from the **recently used list**, your **favorites** list, the **Top-50 list** or the keyword **suggestions** that IMatch 5 makes, based on a variety of data options.
IMatch 5 does other cool things with keywords, but more on this at some later time...



↑ Keyword panel with current keywords and lists

Filtering and Searching

IMatch 5 does not use Searches or Selections anymore. It uses Filters instead. A filter allows you to restrict what you see in the file window to files with certain attributes. For example, if you want to see only bookmarked files, then you set the corresponding option in the **filter panel**.
The filter panel then looks at the current "scope" (what you are seeing in the file window) and hides all files without a bookmark.

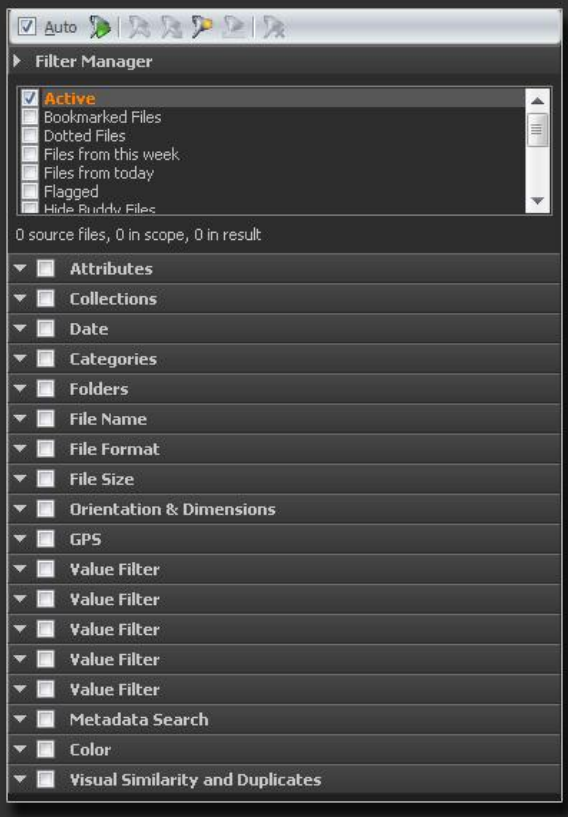
Of course, you can do the same thing to view files with certain ratings, labels or flags; or files created within a certain date range.

IMatch 5 also allows you to filter for metadata, so you can easily show/hide files with certain metadata content. If you want to see only files containing the word "beach" somewhere in the metadata? No problem. You can also run combined queries like "beach OR Daytona" and restrict the search to specific metadata groups or individual fields.

The cool "search by color" and "visual similarity" selections are of course also on board. But they now come in form of filters, like everything else. If you look only for kind of "reddish" files you just filter out all files that don't match the colors you specify.

Filters can be combined, which means, for example, that you can easily find bookmarked files with a rating of 3 or better which have been created within the last 90 days. And you can do that with a few mouse clicks! You can save these filter setups and reuse them later.

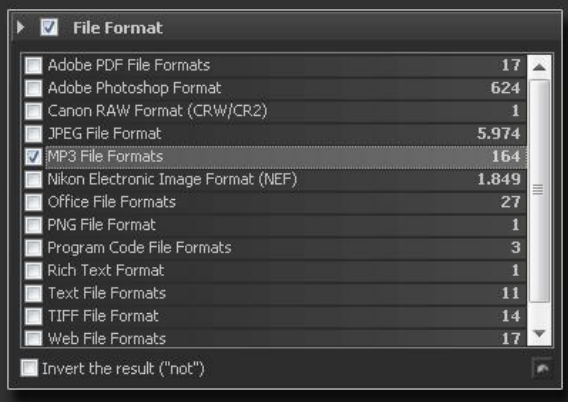
The Scope for a filter can be a folder, a category, an entire disk, or even the entire database! You can run a global search by selecting the database node and then choose a filter. Nothing could be easier. It's blindingly fast too!



The extended filter panel

Filters are sensitive to the Scope

Many filters consider the current scope (what you see in the file window). For example, the file format filter shows a list of all file formats in the current scope. the current scope. Just click to filter for certain formats.



The file format filter shows the formats available in the current scope. Just click to filter for certain formats.

