Akvis Magnifier

by L. Davenport

Have you ever had a situation where you needed to enlarge a photo, but when you did it got all pixelated? Wish you had a way to resize your images without loss of quality? Then you may want to give Akvis Magnifier a look-see, for that is exactly what it does.

Akvis Magnifier's resizing algorithms let you enlarge an image up to a resolution of 30,000 x 30,000 pixels, which makes a 100 x 100 inch poster. It also gives you the option of setting the resolution from 72 dpi up to 1200 dpi. But remember, the higher the resolution, the more Mac CPU horsepower you will need to accomplish the task. Akvis Magnifier's algorithm keeps the image's edges smooth, sharp and clearly defined. At the same time it can improve the image's appearance by removing unwanted noise and compression artifacts.

I used a photo of the Tyn Church in Prague for my first test. Notice how far away it is.

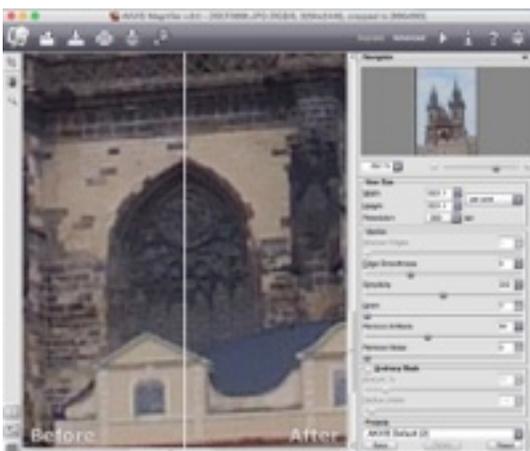**The Akvis Magifyer Interface:**

Akvis Magnifier has an uncluttered user interface with all of the tools readily available right on the opening window. Users are given the option of using the simplified "Express" mode (that has a minimal set of parameters) or the "Advanced" mode that has all of the parameters visible and available to use.

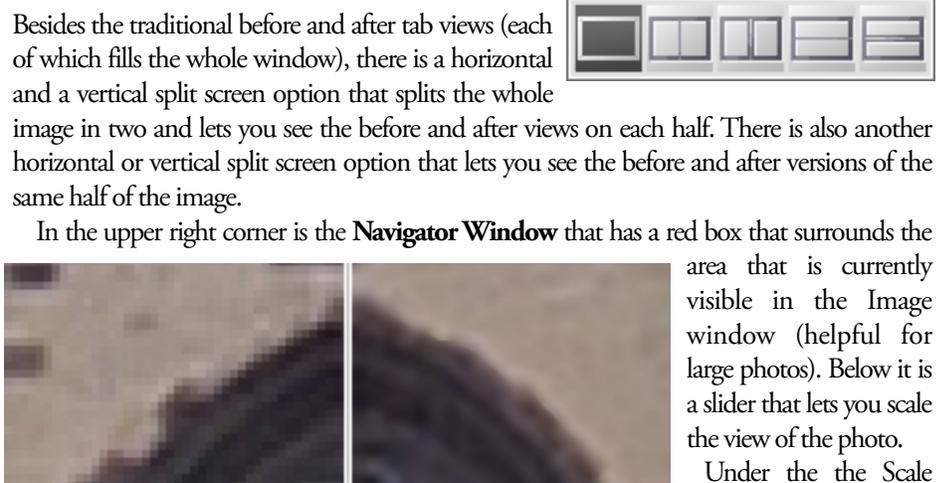At the top of the window is the **Control Panel** that holds many of the standard save/import controls.

To the left is the **Image window** that has Before and After tabs which lets you see if you are getting your desired results before applying it to your photo. At the bottom left corner of the window are buttons which let you choose how the Image window's Before and After views will look.
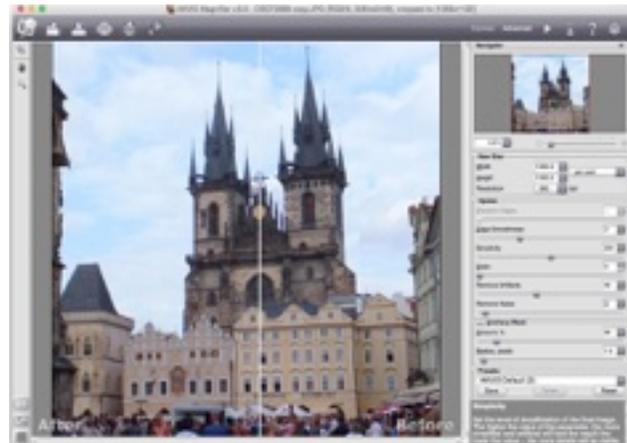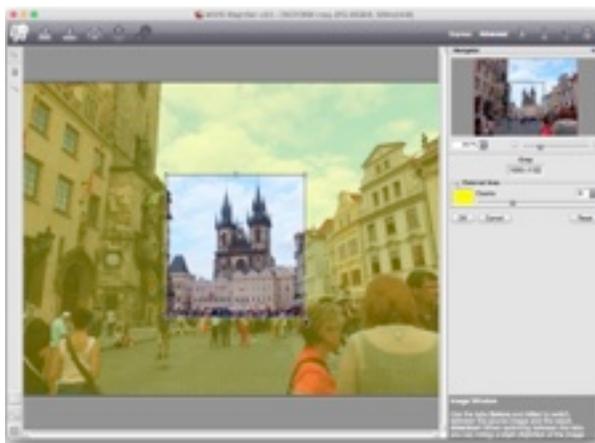
I enlarged the photo and then cropped away everything except the church.

