PLUGIN COMMANDER PRO EDITION 99

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Version 1.02 - December 1999

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1. Features & Facts

Plugin Commander (better known as PiCo) is a tool designed to organize your Photoshop-compatible plugins, Premiere plugins and After Effects plugins, create your own Filter Factory plugins, convert between different plugin formats, batch process image files, manage files, to view and edit images and much more.

PiCo can be used as a complimentary tool with Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premiere, Adobe After Effects, Jasc Paintshop Pro, Corel Photo-Paint and many other application that support plugins, but you can also use PiCo without them.

Here's the feature list of Plugin Commander 1.0 Pro Edition:

Organize your Photoshop-compatible, Premiere and After Effects Plugins

- Enable or disable plugins to make only the plugins you really need to show up in your image and video application
- Change the category of plugins to make them display in the sub menu you want
- Simulation of Photoshop's Filter menu

Archive your Filter Factory Plugins

- Store your Filter Factory plugins inside FFL files with a compression ratio of up to 200:1
- Search function for finding certain filters within FFL files
- Convert FFL files back to plugins

Convert between different Filter Factory Plugin Formats

- Photoshop to Premiere and vice versa
- Macintosh to Windows and vice versa
- Old to new Filter Factory plugin version and vice versa
- Create Filter Factory plugins with a larger preview, that work in different color modes, demo plugins and editor plugins
- Decompile Filter Factory plugins to source code files

Preview Plugins, FFL Files & Images

- JPG preview images of any commercial plugins and instant preview calculation of Filter Factory plugins
- View different image formats e.g. JPG, GIF, BMP, WMF, TIF, PNG, PCX
- Different preview options: adjustable preview window, thumbnail browser, full picture view, Filter Factory editor
- Execute (Filter Factory) plugins directly within Plugin Commander without starting your image application

Create your own Plugins with the Filter Factory Editor

- Extended editing capabilities compared to the original Filter Factory plugin
- Many additional features like source code printing, memory spots, randomize function, code snippet database, ff expression database
- Several cool graphical interfaces to inspire your creativity

Edit your Images in the Picture Editor

- Open and save different image formats
- Acquire images from TWAIN-compatible scanners
- Apply over 15 standard filters and hundreds of freely available plugins
- Convert to various color modes (2, 16, 256 & 16 million colors, greyscaled, dithered)
- Print your images

Batch Process Images and Plugins

- Convert between different image formats
- Create thumbnail of Filter Factory plugins
- Over 20 special filters can be applied during the conversion process
- Filter Factory plugins can be applied during the conversion process
- Batch resize your images
- Instant JPG-Quality preview

File Management

- Two pane main window to manage folders and files quickly and easily
- Quickly select the recently accessed folders
- 9 different file view mode
- File Operations: copy, move, rename, delete, kill
- Folder Operations: move, rename, kill, create
- Start external applications by double clicking files
- Zip and unzip files

Flexibility & Speed

- Multithreading architecture for doing different tasks at the same time
- Accelerated plugin recognition through caching
- Fast preview of Filter Factory plugin through caching
- Menu lists for quickly swapping folders, preview images and for starting external applications
- Efficient layout of the main window: two panes with 3 tab sheets each

Other Features

- Filter Download dialog for connecting to the most popular plugin web sites and getting the newest free plugins
- Enabling and disabling of MediaStudio plugins
- Set images or plugin preview as desktop wallpaper
- You will get free updates of Plugin Commander up to version 1.99

1.1 Limitations of the free Plugin Commander 1.0 Light Edition

- The Light Edition wasn't compiled for full speed
- No cooperative multithreading
- No caching of plugins and preview images

- No scanning of sub folders in Plugin View
- Changing the category of non-FF plugins doesn't work
- No Enabling and Disabling of non-FF plugins in Plugin View
- No Photoshop Filter Menu simulation

- No Conversion of Filter Factory plugins to Adobe Premiere and Macintosh
- No Browser dialog
- No Preview window for previewing Filter Factory plugins on the main window
- Only BMP files are supported
- No Batch Processing dialog
- No Thumbnails command for creating thumbnails of Filter Factory plugins

- No FFL View
- No Find command for searching for files, plugins and FFL entries
- No Create FFL and Add FFL commands
- No enhanced Filter Factory dialog
- No Invoke command (execution of plugins)
- No Unzip and Zip commands

1.2 Minimum Requirements

- **Hardware:**
  - Pentium processor
  - 640x480 pixel, 16bit screen display
  - 24 MB RAM
- **Software:**
  - Win95 / 98 / NT
  - Recommended, but not necessary: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premiere, Paintshop Pro, Corel Photo-Paint, Painter, Picture Publisher or any other application that supports Photoshop plugins

1.3 Plugin Type Descriptions

- PRM: Premiere plugins
- 8BF: Photoshop-compatible plugins
- AEX: After Effects plugins
- TXT: Text file that contains Filter Factory source code
- AFS: Photoshop Filter Factory source file
- PFF: File saved with Premiere Filter Factory
- FFL: Filter Factory Library for archiving Filter Factory plugins
- VFX, VFL: MediaStudio Pro plugins

