Staying Organized in My Digital Workflow

For advice on the best viewing settings visit https://mbp.ac/pdf

Mar 31, 2020

As I finally catch up on tasks after completing my 2020 Japan Winter Tours, I have just organized the images from the three trips and took stock a little, and being as so many of us are spending time indoors at the moment, I figured I'd share some thoughts on the process, in the hope that it might help you with your workflow too. Now might be a good time to enjoy your photography introspectively, and taking a look at your organization can lead to a deeper appreciation of your work as well as making it easier to get to.

If you've been following how I work, you may recall that I keep all of my current year's images on one SSD drive, which includes everything I've shot, and then copy all of my final selects into a second SSD drive. My entire year drive is called my Traveler, because it not only travels the world, but it travels nicely between my computers too, as I also keep my Capture One Pro catalogs on the drive, so I can just catch up where I left off simply by moving the drive between my computers. I won't go into as much detail as my previous posts, such as episode 466, so check out that post if this isn't just a top-up for you.

My Finals drive also travels everywhere with me, but that is where I store everything that I feel is worth showing people, and images that I will actively use going forward. From this year's trips, I ended up with 96 images from my Hokkaido Landscape Tour that I'm really happy with. 77 of them were shot with my EOS R and 19 of them shot with my Rolleiflex medium format twin lens reflex camera. From the first of my Japan

Winter Wildlife tours, I came back with 270 images that I am really happy with, and from my second Japan Winter Wildlife tour, I found myself with 179 images. The main reason for the reduction on the second tour was the warm winter affecting the behavior of the sea eagles. Although we did still get some great shots, it wasn't as productive as the first tour.

Capture One Pro Smart Albums

During my tours I try to show the group what I've been getting from time to time, to hopefully inspire them, but also to encourage them to share their own work, as that really helps us to inspire each other as we travel together. To facilitate this, and to help me speed up my workflow, I create a Smart Album at the start of each tour, that will automatically gather all images of two stars or higher during the dates of the tours, so as I go through my images each day and make my selections, they automatically appear in this Smart Album. Here is a screenshot of the settings, and although this is in Capture One Pro, you can do something very similar in Lightroom.
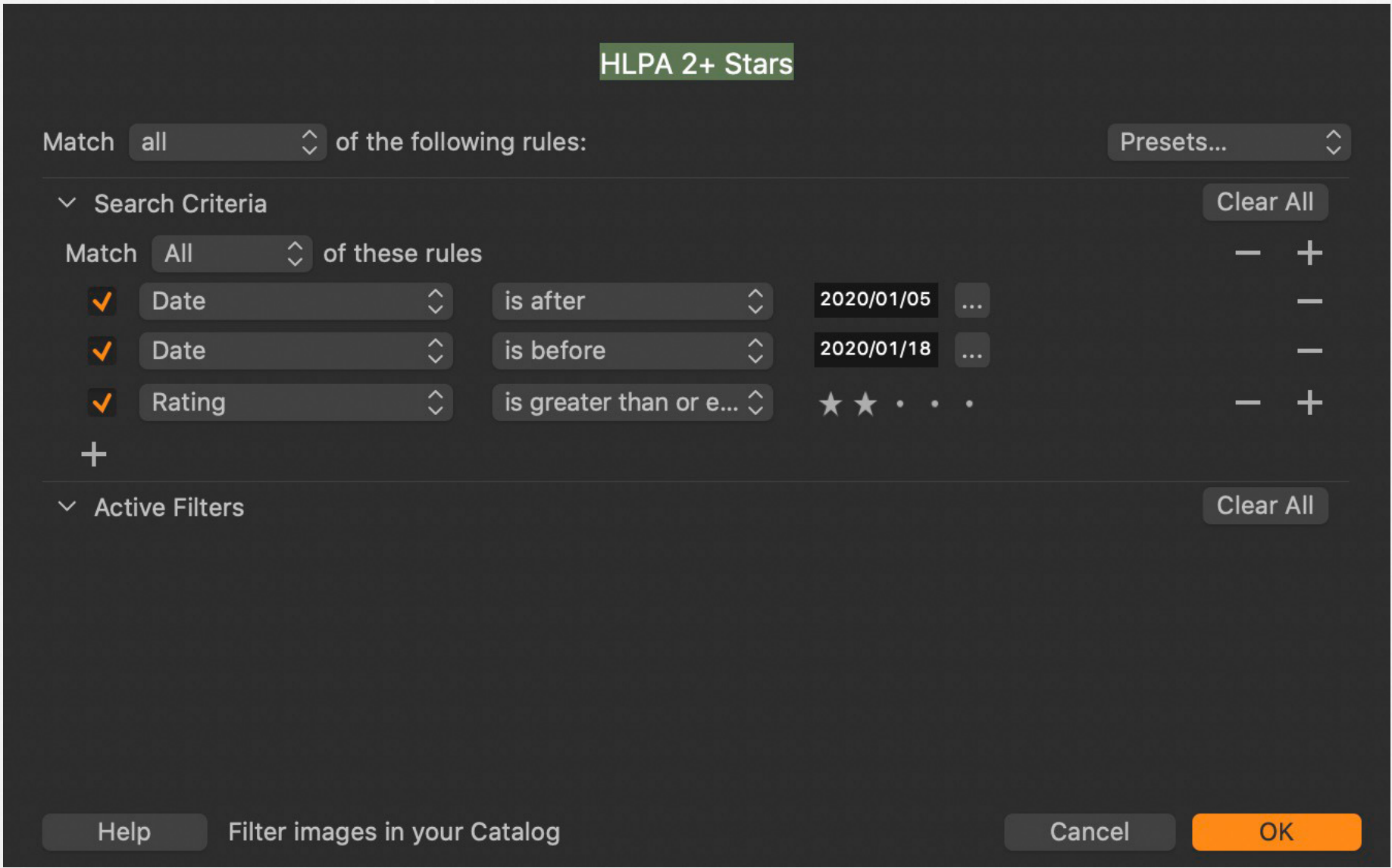
Export Originals

