

Organising your Plugins with PiCo

1. Different Types of Plugins

You can recognize plugins at the file extension they have. Here's a table that tells you which file extension resembles which type of plugin:

File Extension	Plugin Type
8bf	Adobe Photoshop Plugin
prm	Adobe Premiere Plugin
aex	Adobe After Effects plugin
vfx, vft	Ulead plugin (used e.g. in MediaStudio)

The following file extensions indicate that the file is not a plugin:

File Extension	File Type
afs	file created by the Photoshop Filter Factory plugin
pff	file created by the Premier Filter Factory plugin
txt	text file (that may contain filter code)
atn	Photoshop action file

PiCo's Filter View will only display 8bf, prm and aex plugin files. In this View you can change the category of these plugins, enable or disable them and display some information about them. You can do other things in Filter View, too, but I will concentrate in this tutorial on those three functions. But first some more theory.

2. Categories, Directories, Submenus - What is the Difference?

You may be more common to the Win95-synonym of "directory" called "folder". Both words mean basically the same. A folder or directory is a structure that is part of the file system, while a category is something that is written inside a plugin. Your graphic application uses these categories to create different submenus when it scans the plugin folder. So it is possible that two plugins that are in different plugin subfolders and have the same category will be displayed in the same submenu of your graphic application.

This picture is a screenshot of a hex editor with a plugin opened.

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000078F0: 09 04 E4 04 01 00 00 00|00 00 09 00 00 00 4D 49 | ■■■ä■■ ■ MI
00007900: 42 38 64 6E 69 6B 00 00|00 00 04 00 00 00 4D 46 | B8dnik ■ MF
00007910: 42 38 4D 49 42 38 65 6D|61 6E 00 00 00 00 24 00 | B8MIB8eman $
00007920: 00 00 0E 52 61 69 6E 62|6F 77 20 42 75 74 74 6F | ■Rainbow Butto
00007930: 6E 00 33 2E 30 31 2E 2E|2E 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 | n 3.01...
00007940: 00 00 00 00 00 00 4D 49|42 38 67 74 61 63 00 00 | MIB8gtac
00007950: 00 00 24 00 00 00 14 48|61 72 72 79 27 73 20 42 | $ ■Harry's B
00007960: 75 74 74 6F 6E 20 54 6F|6F 6C 73 00 00 00 00 00 | utton Tools
00007970: 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00|00 00 4D 49 42 38 73 72 | MIB8sr
00007980: 65 76 00 00 00 00 04 00|00 00 00 04 00 4D 49 | ev ■ ■ MI
00007990: 42 38 79 74 72 70 00 00|00 00 04 00 00 00 00 00 | B8ytrp ■
000079A0: 00 00 4D 49 42 38 65 64|6F 6D 00 00 00 00 04 00 | MIB8edom ■
000079B0: 00 00 10 00 00 00 4D 49|42 38 74 73 6F 68 00 00 | ■ MIB8tsoh
000079C0: 00 00 04 00 00 00 4D 49|42 38 4D 49 42 38 36 38 | ■ MIB8MIB868
000079D0: 78 77 00 00 00 00 0C 00|00 00 45 4E 54 52 59 50 | xw ■ ENTRYYP
000079E0: 4F 49 4E 54 31 00 4D 49|42 38 69 63 69 66 00 00 | 0INT1 MIB8icif

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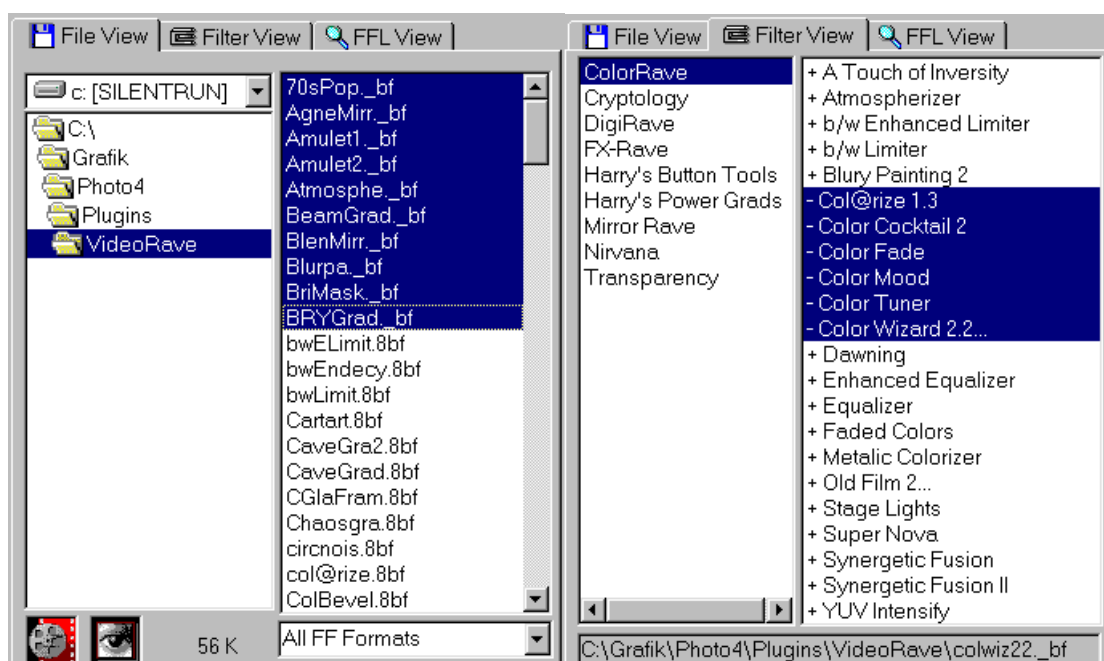
The first red frame shows the plugin's name, the second the plugins category. As you can see from this screenshot, no plugins can have a category name consisting of unlimited letters. Some plugins can only have category names consisting of max. 5 or 6 letters, while the category name of Filter Factory plugins can be up to 35 letters long.