Besides the traditional before and after tab views (each of which fills the whole window), there is a horizontal and a vertical split screen option that splits the whole image in two and lets you see the before and after views on each half. There is also another horizontal or vertical split screen option that lets you see the before and after versions of the same half of the image.

In the upper right corner is the **Navigator Window** that has a red box that surrounds the area that is currently visible in the Image window (helpful for large photos). Below it is a slider that lets you scale the view of the photo.

Under the the Scale slider is the **Settings Panel**. This holds the

Here are a couple of closeups of the Tyn church's front window. Notice the jaggies or pixelation at the top of the window in the Before (center) image and how they have disappeared in the After image on the right.

The two images on the right are the Before and After closeup of a flower's filament (center of the flower). Once again, notice that the pixelation has disappeared in the (far right) After image.

Parameter controls that let you further modify your photo. The "Upsize" controls include: Sharpen Edges, Edge Smoothness, Simplicity, Grain, Remove Artifacts, and Remove Noise. There is also an "Unsharp Mask" option (that sharpens the image by increasing contrast between the pixels). You can also set the pixel "Radius" (that sets the blurring radius for the copy).

If you don't want to tweak the controls yourself, there is a Presets drop-down menu that lists thirteen presets that you can choose from. These presets are for things like: "Denoise + Sharp 200%", "Smoothing 200%", "1000%", and "600 DPI". You can also save your own presets so you can reuse them in the future.

Akvis Magnifier can be bought as a stand-alone application, as a Photoshop compatible plug-in, or both. Since I have the version that includes both, I was able to test both the Stand Alone application and the Plug-in using my Adobe Photoshop CS6. The plug-in worked just like the stand alone version, except for not having a few options. With the Stand-alone version, you can use the Batch Processing feature to apply the same settings to multiple image. But the batch feature is not available in the plug-in. Here is a URL link to see a comparison between the **stand-alone and plug-in** versions.

File Formats

The stand-alone program can save in JPEG, PNG, BMP, and TIFF file formats. The plug-in can save in these same file formats, plus Photoshop PSD files (since it is used within the Photoshop program).

The Akvis web site has many Magnifier **examples and Tutorials**. This is a great way to see what Akvis Magnifier can do before downloading the demo.

The Skinny

Evaluation: Akvis Magnifier does what it is suppose to do - enlarge images without loss of image detail. I like that its default parameters are usually sufficient, not requiring any additional manual changes other than specifying how much to enlarge it. But if you do want to change the parameters, its uncluttered user interface makes it easy to find and use the needed parameters to enlarge and fine-tune your images.

For myself, I am not really interested in making large posters. What I want to use Akvis Magnifier for is to zoom into and crop/focus on a small portion of an image without loosing the image quality. This program accomplishes that as shown from my Tyn Church screenshots.

Requires:
    Minimal system requirements: Intel, 1 Gb RAM, 8 Gb HDD
    Recommended system requirements: Intel, 4 Gb RAM, 10 Gb HDD; NVIDIA CUDA / AMD (ATI) - Stream/APP
    For the Plug-in: A compatible photo editor like Adobe Photoshop CS - CS6 or Adobe Photoshop Elements 1 - 13

Company: **Akvis**

Price:
    Home - Plug-in $89, Stand Alone $89 (for non-commercial use)
    Home Deluxe: Plug-in & Stand Alone versions: $129 (for non-commercial use)
    Business: Plug-in & Stand Alone versions: $249
    Academic discounts: 30% off for Home and Home Deluxe licenses
    BTW: The Home and Home Deluxe versions are for non-commercial personal use whereas the Business version is for people/business who want to sell their final artwork.

Available 10-day Trial copy