You can't, unfortunately, select multiple Smart Albums at once, although you can create a new wider-ranging Smart Album, but I've just selected the albums individually and right-clicked the images in each album, and selected Export > Originals to copy them to a 2020 sub-folder on my Finals SSD.
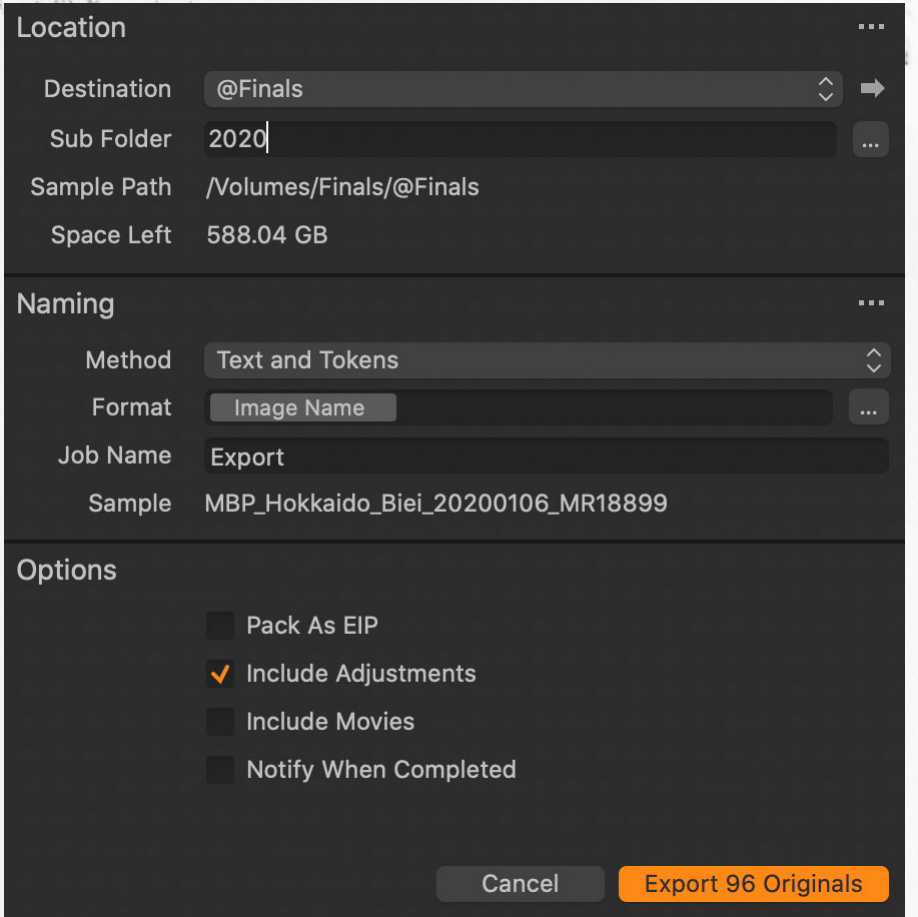
I usually specify to Prefer Sidecar XMP over Embedded Metadata in the Capture One Pro Preferences > Image dialog (following page), as well as selecting Full Sync for the Auto Sync Sidecar XMP option. This, coupled with selecting the Include Adjustments checkbox during the Export of my Originals ensures that Capture One Pro includes all of the edits I've done to my images.