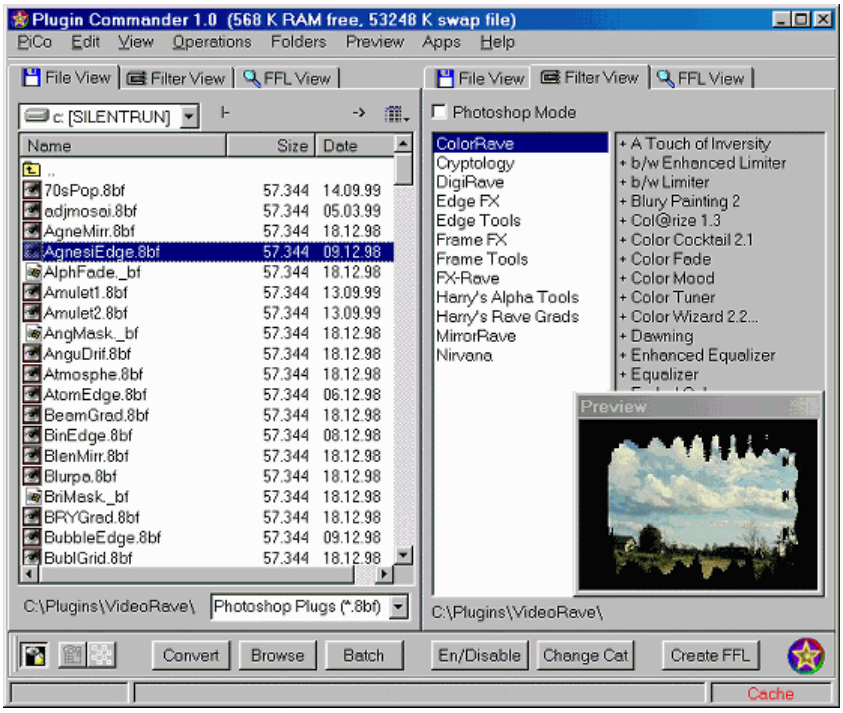
1.4 Supported Filter Factory Versions

- Windows Photoshop
  - **Version 3.0** (57344 bytes): released 1994 by Adobe
    white background
  - **Version 3.0.4** (49152 bytes): released 1995 by Adobe
    grey background
  - **Alf's Power Toys Version** (53760 bytes): created 1995 by Alfredo Mateus
    white background
  - **Johann's Version** (49664 bytes): created 1997 by Michael Johannhanwahr
    grey background, larger preview, copyright display
- Macintosh Photoshop
  - **Version ??** (99840 bytes): released 1994 by Adobe
- Windows Premiere
  - **English Version 2.51** (50176 bytes): released 1995 by Adobe
    smaller preview
  - **English Version 4.2** (50176 bytes): released 1996 by Adobe
    larger preview, but slider values and author text overlap preview
  - **German Version 4.2** (50.688 bytes)
  - **English Version 5.0**
  - **English Version 5.1**

2. Basics Principles

In order to work effectively with Plugin Commander, you need to know some basic principles. If you already know other tools that work according to the Norton Commander principles, you will feel familiar with PiCo.

As you see, there are ***two panes*** in the main window of PiCo that contain the File View, Plugin View and FFL View tabs. One of the panes is always active the other always passive. When you click on one of the panes, it becomes active and the opposite pane becomes passive. The background of the list box in the passive pane is grey. As you can see in the picture below the right pane is the passive one.



Before you press a button or select a command from the menu, you have to select one or more files, plugins or FFL entries from one of the panes. All commands are related to the active pane. Some commands use the folder of the passive pane to place files to e.g. Copy, Move, Add to FFL, Create FFL, Plugin List and Convert. This folder is then displayed by default in the Select Folder dialog. To suppress this dialog and automatically copy or save files in the folder of the opposite pane, you have to activate the appropriate check box in the Preferences dialog.

Below the two panes is a button bar for quickly accessing the most often used commands. At the bottom of the window is a status bar that is divided in three sections. The middle section is used for displaying a progress bar, while the other two sections display various information types like the number of files or the time needed to finish a command.

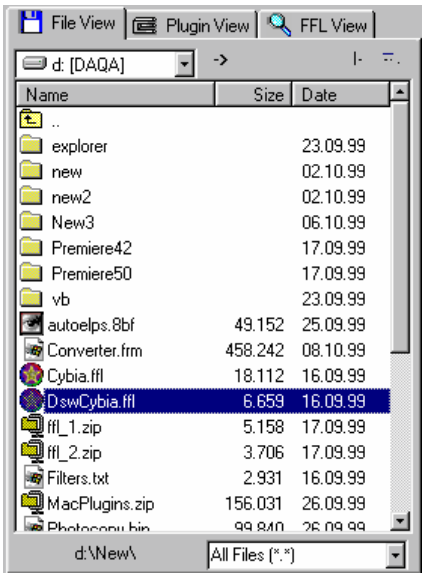
Tip: If you don't know what a certain button, checkbox or other control does, just keep the cursor a few seconds over it. A small tool tip explanation will appear then.

3. File / Plugin / FFL View

3.1 File View

The File View tab is displayed by default. It lets you work with files and folders similarly to the Windows Explorer.

The icon on the top right side above the Date column header lets you switch between 5 different **File View modes**: 4 of them are available in the Windows Explorer, too, and the last one, called Classic, is a Win16 style dialog which was the default dialog in beta versions of PiCo. You can even have up to 8 different File View modes by using the left |- icon.



The **arrow icon** -> right beside the drive box can be used to synchronize both panes. That means that the folder of the current pane is displayed in the opposite pane, too.

Clicking the Name, Size and Date **column headers** sorts the files and folders according to their names, sizes and creation dates.

At the bottom of the tab there's a label that displays the current folder path. In Classic mode the file size will be displayed instead. The **drop down menu** to the right contains different file type patterns that can be selected to exclude or include certain file types in the File View.

Double clicking a plugin will load it into PiCo's FF Editor. Double clicking an image will display it in the Picture Editor. If the Preview icon is active and you click on a plugins or image, you will see a preview of it in the Preview window. Double clicking on other files will launch the associated application with it. Right clicking on a file will display the Operations **context menu**, whereas right clicking on a folder or clicking on the folder label at the bottom will display the Folders context menu.

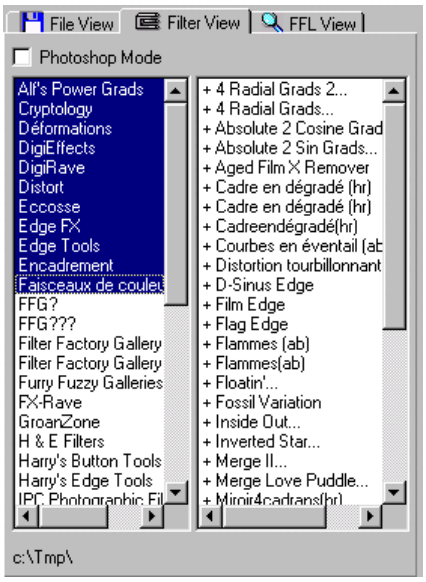
You can move files to the folder displayed in the passive pane by dragging them there.

3.2 Plugin View

Pressing the Plugin View tab will scan the current folder (and all sub folders, if activated in Preferences) for plugins. By holding the shift key and pressing the Plugin View tab only Filter Factory plugins will be displayed. You can cancel the plugin scanning by pressing the Escape key.

PiCo display the recognized plugins in a **two list view**. The plugin categories are displayed on the left side and on the right side the plugins which belong to the selected category are shown. Other image applications also use these categories which are contained in each plugin to build

up a menu tree for displaying the plugins. So categories correspond to the sub menus that are displayed in your image applications Filter, Image or Effect menu.



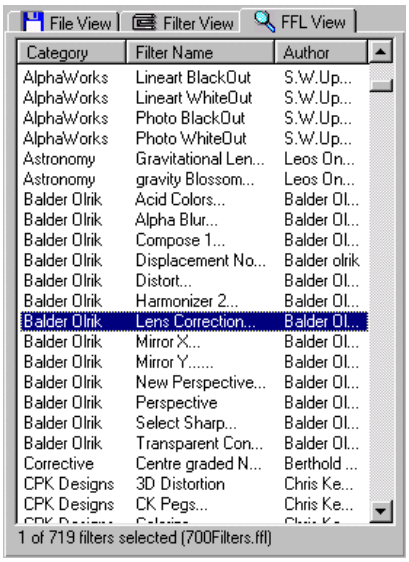
A "+" in front of the plugin name means that the plugin is enabled, a "-" means that the plugin is currently disabled and won't be recognized by your image application.

If you activate the **Photoshop Mode** check box, Plugin Commander will try to simulate Adobe Photoshop's Filter menu. By doing this, disabled plugins won't be visible any more and some categories will disappear, too. They will be moved to the Other category just like in Photoshop.

