



## Product Showcase

Compiled by Jon Canfield  
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### ColorVision PrintFix - An Affordable Printer Profiling Solution

ColorVision, a company well known for their calibration products, such as the ColorVision SpyderPRO, OptiCAL, PhotoCAL, has recently introduced the PrintFIX printer profiling system. The software, combined with the LED patch reader allows users to quickly and easily create profiles for their specific printer and paper needs. Currently, PrintFIX supports a number of Epson inkjet printers, and the company promises regular updates that will add additional printer support.

While the profiles provided with your printer are generally quite good, you are limited to using the manufacturers' paper types to get the most accurate results. There are a host of third party companies that make various photo and fine art papers. If you are a fan of these, PrintFIX will be a time and money saver for you, eliminating much of the trial and error associated with printing on a new paper.

PrintFIX requires Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Elements, as it works as a plug-in within the application. While PrintFIX may work in other applications that support the Adobe plug-in standard, I have done no testing, and ColorVision makes no claim to this in their documentation or on their website.

Using PrintFIX couldn't be much easier. After installing the software and plugging the scanner into an available USB port, you are ready to begin the simple three step process. In Photoshop, you select PrintFIX from the File | Automate menu. A simple dialog is displayed that allows you to select your printer from the list of supported devices. Click the OK button and a calibration target is created for your printer. This target has any compensation settings and the paper type setting listed. To obtain the best results, it is important to closely follow the directions at this point. Be sure to setup your printer and the output color space appropriately, as the choices you make will determine the accuracy of the profile you are about to build. In particular, take note of the paper type.

I asked a ColorVision representative why they suggest always using Matte paper in the settings dialog. The reply was quick and clear -

"What is needed here is a manageable setting that is fairly linear, does not lay down too much ink, but does not starve the saturated colors either. This setting needs to be consistent, since the software is tuned specifically to that media setting for that printer. The media settings noted on each printer's specific target note which media setting was determined to best for that machine, and which was then used as a basis for that printer's target."

Next, you choose File | Import | PrintFIX which opens the scanner portion of the program and allows you to scan your newly printed calibration chart.

Finally, you start PrintFIX a third time and select 'create a profile'. If your calibration chart indicates an adjustment to the default settings, you set these now. Click OK, and your profile is automatically generated for you. Give it an easy to identify name, and select this as the Output Space every time you print on this printer and paper combination. You'll repeat this step for each paper type you wish to profile. Additionally, if you change to a third party ink set, or refill your own ink cartridges, you'll want to run through the profile process again.

A typical problem area for many of us is generating neutral black & white prints. Unfortunately, PrintFIX isn't as helpful here. B&W prints done using the PrintFIX profiles display a distinct color cast. To be fair, ColorVision is quite clear in their literature that PrintFIX is not designed to create profiles for B&W. There are options available, such as a RIP (Raster Image Processor), which bypasses the printer driver completely, or you can create or buy custom profiles generated with a spectroradiometer, but both of these options are significantly more expensive – RIPs are in the \$500 and up range, while spectro-based hardware typically run into the thousands.

For those that are determined and willing to invest some time and effort, ColorVision is currently bundling DoctorPRO with PrintFIX.

DoctorPRO works by running an action that you record to correct color casts. It's time consuming, but you can improve the output significantly. The task is made a bit more cumbersome due to little documentation.

While not inexpensive, at \$339, PrintFIX can quickly save time and money, particularly for those who print on third party papers. I have noticed a significant drop in the amount of expensive paper in the trashcan here, and a slight improvement over the stock profiles provided with the Epson. It has also encouraged me to try new papers that I may have avoided due to cost.

The service and support from ColorVision has been first rate, with all questions answered promptly and accurately. There are many technical and how-to articles on their website, along with free updates to software.

ColorVision is currently bundling DoctorPRO, normally \$169 as a separate purchase. There are also bundles available that include the SpyderPRO and OptiCAL products, giving the user a complete color management solution for monitor and printer. For most users, the ColorVision suite of profiling products will provide everything you need to produce quality output.

### Technical details

- Requires Windows 98, ME, 2000, or XP. Mac OS X 10.2 or better. Available USB port.
- Adobe Photoshop 5.5 or better, Adobe Photoshop Elements.
- Supported Printer (currently many Epson models) Note: a recent update has added support for several
- Canon BubbleJet printers. Check the ColorVision website for the latest printer list.

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