Capture One creates a few extra folders in the export directory to include some cache and settings files, including

masks that I've drawn on images to make adjustments etc. When I open my Finals catalog, because this is the first time I'm copying images across for 2020, I initially have to Import my images at their current location, selecting the 2020 folder that was just created in my Finals folder on my Finals SSD. The important thing here is to ensure that the Include Existing Adjustments checkbox is turned on under the Adjustments section.

You can't actually see the adjustments in your images in the import dialog, but once you have completed the import, all adjustments will be applied to the images and so we don't have to redo any work that we did on the images on the original drive.

I actually recalled that I'd shot a few movie files while traveling as well, and so went back into my Traveler catalog to copy those over, and that reminded me that if you do have movies in your selection, you need to turn on the Include Movies option in the Export dialog, otherwise these will be ignored. I hadn't even rated my movie files yet, so there were not included in my Smart Albums anyway, but that is something to keep in mind if you do shoot movies and use Capture One Pro.
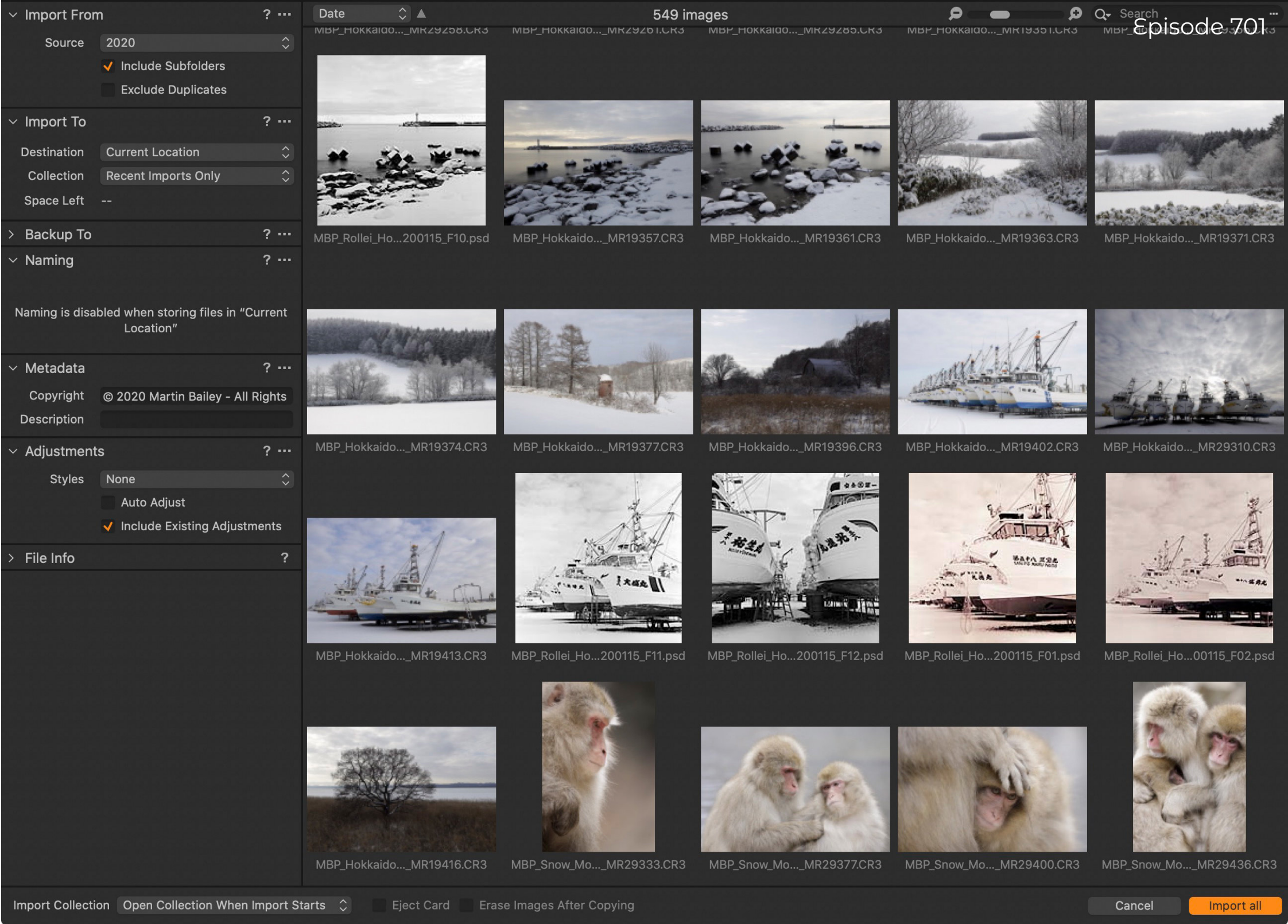
Synchronizing Updates

That did give me the opportunity though to show you how updates are handled for the rest of the year, as I now have a 2020 folder in my Finals catalog, so all I have to do after copying any new work across is right-click my 2020 folder and select Synchronize. I find that it works better to select Show Importer on this dialog, as

some changes to files have not been reflected when I haven't done this in the past, although I haven't checked recently to see if that is still a problem.

Once this process is complete, the beauty of my workflow is that I now have all of the current year's work on one SSD, and I keep that with me at all times, until my cloud backup is completed, and we'll touch on that shortly. In addition to the current year though, I also have one more drive that essentially has every image I've ever shot that I consider being worth a hoot. So with more than
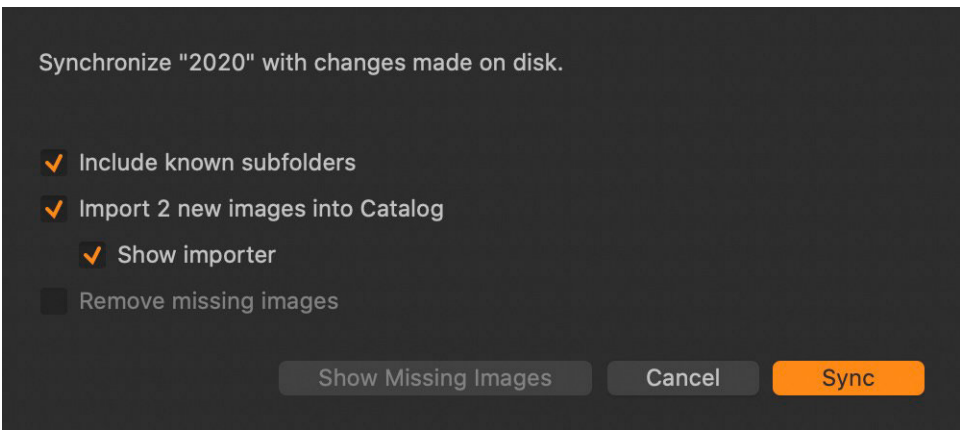
twenty years of my favorite shots in one catalog, I can get to images easily to send to people, for example, even if I'm traveling, or to use in demonstrations during my workshops or talks.

