

# Three painters compare four Northwest paints



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# And the WINNER is ...

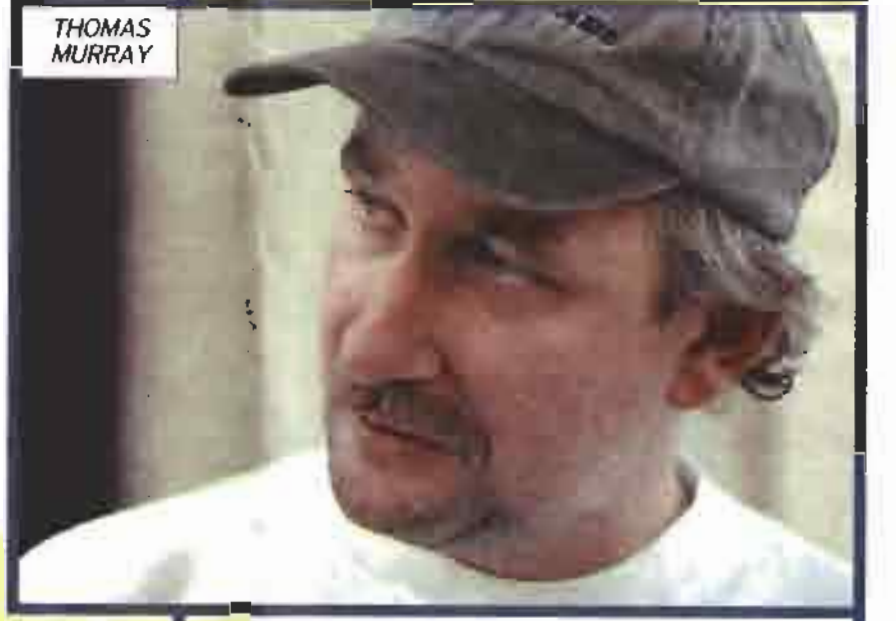
By Bridget A. Otto  
THE OREGONIAN

**A**sk three painters what paint they prefer and why, and you'll get three different answers and varying explanations. One likes how a company staffs its stores. Another says his brand stands behind its products. A third thinks the paint he uses is simply higher quality, and he's known the store owner for years. Asked if they could tell the difference between paints in a blind test, their eyes get a gambler's glint as though they could. It is, after all, their profession. Yet all three hedge their bets. High-end paints, which start at about \$23 per gallon, are pretty similar, they basically agree. Thus they stay with brands for reasons that go beyond how the paint

loads on a roller and covers a wall. But what about the homeowner who doesn't know a Miller from a Rodda or a Benjamin Moore from a Sherwin-Williams? Is one better than the other? In a limited way, we set out to see. We tested paints from the two big Northwest manufacturers, Miller and Rodda. In the quasi-controlled environment of the newspaper's carpenter shop, three painters were faced with four identical paint trays, each filled with a different interior latex paint: two manufactured by Miller and two by Rodda. The painters did not know which paints were in the test; they worked alone so as not to be influenced by each other's comments. All rolled paint onto primed drywall. Silence ensued as each painter tried to discern the difference between

Miller Premium, Devine, Rodda Master Painter and Yolo Colorhouse. Miller manufactures Devine, which was developed by Gretchen Schaufli of Lake Oswego. Rodda manufactures Yolo, which is a nontoxic zero-VOC (volatile organic compound) paint developed by Portlanders Janie Lowe and Virginia Young. Both are considered specialty paints created with a palette of colors that work well in Northwest light. The paint was tinted yellow — Rodda No. 7944 (Tigger's Tail) — and made in each company's satin sheen. The results will not rock the paint makers' worlds. No R&D staffs will be sent scurrying to reformulate this or rejigger that. The test was enlightening, however, for the homeowner who may roll paint on once every couple of

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- THE TEST RESULTS**
- ◆ All noted that Devine was thick and covered well.
  - ◆ No significant quality differences were found between Yolo, the lone zero-VOC paint, and its competitors. (Zero-VOC paints are designed to release no pollutants and be virtually odor-free.)
  - ◆ Rodda was considered thick by one and a little thin by another.
  - ◆ Two of three painters thought the finish, which was satin on all, was eggshell.
  - ◆ Yolo was considered thick by two and thin by one.
  - ◆ Miller was thought to be Devine by one.
  - ◆ All painters thought the paints were extremely similar and of good quality.

Despite decades of experience among them, three professional painters could not determine which paint was which in side-by-side blind testing of interior latex paints. All agreed that when buying paint, you should steer clear of the cheap stuff; you'll only pay for it in labor.

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years, if not for the professional who does it every day.

The independent experts — Jon Bake, Rich Larrance and Thomas Murray, who each own their own businesses — brought decades of painting experience and know-how to the test. They smelled each paint, dipped their fingers in, and looked at the painted drywall with the intensity of a diamond broker checking for inclusions and flaws.

They found a few things they especially liked and pointed out a few things they didn't. But overall, as Bake says, "This is doggone apples to apples here."

The painters say coverage is the most important quality of a paint. The true test of a paint, Murray says, is how it covers in one coat. That said, all three almost always apply two coats.

Bake, who uses mostly Miller, says he's experimented with "one fat coat, but two always looks better."

Larrance, who uses Benjamin Moore, agrees. "The second coat is the secret to getting the true color," he says.

Although partial to Sherwin-Williams, Murray likes the coverage Devine gives.

"It is expensive," he says, "but people forget how much time is involved. Better coverage saves you labor."

That's not to say that people should buy only very expensive paints. For interiors, Larrance thinks a good-quality paint that runs about \$20 is fine. Just don't buy cheap paint, he says.

Murray agrees.

"There is no benefit," Murray says. "Any savings will be instantly eaten up by labor." ♦

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## TIPS FROM RICH LARRANCE

♦ **Don't paint out of a pan.** Get a 5-gallon bucket and pour all but an inch of your gallon of paint into the bucket. Save this bottom inch of paint for your trim work. Paint settles even on the ride home from the store, he says, and this bottom layer has the most pigment in it.

♦ **Slide a grate** (sold at all paint stores) into the 5-gallon bucket. Run the roller up and down the grate, touching just the surface of the paint each time. When the roller is full, run it quickly down the grate one last time to let excess paint spin off into the bucket.

♦ **Properly loaded**, Larrance says, the paint will not drip or splatter off the roller — as long as you don't go "100 miles an hour."

♦ **For the trim**, pour the remaining inch of paint from the paint can into a 2-gallon bucket. (A coffee can works.) Dip just three-quarters of the brush into the paint. Think like an artist.

Larrance says. Don't load one side and scrape the other side clean on the side of the bucket. Load the brush equally by gently dabbing it into the paint and flicking off any excess.

♦ **Buy good rollers and brushes.** It pays off in the long run.

♦ **When you're through for the day**, don't end the job in the middle of a wall. Always end in a corner to avoid start/stop lines.

### WHAT THEY COST

The paints in the test were comparably priced: Miller Premium was \$23.45 a gallon; Rodda Master Painter Hi Hide, \$23.49; Devine, \$36.45; and Yolo, \$33.



ROLLER GRATE



THE PROPER LOAD



THREE-QUARTER DIP



FLICK EXCESS PAINT