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File Comparisons with Double Commander

by Alan German

For many years I used PC Magazine's WMatch utility to make a comparison of the current files in my downloads folder and those archived on a USB flash drive. Recently, after moving up to a 64 GB flash drive, WMatch was no longer able to display the contents of this drive. I tried the open-source utility Meld (<https://opcug.ca/Reviews/MeldingFiles.pdf>) but found the user interface to somewhat awkward. Chris Taylor suggested using Total Commander (<https://www.ghisler.com>) which works really well, but the use of this software is limited to 30 days before requiring purchase. Since I only use this particular file comparison feature infrequently, a completely free version was preferable. Enter Double Commander, which is essentially an open-source clone of Total Commander!

Double Commander loads with a two-pane view of two different folders, listing the files and sub-folders in each. For my specific purpose it's convenient to set my source and target folders as a favourite pairing. I simply need to browse for the two folders in question, click on *Favourites* in the menu bar, select *Save current tabs to a New Favourites Tabs*, and enter a meaningful name in the pop-up dialogue box. Since my downloads folder is named *original*, this is the name I gave to the favourite tab. Subsequently, when I run Double Commander, I can navigate to *Favorites > original* and my preferred set of folders is displayed in the program's window. However, most of the time this is not necessary as the program remembers the last folder-pair that was used. (Figure 1)

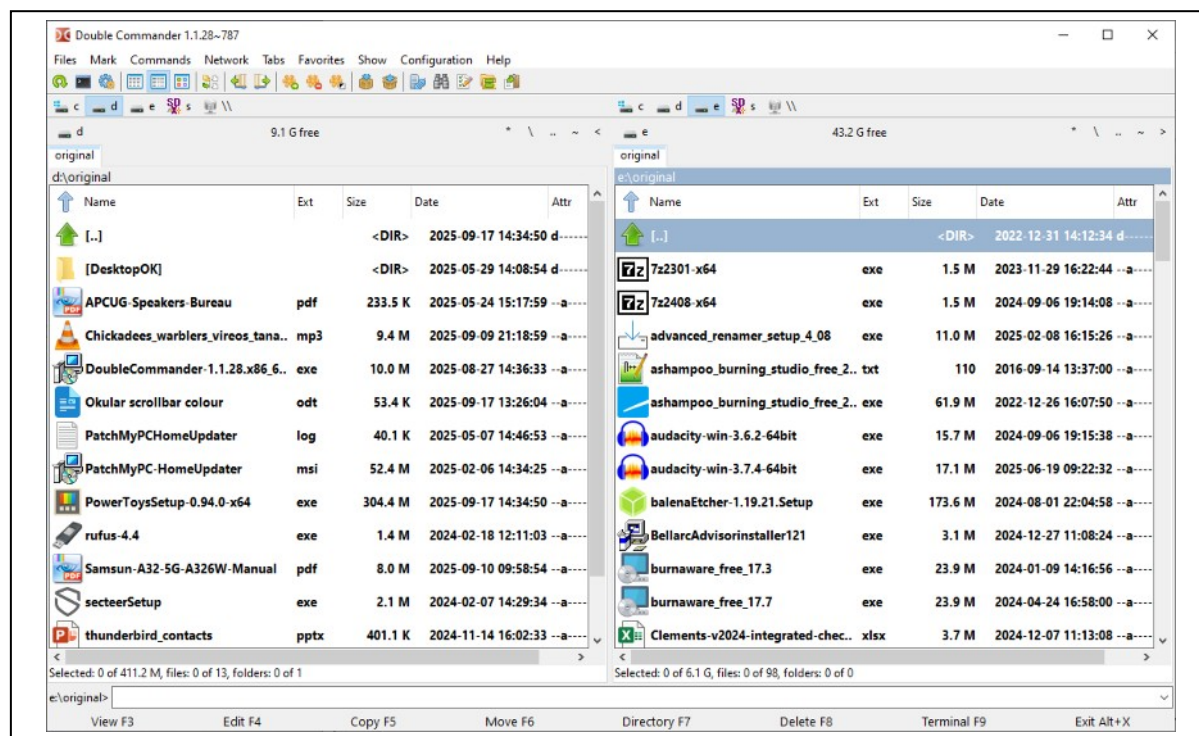


Figure 1. File Comparison in Double Commander

The task that I wish to undertake is to review the files that are present in the source folder but which have not yet been copied to the target folder. Clearly this is not a simple task in the view being displayed. But, Double Commander has a neat trick up its sleeve. If I navigate to *Commands > Synchronize dirs > Compare*, a pop-up window displays a much more useful format. (Figure 2)