At the bottom of the Plugin View there's a label that displays the path, name and file size of the currently selected plugin. Double clicking on a plugin will load it into PiCo's FF Editor or show a preview picture, if the Preview icon is active. Right clicking on the right list box displays the Commands context menu.

By dragging plugins to a different category and dropping them there, they will be moved to that category. You can also move plugins to the folder displayed in the passive pane by dragging them there.

3.3 FFL View



The FFL View displays the contents of FFL files. FFL files contain Filter Factory source code and other information for recompiling plugins.

The FFL View will be displayed if you double click a FFL file. If you press the FFL View tab, Plugin Commander will grab the first FFL file in the file list or display a previously opened FFL file. If there's no FFL file available, PiCo will automatically switch back to the File View tab.

Double clicking a FFL entry will load it into PiCo's FF Editor or show a preview picture, if the Preview icon was activated.

Dragging files/plugins from the File/Plugin View to the FFL View triggers the Add to FFL command and adds them to the FFL file. Dragging FFL entries to the File or Plugin View triggers the Convert command.

4. The Button Bar

Plugin Commander has a button bar right below the two panes for selecting the most commonly used commands.

4.1 The three Icons at the left bottom of the main window

The Preview Icon: If this icon is pressed and a filter factory plugin or an image is selected, the Preview window will pop up and show you a small preview of the selected plugin or image.

The Preview window can be placed anywhere you like by clicking on the title bar. You can resize it by dragging its borders. Please notice however that with a larger Preview window it will take longer to calculate a filter factory plugin preview. The size and position of this window will be saved and restored in the next PiCo session.

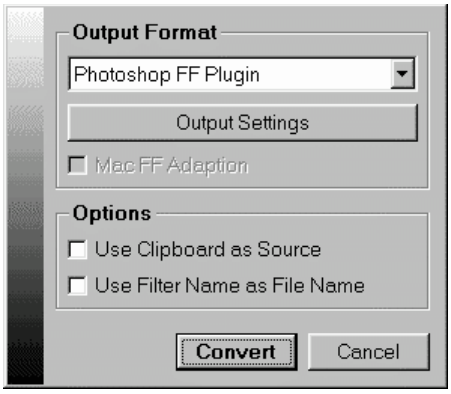
If you selected a plugin, double clicking the image will make it calculate a random effect. Right clicking on it will display the Preview menu that is discussed below.

The Overlay Icon: This icon only works, if the Preview icon is pressed down. It lets you keep the current image in the preview image and apply another plugin to it. This way you can see the overall effect of a series of applied filter factory plugins.

The Alpha Icon: Like the Overlay icon it only works if the first icon is activated. If the currently selected filter factory plugin contains code for manipulating the alpha channel, this feature will make it visible as a greyscaled or blue/yellow effect.

4.2 The Convert Button

The Convert command is for converting between different plugin and filter formats. To use it you have to select one or more files and then press the Convert Button. As a result the Convert dialog will pop up.



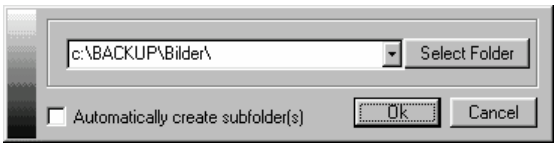
The Output Format drop down menu lets you select one of 6 different formats. The **Output Settings** button will pop up the FF/TF tab of the Preferences dialog for specifying different options of the supported formats. See the Preferences page for further instructions.

The **Mac FF Adaption** check box is only accessible, if one of the last three source code formats (AFS, PFF, TXT) is selected. If you activate it the source code will be rewritten to work on the Macintosh. For the first three plugin formats this will be done automatically.

The **Use Clipboard as Source** check box will ignore the previously selected files and grab a filter factory source code from the clipboard for doing the conversion.

The **Use Filter Name as File Name** check box can be useful if you don't want to change the usual 8+3 letter file names of your plugins to an understandable file name.

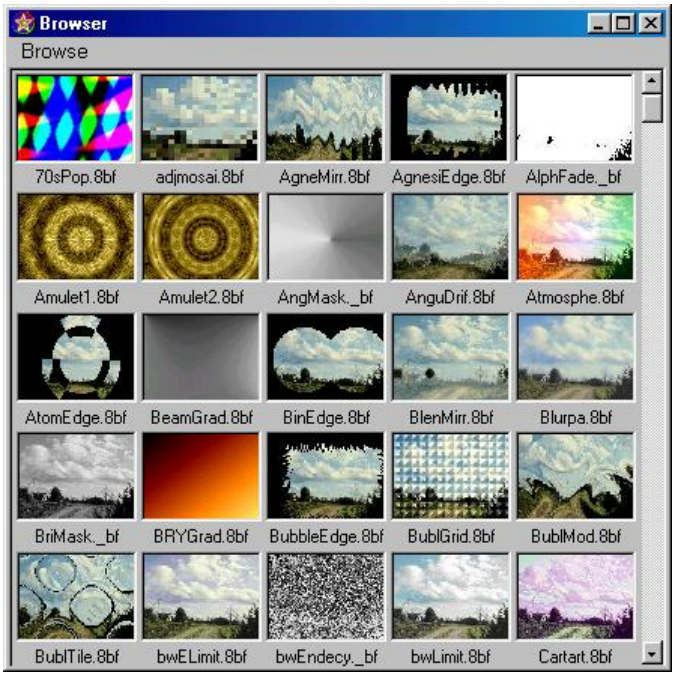
Pressing the Start button will trigger the conversion process. If you didn't activate the Suppress **Select Folder dialog** check box in Preferences, the Select Folder dialog will appear.



The folder of the opposite pane is automatically selected. The second item on the drop down menu is the folder of the active pane. But you can also choose another folder from the drop down menu (which were added from the Folder menu), press the Select Folder or directly enter a new one. If the entered folder doesn't exist, you will be prompted to created it.

If you convert a FFL file or unzip a zip file, there will also be an **Automatically create sub folder(s)** check box. Activating this check box, will automatically create a sub folder from the FFL file name or zip file name. This helps to avoid some file chaos.

4.3 The Browse Button



Clicking the Browse button will display the Browser dialog. The Browser will only display thumbnails of filter factory plugins and of images.

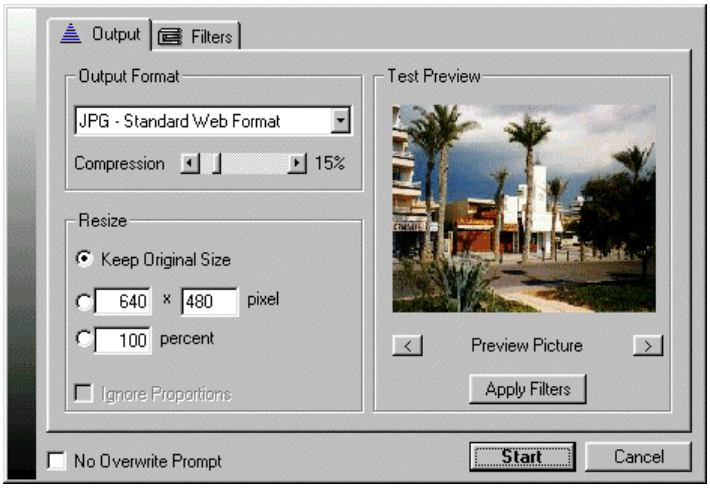
If you select one or no files before pressing Browse, all files in the current folder will be displayed. If you select two or more files, only the selected files will be displayed.

