PLUG-INS PAGE

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Genuine Fractals Print Pro

HAVE YOU EVER watched a movie or television show where people are standing around a monitor looking at a low- resolution image and trying to make sense of it? Then you hear someone say, "magnify and enhance." Magically, the image is enlarged and it becomes clearer. They may even repeat this procedure several times before they are satisfied with the image quality. As photographers, you probably laughed at their attempts, knowing that image enhancement like that are virtually impossible. Well, not anymore!

Screen comparison shot of a digital camera file of an old school house. JPEG compression on the left and a 400% Genuine Fractals resize on the right. Notice that all the straight edges in the JPEG file have jaggies, and have been removed in the Fractals version. Detail inside the window has also been improved considerably.

Fractals menu for changing the size and color mode of the .stn file.

Genuine Fractals Print Pro, available from LizardTech, Inc., enables you to enlarge or reduce images by using proprietary Fractal technology. The program is a plug-in that works with Adobe Photoshop or compatible software. It allows you to work with a smaller size file and still achieve a high-resolution output.

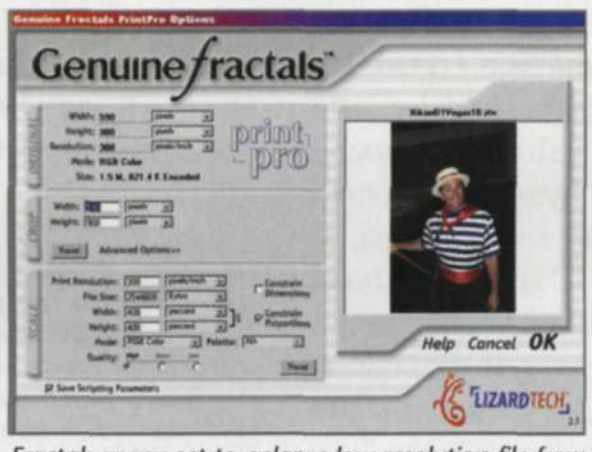
It is a simple two-step process. The first step is to save your edited image in one of two formats—lossless or visually lossless. For maximum quality or if you want to restore your original image exactly, select the lossless file format and it will compress your file by a ratio of 2:1 to 4:1. The visually lossless format reduces the file size slightly without visually degrading image quality as it compresses the file by a ratio of 5:1 to 10:1. The new file is usually named the same as the original, but with the new ".stn" file extension.

When your new .stn file is reloaded, you are given several new options for increasing the image size. At the top of the menu, you are presented with the actual dimensions and size of the original file. You are then given the option of increasing the file size by modifying the pixels, inches, cm, or points.

You can even crop the new file by changing the cropping information in the dialog box. If you move to the bottom of the menu, you're given the option of scaling the original size up or down and you can see the final file size or image percentage. You can also make color mode changes or change the print resolution.

Nikon D1 image that had been reduced for Web page. File was saved as Fractals and reopened at a 400% enlargement on the right. Notice the reduction of the jaggies in both the eyes and the teeth.

Digital image shot of Kodak digital camera. Original file had been reduced to less than 900 pixels on longest side for transmission on the Internet. File was saved as an .stn file and reopened at a larger size with a dramatic reduction in pixels in the Kodak lettering. JPEG on left and Fractals on right.



Fractals menu set to enlarge low resolution file from 100% to 400%.

Once you have determined the method and size increase, simply click OK and the plug-in goes to work. It takes some time to process the file, but the results are worth it.

To see just how much change was really made to the file, you should re-open the original file along side the newly resized .stn file. Zoom in on a sharp edge and continue zooming in on both equally until you start to see the jaggies in the original file. When you compare it to Genuine Fractals .stn file, you will see that the jaggies have been eliminated and new detail is apparent.

This process is especially successful when you need to enlarge a low-resolution Internet file. If you sharpen the file in Photoshop, you end up just sharpening the jaggies. The better solution is to use Genuine Fractals and enlarge it at least 300% before applying unsharp mask on the file. You will be amazed at the increase in image quality. What you thought only possible in the movies is now possible right on your computer with Genuine Fractals. This plug-in program works on both PC and Macintosh platform and works with any Adobe Photoshop-compatible editing program.

For more on Genuine Fractals and other products offered by LizardTech Inc. visit the company's web site: www.lizardtech.com.

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