

All My Movies review

Bring Order to Your Movie Collection!

The times where the number of movies in personal collections was measured in the dozens are gone. The digital boom of our era increased this number to hundreds and even thousands. How to manage this large number of movies? How to remember that your friend should have returned a movie to you a month ago? How to avoid buying a movie that you already have? All My Movies will help you solve these problems.

Let's look at the process of using this software in detail. The program installer is a usual wizard consisting of a few steps. At first startup, a window appears which explains how you can purchase a license. It also gives important information on how not to lose the movie database. You should not use the sample database for storing your movies because it will be overwritten each time the program is updated or reinstalled. The sample database is only for evaluation purposes. A new database can only be created in the registered version. The license costs \$44.95.

When All My Movies is launched, the program displays the tip of the day. Personally, I don't like these "tips of the days" much, but they are easy to disable by removing the tick from the same screen. By default the program opens the demo database, which only has three movies. The most important thing about a program like this is how easy it is to add new movies into the database. You want to add as little information manually as possible, especially if you have a large collection.

There are several ways you can add a new movie into the database. All of them are available in the "Movie" menu. The easiest method is to use the "Movie-Add&" menu item. An empty movie card will appear containing a lot of fields. This may look overwhelming, but the only field you have to fill in is the name of the movie in the "Original title" field and press Enter.

The program will then try to find it, and all the information about it, in one of the on-line movie databases. In my case this is IMDb.com -- the largest movie database on the Internet. If I wanted to add "Terminator 2" into my collection, all I would have to do would be type "Terminator" in the "Original title" field. The program would find several movies and would prompt me to select the one I would want.

In this example, I would then select the one I would want by double-clicking it and in just a few seconds (depending on the speed of your Internet connection) all the information about the movie, including the DVD cover picture, would be filled in. If I was happy with the result, all I have to do is either hit "OK" or "Next movie" if I wanted to add another. If I was not happy with the result, I could easily get the movie information (like movie synopsis or cast of movie) from another source just by clicking the small button right to the Original title on the movie card and selecting a different on-line database from the pull-down menu. It is even possible to add additional on-line databases by using plug-ins, which can be downloaded from the All My Movies download page

You can always see where all the information is taken from, because the name of the source is displayed in the title of the movie card window. You do not have to save your selection; the program remembers your choice automatically. So, let's try to find information about, say, the movie "Ice Age 2". Type this name into the "Original title" field, press Enter, complete the familiar procedure and voila - the film is stored in the collection!

The whole process of adding a movie can be seen in an animation on the developers website at:

http://www.bolidesoftware.com/images/amm_movieadd_tut.gif. Although they tried to decrease the file size as much as possible by making the animation gray scale, the animated GIF file is still rather large -- about 1 Mb. But it will help to estimate the amount of time required to add a movie.

As I mentioned before, there are more ways to add a movie into the collection. You can also add movies on your computer to the program. To do this, select the "Movie -- Add from file" menu item. Just browse to the movies' location on your hard drive and All My Movies will read technical information such as audio and video codecs used, average bitrate of the audio and video streams, video length, frame rate, screen format, frame resolution and file size. All this information is stored in your collection. For some, this feature will be quite useful. It is also possible, with this method, to extract separate frames from the video file and store them in the collection. Sometimes it is hard to remember what that movie was about, but after having looked at two or three screenshots, you instantly remember the entire movie. Here is how you can extract frames from a movie:

Find the frame you want using the slider, press the "Save screenshot" button and the screenshot is attached to the selected movie. One more interesting feature is that all the movies added this way, can be started from within All My Movies using the toolbar button in the top part of the main window.

The "Movie -- Add DVD" menu item works in a similar way but is used to add DVD disks instead of single files. The function to extract screenshots and read technical information is available here, too.

The last way to add a new movie into the collection is to use the "Movie - Add DVD by barcode" menu item. This way All My Movies will try to find the movie in the on-line database using its barcode instead of the title. If you happen to own a barcode scanner, adding movies is even easier. This function seems to work best for DVD Region 1, though (disks

released in the USA and Canada).