While the thumbnails are displayed you can interrupt this process by pressing the ESC key or by selecting **Stop Scanning** from the Browse menu. To continue just select the **Continue Scanning** menu item. The **Thumb Size** menu item lets you choose between three thumbnail resolutions: 90x60, 120x90 and 160x120. The middle resolution is set by default.

Double clicking an image will display it in the Picture Editor, double clicking a filter factory plugin will display it in the Filter Factory Editor. Double clicking on another file will run the associated application.

4.4 The Batch Button

Before pressing the Batch button, please select one or more image or filter factory plugins. After pressing Batch button the Batch Processing dialog will display.



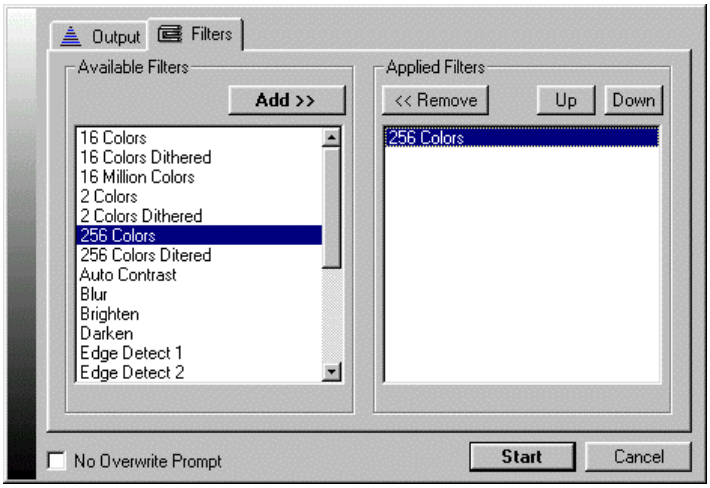
This dialog enables you to change the format, size and color depth of images and apply various other filters. You can also use it to automatically apply filter factory plugins to the default preview image and save the result or to create thumbnails of filter factory plugins by using the Resize option.

The Output Format drop down menu in the Output tab contains different image formats to choose from: JPG, GIF, BMP, PCX, PNG, TIF and EPS.

If you select JPG, the **Compression scroll bar** will be enabled to let you select the JPG compression ratio. Moving this bar will be reflected in the Test Preview, so you immediately get an impression of the JPG output quality.

The Resize frame contains three options to change the size of the images. **Keep Original Size** won't do any changes to the images. The second option button lets you specify a certain image size in pixel. Activating the **Ignore Proportions** check box will resize the images to the exactly specified pixel size, otherwise the proportions of the images will be respected. The third option will resize the images by the specified percent value.

The Test Preview frame contains an image preview. By default the default preview image is displayed, but you can switch through all selected files by pressing the < and > buttons. The **Apply Filters** button will apply the filters selected in the Filters tab to the Test Preview.



The **Filters tab** lets you select different filters that will be applied during the batch process.

To add filter factory plugins to the Available Filters list, press the **Add Filters** button and select a folder with filter factory plugins.

To add a filter to the Applied Filters list box select one from the Available Filters list box and press the **Add >>** button or simply double click the filter. To remove a filter from this list again, simply double click it or select

it and press the << **Remove** button. Use the **Up** and **Down** buttons to change the order in which the filters are applied to each image during the batch process.

The *** button** can be used to make the applied filter factory plugins generate random slider values. If you press this button a * will be placed in front of the filter name to indicate that this filter will be applied with random slider values. Pressing the button again will remove the *. It doesn't work with the basic filters however. This feature can e.g. be used to create random textures with filter factory plugins.

The order of the filters is crucial especially, if you use one of the Color Depth conversion filters. Most filters will only work, if the image has 16 million colors (24 bit), so make sure that e.g. the 256 Colors filter is the last one in the row.

As mentioned above, you can switch back to the Output tab and preview the effect of the filters by pressing the Apply Filters button. You can even preview the effect on every selected file by additionally using the < and > buttons.

After selecting all your preferred settings, press the **Start** button. If the **No Overwrite Prompt** check box is activated, the output files will automatically overwrite files with the same name.

4.5 The En/Disable Button

With this command you can enable or disable plugins by renaming their file extension. The 8bf file extension will be renamed to _bf, prm to _rm, aex to _ex etc. In File View enabled plugins are marked with a + and disabled ones with a -.

Disabled plugins won't show up in your image or video application anymore. This is an useful feature to prevent your image or video application from getting cluttered up with plugins. Without this feature you would have to deinstall and later reinstall your plugins.

All selected plugins that are currently enabled or active will be disabled, while all disabled plugins will be enabled by pressing the En/Disable button.

4.6 The Change Cat(egory) Button

Changing the category of plugins makes them display in a different sub menu in your image application. As an alternative to this button you can simply drag and drop the plugins into a different category. But if you want to move them into a new category, you will have to use this command.

The Change Category button only work in Plugin View.

Warning: Whereas Change Category won't work with Premiere 4.2 plugins, because they don't use categories, it isn't recommended to do it with Premiere 5 plugins, as they will probably not show up in Premiere 5 or show up somewhere you don't want them to be. This function can however be used with Photoshop-compatible 8bf plugins and After Effects aex plugins.

4.7 The Create FFL Button

Archiving the selected filter factory plugins in a FFL file can be done with this button. Plugins that weren't created with Filter Factory or PiCo's FF Editor can't be placed in a FFL file.

You will be prompted to enter a file name for the FFL file to be created. Then the Select Folder dialog will appear unless you activated the "Always use passive pane folder" check box in Preferences.

You can view the newly created FFL file in the FFL View tab by double clicking on it.

4.8 The Plugin Commander symbol

Clicking on this button will display the Apps menu as a context menu.

5. The Menu

5.1 The File Menu

Preferences

Displays the Preferences dialog.

Exit

Quits this program.

5.2 The Edit Menu

Refresh

Refreshes the contents of the File, Plugin or FFL View of the active pane.

Toggle Select

Deselects all selected items and select all deselected items in the File, Plugin or FFL View of the active pane.

Select All

Selects all items in the File, Plugin or FFL View of the active pane.

5.3 The View Menu

File View / Plugin View / FFL View

Switches the active pane to the File, Plugin or FFL View. These menu items have the same effect as pressing the appropriate tab.

Browser

Displays the Browser. (See the Browser button.)

