

Hands-on with Datacolor's new Spyder5+

-David Cardinal – Professional Travel & Nature Photographer

Spyder5 is already an amazing tool for getting the best color out of your display. With the Spyder5+ upgrade, Datacolor has added several really nice features that are an absolute no-brainer for the price. I've been using the new capabilities for a few weeks now, and am really pleased with how much time they've saved me, as well as the additional productivity they've provided. In this article, we'll go through each of them in turn.

Automatic Room Light Switching

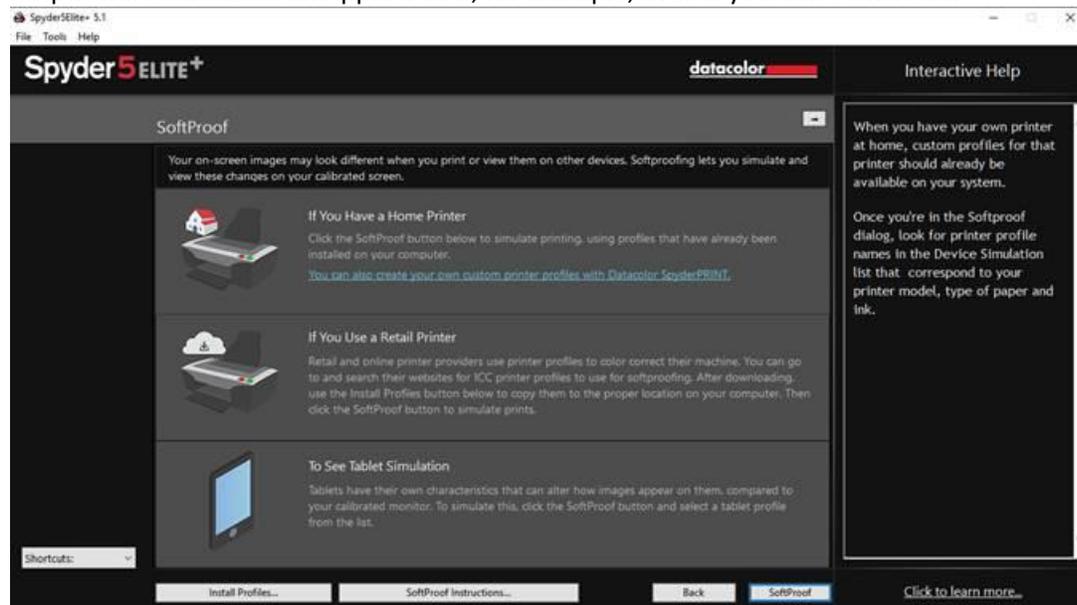
One of my favorite new features in Spyder5+ is its ability to automatically switch profiles based on the level of ambient light. My studio has a lot of windows, and I love to leave the blinds open during the day – even though I know of course that an always dark room is ideal for color correction. As a result, the amount of light in the room varies greatly between day time, evening, and night. Before now, I've always had to either manually switch profiles or compromise by fiddling with the brightness and hoping for the best.

Now, by leaving my Spyder5 plugged into the machine, with the ambient light sensor facing up, the profiles are automatically switched for me. So far, it is working flawlessly for me here, and I look forward to experimenting with it on safari, where it is also often difficult to control light levels without working under a hood.

SoftProofing and Device Simulation (with Spyder5ELITE+)

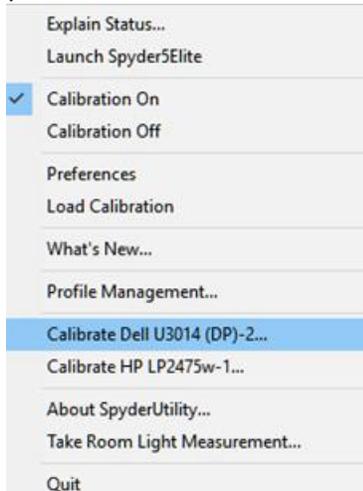
Getting predictable color on other devices is one of the biggest promises of a color-managed workflow, but isn't always easy. One way to determine what your image will look like on a printer, or online, or even on a mobile device is to Soft Proof the image using a profile for that printer or display. ELITE+ builds that capability into the Spyder5 software. You can use the included target or look at any image or images you have by specifying a custom file or folder for it to use as targets.