Now let s have a closer look at how All My Movies displays all the information that is stored in the database. You can change the layout of the program by selecting another display template. You can do it using the "View -- HTML template" menu item. Here is for example a movie card displayed using the Indian template, which looks quite nice.

The list of movies available can be configured quite easily. You can add columns into the list, for instance movie release date. This is done using the preferences window (the "Tools-Preferences" menu item) in the "Additional columns" section. One of the things I like is how you can group the movies in the list. For example, to group movies by genre, use the context menu by right-clicking on the movie list. Select the "Group by - Genre" menu item and get a tree list with the number of movies in each genre shown.

There are many ways to group movies for example by release date, first letter of the title, and director name. There is also a traditional search feature which is available in the "Tools -- Search movie" menu and looks like this:

There are also several ways to filter and sort the movies list. This is done directly from the movie card. For example, if you left-click on the actor name, the program will offer you to display all movies where this actor starred or find extended information about this person. By clicking on a genre in the movie card, you can group movies by genre or display only movies in the selected genre. The implementation is quite convenient and intuitive.

If you are a real movie fan, you will probably want to learn more information about actors, directors, script writers, and so on. In this, All My Movie will also help you, because the program can also automatically find information about different people, including actor photos and store them in the database. A very interesting feature is a pop up photo of the actor and short biography which appear when you move the mouse over his name. This is available only if the actor card is filled (more about this later) and it looks like this:

You can view the list of all persons associated with all movies in the current collection in the person list (the "Directories - Persons" menu item). This looks roughly the same way as the movie list.

Those actors, who have extended information about them available, are green. This information is downloaded automatically by a single press of the button similar to the way of adding movies -- the program finds information about the person on the Internet and stores it into the local database.

The actor card is displayed in a following window:

Using the button to the left of the person s name, you can have the program find and download information about the person from the Internet. There is also a button to change the currently used on-line database.

All My Movies stores all data in a database in a special format, but allows the movie collection to be exported into many formats, such as MS Excel, plain text files, CHM, or HTML format using templates. You can export the collection into the HTML format in the following way. Select the "Tools -- Export to HTML" menu item for this window:

Select the preferred template from the list of available templates, click the "Next" button, specify the location where the file will be stored, and you will get a full-featured web page ready for uploading onto the Internet. If you know HTML, it will be easy for you to create your own template. Next to this flexible exporting functionality, All My Movies also can import an existing movie collection, but this is a topic for another article.

As of version 4.5, All My Movies has an extended database of friends to whom you loan your movies. The program keeps an account of all movies given out, reminds you about the persons who haven't returned the movie on time and keeps a history of loaned movies for each of your friends. It is very easy to use this functionality. When you give a movie to your friend, find this movie in the database and select the "Movie -- Loan/Return" menu item, or press the F12 key. The program will display the following window:

In this window, type the name of your friend or select it from the list, and specify the number of days after which the program will start to remind you about the movie not having been returned. Click the "OK" button to mark the movie as given out -- a corresponding note appears in the movie card and the movie is highlighted in pink in the list. When the movie is returned, use the same menu item or the F12 key to mark the movie as returned. You can see the history of loans/returns for each friend in the corresponding database (the "Directories - Friends" menu item).

If the currently present fields for storing movie information are not enough for you, you can configure your own fields in Preferences, which will then be available for searching and grouping. For example, you may want to add the "Translation quality" or "Picture quality" fields. Custom field can be text or boolean (flags). In case of boolean fields, you can specify the color which will be used to highlight movies with the corresponding flag set. This is very useful to mark, say, favorite movies.

This article describes only a portion of All My Movies features. All My Movies is a very flexible and configurable tool for anyone who has at least a dozen movies in the collection. By spending a few moments to configure the collection and add your movies, you can get a nice and flexible digital collection, which helps you not to get lost in your own movies. The demo version of the program can be downloaded from the official website. Here you can also purchase a license for \$44.95.

