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SWISS EXPRESS SCENERY CLINIC

DETAILING AND WEATHERING WAGONS



The finished weathering. I intentionally did not weather the information panels on the wagon because these are usually the cleanest part of the wagon in real life.

All photos: Peter Marriott

Peter Marriott discusses the various detailing and weathering techniques that can be used to improve wagons.

Some European wagons arrive ready-fitted with detailing parts whilst others come with packets of these to be fitted. Although a large number of UK outline wagons are now available ready-weathered, with European model railway equipment this is the exception rather than the rule.

Wagon detailing – is it worth doing?

Many ready-to-run models come with a bag of detailing parts but some purchasers choose not to fit these; others consider their model is not complete until they are fitted. The detailing work on the RAILION wagon discussed below took about a hour.

The result is that I now have a wagon that looks more realistic than the version straight from the box, and I gained satisfaction from doing the work.

Weathering – is it worth doing?

Weathering is the process of making models look more realistic by simulating the effects of rain, sun, dust, snow, grime, ageing, etc. As few European models are available ready weathered it is usually up to the purchaser to decide to modify their models. Some of us will understandably choose not to weather our rolling stock because of cost and re-sale implications; this is very much a personal matter. We can choose how far we want to weather our rolling stock – will it be lightly weathered or very dirty? We can also be selective with our weathering – so, for example, a wagon can be detailed and painted to represent replacement timbers and panels. Personally I find it very satisfying to see a wagon that I have weathered myself, working its way around a layout. To me the process is fun but I also confess to still finding it rather nerve-racking. Even after weathering numerous wagons each time I begin on a new wagon I still worry “I do hope I make this wagon look better not worse!”

Detailing and weathering a Roco 'RAILION' bogie covered wagon

These DB wagons are frequently seen on Swiss lines. The equipment that I used to weather this wagon (without an airbrush) was just a couple of aerosols of Humbrol acrylic paint, Tamiya weathering chalks and craft acrylic paints. The tools that are needed to

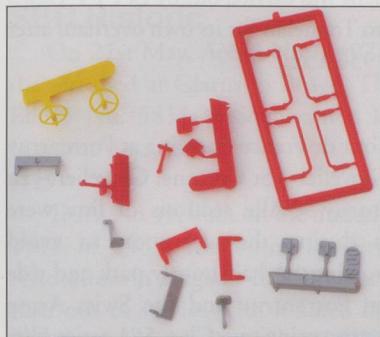
The Roco RAILION wagon straight out of the box just looks too clean and shiny! Compare this with the finished wagon above.



detail and weather the wagons were a sharp craft knife, a small pair of tweezers and some small paintbrushes.

Detailing

The model came with quite a number of parts to be fixed to the model – in red, yellow and grey plastic. The accompanying pictures show that the holes into which the detailing parts are to be pushed are quite large, so if you choose not to fit the parts the wagon would not look too realistic. A small diagram is supplied with the wagon showing where the parts are to be fitted. Some of the parts are tiny and need a steady hand and tweezers to push them in place. I used a dab of Deluxe Materials Plastic Magic onto the join to be doubly sure that the parts would stay put.



Here are the add-on bits and pieces that came with this particular wagon.

Weathering

On this wagon I used three weathering methods – weathering chalks, acrylic spray and dry brushing. Before I started I looked at the various

prototype pictures that I had to hand to see where the dirt would lie in real life. The next step was to use Tamiya Weathering Master B Set (Snow/Rust/Soot) chalks to apply a covering of dirt along the body sides with the supplied sponge/brush. I covered the roof in a lot of black weathering chalk and once I was happy with the amount of dirt on the wagon I sprayed the lower body with light grey acrylic paint by Humbrol, using a couple of light passes. To finish I dry brushed the raised details on the wagon as described below.



Some of the parts have been added to the wagon here and the bogie has been dry brushed with grey paint.

The dry brush technique

This method is used to enhance the raised details on a model rather than for applying a solid colour. The technique is as follows:

- Lightly dip a small but wide paintbrush into the acrylic or enamel paint.
- Rub the excess paint off the bristles of the brush on some paper tissue.
- Brush lightly over the details of the wagon.
- The paint will stick to the raised details and will highlight parts of the model.



The end of the weathered wagon. The dirt and grime effect has settled into the joints so that it looks more like the effect one would see on a real wagon.

Using Tamiya weathering chalks

Various companies make weathering chalks in a number of colours. Chalks are available in powder or in stick form. The chalks that I have used for this wagon are made by Tamiya because they are quite widely available in model shops in the UK and are sold in plastic trays of 3 colours, plus a double-ended brush (sponge one end, sponge brush the other) for applying the powder chalks. Remember when using Tamiya chalks:

- Chalks work best when applied to dull or non-glossy models, so you may find that applying a light coating of matt varnish, or distressing the model with glass fibre brushes before weathering, will enable the chalk to adhere better.
- The supplied brush with its foam cap is used to collect the chalk from the container then rub it down on the rolling stock.
- Use the soft end of the double-ended brush to wipe away any excess chalk and to spread the chalk further onto the model.
- As with all weathering rub the chalks in the direction that the weathering would naturally form.
- The tip of your finger is also a useful tool in spreading chalks!
- If you do not like the effect you have made the chalk can be wiped away even after it is dry by using a damp cloth.

Weathering dos-and-don'ts

- Use the materials that you are most comfortable with and what you are confident will produce good results.
- Experiment on an old wagon first and leave your best wagons for later! Weathering is definitely a technique to be learned.
- Work from prototype pictures to see exactly how a particular wagon would weather over time. Look where the rust patches are likely to occur.
- Go easy on weathering! It's better to do it too lightly rather than too darkly. You can always add another layer but it is not so easy to remove a coat – apart from water-based products.
- When you are happy with the finished result the weathering can be sealed in and protected by a quick spray of matt varnish from an aerosol. This usually has the effect of toning down the weathering.
- To create rust spots make up a little paste by mixing rust chalk with a little matt varnish or PVA glue. Dab the paste onto the sides and underframe of wagons with a small paintbrush, a wooden stick or a cocktail stick. Drag the paste downwards to create the appearance of streaks of rust washed down the sides of the wagon. 