FlipAlbum 5

Create your own cool online and CD photo albums

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With the evolution of digital cameras and film scanners, sharing photos with friends and relatives has become much easier. It's now common for photographers to take a digital version of their photo and send it via e-mail down the street or continents away. Inkjet printers have increased quality while reducing prices, which makes them affordable for printing your images at home. This digital technology is forever changing the way we enjoy photography.

It seems, though, that with photographers, the more technological advancements they embrace, the more they want. A company called E-Book Systems has listened to photographers' requests, and offers a software solution called FlipAlbum. It uses the patented "Digital Flip" technology to provide the realistic 3-D effect of turning pages in a photo album. You can now organize and archive your photos in an electronic photo album that has the look and feel of a traditional book. They offer something for all levels of photographers with three versions of their Windows-only FlipAlbum 5 series: Standard, Suite and Professional. To fully understand how the program works, we'll take you through the process of creating a FlipAlbum.

Before starting the program, we highly recommend that

FlipAlbum collects your images into a photo database, and displays them on the main screen as a thumbnail index.

you streamline your computer system so that it runs efficiently with FlipAlbum. The FlipAlbum software requires a considerable amount of base memory to run at maximum efficiency, so be sure to close other programs before opening FlipAlbum. Although it will run with other programs in the background, it is at a much slower pace, which you may find frustrating.
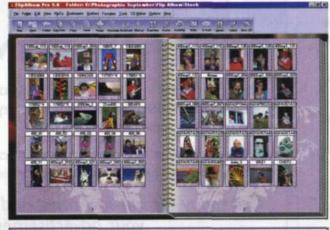
When you first open the program, you will be given the choice of creating a new FlipAlbum or loading one that has been created previously. When you create a new album, you need to tell the program the directory where your images are located. The program will then collect the images and create a photo database, complete with thumbnails and file names. You can then add text and clipart, rotate photos, rearrange pages, and when completed, the FlipAlbum opens to the first page of the book, which is a thumbnail index.

Here is where things get interesting. If you move your mouse pointer close to the edge of a page and press the button, the page will magically turn just like a real page in a book. If you have your speakers turned up, you will even hear the rustle of the page turning. The effect is as close to the real thing as you can get.

But wait; there's a lot more! If you want to go back to a specific page, you can place your mouse cursor over the edge of the book pages and the page numbers will be available for selection. If you want to grab a page and hold it while it turns, just grab the page at the bottom corner. You can even manually rapidly flip the pages to browse through the album. You also have the option of viewing any image full screen by touching on an image in the thumbnail database. If you touch on any
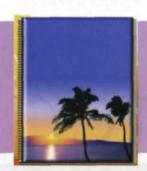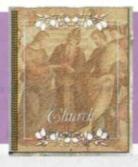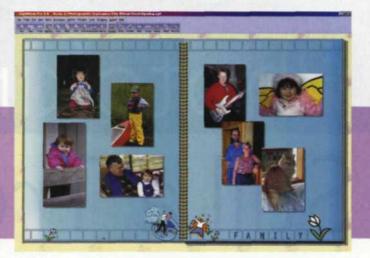
FlipAlbum 5 comes with a wide variety of templates, each complete with cover, bookbinder and choice of paper texture, background and clipart to enhance the feel of your book. And you can easily put your FlipAlbums on CD or DVD.

listing in the table of contents, you are taken directly to that page in the album. Wow!

Now that we have shown you how the program earned its name, we can move on to the endless possibilities available with this program. FlipAlbum features a wide variety of book templates to enhance your photo database from vacation trips to weddings. Each template comes complete with a cover, book binder and choice of paper texture, background, and clipart to enhance the feel of your book. The advanced options menu gives you full control over margins, texture, custom backgrounds, drop shadows, or font style and color. You can even control the speed at which the flipping of the pages occurs. In addition, you have the option of adding video and even sound to any of the pages.

Once you have created your FlipAlbum, you have several choices for sharing it with others. Since computers today often feature a CD or DVD burner, your FlipAlbum can be designed to run automatically from CD or DVD. The simple two-step process starts by clicking on the Create a CD button. The program will create a folder to hold all the files and images in your desired FlipAlbum. You will then be instructed to start your CD/DVD burning program and it will copy all files from that folder. When you put the finished disk into your computer, it will open to the FlipAlbum that you just created. The best part is that the user on the other end does not have to have FlipAlbum to use the final image disk. The user then has the choice of viewing the book by turning the pages, looking at a specific image, or printing out selected images.

FlipAlbum pages turn, just like a real book. Crank up your computer's volume, and you can even hear the rustle!

If you want to protect the images on the CD/DVD from unwanted usage or printing, the Professional version features image encryption, printing lock, and watermark protection.

This high-end program also allows for commercial usage of these FlipAlbums so you can sell your final product. This makes it great for the wedding or stock photographer to show their products without the fear of unauthorized use of the photos. With FlipAlbum 5 Professional you can also create Video CDs that will play a video of your FlipAlbum on your TV via a standard DVD player.

If you want to send a FlipAlbum via e-mail, you can upload your album to a special FlipAlbum server area, and then send it from there to anyone you want. The first time you log on to the FlipAlbum page you will be asked to enter your login name and new password. You will be restricted to 5 megabytes of data, so you should limit the image size before you send them.

In fact, if you only plan to use your FlipAlbum on the Web, you might consider reducing the image resolution down to Internet resolution (200-600 pixels on the longest side at high JPEG compression) for faster transmission and reduced storage space. We recommend that you send yourself a test FlipAlbum to see how the images download and look on your computer before sending them out to other people.

FlipAlbum comes in three flavors: Standard $29.95, Suite $79.95, and Professional $149.95. As you would expect, each successive version has a few more features than the previous. The Suite version adds the capability of multi-albums on one CD, pop-and-play feature, and the ability to play your FlipAlbum on newer DVD players. The Professional version adds the image encryption, password feature, watermark option, print lock capability, and your own URL in the background of the photo album. So which FlipAlbum is right for you? Log onto the Web and check it out at www.flipalbum.com. ■