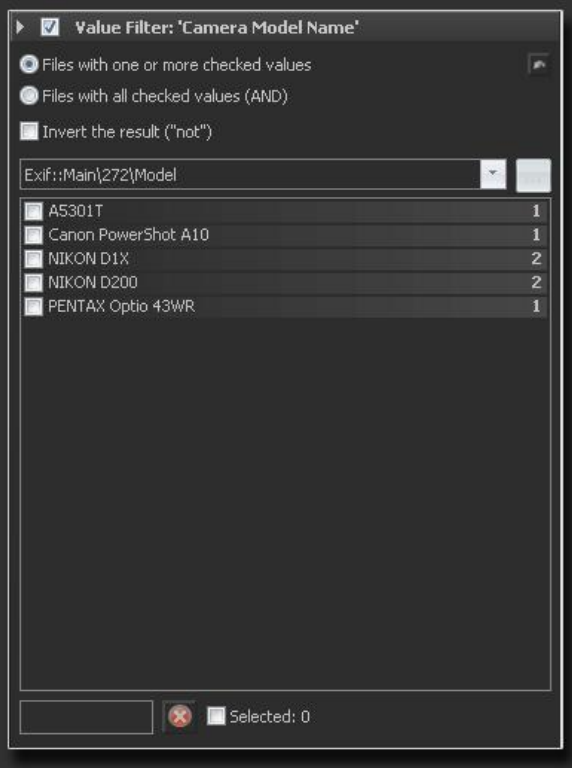
Metadata Value Filters

With IMatch 5 searching for metadata has become even easier. Using the special metadata value filter allows you to actually see all values for the selected field in the current scope.

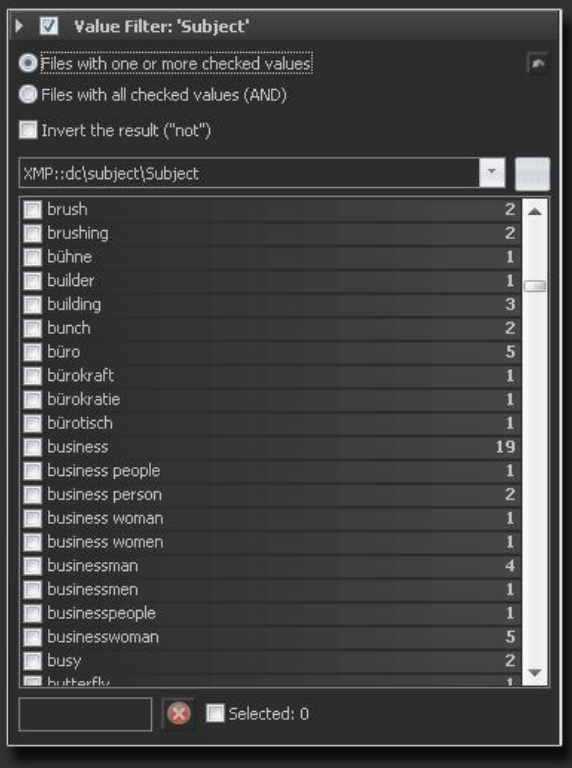
Assume you have selected a folder containing images taken with different cameras. Enable the value filter and select the **camera model** field. After a short time, the filter displays all the camera models and the number of images per model contained in the database. To filter out specific models, just click the check boxes.

You can do the same for all metadata fields supported by IMatch. You could, for example, do this for the XMP subject (keywords) field. Even if there are thousands of files in scope, with hundreds of keywords, in an instant, IMatch determines the information required to fill the filter list. You can then check the keywords you are interested in so you only view the images containing those keywords.

Remember, the scope can be the entire database. This means that in seconds, you can filter your entire database to see only images with a specific keyword, or a combination of keywords. You can even combine keywords via Boolean operators like OR and AND. Or invert it, to see all files not having the selected keywords.



Metadata value filter for camera model



Metadata value filter for keywords (3000 keywords)

Metadata Filters

IMatch 5 contains a high-speed full-text search engine which works very similar to your favorite web search engine.

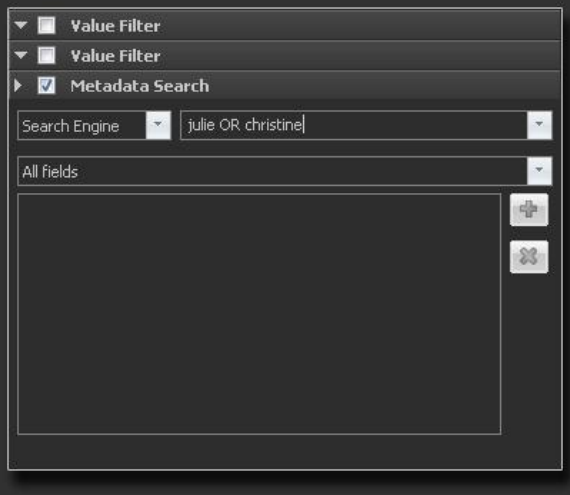
Even with large databases, the search times are normally less than one second. IMatch can display the result even while you're still typing, allowing you to refine the result quickly.

Again, the search engine works on the current scope, which could be a folder, category, collection, a drive, or even the entire database.

The search engine supports Boolean operators like OR, AND or NOT to find precisely what you're looking for.

The search engine provides fastest possible way to search your database for all the *common* metadata fields. Not every esoteric EXIF maker note field is available to the search engine. This keeps the search engine fast, and the database compact.

But since we work with IMatch, there is, of course, another mode which really searches every bit of metadata available somewhere in the database. This takes a bit longer but may be exactly what you require if you need to find all the images containing a specific value in an obscure EXIF maker note field. But most of the time, if not always, you will probably only need to use the search engine.