3. Enabling and Disabling Plugins

Having too many plugins in your plugin folder(s) makes your graphical application start up slower, use more memory and probably floods your filter menu which can be quite annoying.

If you want to avoid it and don't need all your plugins all the time, there's a simple way to disable unnecessary plugins with PiCo, so that your graphical application won't recognize them:

1. In File View or Filter View highlight the plugins you want to disable or enable.
2. Press the Enable/Disable button, press <Strg + E> or choose Operations > Enable/Disable.



3. You will notice that the file extension of the disabled plugins will have changed from ".8bf" to "_bf" or "8b-". In Filter View the + symbol in front of the filter name will change to a - symbol indicating that the plugin is disabled.

PiCo disables plugins by simply renaming the file extension. To enable and have them again in your graphic applications filter menu, simply repeat step 1 to 3.

4. Changing the Category of Plugins

Some applications like Photoshop limit the number of categories that are displayable in the filter menu. So it is important to be able to put as much plugins in each category/submenu as possible. PiCo let's you do it quite easily.

But this feature is also usefull to organise your plugins into certain categories that resemble thier effect e.g. Psychedelic, Texture, Distortion, Color Filters.

So let's begin:

1. Start PiCo, select your plugin directory in File View and press the Filter View tab.
2. Highlight the plugins that you want to move to a differnt or new category.
3. Press the Change Category button, press <Strg + H> or choose Operations > Change Category.
4. A small window will pop up.

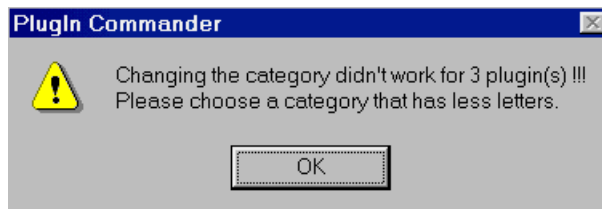


5. To move the highlighted plugins to a new category, enter a new category name and press OK.

To move them to an existing category, select one of them from the combo box.

6. Now the plugins should appear in the new category, if no error message appears.

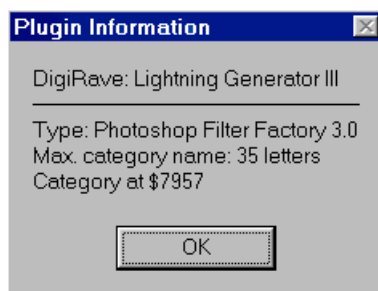
7. If the following error message appears, then you will have to start again from Step 2 and enter or select a shorter category name.



Tip: You can move plugins faster to existing categories by simply dragging and dropping them with the mouse. Please notice that PiCo doesn't use the standard Win95 Drag 'n' Drop method, but it is quite similiar.

5. Plugin Informations

Last but not least let's have a look at a neat little feature called "Plugin Information". You can use it to quickly gather some information on a single plugin in both File and Filter View. After you highlighted a plugin and pressed the Plugin Information button, the following window will appear:



The first line tells you the category and filter name, the second describes the plugin type: in this case a Filter Factory plugin. The next line tells you the maximum length this plugin's category name can have. And finally the last line tells you the position of the category inside the plugin file, in case you want to edit the plugin with a hex editor.

6. Feedback

If you have any further questions or comments or if you didn't understood something, then just write me at harry@visca.com