

002cff68-0

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Chapter 1

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1.1 Picture Cat

Picture Cat

Version 1.0

by Richard Aretz

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1.2 Introduction

1. Introduction

PictureCat is a sophisticated program for the storage and administration of picture collections, therefore being a perfect add-on to Printer24. Flexible sorting and management functions will help you to keep control even over large collections with hundreds of files. Apart from the Amiga Standard 'IFF'-Format, PictureCat also supports various PC-formats (OS3.0 or higher required) as well as all formats supported by Amiga DataTypes. Using the built-in interface to its companion program 'Printer24', you can generate even the largest picture catalogs in no time.

1.1 Hardware Requirements

Picture Cat will run on any Amiga equipped with 2 megabytes of RAM and Amiga OS 2.04 or higher. Although a hard disk is not required to run the program, it is strongly recommended for speed reasons. To use the PC graphics formats, OS 3.0 or higher is required.

1.2. Installing on a Hard Disk

Insert the program disk in a disk drive. After the 'PictureCat'- disk icon has appeared, open its main window by double clicking on it with the left mouse button. Now open the desired directory on your hard disk, and drag the

'PictureCat'-drawer into the hard disk window. This will cause the program to be copied onto the hard disk. Now start the tool 'Install Datatypes' by double-clicking on its icon to copy the DataTypes for the PC-graphics formats onto the hard drive.

1.3 How to Use

2. How to use PictureCat

2.1. General Instructions

Fig. 1 shows an open file as displayed on your computer monitor. It is possible to open several files at the same time, the number of which is only limited by your computer's memory. The most important pieces of information are displayed in the window's title bar, beginning with the file name, followed by the number of entries, the number of currently selected pictures and their size. This information is especially useful files are going to be copied to a different volume to check the free space required.

You can select a picture simply by clicking on its thumbnail image with the left mouse button. To select several pictures, just do the following: Move the mouse pointer over the border area between two thumbnails, and drag a rectangle over all pictures to be selected while holding the left mouse button pressed. Alternatively, you may also hold the SHIFT-button pressed while clicking on the thumbnail images to be selected.

Double-clicking on an object may have two different results:

- 1) Double-clicking on the image part of the picture will automatically load the picture into a pre-defined picture viewer and display it on your screen. Please refer to 'Viewer Preferences' for more information.
- 2) Double-clicking on the title bar of the picture opens a requester containing specific information related to the current picture.

All other functions are controlled via menus.

1.4 The Input Menus

3. The Menus

3.1 The Project Menu

The Project menu contains all functions related to catalog files.

Open File

Brings up an ASL file requester to select the desired catalog file.

Open Backup

Opens a copy of a catalog file. All modifications are only made to the copy, not the original. To keep the copy, select 'Yes' in the requester which is opened after closing the copy. The original file will not be modified.

Close File

The current file and all windows related to it are closed. Note: Alle modifications, including window size and position, are automatically saved.

Delete File

Deletes the current file. As there is no chance of recovery, it recommended that you use this function with great care.

Create Selection

File Creates a new catalog file based on all selected pictures in the current file. When closing this file, the user can chose whether to save it using a new file name, or to delete it.

Import Pictures

Allows the user to insert new pictures into the current catalog file.

Scan Directory

Searches for picture files in the specified directory (without subdirectories). In the 'Select Pictures'-requester you can select which pictures to include in the catalog by clicking on the picture name with the mouse. Drag the mouse pointer over several picture entries with the left mouse button pressed, to select them.

Scan Directory recursively

See above, except that subdirectories are scanned as well.

Copy Pictures

All currently selected pictures (not their thumbnails) are copied to a different volume (e.g. floppy disk). The total size is displayed in the title bar, allowing the user to check whether there is enough storage space left on the destination volume.

Print List

Outputs a picture list of the complete catalog. Please refer to the 'Print List' requester for more information.

Leave out Bitmaps

Because certain types of pictures (especially those with millions of colours) may require more RAM than available in your system, PSP allows you to temporarily store them on the hard disk, loading them automatically when it comes to printing. This function has three different options:

- a) Always leave out bitmaps
- b) Never leave out bitmaps
- c) Leave out bitmaps by size.
This option allows you to enter a certain limit. Bitmaps with a size exceeding this limit will automatically left out.

Save on Quitting

If this option is active, all preferences (e.g. window size and position) related to the current file are saved as soon as the file is closed. Important: If this is not active, all modifications made to the preferences will be lost! You should therefore always have this switch activated, unless your file is stored on a medium which cannot be written to (such as a CD-ROM) or you explicitly do not want to change anything.

3.3 The Thumbnails Menu

This menu contains all functions which are only related to certain pictures. In most cases the functions will only modify the currently selected images.

Delete

Deletes all currently selected Thumbnails. This does not immediately destroy the original picture data. These are marked as "free" and are overwritten the next time the file data are updated.

Restore

Performs an UNDO on the last Delete-action.

Sort

Pictures are sorted on the basis of several criteria defined in the appropriate sub-menu.

Sort Direction

Select here whether to sort in ascending or descending order.

