PRESS CUTTINGS
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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 (film 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 radiussed to make it easier to hold. Inside the box, a circular assembly rotates between clickstopped 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, skip 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 Pro 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