



Speedy Arachnids

Datacolor Spyder 3 Elite Display Calibrator

BY ANDY SIM

For those who process digital images on a day to day basis, we all know that it's fairly important to use a monitor capable of producing accurate gamma levels as well as appropriate color profiles. As such, calibrating a display unit has evolved into a pre-requisite for many photographers, designers, and others in a similar trade. To date, there are a few such devices out in the retail market to make this process a little easier, like Pantone's 'huey' suite of display calibrators, and of course, there's Datacolor's Spyder 3 Elite with its photo-centric interface in the limelight here.

Hardware wise, there are some obvious improvements made to the new fangled device as compared to its predecessor, the Spyder 2. The Elite's colorimeter now comes embedded with an ambient light sensor, a desktop cradle, and a LED status indicator. Noticeably, it also professes a larger light-measuring aperture of 372 square millimeters that's double the coverage of Spyder 2's rating of 165 square millimeters.

Upon unpacking its contents, we found that the humble package basically contains a chrome-colored colorimeter, which is significantly sexier than the Spyder 2, a cradle as mentioned earlier, a screen cleaner, and an installation disc. It is recommended that users install the bundled software prior to hooking up the colorimeter. Additionally, we'll be testing the calibrator out on a Windows XP system, coupled with a regular ViewSonic 17-inch LCD monitor. If you've installed the application without any glitches, the OS should be able to detect the colorimeter once you've connected it.

Halfway through identifying the color controls, we realized that the application doesn't allow us to check the box for the RGB sliders. This default setting can easily be resolved by going to the software's "preferences" selection (followed by the advanced settings), to turn it back on. However, be warned that a wrong tweak of the RGB numbers may mess up your monitor's overall colors. Moving on further, the Elite's software would indicate the optimal display

values for LCDs is as follows; 2.2 for gamma and 6500K for the white point balance. What's nice to know is that the application gives the user a choice to calibrate it with or without taking the ambient lighting into consideration. In a similar fashion, a choice is given as to whether you wish to mount the colorimeter via the suction cup or use its attached counterweight.

The calibration process did not exceed five minutes, with much credit going to its ReCAL features, and more importantly, the required steps are easy to follow through. Towards the end, the given test images proved that the final results did indeed display richer colors with better contrast levels prior to the calibration. For those who are interested in adjusting the settings of a projector, the bundled cradle makes itself useful once again since it's also acts as a tripod mount. It's recommended that you mount the colorimeter at a distance of 30cm away from the projector screen.

Having taken the Spyder 3 Elite for a spin ourselves, it's safe to verbalize that the gadget's fuss-free yet effective methodology in effecting a screen calibration is rather commendable. Besides the basics, there are other options available like white and black luminance targeting, for instance. However, if there's one thing we can gripe about, it would have to be the Elite's rather thorny price tag.

The Datacolor Spyder 3 Elite Display Calibrator is available exclusively at Cathay Photo. Website: www.cathayphoto.com.sg

SPECIFICATIONS

Computer Connection	ICC Profile Support	Minimum monitor resolution	Supported OS	Price
USB	ICC 2, ICC 4	1024 x 768 or greater	Windows 2000, XP, Vista, Mac OS X (10.2 or higher)	\$5520

Number of Filter/Detector Combination: 7 Filter/Detector Technology
Accuracy (x,y typical): 0.0025
Aperture Size: 27 mm Diameter
Initial Calibration Time: 5 Minutes
Recalibration Time: 2.5 Minutes
Ambient Light Shield: 2 Inches
Mounting Methods: Universal Suction Cup, Universal Counterweight and Tripod Mount
Dimensions: 10.2 x 8.9 x 3.8 mm
Warranty: 2 years
Website: <http://spyder.datacolor.com>

HWM'S VERDICT

Features: **8.5**
 User-friendliness: **8.5**
 Performance: **8.5**
 Value: **7.0**

8.0
 Out of 10

There may be cheaper alternatives of display calibrators out there, but the Spyder 3 Elite still makes the calibration procedure a simple and swift process to abide by.



The colorimeter mounted via its suction cup on the LCD screen. This new sensor packs an improved sensitivity over its antecedent.



Some of the test images that would greet you towards the end of the calibration process. You can zoom in on them by clicking on the desired area.