FF Editor

Displays the Filter Factory Editor.

Picture Editor

Displays the Picture Editor.

Batch Processing

Displays the Batch Processing dialog.

Filter Download

Displays the Filter Download dialog.

Double clicking one of the URLs from the list or selecting **Connect** from the File menu will start your web browser and connect you to that site. **Save** will save the current URL list. **Share** will display the path of the file the list was saved to. With **Exit** you can leave this dialog.

Choosing **Copy URL** from the Edit menu will copy the selected URL to the clipboard. With **Add** will be able to add a new URL to the displayed list. **Edit Name** and **Edit URL** let you edit the name and URL of a selected entry. **Delete** will delete the selected entry from the list.

You can **change the position** of the URLs by holding down the Alt key and pressing the cursor keys.

5.4 The Command Menu

Commands that generally apply to File View

Rename

If only one file is selected you will be prompted to enter a new name for it. If more than one file is selected, you will be prompted for a new file extension for these files.

If a folder is selected, the **Rename Folder** command from the Folder menu will be triggered.

Copy

Copies all selected files to a different folder.

Move

Moves all selected files to a new folder. That means that they are copied to a new folder and the files in the old folder are deleted.

If a folder is selected, the **Move Folder** command from the Folder menu will be triggered.

Delete

Deletes all selected files by moving them to the trash can. You can still undelete these files by using the trash can.

If a folder is selected, the **Kill Folder(s)** command from the Folder menu will be triggered.

Kill

Deletes all selected file *without* moving them to the trash can. So they will be lost.

If a folder is selected, the **Kill Folder(s)** command from the Folder menu will be triggered.

Properties

Shows the Properties dialog of a selected file or folder. Pressing Alt + Return does the same.

Find

The Find command behaves differently in the three Views. In File View and Plugin View the standard Windows Find dialog is invoked for searching for certain files or expressions within files. In FFL View a PiCo dialog is displayed for searching for certain filters. For an description of the Windows Find dialog, please refer to a Windows 95/98/NT documentation.

The FFL View Find dialog has a Case Sensitive check box that can be activated, if you like to do a case sensitive search. You can enter one or two key words. If you enter two keywords, you have to separate them with one of the following s*earch operators:*

- **&** for Logical AND
- **!** for Logical NOT
- **|** (use Alt + Ctl+ <) for Logical OR

Here are some *search examples*:

- **Gallery** searches for the string gallery in the filters name,category, author and copyright.
- **Gallery N** searches for all filters with the category Filter Factory Gallery N
- **Gallery&Mario** searches for filters created by Mario and that have the category Filter Factory Gallery

- **Gallery N&Mario** searches for filters created by Mario and with the category Filter Factory Gallery N
- **Gallery!Werner Streidt** searches for all filters with the category Filter Factory Gallery, but excludes those that are written by Werner Streidt
- **Mario|Andrew** searches for all filter that were created my Mario or Andrew

Unzip

Unzips all files from the selected zip files.

Unzip & Run

Unzips all files from the selected zip files to a temporary folder and displays a dialog for running these files. This command can be useful, if you want to look at the contents of a zip file or want to run Setup.exe or Install.exe from within a zip file without unzipping it firstly.

You will be automatically prompted to delete the temporary files after you used them and don't need them anymore.

Zip

Archives all selected files into a zip file.

Commands that generally apply to Plugin View

Enable/Disable

Enables or Disables plugins. (See the En/Disable button.)

Change Category

Changes the category of plugins. (See the Change Category button.)

Invoke

Executes a selected Photoshop-compatible 8bf plugin like it is done in image applications when selecting a filter plugin from the menu.

Unfortunately, Plugin Commander can only invoke certain plugins and is incompatible to many plugins. But there are some plugins that will work e.g.

- All filter factory plugins
- The Flux Collection plugins

- NRV Buttonmania
- Fantastic Machine Tile Tools

Many other plugins will display their dialog, but pressing the OK button or dragging the preview will crash Plugin Commander or just display a black or deranged result e.g. Filter Meister plugins, Plugin Galaxy, Rubberman, Almathera plugins, Paint Engine, Andromeda plugins, Total Xaos plugins, Jama 3D, Kai's Power Tools 3, Auto FX Auto Eye etc.

At least you can use Plugin Commander to have a quick look at some plugins.

Plugin Information

Shows some information about the selected plugin file.

Plugin About Dialog

Shows the internal About dialog of the selected plugin.

Commands that generally apply to FFL View or FFL files

Create FFL

Archives the selected filter factory plugins and source files into a FFL file. This command works in all three views: File, Plugin and FFL View. (See the Create FFL button.)

Add to FFL

Adds the selected filter factory plugins and source files to a FFL file that is currently displayed in the FFL View of the opposite pane. If both panes display a FFL File, you can use this command to copy filters from one FFL file to the other.

Plugin List

Displays the Plugin List dialog for saving the filter names, categories, file names, author and copyright of the selected plugins to a text file. If the Copy to Clipboard check box is active, they will be copied to the clipboard. Otherwise you can enter a file name for saving them. This command works in all three views: File, Plugin and FFL View.

Thumbnail

This function is similar to using the Batch command with plugins. It creates thumbnail in BMP format of the selected filter factory plugins. The size of these plugins depends on the

size of the Preview window. So you can use the Preview icon to display and resize the Preview window before using the Thumbnail command. This command works in all three views: File, Plugin and FFL View.

5.5 The Folders Menu

Move Folder

Moves the selected sub folder to a new base folder.

Rename Folder

If a sub folder is selected, this function will let you rename it. If no sub folder is selected, you will be able to rename the folder that is currently displayed.

Kill Folder(s)

Will completely erase all sub folders and files contained in the selected folder or folders. Be careful with this command!

Create Folder

Prompts you for entering a new folder and creates it.

The Folder items

At the bottom of the Folders menu there's a list of folders that have been accessed recently or that were added to this menu in the Folders tab of Preferences. Selecting one of them will display this folder in the File View of the active pane. Selecting **Edit Folder List** at the top of this list will display the Folder tab of the Preferences dialog for editing the folder list.

5.6 The Preview Menu

If the Preview icon isn't pressed, only the Open Picture menu item will be active. This menu can also be displayed directly on the Preview window as a context menu by right clicking on the preview image.

Randomize

Will create random slider values for displaying the plugin effect. The same effect can be achieved by double clicking on the image in the Preview window.

Update

This menu item will only be active, if the Preview Cache in Preferences is activated and the image displayed in the Preview windows was read from cache. The Update command will recalculate the effect and overwrite the old cache image.

Open Picture

Lets you open a new image that will be used for previewing filter factory plugins.

Save Preview

Lets you save the image displayed in the Preview window.

Set as Wallpaper

Sets the image displayed in the Preview window as the desktop wallpaper.

The Preview image items

At the bottom of the Preview menu there's a list of images that have been opened recently with the Open Picture command or that were added to this menu in the Preview tab of Preferences. Selecting one of them will load it as the current preview image for previewing filter factory plugins.

