



Do-it-all Display Calibrator

Datacolor SpyderTV PRO Display Calibration System

BY NG CHONG SENG

Slightly more than a year ago (in our November 2005 issue), we reviewed the original SpyderTV, which we proclaimed to be the "answer to our TV's color problems". However, it was not without its faults. For one, the rather cumbersome calibration procedures (compounded by how TV makers labeled their settings) can be daunting for first-time users. Also, the rather simple software used meant that high-end users would probably never be satisfied with the end results. Fast-forward to today, and what we have here is the SpyderTV PRO, an upgrade to the SpyderTV. Several new features have been added, but the most prominent one would be the fact that the SpyderTV PRO now allows calibration of both home theater displays as well as computer monitors. This is possible because the Spyder2PRO software (for monitor calibration) is also bundled in the package. Front projectors can now be calibrated as well (the SpyderTV cannot do that), and new in the software is the ability to do gray scale cuts/gains adjustments.

The setup process is identical to the SpyderTV. The SpyderTV PRO software (Windows only) that comes in a CD has to be installed on your PC first (a laptop preferably so you can bring it around to any TV). To attach the colorimeter to the screen, you can use the included suction cup attachment. Alternatively, you can screw a tripod mount into the screw thread of the suction cup, and then use a tripod to hang the colorimeter so that it is flushed to the surface of the screen. The USB connector on the other end of the colorimeter will then go to your computer. A bundled DVD contains the test patterns as well as a very thorough calibration walkthrough video for new users. This DVD will go into a DVD player and connected to the TV input you wish to calibrate. In essence, the SpyderTV PRO software on the PC will record the readings taken by the colorimeter, which will in turn advise you on the next step to take (e.g. which parameter to change on the TV or which pattern to choose next on the DVD). While all these may sound confusing, it's pretty straightforward in

practice (albeit repetitive at times). As always, before you begin your calibration, you should either reduce or eliminate ambient light and warm up your display for at least 30 minutes. You should also revert your TV mode back to default or Standard (whichever your TV calls it). Of course, knowing where the settings on your TV reside and ensuring that your DVD player and TV remotes are functioning will help smoothen the whole process.

At the end of the calibration, you will be presented with a summary of the changes you have made. Unlike a computer monitor calibration where you are advised against touching the controls after calibration, you are not restricted here. Just note down the optimized values so that you can revert back afterwards. The report can also be printed or exported to PDF for future reference. For monitor calibration, the process is even more straightforward. The only difference is that the calibration is done using the Spyder2PRO software instead. The test pattern DVD is not required here. At the end of the calibration, a color profile would be created which loads automatically every time the computer starts up.

The SpyderTV PRO is without doubt an improvement over the original SpyderTV. The software now feels more polished, and we quite like the professional looking calibration report. That said, we're not quite sure if the new features (and the inclusion of the ColorVision Spyder2PRO software) is worth the price premium over the original SpyderTV. But for installers and home theater enthusiasts who want a package that can calibrate almost any display, this SpyderTV PRO is the one to get.

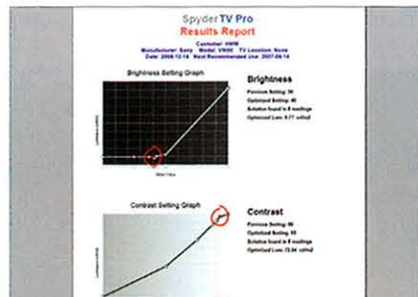
SPECIFICATIONS

| Hardware | Software | Calibrates | Price |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---|--------|
| SpyderTV Colorimeter | SpyderTV PRO & Spyder2PRO | Home theater displays & computer monitors | \$5995 |

Home Theater Displays Supported: Front projectors, plasma, RPTV, LCD, LCoS, DLP, and CRT TVs
Computer Displays Supported: Front projectors, LCD, CRT and notebook displays
Box Contents: SpyderTV PRO software CD, Spyder2PRO software CD, SpyderTV colorimeter, suction cup/tripod attachment, SpyderTV PRO test pattern and Instructions DVD, carrying case
Requirements: DVD player, remote controls for your TV and DVD, a desktop or laptop PC with Windows 2000 or XP operating system near your TV, USB port, Computer: Pentium II 800 Mhz, 256 MB Ram, 100 MB Free Drive Space, Video Card: 1024x768 resolution, 24 bpp color (16.7 million colors)
O/S Supported: PC (SpyderTV PRO and Spyder2PRO) and Mac OS X 10.3 or higher (Spyder2PRO only)
Local Distributor: Cathay Photo Store (Pte) Ltd



Other than the hardware colorimeter, you're also paying for the SpyderTV PRO (and the test pattern disc) and the Spyder2PRO software.



At the end of the calibration, you get to save a report (in PDF format) of all the changes you have made to aid in future references. We've got to admit that the report was pretty professional looking.

HWM'S VERDICT

Physique: 8.0
 Features: 8.0
 User-friendliness: 8.0
 Performance: 8.5
 Value: 7.5

8.5
 Out of 10

One package to calibrate them all – provided you've the dough.