Selection Mode

Chose the required selection mode with this function:

ON	-> Selects a picture.
OFF	-> Deselects a picture.
SWAP	-> Clicking on a picture swaps its selection status.
EXCLUSIVE	-> Clicking on a picture de-selects all others.

Select all

Selects all pictures.

Select Category

All pictures in a file can be assigned to up to 20 different categories (e.g. landscapes, vehicles, persons, etc.), which may be separately defined for every catalog file. When this function is activated, PictureCat will search for the first selected picture and then select all other pictures belonging to the same category. The user can then easily create a category-based overview using the 'Create Selection File' function.

De-select all

Assigns the status 'not selected' to all pictures.

Title Display

Allows the user to display a certain text under the thumbnail. There are three sub-menus to chose from.

Copy

All currently selected pictures are saved to a file in the RAM-Disk. Note:

Only path names and file names are saved, not the picture data.

Cut

All currently selected pictures are copied, then deleted.

Paste

Reads a file which has been cut or copied, and inserts the corresponding pictures into the current file. These three functions allow for quick exchange of pictures between different catalogs.

Font

Select the font for the picture sub-title with this ASL font requester.

Picture Info

Displays important information related to the current picture.

Category

Currently selected pictures can be assigned to certain categories. Refer to the 'Assign Category' requester for more information.

Motive

You can enter a description of up to 100 characters for every picture. For more information, refer to the 'Add Comment' requester.

Search for Pic

After entering the search string, alle motive texts are searched for this string. If it is found, the corresponding picture is automatically selected.

3.4 The Picture Viewer Menu

This menu contains a number of functions related to displaying pictures. It is even possible to create a simple slide show. Screen Mode Here you select the screen mode the viewer should use.

Screen Mode

Here you select the screen mode the viewer should use.

Preferences

Please refer to the section on the 'Viewer Preferences' requester.

One Pic only

Displays only a single picture.

All Pics

All pictures currently selected are displayed one after another. Clicking the left mouse button will terminate the current picture and bring up the next. Press ESC to switch back to the main window.

Help System

The "DOCS" directory contains two text files for the online help system of PictureCat. One is in AmigaGuide-format (displayable with programs like 'AmigaGuide' or 'MultiView'), the other one in ASCII-format. You can use any ASCII-compatible tool, like 'More' or 'WatchIt', to view it.

Get Help

Will open the online help text as specified under 'Select'.

Select

Here you can select the tool to be used for displaying the help text. Simply enter its file name into the text gadget, and insert the variable \F at the required position for the file name.

Click one of the 'File Type' radio buttons, to chose either the AmigaGuide file (in AmigaGuide format) or the ReadMe file (in ASCII-format).

1.5 Document_3

4. The Input Windows

4.1 Assign Category

Purpose: Assign a picture to a user-definable category.
Menu: "Thumbnail/Category"

This requester contains up to 20 user-definable categories, which any picture can be assigned to. Each catalog file can have its own group of categories. Simply click on one of the buttons in the upper half of the window to assign the category number to the current picture. To change a category name, just click into the "Current" gadget, and type in the new name. If you click on an empty category button, this function will automatically be activated. The "Next Picture"-button can be used to switch to the next picture in the current catalog. If you activate the 'automatic' option in the 'Picture Switching' section, the next picture will automatically be activated after the preceeding one has been assigned to a certain category. Clicking on 'Show Picture' will load a user-defined picture viewer and open a full-sized display of the current picture.

4.2 Add Comment

Purpose: Add a comment to a picture
Menu: "Thumbnail/Comment".

The user may add an individual comment to every picture in catalog, which is especially important when using the search function. With a comment you may assign a special description to your pictures. The functions related to picture switching and display work as described unter section 3.1.

4.3 Print List

Purpose: Outputs a list of pictures to yourprinter.
Menu: "Project/Print List".

Use this function to print a list of all currently selected picture files, taking into consideration the current sort mode. The two sliders on the left

side allow you define the number of lines on the page; if you are using continuous paper, you may also select the number of lines not to be printed to skip the perforated line. When using single sheets of paper, select a value of '0' here. If you are going to redirect the print output to a file (e.g. because you want to print the file on somebody elses printer), click on the drawer icon next to the text gadget, and enter the path and filename for the output file.

The right section of the window contains a number of gadgets which allow for the selection of various print parameters. Since a printed line usually is about 72 characters wide, a value of 10 CPI should be used.

This line contains the
following information:

- 1) Picture file name
- 2) Width, Height and Depth (Number of Bitplanes).
- 3) File Format (IFF,PCX....)
- 4) Category
- 5) File Size

4.4 Viewer Preferences

Purpose: Display Pictures
Menu: "Viewer/Preferences"

Use this requester to select a number of flags related to the picture viewer. It is even possible to program a small slideshow.

4.4.1 The Display Options

Full Screen

Converts the picture so that it will fill the whole screen.

Loop

After all pictures have been displayed, the program restarts with picture one.

Buffer

Stores the picture in an internal buffer before displaying it. This required for several transition effects to work.

Don't adjust size

The picture is not modified to fit the output window.