Selecting **Edit Folder List** at the top of this list will display the Preview tab of the Preferences dialog for editing the image list.

5.7. The Apps Menu

This is a list of applications that were added to this menu through the Apps tab of Preferences. Selecting one of the items will start the appropriate application. If a "%1" is appended to the application name, the currently selected file in File View will be passed to the application as a parameter. So you can use this menu to start image applications or to display files selected in Plugin Commander with an external application.

Selecting **Edit Application List** at the top of this list will display the Preview tab of the Preferences dialog for editing the application list.

5.8 The Help Menu

Help

Displays the Help files in your web browser.

Tip of the Day

Displays a small window and randomly shows short and helpful tips on using Plugin Commander.

Online

The PiCo Newsletter

Starts your web browser and automatically connects you to the web page of the Plugin Commander Newsletter. You can subscribe yourself there or read the latest news.

Plugin Com HQ

Starts your web browser and automatically connects you to the homepage of Plugin Commander for reading the latest news, getting updates etc.

Add URL to Favourites

Adds the URL of the Plugin Com HQ site to Internet Explorer's Favourites menu.

Add URL on Desktop

Creates an icon on your desktop which lets you connect to the Plugin Com HQ site by clicking on it.

About

Displays the About dialog with the version number and credits.

6. Filter Factory Editor

6.1 Interface Designs

With Plugin Commander's Filter Factory Editor you can edit different settings of filter factory plugins. To load a filter factory plugin into the FF Editor simply double click it.

There are two FF Editor types: a 640x480 pixel large one and one that needs a higher screen resolution and has some additional features. While there are several interface designs of the first type there is just one version of the second type called Rattler Galaxy which is the default FF Editor design. If you should use Plugin Commander at 640x480 screen resolution, please select one of the other interface design from the Interface tab of the Preferences dialog.

Please notice that there's also an option in Preferences to select the Original Filter Factory Editor as PiCo's FF Editor. This feature is just included for fun and to demonstrate the contrast between the Original FF Editor and PiCo's FF Editor. It isn't recommended to use it.

6.2 Editing the Filter Settings

As the FF Editor window doesn't have a title bar you can drag it by clicking somewhere on the window background. If you move the mouse pointer over some of the labels and buttons, you will recognize that they will highlight. This behaviour indicates that you can edit this label or trigger this button by clicking on it. The Filename, Category, Filtername, Author, Copyright, Slider 1 to 8, the slider value, A=, R=, G= and B= labels can be edited this way. The slider values can be changed by dragging the slider knob, by clicking on the slider bar or by clicking on the slider value labels.

Pressing the **A=, R=, G= and B= labels** will each display a large text box with the filter factory source code. Pressing these labels again will make the text box disappear. The source code can be replaced or edited to produce your own filter factory plugins.

As a little help you can access all filter factory functions and variables from the Functions button. Pressing it will display a menu for pasting them into the code box. Besides that, the Code snippet database button lets you access some useful code snippets. The 1/3 buttons will turn the three R=, G= and B= code boxes into a single C= code box. This way you don't need to enter the same code three times while you are programming a new filter. The F button lets you select the properties of the font that is used for the code boxes.

The **button named 1 to 10** are so called memory spots. Pressing one of them will highlight it and store the current slider settings. Pressing a highlighted memory spot button will restore the saved slider settings and apply them. The Clear All button erases all stored slider settings and the Delete button lets you delete a single memory spot.

The **four check boxes left to the slider names** are for turning the sliders into so called MAP controls. A MAP control consist of two sliders and one slider name. This feature is only included for compatibility reasons as it is only used by very few plugins. So don't bother about these check boxes, just forget them...

The **Auto Preview check box** determines if the filter preview is updated or not. The **Magnifying Glass button** lets you zoom into the preview by clicking the left and right mouse button over the preview. The **Hand button** has no function at the moment. Left clicking on the preview will update it immediately, right clicking will display the Preview menu known from PiCo's main window.

The **Open Picture button** lets you select a new image for previewing purposes, while the **Save Picture button** calculates the final image, displays it in the Picture View window and displays a file dialog for saving it.

The **Apply (or Big View) button** calculates the final image and displays it in the Picture View window. The **Randomize button** sets random numbers as slider values. So with this button you can explore the different effect that a filter is capable of. Additionally if you like one effect, you will be able to store it as a memory spots. The **Reset button** will completely erase all filter settings. This function will be useful if you want to start creating a filter from the scratch. Last but not least, the **Save As** button allows you to save the changes you've done. The filename which is entered in the Filename label is used to save the plugin.

6.3 The Context Menu

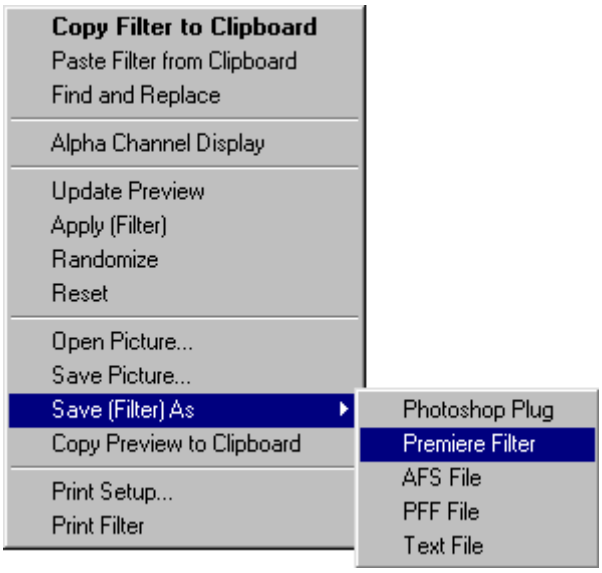
There are also some hidden functions in the FF Editor. Right clicking on the background will pop up a context menu.

Copy Filter to Clipboard / Paste Filter to Clipboard

These functions will let you copy and paste the filter factory source code to and from the clipboard. Useful, if you want to send a filter source code to someone via email.

Alpha Channel Display

If this menu item is checked, the Alpha Channel (A= code) will be displayed in the preview as a greyscaled or blue/red effect. It works just like the Alpha Channel icon of the main window.



Update Preview

Will immediately update the preview.

Apply (Filter) / Randomize / Reset / Open Picture / Save (Filter) As

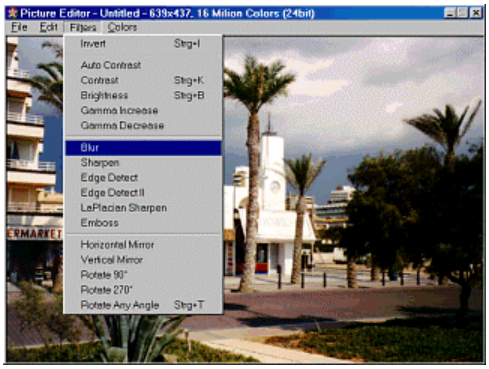
Same functions as the buttons with the same name. See above.