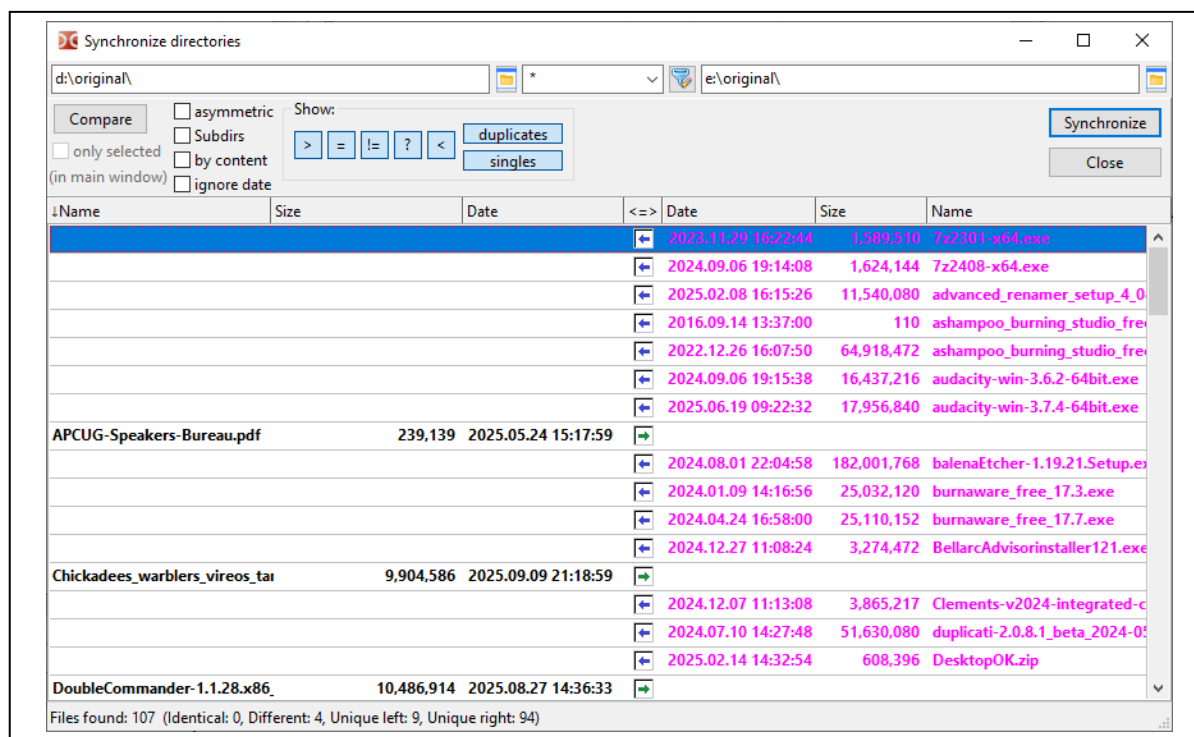


Figure 2. Synchronize dirs and Compare Commands Invoked

Note the group of icons shaded in blue and immediately to the left of the *duplicates* and *singles* buttons. These are filters that can be applied to the file listings. Since I am not interested in files that have already been transferred to my archive drive, I can deselect the “<” icon which will remove all of the entries in the pane on the right side which are files that exist on the archive drive but are no longer present in the downloads folder. (Figure 3)

The selected files can be further refined since some of the files in the source folder are transitory and do not need to be archived. For example, the first file *APCUG Speakers Bureau.pdf* is present for reference only. Such files are likely to be deleted or updated and so there is little point in retaining the current version in the archive. Initially a right-arrow is displayed in the centre column between the two folders indicating that the files are selected to be copied from the left folder to the right folder. Clicking on this arrow removes this designation so that no action will take place when the folders are synchronized.

Also of note are several working files such as Rufus, Yumi, and Uninstalr. These are portable apps that are run directly from the downloads folder. These files are already present on the archive drive as indicated by the equals sign between the folders so no copying will take place.

