

Weathering Rolling Stock, with Windex...

Rob Barker

My twist on three standard weathering techniques: washes, dry brushing and overspray. I use a variation on Jim Six's Q-Tip (cotton buds) weathering.

The basic idea is that rolling stock gets dirty, then it gets rained on and most of the dirt and grime get washed off – at least off the surfaces exposed to the rain. Car sides wash off easily, but doors and car ends have more ‘nooks and crannies’ where dirt and grime collect. The undersides of modern high side covered hoppers for example never see rain but pick up heaps of road grime. To simulate this, I apply layers of weathering to the whole car and then take a cotton bud soaked in Windex (Jim Six uses Champ Decal Setting solution) to wipe the weathering off the large flat surfaces. The cotton bud won't fit in all the little nooks and crannies, so these areas get really dirty.



Acrylic paints are easily removed with ammonia/alcohol based window cleaners – Windex is the only brand I've tried this with but others should work just as well. These cleaners don't do a very good job at removing lacquer based clear coats like Dullcoat. So by sealing paint and decals (or factory paints) with Dullcoat you can start applying acrylic weathering colors knowing that the weathering can easily be removed without damaging the original paint and decals. (Be careful however, with some elbow grease and lots of Windex you can remove Dullcoat, and very quickly the decal underneath!)

Before I even start a weathering project I like to get some prototype photos of cars as close to the same car series as the one I am modeling (if not the exact same car.) This helps me decide how heavy the weathering should be, and if the photo is in colour, what weathering colours I should use. The Gelwood “Fallen Flags” web site is by far the best resource on the internet for this purpose. I've included the address below, as well as several other on line resources for rolling stock and diesel photos.

Paint: I use mostly Modelflex paints; Roof Brown, Grimy Black, Rust, Rail Brown, Earth, Dust etc. Sometimes I'll mix the weathering colours together; it all depends on the prototype. For weathering purpose, the paint is cut with Clear Flat (or Clear Gloss if I am planning to decal over the weathering.) The ratio of pigmented paint to Clear Flat depends on how heavy a weathering effect I'm after – this is an easy way to control how heavy or light the weathering will be. Once the paint is cut with the clear, I call it “weathering mix.”

Washes: The “weathering mix” if further thinned with Poly S Airbrush Thinner. Normally, Modelflex paints are thinned with water but for washes the surface tension of the water keeps the pigment from flowing into the nooks and crannies – which is the whole idea of the wash. Don't worry too much about getting even coverage on the smooth surfaces. These will be removed later.

Dry Bushing: Generally use the weathering mix straight (no thinner) and this is a ‘detailing’ step. Get paint on the brush and wipe most of it off before using it on the model. You can simulate rust streaks with a little practice (and a slightly dry brush) – if you make a mistake – no worries – wipe it off with Windex and try it again.

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Overspray: While Modelflex can be sprayed unthinned, the weathering mix is further thinned with water (the alcohol in PolyS airbrush thinner causes Model flex paint to dry too fast for airbrushing.) You can spray with a lower air pressure and the first few coats you can hardly see any change to the model. The effect is very subtle and this works great as a final weathering coat.

Putting it all together: I usually start weathering during the construction process. This helps to protect details that are easily broken off, and also makes it easier to get into the ends of hopper and covered hoppers. Brake detail, ladders, car ends get a wash of Grimy Black, Roof Brown or a mixture of both. The bulk of the paint is removed with a cotton bud soaked in Windex. Once the model is complete, or after a layer of washes and wipes is put on the model I then start to focus on some of the detail weathering. Rust spots, oil spills and that sort of thing. At this point the weathering will usually look very harsh – with spots and streaks that just don't seem to go together. This is where the oversprays come into play. A light spray with Grimy Black, Roof Brown, Dust or even the cars base colour, will tie the whole thing together.

Prototype photos on line.

<http://www.rr-fallenflags.org/>

<http://www.railarc.com/>

<http://www.railpictures.net/>

<http://freight.railfan.ca/>

<http://www.trainweb.org/nwrp/main2.htm>

Prototype specific sites:

CP Photo Archive

<http://www.trainweb.org/galt-stn/cproster/main.htm>

BN Photo Archive:

<http://archive.trainpix.com/BN/INDEX.HTM>

ATSF Photo Archive:

<http://archive.trainpix.com/ATSF/INDEX.HTM>

CP Diesel Roster:

<http://www.trainweb.org/galt-stn/cproster/main.htm>

Soo Line Diesel Roster

<http://sooline.dieselrosters.com/>