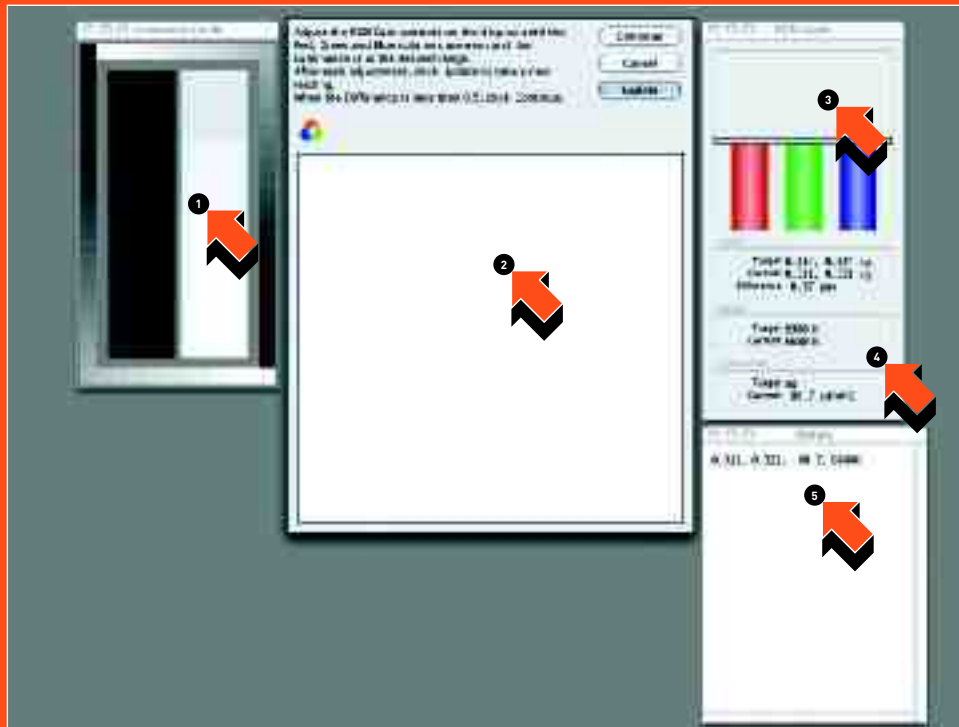


THE PRINTFIX PRO SUITE INTERFACE



**1 LUMINANCE GUIDE** Keeps track of the screen's relative brightness to ensure that the calibration doesn't wash out highlights and make the darker shades sink into pure black

**2 COLOUR READINGS** The area where the Spyder2PRO hardware takes its colour measurements. The square cycles through different hues and brightness values

**3 RGB LEVELS** If your monitor allows it, you can control the individual RGB values, ensuring that no colour bias creeps into your monitor's calibration

**4 KELVINS** Colour temperature is measured in Kelvins, with the ideal target value of 6,500K – which corresponds to daylight at midday – contrasting with the current value

**5 HISTORY WINDOW** Useful for comparing your current calibration against previous calibrations. It includes the previous RGB values and colour temperature

a series of steps, beginning with sticking the Spyder2 hardware to the screen with the aid of three small suction cups. Then you'll need to set up your monitor's optimal brightness and contrast, and let the software know what kinds of adjustment controls your display has. In our tests, we found our Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 220 allowed individual control of the RGB channels. Manually adjusting those so that they were all uniform was easily the most fiddly part of the process.

Once that section is complete, the software takes over and displays a series of colours under the Spyder2's sensor. This takes a little while. When the software has finished cycling through the colours, it creates a new display profile and asks you to name it. It finishes by comparing your freshly minted profile with your previous settings, and the results can be startling.

We found that our old settings – created with Apple's built-in calibration software – were overly dark and blue. The new profile initially seemed too warm, but that was because we were so used to staring at our artwork through cyan-tinted glasses. It was impressive stuff, but could the printer calibration be as quick and painless?