Datacolor has also provided profiles for several common mobile devices, so you can see what your output will look like on an Apple iPad 3, for example, even if you don't own one.



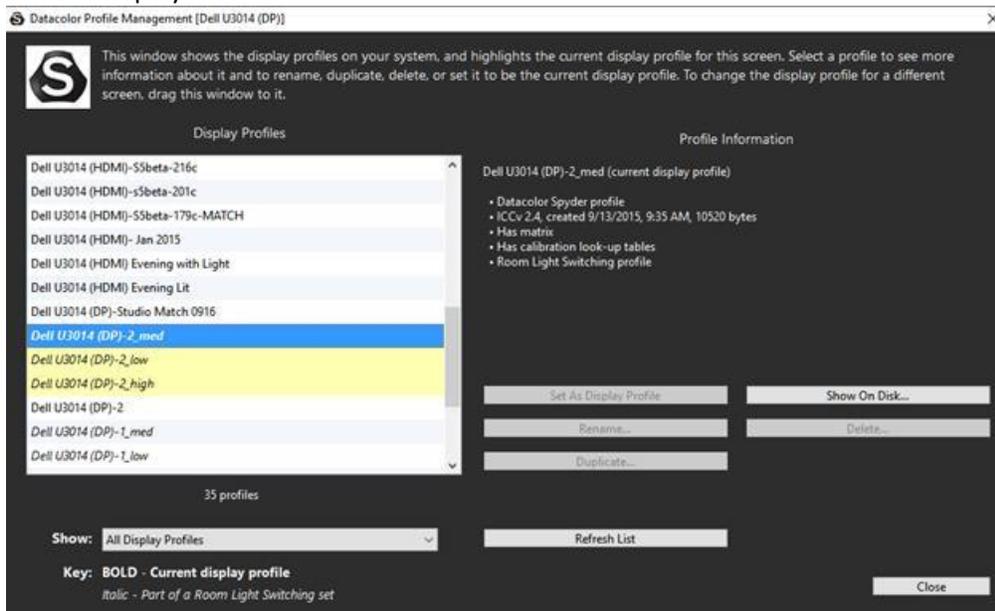
1-Click Calibration

Every color expert will tell you that you should recalibrate your monitor on a regular basis for best results. But if it is too much work, most of us don't. With Spyder5+ Datacolor has made the process about as painless as possible. You can literally single click on the Spyder Utility menu (that pops up from the Toolbar), and it will take you to the "place Spyder here" measurement screen for whichever display you have selected. It can't be any easier than that!



New Profile Management Tool

Over time it is easy to collect quite a number of profiles for various lighting conditions, or even for displays that are temporarily used with your computer, like projectors. Managing them is at best a hassle. Spyder5+ builds on the existing Datacolor Profile Chooser with a new Profile Management Tool that allows you not just to set the profile(s) in use, but to copy, rename, or even delete them. As a nice touch, it shows some important information about a profile when you select it, such as whether it was created with a Spyder, and what version of ICC it supports. As with Profile Chooser you can see which profiles are associated with your current display, or even filter your profiles to only display those for the current display.



Visual fine tuning added to Studio Match for multiple displays

Spyder5ELITE is already an effective and pretty painless way to match the colors on multiple monitors. The wizard walks you through the process from beginning to end. However, I wasn't always completely happy with the results. ELITE+ adds a cool visual comparison tool that displays a set of color patches and lets you adjust the color, gamma, and brightness of your secondary display (or displays) to get the best possible visual match with your primary display. I used it on my main Photoshop machine and now my monitors match more closely than ever.

Summary: Spyder5+ is a great value for anyone using Spyder5

Frankly, any one of these features might be worth the money to me. So, at the risk of sounding like a late-night TV ad, it's great that Datacolor has put them all together in a single software upgrade.