Print Setup / Print Filter

Print Setup lets you define your printer settings and Print Filter will output the filter factory source code to your printer.

7. Picture Editor

You can open or load an image into the Picture Editor by double clicking an image file in the main window, double clicking an image in the Browser, pressing Apply or Big View in the Filter Factory Editor, using the Invoke command or by simply selecting the Open, Acquire Image or Paste command in the Picture Editor.



7.1 File Menu

Open

Lets you open an image that will be displayed in Picture Editor.

Save / Save As

Saves the currently displayed image.

Select Source

Lets you select a scanning device.

Acquire Image

Invokes an TWAIN-compatible scanning dialog for scanning an image.

Print Setup

Defines the printer settings.

Print

Prints the displayed image in its actual size or scaled to the printing page proportions.

Exit

Exits Picture Editor.

7.2 Edit Menu

Undo

Restores the state of the image before the last action.

Copy

Copies the image to the clipboard.

Paste

Retrieves an image from the clipboard.

Resize Image

Lets you define a new pixel size (e.g. 640x480) or enter a percentage amount for changing the size of the current image.

7.3 Filters Menu

You can find different commands in the Filters menu for manipulating the image e.g. **Invert, Contrast, Brightness, Gamma, Blur, Sharpen, Edge Detect, Emboss, Mirror and Rotate**. These are standard functions that you certainly know from other image editing tools. If you shouldn't have an idea what they do, just try them.

7.4 Plugins Menu

The **Scan Active Pane** command will scan the folder that is displayed in the active pane of the main window for filter factory plugins and display them at the bottom of the Plugins Menu. The **Select Plugin Folder** lets you select a folder for scanning for filter factory plugins. You can apply the plugins at the bottom of the Plugins menu to the image. They will display the original filter factory plugin dialog.

7.5 Colors Menu

The Colors menu offers different color conversion options to choose from. You can change the currently displayed image to 2 color, 16 color, 256 colors by using the standard Octree color reduction or Floyd Steinberg dithering. Additionally a greyscale and 16 million color mode is also offered.

Tip: If you want to save the current image as a GIF file, you should select 256 Colors Dithered from the Colors menu firstly.

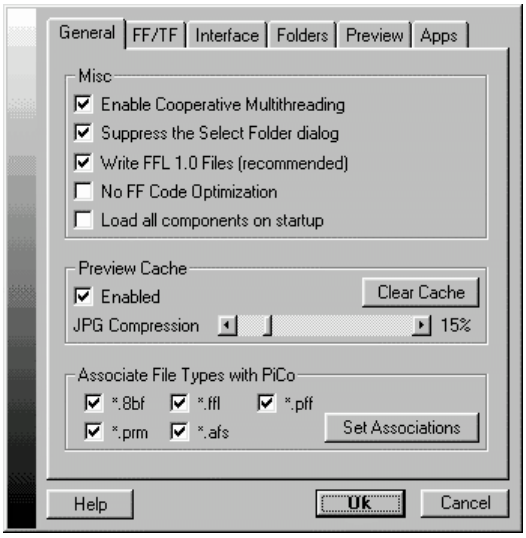
8. Preferences

The Preferences dialog can be activated with the F12 key or from the File menu. It lets you change different settings which are essential for using Plugin Commander.

8.1 General Tab

Enable Cooperative Multithreading

This is quite a useful feature. It allows you to do different task at the same time. For example while a FFL file or a folder with plugins is scanned in one pane, you can do something else in the other pane or load a filter into the FF Editor. There haven't been any complications yet, but if you should encounter problems it will be safer to deactivate this feature. Please notice that not all commands support cooperative multithreading.



Suppress the Select Folder Dialog

PiCo uses the Select Folder dialog for selecting a destination folder for performing a certain function. If this check box is activated, PiCo won't prompt you for a folder and automatically use the folder of the passive pane.

Write FFL 1.0 Files

PiCo 1.0 supports writing FFL 1.1 files. However, older beta versions of PiCo only know the FFL 1.0 format. So if you want to distribute a FFL file, please activate this check box for compatibility reasons. FFL 1.1 files are smaller than FFL 1.0 files and PiCo can process them a bit faster.

No FF Code Optimization

PiCo automatically optimises the filter code of filter factory plugins. If you want to suppress this feature, activate this check box.

Load all components on startup

Will load all necessary components when starting Plugin Commander. This will slow down the startup process, but avoids to loading them later. If you often use Plugin Commander to do some conversion or plugin management, you should deactivate this option. But if you use the image and preview features very often, you should activate it.

Preview Cache

This feature is enabled by default. So every time a preview is calculated for filter factory plugin, the preview image is saved as a JPG file into the cache sub folder of the PiCo folder. If this plugin is previewed again, the cached image is displayed instead of recalculating the preview. This feature can speed up previewing filter factory plugins tremendously especially in the Browser.

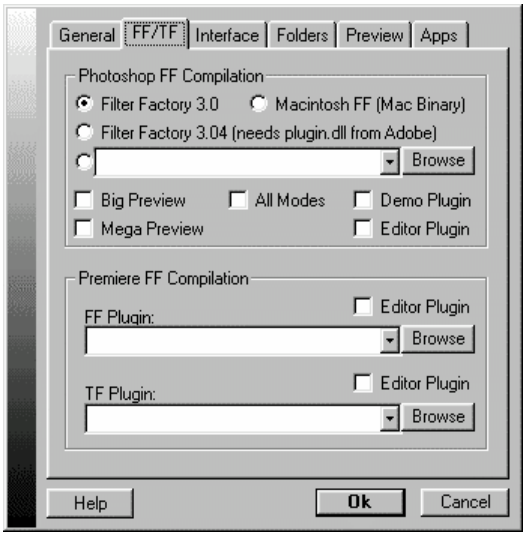
The **Clear Cache** button erases all cached preview images and frees some hard drive space. The JPG Compression slider lets you adjust the compression of the cached images. A compression ratio of 15% is set as default.

Associate File Types with PiCo

Pressing the Set Associations button will associate the selected file extensions with Plugin Commander. That means that every time you double click such a file, PiCo will be started.

8.2 FF/TF Tab

Every time Plugin Commander creates a filter factory or transitions factory plugin (e.g. when converting or saving plugins) it uses a file template.



Photoshop FF Compilation

There are four option buttons for selecting the filter factory versions you like PiCo to create. Filter Factory 3.0 & 3.04 templates are already included with PiCo, but you can also use your own templates. The Mac Binary files that will be created with the Macintosh FF option have to be transferred to a Macintosh machine and converted to Mac Photoshop plugins by using Stuffit Expander. The fourth option lets you select your own filter factory template with the help of the Browse button.

Big / Mega Preview

If activated, PiCo will create filter factory plugins with a dialog with a larger preview box.

All Modes

Normally filter factory plugins only work with RGB images. If this check box is activated, the filter factory plugins will work in LAB, HSB and YCMK modes, too. But please be careful, these modes may crash the filter factory plugin, because it wasn't programmed for these modes.

