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Ask Tim Grey eNewsletter

November 8, 2011

Celebrating 10 Years of Ask Tim Grey...

In Today's Email:

- [Today's Question: Importance of Projector Calibration](#)

Check out (and comment on) my latest blog post here:

www.timgrey.com/blog/2011/boat-ride-memories/

Today's Question: How important is it to calibrate a Digital Projector? Or can they actually be calibrated with a "Spyder-type" device and software program?

Tim's Answer: This is actually a question that appeared in yesterday's edition of my Elements Weekly email newsletter, aimed at users of Photoshop Elements, but I thought it was a topic that would be of interest to a broader audience, so I'm re-publishing it here today...

I would say it is quite critical to calibrate a digital projector. To be fair, the color on most digital projectors tends to be reasonably consistent. Not consistent enough to keep most photographers truly happy with the accuracy of the color, but consistent enough that in theory it shouldn't be too big an issue.

The bigger problem, I would suggest, is that each computer is sending different color information but expecting (in theory) the same results. I'm very much oversimplifying the explanation here, but the point is that each computer is sending color information based on (in most cases) the display profile for that computer, not the behavior of the projector.

In theory you could overcome this problem by always setting your display profile on the computer to the sRGB color space, and then setting the projector to the sRGB setting. This won't necessarily get you the best results, but you should get reasonably accurate results most of the time.

But to really get the very best results, you should build a profile for the projector in the specific environment under which you'll be presenting. For many photographers that might mean building a custom profile each time you present, but as far as I'm concerned this is time well spent (and frustration well avoided).

The "Spyder" products you refer to are the ColorVision (DataColor) products, and for digital projector profiling you would be looking at the [Spyder3Elite](#), which sells for around \$180. My

personal favorite tool for this task is the [X-Rite ColorMunki Display](#), which sells for around \$170, and in my experience does an excellent job of ensuring accurate color for your digital projector. You can learn more about the X-Rite ColorMunki Display here:

<http://amzn.to/tTfmuo>

I should hasten to add that both of these tools enable you to calibrate both digital projectors and monitors. In other words, you should have a tool like this regardless for purposes of calibrating and profiling your monitor displays, but by choosing carefully you can also ensure the ability to profile projectors as well.

I should also point out that under most circumstances by profiling the digital projector you will end up with a laptop display that is not very accurate. This is because in most cases you can only have one active profile for all displays. So you won't necessarily have a projected image that matches your laptop (or other computer) display, but at least you can have an accurate projected display.

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