Brief Summary of Backup Process

Photos & Capture One Pro Catalog Management and Backup Strategy

As we came so close to this during the last paragraph, I've updated my Studio Backup workflow slide and included that here for your reference. To summarize, I shoot my images and initially store them in my Traveler SSD, and although it's not on this slide, if I'm actually away from home, I do daily backups to a second drive, just in case anything happens to the first. I will then keep the Traveler in my pocket or a locker for the entire time.

When I get home from a trip, I plug the Traveler into my iMac Pro, and that kicks off a Chronosynch job I've created to synchronize my new images and updated Capture One Pro catalog to my Drobo. On my iMac I'm running Backblaze which then starts to transfer my new images and catalog into the cloud. This can take a while, and I have to choke the upload speed a little so as not to get my Internet connection crippled by my stingy provider, but even after a wildlife trip with thousands of images, within a few weeks of getting home my new work will be backed up in the cloud.

Being slightly paranoid, I actually have a second Drobo which I turn on occasionally and run another Chronosynch job to synchronize my first

Current Year's Raw Files + Capture One Catalog Master Copy

Traveler

Final Selects + Capture One Catalog Master Copy

Finals

Automatically Synch Images and Catalogs to Drobo with Chronosync

iMac

Drobo #2 Mirror Backup of Drobo #1

BACKBLAZE
Backup in Cloud

Drobo #1
— Finals Backup
— Photo Originals
— Current Year Backup
— Previous Years Master Copy
— Audio
— Video

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Drobo with my second. This is just to save me waiting for a cloud backup to be delivered from Backblaze should I ever have anything go wrong with my Drobo. The cloud backup is really my ultimate disaster recovery plan, should something happen to my entire house,

taking out both Drobos. My entire back is currently around 17TB though, so downloading it over the Internet is not really an option. I'd have to pay for physical drives to be sent out to me.

I also backup my Finals SSD to the Drobo, including the Finals Capture One Pro catalog, as I make most of my final tweaks on there, and it also contains lots of Collections for things that I've done over the years, including

my yearly Top Ten selections, which I love to go back through from time to time. I also use it to create temporary collections like this Want to Print collection.

Printing Our Work

I'm not sure if I'll have time to do this during the coming week, but I was thinking that I'd love to print some of the medium format work that I did during my Hokkaido Landscape tour in January. so I've just dropped twelve images into a Want to Print album. I might tweak the selection too, but there is something about the tactility of the format that makes me want to print at least a selection of images. I found it so interesting and calming to work with film after almost twenty years and also developing the film myself using the Lab-Box. There is something about deciding how to complete this analog work in the digital darkroom though that has me thinking a little harder than I have so far when printing digital work, so I'll try to nail that down and talk about it once I've come to some conclusions.

