

## Polaroid Dust & Scratches Removal

Free; [www.polaroid.com/service/software/poladsr/poladsr.html](http://www.polaroid.com/service/software/poladsr/poladsr.html)

I'm recommending this modest little application because it's a free, standalone app that will run on just about any Windows or Mac platform you're likely to have, no matter how ancient. Polaroid Dust & Scratches Removal doesn't do a perfect job of dust or scratch removal, but it's surprisingly good, getting rid of the majority of the damage. If you need to do quick-and-dirty (no pun intended) cleanups of a large number of originals, it's a handy production tool.

My preferred way of using it is in conjunction with a good image processing program. I first let Polaroid Dust & Scratches Removal do its thing and copy the results into a new layer in Photoshop. Once there I can preserve the areas that the Polaroid program cleaned up well and mask out the areas where it wasn't so good.

Polaroid Dust & Scratches Removal is extremely simple to use (Figure 3-10). It can read and write JPEGs and 8-bit or 16-bit color or B&W TIFFs. The first step after opening an image to be cleaned up is to detect the dust and scratches and create a mask for them. That operation brings up a dialog box where you set the tile size, defect level, and mask size. As a rule, you'll leave the



**Fig. 3-10** Polaroid Dust & Scratches Removal is a free program with a simple interface. There are only five adjustments in the scratch detection phase (upper screenshot) and one in the scratch removal phase (middle). The results (bottom) aren't perfect, but they're a big improvement, and you can't beat the price or the speed.

tile size set to the maximum value of 64, unless the application is failing to pick up a lot of small damage. Set the defect level higher for really dirty originals and lower for relatively clean ones. A value of 30 to 40 is a good starting point. With my scans, which are at fairly high resolutions, I find that a large mask size does a better job of capturing the dust and scratches. Leave Adaptive Filtering off; it does not do a better job of finding the damage, and it runs more than five times more slowly.

After Polaroid Dust & Scratches Removal has created its mask, you can go in and edit that mask with brushes and erasers if you feel that it's missed something important or erroneously selected image detail. Clicking Clean Image... brings up another dialog box in which you choose the amount of feathering for the cleanup. Larger values do a better job of blending the cleaned-up areas into the image but can also degrade fine detail. Save the massaged photograph as a new TIFF file, and that's it.

Polaroid Dust & Scratches Removal is compact and it's speedy; it took about 1 minute to mask a 25-megapixel, 16-bit color file of a badly scratched Kodachrome slide and less than another minute to clean up the scratches. The results are far from perfect, but it's a very respectable start.

Understand that this application is almost obsolete. Since it's an orphaned product, don't look for support or for it to ever be updated to become 64-bit savvy or a Universal Binary on Intel Macs. Although it can be run as a Photoshop plug-in, I don't recommend it; you'll have to make too many other performance compromises to get it to run. But for standalone use, it's acceptable, and you can't beat the price.