

Colorvision Spyder2Pro
By George Hutchinson

Until recently, most computer users have not been too concerned about the color accuracy of their monitor. Subjective, visual adjustments were usually sufficient for the appearance of games, business graphics or even web content. Graphics artists, professional photographers and the printing industry, however, have required sophisticated calibration tools to insure accuracy. These professional systems were complicated and generally priced far beyond the practical reach of casual computer users or even advanced hobbyists.

Recent technological advances have made digital photography, video, and multimedia common on home computers; often rivaling or exceeding the capabilities of the expensive professional equipment of just a few years ago. This dramatic change, has exposed the weakness of “eyeballing” monitor adjustments. In many cases, Johnny’s face has suddenly taken on a deathly greenish tint or Susie’s peaches and cream complexion appears to have severe sunburn. Even worse, prints look nothing like they did on the computer. Frustrating attempts to adjust the monitor often just seem to make some things worse.

It is important to understand that no two monitors are exactly. Not only are there differences between manufacturers, but also production variations in the same exact model. In addition, displays change with age; sometimes not so gracefully. Fortunately, a company called Colorvision[®] has been making an effort to bring accurate, affordable color calibration to amateurs and professionals alike. The subject of this review, their Spyder2PRO[®] Studio package, is just one of several they offer.

The Spyder2PRO[®] Studio comes with a sleek silver and black colorimeter with an adapter that allows it to be used with either a CRT or LCD. This is a hardware device that accurately measures color on the screen, calculating adjustments accordingly. It connects to the computer with a long, sturdy USB cable. The Spyder2PRO Professional Monitor Calibration software then reads the data and creates an accurate monitor profile.

Before opening the box, I was fully prepared to spend a considerable amount of time studying the manual. Much to my surprise, it is only one page in length, limited to simple setup and installation instructions for both Windows and Macintosh users. The software only took only few moments to install, after which I was presented with a “wizard” type of process that led me through the calibration process.

The opening screen contains a brief explanation of what adjustments will take place. There are friendly help screens available at every step of way that not only instruct, but assist with understanding the concepts. The next few screens guided me through required monitor adjustments and software settings. The colorimeter is then attached to the monitor screen and a series of sample colors on the monitor were read and analyzed. Upon completion a new monitor profile is named, saved and installed.

Finally, the software gives you a chance to compare before and after results. In my case, there was a very distinct green bias in the before image. In the after comparison skin tones are much more natural and images have better contrast and tonal range. The total calibration process took me about 15 minutes from start to finish.

The Spyder2Pro Studio package includes additional, bonus software professionals and advanced enthusiasts will find useful. DoctorPRO[®] is a Photoshop[®] plug-in for demanding users interested in sophisticated photo editing. The nik Color Efex[®] Standard Edition allows users to create digital lighting effects similar to the use of various camera filters. PANTONE[®] Colorist software also included enables web and graphic designers to choose from Pantone Matching System Colors in programs such as Adobe Photoshop[®] that do not have the libraries built in. A \$75 rebate coupon toward the purchase of Colorvision's PrintFIX[®] or their SpectroPRO[®] printer profile creations packages is included as well.

I was pleasantly surprised at the user friendliness of this product and stunning results. Anyone interested in digital video, photography or could otherwise benefit from color monitor accuracy would be well served to consider this product. The street price of the Spyder2PRO Studio version reviewed is about \$279. Colorvision[®] makes other versions of this package aimed at home or advanced users, with more modest prices beginning at a street prices of about \$99.

System requirements: CRT and/or LCD Monitors, Windows[®] 2000 and XP, Mac OS X 10.2 or higher and a USB Port.

Support: ColorVision provides technical support at no additional charge. 1-800-554-8688 or 1-609-895-7430 or email your question to support@colorvision.com. Online FAQ's are available. Software upgrades, manuals and datasheets are also available for download. Technical support hours are Monday through Friday, 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM EST.

ColorVision, Inc., 5 Princess Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648, 800-554-8688,
<http://www.colorvision.com>