

PRESS CUTTINGS

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Subject: Colormunki

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# colormunki

Calibrate your screen, profile your printer and paper, create colour harmonies for borders and overlays, match real world colours exactly in your output – all for £319.

Most photographers buying X-Rite's new ColorMunki device will do exactly as the on-screen help suggests, and calibrate their screen and printer in one process. They will be keen to see exactly how well the first printout matches the screen display after going through the installation.

ColorMunki is very well designed. Traditional spectrophotometers for measuring printed originals often need a separate attachment to act as a screen calibrator, and many are not dual-purpose. They contain the same innards but you have to buy twice over, once for a screen calibrator and again for a printer profiling system.

Either that, or you are into almost four figures for a dual-purpose kit.

ColorMunki Photo, distributed by Colour Confidence, is only £319 plus VAT. Like the legendary ColorTron of 1994 it tackles all tasks except transmissive original measurement (from density), and comes with clever software for colour matching and harmony. To this it adds a program which can bundle your finished pictures with profiles automatically used by Windows or Mac users receiving the file, and warn the recipient of uncalibrated viewing conditions.

Unlike the ColorTron, it does not depend for accuracy on a folding black-target box or a white reference tablet which needs replacing every year until it finally gets lost. Instead, the housing of the ColorMunki has its own dark chamber for black reference and its own permanent white point calibration patch hidden away inside. It also has an ambient light level sensor.

It's a square box with one corner radiused to make it easier to hold. Inside the box, a circular assembly rotates between click-stopped points. One of these is the calibration position, where the sensor is aimed at its internal targets. Another is the ambient light sensor position, another the screen calibration and print measurement position.



ColorMunki is a robust hand-sized device with three functions – screen calibration, printer profiling, and colour sample measurement.

## Screen calibration

Instead of a screen attachment to change the spacing of the sensor from the surface and alter the aperture, the ColorMunki comes with a storage pouch that doubles as a calibration accessory. You insert the device with its sensor seated in a moulded part of the case, and zip it up. The neckstrap is loaded like a skinny sandbag, and drops over the back of your monitor to hold the unit in place on the screen.

In practice this works perfectly without any suckers or risk of falling off, and is friendly to CRTs, LCDs, glass or plastic surfaces, big monitors or laptops alike.

There are at least four levels of possible screen calibration. You can opt for easy or advanced, ssp or include stages for adjusting monitor brightness and contrast manually at the start, and have ambient light allowed for or ignored. You can also pick your whitepoint from D50, D65 or Native.

With my iMac 24, no screen adjustments are possible other

than brightness and this is not convenient to access during calibration as it's software controlled. I therefore calibrated by eye using Apple software first, then ran Advanced ColorMunki calibration ignoring ambient light and using native whitepoint.

Despite going through the routine in little more than a minute – compared to the 20 minutes my Spyder Pin 2 takes to produce an adjusted profile – the ColorMunki's eight steps per channel and eight steps of brightness produced a clean fix to gamma which noticeably improved visible highlight detail and gave a better idea of when shadow were a bit heavy.

This is the first profile I've felt was better than visual calibration on my current machine.

## Print matching

To test the printing calibration, I picked a stock of paper for which no off the shelf profile has so far worked – some Lyson 310gsm Standard Fine Art, probably three

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or four years old, which I have not been able to use in my Epson Stylus Pro 3800. Lyson only provide profiles for their own inks and I suspect the paper has been improved since I got the 100 or so sheets of A3 which were going to waste.

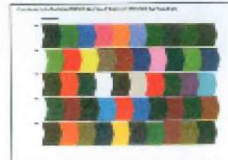
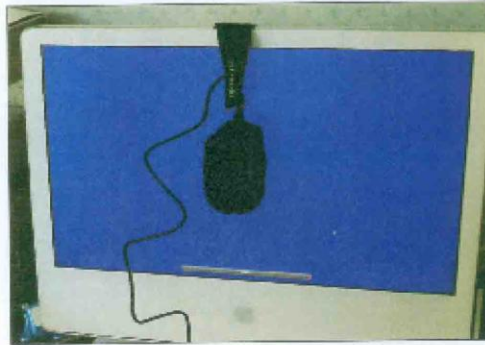
The print calibration chart is easy to print out, and gives you a chance to use Printer Setup before you click print, to ensure you have the right paper type, feeder and colour management settings. I chose Velvet Fine Art (Epson's paper type), Manual Rear Feed, Auto colour, and No Colour Management. This ensured the printer switched over to matt black ink, and used the paper type most closely resembling the Lyson stock.

A test print from a photo file before doing this showed muted overall results with rather flat shadow separation and distinct tone break from darker midtones to black, low saturation, some posterization and a generally drab look.

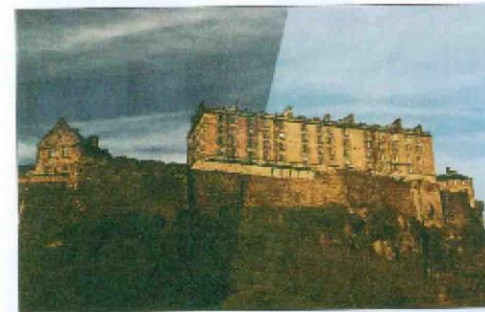
The ColorMunki chart requires ten minutes drying time before you advance to the Measure step, and slide the device on its slick plastic rails slowly down each of five rows of colour patches. It took a couple of tries to get the sliding speed right, and from then every measurement pass was perfect.

A second print was scheduled by the software to get the right line-tuning, with another ten minute drying wait. A timer runs on screen, so you get on with other work, then check back to see whether your time has elapsed.

Each step does not auto advance so after printing my second test and getting on with work, the software still showed the screen asking me to make the print. I had not started the timer, as I had not clicked 'Next'. This was no big problem but the steps do add up, and you would be well allowed at least half an hour to create every new paper profile.



Screen calibration in progress (top). The test print above is scanned by dragging the ColorMunki on its rails, held as shown on the facing page and pressing the button. Below: before and after profiling as described in the article.



ColorMunki has a wizard which is supposed to load the profile automatically as a default for Adobe CS and Quark XPress. On my Mac, it actually reset the defaults to AdobeRGB but correctly located the profile for manual selection. The profile was correct, including auto-setting the rear sheet feeder as the only paper loading option.

The print made with the profile was far superior to the first test, and a tolerable match to the iMac screen (using the GrafiLite viewing light), with much better blue sky and green foliage. It did not totally lose the flat midtones, and posterize steps were still present, making some shades blend into each other.

Different printer settings could be tested to improve on this. Where printer settings are better known – as with Fotospeed papers I profiled – results are spot on. Each printed target to measure is A4 and two will normally be needed, plus any real prints used to confirm results. I used two A3 sheets per calibration run.

You will have to work out for yourself whether the time and money are justified compared to using free services like Permalut and Fotospeed custom profile production, or paid profiling for those with a wide range of materials to match up.

## Spectrophotometry

Using the ColorMunki to make spot measurements from surfaces, you can create Photoshop and other swatches based on fabrics, printed colour, plastics and natural materials. The measurements are taken using 36 bands from 380nm to 730nm.

To test the usefulness and accuracy of the device, I measured a Munsell Color-Checker and exported a spreadsheet with 17471 values, these were compared with one of the more reliable conversions of Gretag MacBeth's original CIE (1931) xYY Illuminant C based

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