

# It's All in the Hue

*Ceiling suspension grid color tests 'keep the roof from caving in' at USG Interiors*

For Bill Fichtel of USG Interiors, the world's largest manufacturer of ceiling suspension grid, having paint colors not match is like having the "roof cave in." That is why Fichtel, production supervisor/paint department, relies heavily on spectrophotometer technology and computer software to ensure quality control over the department's paints.

Fichtel works out of USG Interiors' Westlake, OH, facility, one of three U.S. ceiling suspension grid plants for the manufacturer. Fichtel estimates his department conducts up to 100 color tests a day, all with a CM-2002 portable spectrophotometer and SpectraMatch software from the Instrument System Div. of Minolta (Ramsey, NJ).

"We formulate most of our colors in-house. As the need to make numerous matches grew, we needed a system that could give us the numbers of the standard and the match we were making and to help us choose

from various tints we now carry," explains Fichtel.

Color evaluating under different lighting conditions is important to Fichtel. Many of the ceiling grids are painted with custom colors and are installed in rooms with many different light sources.

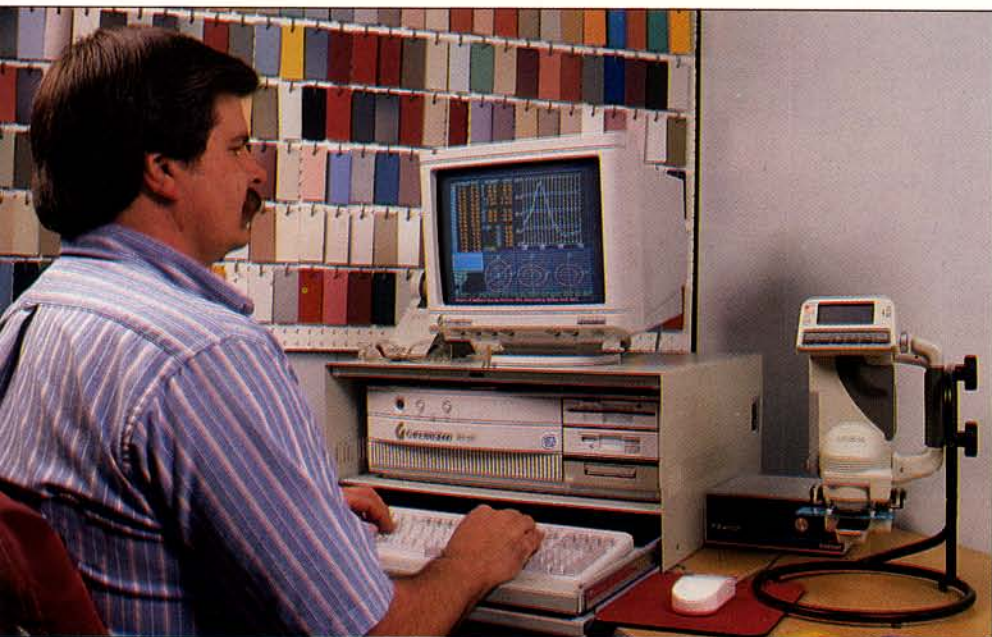
The spectrophotometer provides color data for various lighting conditions. It uses an 8-mm aperture and xenon light sources. The data acquired under the necessary illuminant are then analyzed with the software.

"Matching the colors under various lighting conditions allows us to eliminate much of the flip-flop of paint. The software can take us through the matching process based on whatever light source we need," adds Fichtel.

The software allows Fichtel to create a theoretical formula for a particular color and compare it under different light sources. This allows him to see how the colors react without making a batch of paint. When a correct color is established, the system can provide the cost of the batch, price per ounce, gallon and drum.

The ability to change lighting conditions aids in matching the ceiling grids manufactured at the Westlake facility with the tile boards made at other locations. A phone conversation establishes the lighting conditions, and Fichtel switches the software to the appropriate light, virtually guaranteeing a match. □

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Bill Fichtel, production supervisor/Paint Dept. at USG Interiors, matches colors using Minolta's CM-2002 spectrophotometer and software. Photo courtesy of Minolta.