**Printing solution**

The technique is much the same: print off a sheet containing dozens of different coloured swatches and run the spectroradiometer over them to

# PrintFIX PRO Suite



IF YOU THOUGHT ACCURATE COLOUR CALIBRATION FOR YOUR PRINTER AND DISPLAY WAS TOO EXPENSIVE OR FIDDLY, IT'S TIME TO RECONSIDER

Computer users who deal with colour in a professional capacity, such as designers, illustrators and photographers, should be aware of the importance of correctly calibrated output devices, but often don't bother. Brave souls may try to use Adobe *Gamma* or Apple's own calibration software, hidden away in System Preferences under Displays.

The chief problem with software-only solutions is that the results are based solely on the user's ability to judge colour accurately, so the outcome can be hit and miss. What's needed is something that takes the fallibility out of the equation, and that's where ColorVision steps in.

The *PrintFIX PRO Suite* comprises a USB-powered spectroradiometer and *PrintFIX PRO* software – which together tackle any output from an RGB-driven colour printer – and a USB-powered colorimeter and

*Spyder2PRO* software for calibrating CRT and LCD screens. The two products are available separately, but the suite combines them for a considerable saving.

**Getting plugged in**

The software is Mac and PC-compatible and supplied on two CDs. It's definitely advisable to check through the rather brief manuals and guides to ensure that you're not tempted to plug in the hardware devices until you've installed the software. The installation process itself is easy and mercifully brief.

Once the software has been installed, you can begin the process of creating colour profiles for your monitor and printer. ColorVision recommends that you calibrate your monitor first, which makes sense because you'll be comparing what's on screen with your printed

output when you create a colour profile for your printer.

Before you start, make sure that Adobe *Gamma* and any other third-party monitor calibration software is disabled, and set the display resolution to a minimum of 1,024x 768. In Windows, ensure that Hardware Acceleration in the Display Properties control panel is set to Full and that Anti-virus and Screensavers are both switched off.

The next step is to plug the Spyder2 Colorimeter into a powered USB port, such as one directly on your computer. Plugging into your keyboard or a non-powered hub is not advised. The USB cord on the Spyder2 is generously long, so it should easily reach your monitor, even if your computer is sitting on the floor several feet away.

Firing up the *Spyder2PRO* software will then take you through

**RESOURCE**

An introduction to some of the issues involved in monitor calibration can be found online at <http://epaperpress.com/monitorcal>. Learn all about calibration theory, dealing with LCDs and find out what monitor gamma really means

**THE IMPORTANCE OF CALIBRATION**

Colour calibration is important because it ensures that the colours you see on your monitor are the same as those seen on someone else's computer. It also means that your print-outs match both. For the print industry in particular, this is crucial for detecting when images are too dark or too light or show a colour cast that may appear on the press. It's also becoming a critical part of the movie and TV industry as more and more processes become completely digital. However, colour calibration only really works if everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet to create a closed loop of calibrated devices.

create a tweaked colour profile to drive your printer. The first thing to do with inkjet printers is to ensure that all the print heads are working correctly. Be prepared to waste ink, paper and time getting your printer up to speed. *PrintFIX PRO* usefully allows you to print a test matrix of colours onto a single sheet of paper up to four times, but can't drive the printer's head-cleaning routines, which can mean having to hop back to Epson's Printer Utility to fix things.

When all the print heads are running correctly, the software gives you the option of printing out one of several profiling targets: a Fast Target, made up of 150 patches on one sheet; High Quality Target, made

**“The software compares your freshly minted profile with your previous settings, and the results are startling”**

up of 225 patches; or an Expert Target made up of 729 patches spread over three sheets (or on a single sheet for roll or cut-sheet printers). You then use the spectroradiometer to click on the patches, in turn prompted by the software. If the thought of doing this even 150 times seems daunting, the good news is that it doesn't take as long as you might think.