Once the final set of files has been selected, pressing the Synchronize button results in a pop-up box that provides the details of the files that are to be transferred (e.g. *Left to Right: Copy 2 files, total size 314.4 M (329,650,650)*), the location of the target folder (*e:\original*), and a checked box labelled *Confirm overwrites*.

Pressing the OK button starts the file copying process. The Synchronize directories window is then redisplayed at which point the files for Double Commander and PowerToysSetup are flagged with equals signs in the file comparisons.

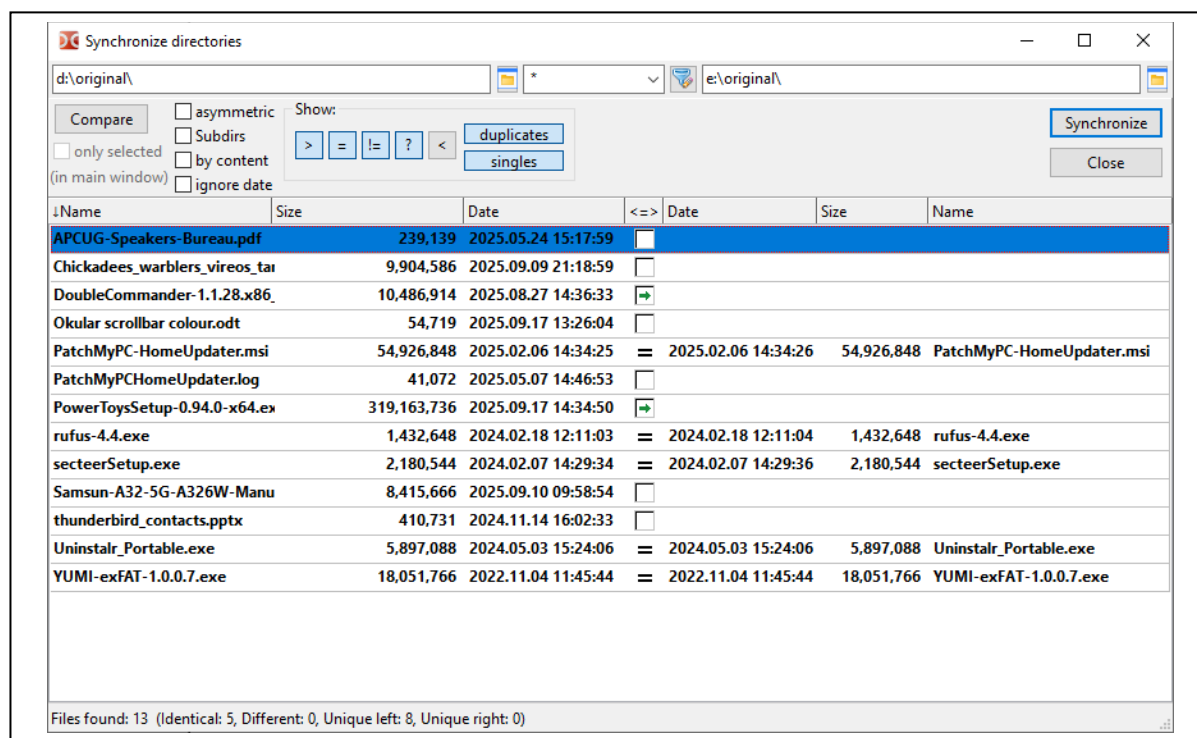


Figure 3. Final Selection for Synchronization

The task that has been described is only one way to use Double Commander. The program has many more features and is highly configurable. For example, the *Mark* menu item provides multiple ways to select and process groups of files, while *Show* allows many options to view or sort files.

Navigating to the *Configuration > Options* menu gives a huge number of program elements that can be customized. These include setting the colours for the titles of the file panels, the background for bars highlighting selected files, and the colours for the text used to display file names. These latter options are extremely useful to provide sufficient contrast between the filename and the background of the highlighted selection bar.

Double Commander is a very powerful file management system with a fairly intuitive user interface. For detailed instructions, an online user guide is available by selecting the *Help* menu item. If you have a need to manage files across multiple folders and disk drives, give this program a try. As is the case with much open-source software, Double Commander provides excellent utility at an excellent price!

Bottom Line

Double Commander (Open Source)
Alexander Koblov and Rich Chang
Version 1.1.28
<https://doublecmd.sourceforge.io>

double commander

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