Demo Plugin

This feature lets you create Demo versions of filter factory plugins by deactivating the OK button in the compiled plugin and making the plugin unrecognisable for Plugin Commander.

Editor Plugin

If this check box is activated, the final filter factory plugin will display a window with code boxes instead of the usual filter dialog.

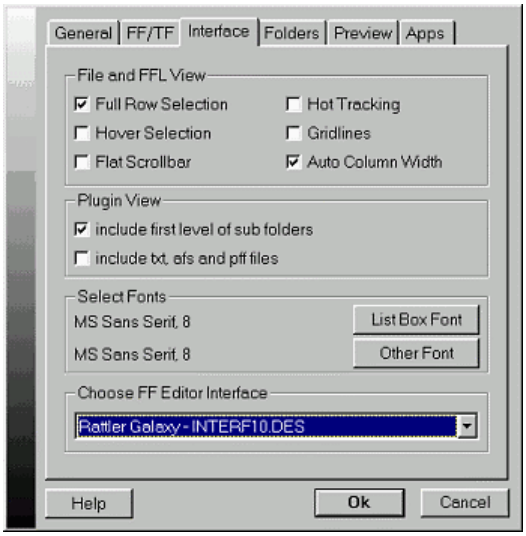
Premiere FF Compilation

Please use the Browse button and select the Adobe Premiere Filter Factory (fl-fact.prm) & Transition Factory (fx-fact.prm) plugins from your Premiere plugin folder. These two files will be needed if you want to convert the Photoshop Filter Factory plugins to Premiere plugins. The Editor Plugin check box has the same effect as described above. The following Adobe Premiere Filter Factory versions are supported by PiCo: Early Version 4.2 English (also known as Version 2.51), Version 4.2 English, Version 4.2 German, Version 5.0 English and Version 5.1 English.

8.3 Interface Tab

File and FFL View

These 6 check boxes define the behaviour of the list box in the File and FFL View.



Full Row Selection is activated by default, because it makes the full row appear selected and not only one item of a row. *Hover Selection will* make an item selected if you keep the mouse pointer a second over it. Flat Scrollbar makes the scrollbar appear flat. With *Hot Tracking* the items will be highlighted when the mouse pointer moves over them. *Gridlines* will displays grid lines within the list box. *Auto Column Width* will make the size of the column headers adapt automatically to the item size which is very useful if you e.g. always want to see the full file names.

Plugin View

These two check boxes let you define which files are scanned and displayed in Plugin View. The first check box makes PiCo scan all sub folders of the current folder for plugins and the second check box enables TXT, AFS and PFF files to be displayed in Plugin View, too. Please notice that activating the second check box will slow down the scanning process when switching to the Plugin View.

Select Fonts

The two buttons let you select different fonts, font sizes and font attributes for the main window of Plugin Commander. These two options can be very helpful if you use a high screen resolution with a small fonts setting. The List Box Font button selects the font that will

be applied to the File, Plugin and FFL View lists. The Other Font button selects the font for all other elements on the main window e.g. the tab headers, the folder label, the file type drop down menu etc.

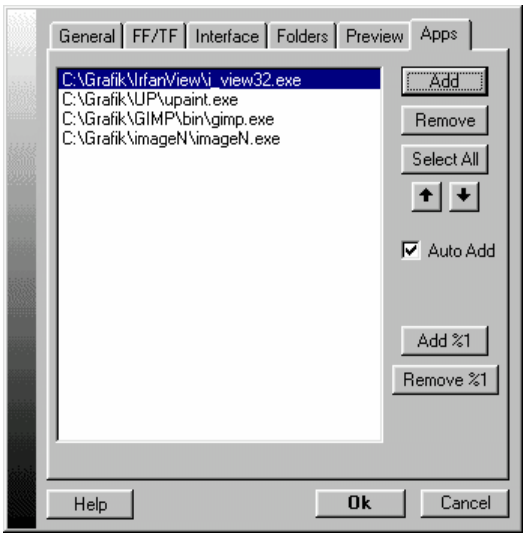
FF Editor

The drop down list contains interface designs (you could call them skins, if you like) for the FF Editor. These interface designs consist of a JPG and a DES file which have to be placed in the interface sub folder of the PiCo folder.

8.4 Folders, Preview & Apps Tabs

Add

Pressing this button will display a dialog for selecting a folder, image or application. The selected item will be added to the list box at the left.



Remove

Removes the selected item from the list box.

Select All

Lets you select all list box items.

Arrows

A selected list box item will move up or down with every click on one of these buttons. You can use this feature to sort the list box items. Holding down the Alt key and using the cursor keys will do the same job.

Auto Add

If this check box is activated, folders and images will be automatically added to the list as they are selected or opened in Plugin Commander.

Add %1

Only in the Apps Tab: If you added a %1 to an application item, the file that is currently selected in File or Plugin View will automatically be appended as an parameter when running the applications from the Apps menu. This way you can run an external application and specify a file that it should load automatically.

Remove %1

Only in the Apps Tab: Removes the %1 argument, so there will be no file transferred to that application when it is launched from the Apps menu.

9. Keyboard Shortcuts

A - Z	In a list boxes and menus: Jump to the first entry beginning with this letter
Esc	Interrupt a command or process
Return / Enter	In a file list: Preview Photoshop Plugin, look at FFL file or launch associated program
F 1	Launch Help file
F 2	Rename a file
F 3	Unzip the selected files
F 4	Zip the selected files
F 5	Copy a file
F 6	Move a file
F 7	Displays the Browser
F 8	Displays the Picture View window
F 9	Display the FF Editor window
F 11	Display the Filter Download window
F 12	Displays the Preferences dialog
Ctl + F 1	Switch to File View
Ctl + F 2	Switch to Plugin View
Ctl + F 3	Switch to FFL View
Del	Delete a file by putting it into the trash can
Shift + Del	Delete a file without putting it into the trash can (Kill)
Ctl + A	Select all items in a list or text box
Ctl + B	Creates thumbnails of selected filter factory files
Ctl + D	Add a file/filter to a Filter Factory Library (FFL) file
Ctl + E	Enable or Disable a Photoshop, Premiere, After Effects or Mediastudio PlugIn

Ctl + F	Displays the Find dialog
Ctl + H	Change the category of Photoshop PlugIn in the Plugin View
Ctl + I	Show information on a selected plugin
Ctl + L	Create a FFL file
Ctl + O	Open an image file
Ctl + R	Refresh File, Plugin or FFL View
Ctl + T	Toggle Select

Ctl + C	In text boxes: Copy to clipboard
Ctl + X	In text boxes: Cut to clipboard
Ctl + V	In text boxes: Paste from clipboard
Ctl + Z	In text boxes: Undo last change

Alt + B	Browse plugins and images
Alt + C	Convert plugins
Alt + D	Enable/Disable plugins
Alt + H	Change the category of plugins
Alt + L	Create a FFL
Alt + T	Batch process images and plugins

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