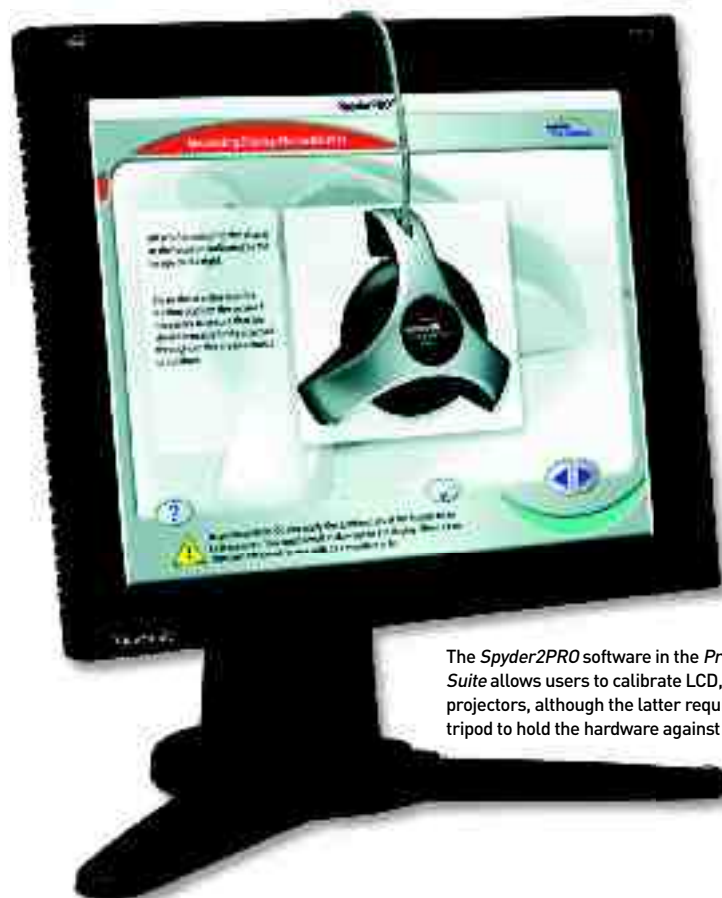
On completion, *PrintFIX PRO* builds a profile and asks you to print out a test sheet to compare it with

the image on screen. In our tests, we had to try the process several times until we got bright, saturated images with natural tones and accurate colours. The results were good, but we couldn't shake the feeling that it was slight overkill for our little inkjet printer. However, the time and trouble it takes to get first-class prints is definitely worth it for a busy office inkjet or wide-format printer where colour accuracy and consistency are paramount.

Although the software has none of the interface polish or gloss of OS X or Vista, it works remarkably

well. In fact, it's hard to imagine how the process could be any simpler. Calibrating your monitor with the Spyder2 in particular is quick and easy, and could be done by someone with no experience of calibration. Creating a profile for an inkjet printer is slightly more fiddly, but if it can convince the old Epson we were using to turn out decent prints, it should work for just about everyone.

Now there's no excuse not to have affordable colour accuracy as part of your everyday workflow. **arts**



The *Spyder2PRO* software in the *PrintFIX PRO Suite* allows users to calibrate LCD, CRT and projectors, although the latter requires a camera tripod to hold the hardware against the projection



Creating a colour profile for your printer is easy. Simply run the spectroradiometer over the swatches provided



*PrintFIX PRO* offers several profiling targets. Note that the Fast Target is quicker to complete, but is not as accurate as the High Quality and Expert Target options

MAC Yes

PC Yes

**PRICE**

EUR599

**CONTACT**

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www.colorvision.ch

**FEATURES**

- Comprehensive user help
- Before-and-after viewing
- Standalone Wizard software design
- Selectable Gamma options
- Luminance targeting
- Easy to use
- Custom target creation
- Integrated print-quality and media-settings checks
- Easy print preview and profile adjustment
- High-bit and high-resolution profiles

**SYSTEM****MAC:**

- Mac OS X 10.3 or higher
- Powered USB port
- 1,024x768 or larger screen

**PC:**

- Windows 2000/XP or higher

**FOR**

- Ideal solution for high-end enthusiasts, freelancers or small studios
- Simple and quick to use
- Great results

**AGAINST**

- An expensive solution for the home user
- Interface feels dated
- Could do with better printed manuals

**VERDICT**

Colour-calibrated devices should be a part of any designer's workflow, and this reasonably-priced hardware and software solution creates easily achievable and accurate results for monitors and RGB-driven printers. A must-have for freelancers and small studios