Custom Screen

Opens a custom screen to display the window. If this is not active, the picture is shown on the main screen.

Floyd-Steinberg

Uses a FS-algorithm to display the picture. Otherwise, no dithering is used.

4.4.2 External Viewer

Use External

Use the screen mode coded into the picture file, or an external viewer, allowing pictures to be displayed on third-party graphics boards in up to 24 bit. Since a new screen has to be opened for every picture, transition effects are not supported in this mode.

+DoubleNTSC

+DoublePAL

Many Amiga users use the newer 'MultiSync'-Type monitors which do not support 15KHz Screen Modes. With this option, the program generates a 'Double-Scan'-mode. To make this work, the 'Internal' option in the 'External Viewer'-requester has to be active.

The slider in the lower left part of the window can be used to determine the display duration in seconds. Note: Since the loading process takes some time (especially, if a conversion process is required), displaying a picture may in some cases require more time than selected here.

The window on the right contains a number of transition effects, which will be processed one after another. Please note, that only the active effects are displayed.

4.5 Dither Mode Preferences

Purpose: Selection of a Dither Mode.

Menu: Automatically when opening a new file

This requester automatically opens when a new file is opened and enables you to select the desired thumbnail size and the required dither mode. It is important to remember that these values cannot be modified at a later point of time; if this is required, it is recommended that you use the 'copy' and 'paste' functions to copy the required pictures into a new catalog.

The following section contains the pros and cons of the available options.

Fixed Colours

Pros : low processing power requirements

Cons : high memory requirements, slow screen update.

Purpose: Uses a fixed palette to convert pictures for screen display.

HAM

Pros : low processing power requirements, fast screen update, low memory requirements.

Cons : pictures lack clarity, HAM-screen required.

Purpose: Requires Amiga with AA-chipset, because older chipsets do not support HAM in all resolutions.

Matrix 2Bit

Pros : low processing power requirements, fast screen update, low

memory requirements.
Cons : black/white only.

Matrix 4Bit

Pros : low processing power requirements, fast screen update, low memory requirements.
Cons : low quality colour display
Purpose: This is mode of choice for Amigas which can only open screens with up to 16 colours (A500, A2000, A3000).

Matrix 6 Bit

Pros : higher quality colour display.
Cons : higher memory requirements, slower screen updates
Purpose: This mode is the best compromise between display quality and speed. 128-colour screen required.

Matrix 8 Bit

Pros : best colour display.
Cons : high memory requirements, slow screen update.
Purpose: Use this mode for the best colour display. Requires a screen with 256 colours and an Amiga with at least an 68030-processor.

Floyd 2 Bit

Pros : see Matrix 2Bit
Cons: see Matrix 4Bit
Purpose: By using error distribution, the FS-dithering usually produces a better colour display compared to the corresponding 'Matrix' method.

Floyd 4 Bit

Pros : see Matrix 4 Bit
Cons: see Matrix 4 Bit

Floyd 6 Bit

Pros : see Matrix 6 Bit
Cons: see Matrix 6 Bit

Floyd 8 Bit

Pros : see Matrix 8 Bit
Cons: see Matrix 8 Bit

Grey Scale n

Pros : fast screen update, low memory requirements.
Cons : no colour display.
Purpose: In this mode all colours are converted into grey scales.

For on-screen display, only the two 'Bayer'-matrixes are suitable for matrix dithering.

The section in the lower part of the window contains three buttons to determine the buffer type for the bitmap graphics:

No Buffer The bitmaps are recalculated every time the screen is updated. Although this requires additional time, precious CHIP-Ram is saved.

Buffer HD Bitmaps are temporarily stored on your hard disk and can be loaded on demand, resulting in faster screen updates.

Buffer RAM Bitmaps are temporarily stored in memory, allowing for fast access. This is the choice for users with lots of memory, but no hard disk.

Click on 'Test' to check the result of your selections, or click on the gadget to the left to open a file requester where you can select a picture of your choice.

4.6 Select Screen Mode

Purpose: Screen Mode selection
Menu: "Project/Preferences/Display".

Use this requester to select the screen mode you want to use for your work with PictureCat. The available modes strongly depend on your hardware. 'The DoubleScan'-Modes are especially recommended, but unfortunately these require the AA-graphics chip set currently only available in Amiga 1200s and 4000s. Please note that these modes also require a special 'MultiSync'-type monitor.

Third-party graphics cards which support Amiga-compatible screen structures (such as the Picasso or the CyberVision 64) are also supported.

Since PictureCat uses special dithering techniques to display pictures, a screen mode supporting at least 16 colours is required to run the program. Although a 256-colour display will generate the best results, 128 colours will normally be preferred as the best compromise between display quality and speed.

Note that the Amiga's 'HAM' mode might be superiour to a 16 colour display in many cases. Furthermore, it may also be much quicker than the normal 128 colour screen, because it only requires 6 bit (=64 colours). Unfortunately, this speed increase leads to a loss of display clarity, as only every third pixel can be assigned the correct colour in HAM mode.

The 'Y-Aspect' function opens a test window which helps you to maintain the correct aspect on-screen, avoiding the distorted display of circles, etc.