



John Roberts trade tests a new spirit level

I will level with you about this instrument

THERE are many spirit levels on the market all with their own description of quality and accuracy, but this one stands out for me.

The manufacturer claims electronic adjustment to ensure the vials are set accurately. I measured the accuracy of this instrument against three other spirit levels, one being digital, and found this accurate at various temperature levels.

I must admit I have never checked a spirit level before and can only check as described above, as I do not own any sophisticated equipment to carry out accuracy tests.

This said, looking purely from a floor and wall tile angle (no pun

intended) the horizontal and vertical lines are the most important to customers. And this is where this instrument comes into it's own.

This level is 1000mm in length, making it a good size for floor tilers to achieve a spirit level on ceramic tiles even in confined spaces.

The level has a high tensile centre support. I did not want to test this to destruction but having applied a considerable amount of pressure to both ends with the middle on a solid base I did not find any deflection in the instrument.

I placed a straight edge along both edges before and afterwards and found no measurable effect of applying pressure.

UV stable vials, having only used this instrument indoors as do most floor and wall tilers, I did not evaluate this point.

The precision milled edge is very useful as it helped with the anti slip aspect. The instrument boasts anti-slip rubbers on each end. These were extremely useful when holding the level vertically with one hand, whilst placing a pencil line along the edge or when assessing the alignment of wall tiles.

The centre vial is magnified to aid the visual aspect from a distance and also from close up to give more accuracy. The centre vial has an 11-point resin lock for more accuracy.

Compared with my other spirit

levels, I found this one easy to use with virtually no slip and clear easy to see level from the magnified vial.

One negative point and a pet hate of mine, the instrument was not supplied with a container to store it and for when travelling to prevent damage from other tools falling onto the vials. **CFJ**

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John Roberts founded TAOFS (The Academy of Flooring Skills) and is a prominent consultant in flooring. TAOFS offers training in all types of floorcoverings.

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David Gatfield on changes for floorlayers

Big choice today. It wasn't always so!

BETWEEN now and Christmas there is bound to be several new types of flooring launched to add to an already bewildering array of products.

Currently there are rubbers, smooth vinyls, textured vinyls, tiles, planks, panels, imitation granite and marble. Then there's PVC pretending to be wood, ceramics, wood in the form of laminates disguised as ceramics, and even wood masquerading as itself. Oh, did I mention safety flooring? And we've not even touched on resins or carpet — an incredible choice of flooring types widely ranging in price and quality, not to mention availability, durability, usability, coveability, likeability and (today's buzz word) sustainability.

It was a lot easier when I started out in the game in the dark ages; there was wood, which had already been around forever, a bit of contract carpet, linoleum, rubber, thermo plastic tiles, some unstable contract vinyl sheet at either 3ft or 6ft wide and safety flooring, which came in only one format in those days and in just six colours. Half a dozen basic products covered the nation's entire flooring needs.

■ **Availability:** This was limited, as the distributor network of today was non-existent. Flooring contractors either bought from a few outlets with a limited stock, or direct from the manufacturer, which usually meant spending an hour waiting in line at the trade counter, before driving round the back and being ignored by the warehouse staff, to eventually collect your materials.

■ **Durability:** This was a suck it and see affair. Early flexible vinyl tiles wore out too quickly, so someone had the idea of loading them up with asbestos. It made them last longer — so long that some are still around today. Now the problem is that nobody wants to

take them up, for obvious reasons. However in those blissfully ignorant and innocent days, the dangers of asbestos were unknown; floorlayers of my era installed these products every day.

■ **Usability:** Most products in those days were difficult to use, especially by today's standards. Floorlaying was a hard job and not yet recognised as a trade, so it was head down, backside in the air until the job was finished, whatever the product.

■ **Coveability:** Not much was coved back then, except for a few thermo plastic tile installations, most of which were early attempts to cover in situ terrazzo or granolithic cove details. When I joined Altro, almost every job we did was coved, and now much contemporary flooring can be coved with many people sufficiently skilled to carry out this exacting work.

■ **Likeability:** It didn't much matter whether you liked a product or not. There was so little choice that changing from one sheet vinyl to another held no advantage for the flooring contractor; it might have been going from the

frying pan into the fire so better the devil you know, to abuse a cliché or two!

■ **Sustainability:** In those halcyon days, the world seemed to be a bottomless pit of natural resources; oil was abundant and there was thought to be no shortage of anything that took your fancy for the rest of time. How very different today! Oil, from which we derive PVC, is so depleted that the North Sea is expected to be devoid of this precious commodity within 15 years, if you believe the experts, so sustainability is now the order of the day.

All this adds up to a fantastic (though often confusing) choice for the consumer, but at an ever increasing cost to the environment. Schemes like our Recofloor partnership with Axion and Polyflor will hopefully mean we won't all be forced to live on the moon in a few years time. **CFJ**

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Moisture hung out to dry?

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about time we had a debate about the moisture testing and even get someone independent to look at the various methods of moisture testing, perhaps funded somewhat by the CFA on behalf of contractors.

To stamp out moisture we must get on top of the testing methods and agree a set of protocols for their use as well as how the methods relate to each other and if values can be compared?

At least it will allow the relative merits or pros and cons of each test method to be

defined and outline the circumstances under which they can be used and trusted. I would love to hear from anyone involved in this area to see if there are similar thoughts out there.

I'd like to think that in 20 years **CFJ** will look back at today and reflect on how much an issue moisture USED to be — what are the chances? **CFJ**

Martin Cummins is technical training manager at Laybond

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