

SECRETS of Home Theater and High Fidelity

A
SECRETS
Accessory
Review

Product Review

Datacolor SpyderTV Display Calibration Kit

Part I

December, 2005

Ofer LaOr



Introduction

Datacolor has recently introduced SpyderTV, a new software/hardware combination that promises to bring home theater display calibration to the masses. The concept for SpyderTV originated with renowned color calibration software maker Milori, who designed ColorFacts, and was one of the reasons why Colorvision/Datacolor had purchased the company.

The SpyderTV promises a lot for a list price of \$249. The product was designed to provide novices with rudimentary color calibration at a fraction of the cost of a professional ISF calibration package, such as ColorFacts Pro. The product is a step up from the more common DVD test pattern calibration that does not include the use of a sensor.

Calibration, what is it?

Specifications:

- Compatible With:
 - Direct View CRT
 - LCD Flat Screen Display
 - Plasma Display
 - Rear Projection Display
- Sensor: Spyder 2
- Required: PC with USB Connection
- NTSC or PAL
- MSRP: \$249 USA

Datacolor

www.datacolor.com

Have you ever noticed that the displays in an electronics store all show the same source image, but each TV looks different? Out of the box, TVs and displays are set to seek out the buyer's eye - i.e., look sharper, brighter, and more colorful. When you get your display home, however, how do you get it to look as close to the real world as you can?

DVE and AVIA discs try to provide you with a passive source that lets you optimize what you have. However, you still need some type of reference to be able to get your display close to what the movie director or editor had seen on their reference monitor.

The difference in price between AVIA/DVE class products and the next step (a full blown ISF test or even ISF equipment) was the huge gap that SpyderTV

is attempting to fill.

What does it do?

The SpyderTV package includes a software CD, a DVD (NTSC for the US, PAL for Europe), the Spyder2 USB sensor, an LCD/Plasma viewing filter, a suction-cup/tripod holder latch, and a neat bag to hold the entire package in.

The answer to the "What exactly does and doesn't it do?" question was a hard one to answer prior to actually getting the unit. However, it appear to focus on a few major calibration points: Brightness, Contrast, Color/Tint, and Color Temperature.

The system attempts to find the ideal values for each of these with concern to accuracy. It differentiates between plasma, LCD, CRT, and rear projection technologies, and adjusts its calibrations accordingly.

The interesting thing about SpyderTV is that it includes exactly the same sensor as the Datacolor ColorFacts Pro 6.0 package. The capabilities of the SpyderTV are obviously less than those of Datacolor's flagship product, but it does give people a taste of "the good stuff".

While SpyderTV doesn't specifically state that it can be used with front projection systems, it doesn't take much to allow a front projector to be calibrated – just add a tripod, turn the sensor towards the lens of the projector, and you're there.

The Spyder sensor is shaped like a three legged spider, and comes with a hive- shaped filter that fits on top of it. The documentation says nothing about the filter, which should always stay on when using the SpyderTV software.

The sensor includes three tiny suction cups which get blocked off by the hive shaped filter. That leaves the extra suction cup attachment. Sadly, that attachment fit tightly on the sensor and I found myself wanting a tighter connection between the sensor and the display.

The sensor's cable comes with a sliding counterweight that ensures the sensor's weight does not dislodge it from the screen. I found myself having to repeatedly reattach the sensor to the screen, so I would say that more suction might be in order here.

The SpyderTV DVD starts off with a sales pitch (most likely for shops selling to to use for demonstrations), an explanation of the system, and some test patterns. The test patterns are by no means a replacement for DVE/ AVIA (a few more key patterns and it could have been, but they serve the system nicely).

[Click Here to Go to Part II.](#)

© Copyright 2005 Secrets of Home Theater & High Fidelity

[Go to Table of Contents for this Issue](#)

[Go to Home Page](#)

The **SECRETS** DVD Player Benchmark
It's what everyone's been talking about

[About Secrets](#)

[Register](#)

[Terms and Conditions of Use](#)

The **SECRETS** Primers
Explanatory Articles for Beginners