

Any color geek worth his salt will tell you that the first device to color manage is your display system. Now there's a simple solution.

BY ANDREW RODNEY

Pantone *huey*

AFFORDABLE AND EASY MONITOR CALIBRATION

Six years ago, it wasn't uncommon for a colorimeter and software package for display calibration and profiling to cost well over \$600. Now priced at a couple hundred dollars, today's best colorimeter and software packages provide precision and ease of use one could only imagine a few years ago. Yet too many users simply can't fathom spending \$200 on a package to calibrate and profile their displays.

Enter the Pantone huey, developed in partnership with GretagMacbeth. At a suggested retail price of \$89 and sporting a very simple wizard-based interface, this product sits squarely in the consumer market.

I believe the vast majority of photographers should consider a solution with more control and features, but the huey should be embraced by your clients and by photographers with a color management phobia.

The huey hardware has a unique appearance. This 4-inch, pen-shaped unit attaches to your computer via USB, and when not in use sits near the display in a desktop cradle (Figure 1). The device is designed to actively measure the ambient light around the display at all times. Many users work in environments where the lighting around their workstations is constantly changing. Certainly it's not an ideal condition, yet it's all too common. The



Figure 1. The huey sits in a holder near the display, periodically measuring and making adjustments for the ambient light conditions.

huey adjusts the display brightness to suit the changing ambient light.

On the back of the huey, a felt pad surrounds three sensors above a series of suction cups. I'm not fond of using suction cups on LCD displays. By tilting the display upward to avoid undue pressure on the device, I was able to keep the huey on the display without visible damage. With the display in a vertical position, the huey kept falling off mid-calibration. I ended up applying just minimal pressure to keep the device attached. Fortunately the calibration process takes only about one minute. A counterweight like those on larger colorimeters would be a useful upgrade.

The huey package contained a sample of an LCD cleaning pad and a Klear Screen Micro Chamois polishing cloth, a product I've used with excellent results.

The series of red LEDs on the front of



Figure 2. The user interface is a modern design devoid of excess elements to confuse the novice user. Here you choose the type of display and click the Next button. All the steps are outlined in a simple status bar at the bottom so you always know where you are in the process.

the huey flash as the unit is calibrating and then profiling the display. They also flash every few minutes if the unit is set to measure and update the ambient light.

To begin calibration, select LCD or CRT for your display, click the Next button, and sit back as the unit reads the color patches (*Figure 2*). The series of green dots on the left side of the screen updates as each patch is measured. Upon completion, a screen appears allowing you to toggle the calibration on and off to see the effect (*Figure 3*).

At the end of the process, the interface prompts you to select a color setting based upon the kind of work you do; the default is Web Browsing and Photo Editing (*Figure 4*). I would have preferred to select this option before testing out the before-and-after function, or better, if both options were combined in a single screen.

I was told that the Web Browsing and Photo Editing setting correlates to a calibration target value of CCT 6500K, Gamma 2.2. According to the product manager, Gretag-Macbeth wanted to describe the settings rather than offer the technical target values, simply because huey is designed for customers unfamiliar with color management, who might not even know what an ICC profile is.

Once you select a color setting, the huey



Figure 3. This window will show you the corrected and uncorrected state of your display calibration.

software writes an ICC profile of this condition and loads it as the system default. Your next calibration will overwrite the ICC profile, assuming you specify the same color settings.

You can disengage the huey's ambient light measuring and/or adjust the frequency of the measurements (the default is every 5 minutes). A preference will also remind the user to recalibrate the display at certain intervals. The preference panel installed under OS X is where you control these features. Unfortunately, it could not run on an Intel iMac.

In my tests with a 20-inch Intel iMac, the huey's calibration and profile produced good results with images viewed in Photoshop.

There's no question that this approach is preferable to no calibration at all, or to using "eyeball" calibration with a product such as Adobe Gamma. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the huey package to a designer, art director or color management-phobic user.

I have some reservations about how wise it is to alter a display's conditions to compensate for ever-changing ambient lighting, but for some this feature could be useful.

If you work in Photoshop or other ICC-aware applications where color is critical, I suggest you look at a more robust solution such as the GretagMacbeth Eye-One Display 2 (MSRP \$240) or the X-Rite OPTIX (MSRP \$379). But no question, the huey is a low-cost, easy-to-use color management solution for a new market, and as such, I welcome and applaud this product. ■

For more information, see www.gretagmacbeth.com/products_huey



Figure 4. The available color settings correlate to the following target values: Cool = 7500K, Medium = 6500K, Warm = 5000K, Low contrast = 1.8, Medium contrast = 2.2, High contrast = 2.5.