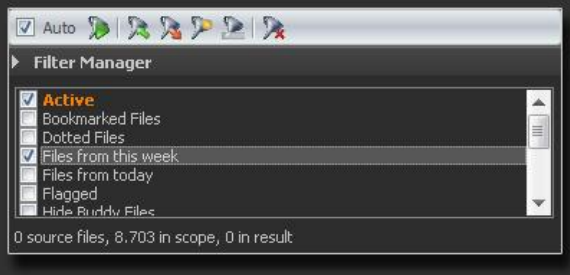
Meta filter looking for all files containing 'Julie' or 'Christine' somewhere in the metadata.

Filter Presets

As with the current IMatch version, you can store filters for later reuse. What is new is that the filters also search for metadata. This means that you can create filter "presets" which can return images with certain keywords or other metadata values. The possibilities are virtually endless…

You can add, update, delete and apply filters via the **filter manager**, which is part of the filter panel.

Other features of IMatch 5 also make use of the powerful filter feature. More on this at a later date.



The Filter Manager allows you to manage your filters

Relationships

IMatch 5 introduces the concept of "relationships", which is an extended version of the buddy files available in the current version of IMatch 3.

A buddy file is a file which is somehow *related* to another file. Often this is a JPEG file related to a RAW file, an associated audio file or a XMP sidecar file.

IMatch 3 ensures that buddy files are kept together with their master files during move/copy/rename operations.

IMatch 5 extends concept of relationships beyond simple buddy files. Once of the aspects of this new concept is stacking

Stacking

IMatch 5 supports image stacking. A stack of related images is represented by one thumbnail/row in the file window. The topmost (visible) image of the stack is the "top" or "pick".

An image stack can be created automatically by IMatch or manually by you. IMatch can automatically stack images based on certain criteria, e.g. the EXIF timestamp or bracket sequence.

You can expand and collapse stacks directly in the file window. Files can be added or removed from stacks at any time and you can split stacks if you want to separate the stacked images into two or more stacks. IMatch 5 supports stacking for all file types, not only images.

Versioning

Another aspect of "file relationships" is the versioning of files. The term versioning here is used to describe "derived" images.

If you copy an image inside the IMatch database from one folder to another, the new image is related to the original image. It is a "copy" of the master file.

If you load a RAW file in IMatch and produce a JPEG file from it, these two files are also related.

The JPEG file is a "derived" image. It has (where appropriate) the same attributes, categories and metadata of the original image.
IMatch 5 takes care of this—by copying meta data, assigning the new version of the image to the same categories as the master file etc.

If you produce different versions of your images in an external image editing application (e.g. for web use, printing), the versioning feature in IMatch 5 allows you to view these different files as a set of images, derived from a common master image.

{ Image Editing }

I have to admit that at this time I'm not sure if there will be any image *editing* capabilities in IMatch 5. Or the first edition of it.

There are several well-designed image editing packages available for a fair price. Some are even for free.
It makes no sense to duplicate the functionality of these applications in IMatch—my time is much better spent working on the asset management features.

Still, if I would do include editing capabilities in IMatch, these editing features will be a) virtual and b) tightly integrated with the versioning concept.

Like almost all modern RAW processors, IMatch doesn't manipulate the original file. Instead it stores a set of *instructions* how to produce an output image from the source image.
These instructions reflect the operations you have performed on the image, e.g. cropping, color-correction, curves, resize.

Different instruction sets can be stored inside the database, as *versions* of the source image. You decide which of the versions (aka manipulations) is used to represent/display the master file.

To produce a permanent version of a file you instruct IMatch to produce an output file from the source by applying the instructions stored in one of the virtual versions. This makes the virtual version persistent in the form of a new, derived image.

To produce a "web" version of an image, you instruct IMatch to apply the "web version" to the source image — producing a cropped, resized, sRGB version of that file, ready for upload to your home page or a photo sharing web site.

Scripting

IMatch 5 contains an updated version of the existing scripting engine. Most of the changes will be ‘under the hood'.

I will add new and update existing scripting classes to incorporate the new features available in IMatch 5.

A few areas in scripting have more substantial changes. For example, the IMBitmap class is now implemented using the IMatch 5 render queue. This change makes the IMBitmap scripting class fully compatible with the rest of IMatch and adds proper color management plus a number of new features. It may require some changes in method names or the odd new or changed parameter for existing methods.

OK, this is it

On these pages I have highlighted some aspects of the next generation of IMatch. All the screen shots are from the real development version; nothing was faked.

I could of course not show **all** features which are new or enhanced in IMatch 5. And I have intentionally left out some of the cool new features — the 'competition' is reading this too!

I know that you are waiting for the beta version and the release version of IMatch.

I understand that you are curious to try it out on your own computer.
But please keep in mind that I really am working hard to get this all finished; all my available time and energy is invested in this project at the moment.

I will complete everything as quickly as possible and as fast as product quality allows. Better is preferable to faster.