Whether you shoot film or digital though, printing can be incredibly fulfilling, so I wanted to suggest that if you are staying safe and healthy during these times of crisis, and find yourself with some time at home to enjoy your photography, printing can be a great way to do that. It might be hard to source a new printer at the moment, but even if you have an inexpensive A4 inkjet printer hanging around, the results can be surprisingly good, so maybe give it a try.
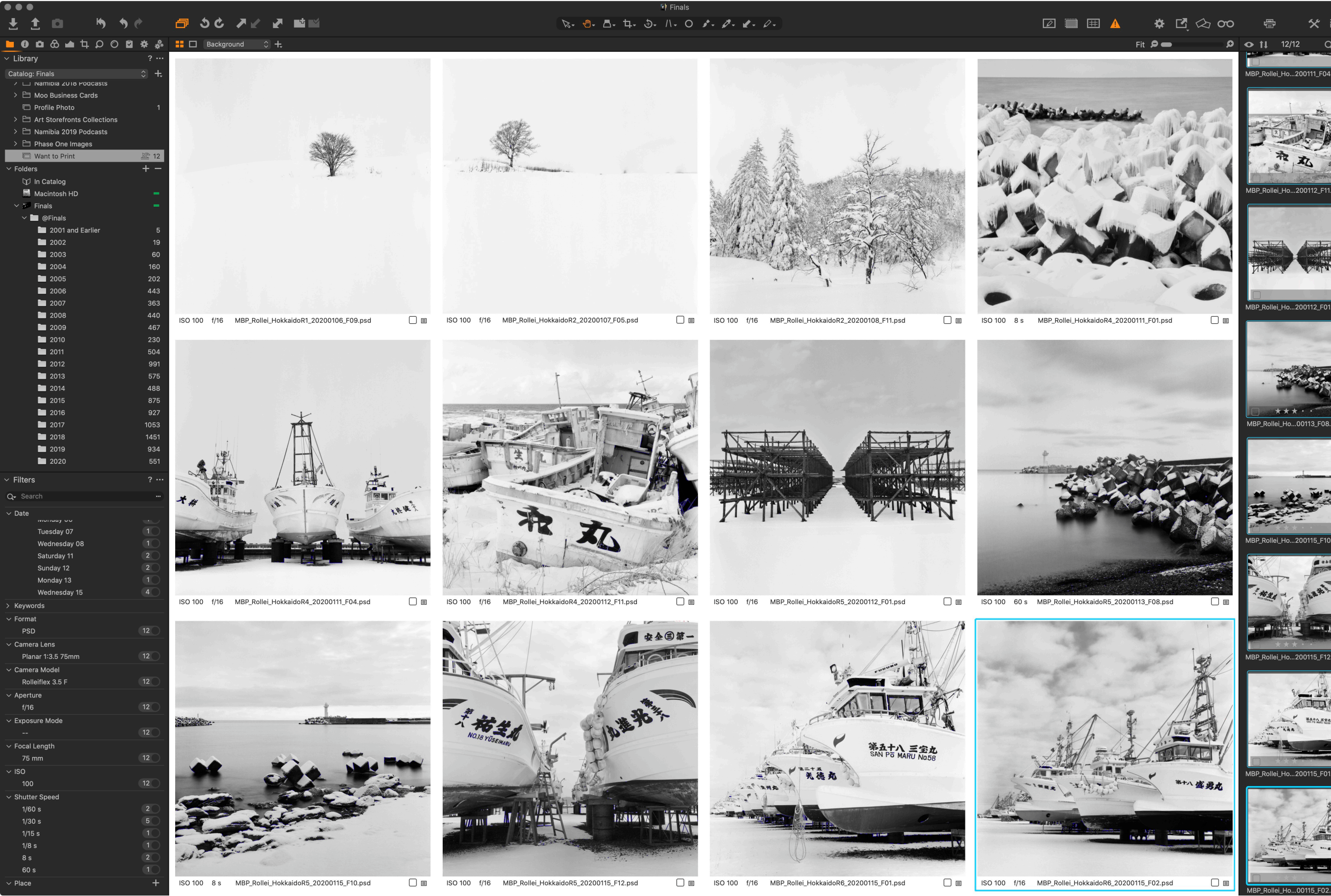
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