



Dennis Andreas

Railroad Report

Weathering for a Realistic Look

Weathering is easy to apply and the rewards are worth the effort.

There are many great products available to enhance every part of a model railroad layout. Previous articles have involved construction buildings and creating a scenery demonstration piece. It's now time to see what can be done to highlight items like track and bridges. In addition we'll work together with an inexpensive caboose to add realism and a bit of age. The techniques are easy and relatively fast and we have two new products to introduce. The key to selling these products is to find some time and explain to your customers how weathering is done.

I mention an inexpensive caboose because the average customer won't take a triple digit dollar caboose and paint it, that wouldn't make a lot of sense. However these techniques will appeal to dealers setting up a store display, or more importantly, engage a younger modeler with the next steps they can take after laying out the starter set they were given as a gift. You can even use the techniques presented to address your dyed-in-the-wood customers into thinking about trying some of the newer systems.

To start, let's look at Woodland Scenics Tidy Tracks

Track Painter pens. These gems are self contained paint pens, no separate brush is needed. For purposes of this demonstration we'll use three colors; Rusty Rails, Weathered Tie, and Steel Rail. By far my favorite pen is Rusty Rails. A simple swipe on the rail side produces a very realistic rust pattern. The use of these pens can make the pristine steel or brass track that comes with a starter set, and is generally part of a new layout, blend naturally into a setting and not stand out.

The Weathered Tie Painter pen works great to add a creosote look to the wood ties. By adding a little Rusty Rail to the tie near the rail, it gives the appearance of the rust



bleed that occurs as rails gradually erode. Another use for the Rusty Rail Painter pen is for the wheels, axle trucks and couplers on rolling stock. Just like the rails, they have rust on the surfaces, and these effects are easily reproduced with the Tidy Tracks Painter pens.

When using the pens, start by giving them a little shake to mix the contents, and then gently press the nib on a firm surface to get the paint flowing. While pressing, the user will begin to see the color moving down the nib. When the color gets about half way down the nib, stop pressing and let capillary action and gravity do the rest. By stopping the press before the paint comes to the tip, it will keep too much paint from being applied to the surface that's being colored, and most of all, keeps paint from being wasted.

When ready to paint, simply glide the pen nib on the surface to be weathered. The process is simple and quick, plus the results are very convincing. But offer some help and reminders to the new users. Frequently newbies are frustrated because they've not achieved the look they are after, and many times it's simply because nobody explained that the



New products and simple techniques can greatly enhance the appearance of inexpensive out of the box components.

inside surfaces have to be done also, especially when painting rails.

We've made short work of the rails with the Rusty Rails Painter pen, so now it's time to see what we can do to the ballast portion of the track. Full-scale railroads use light gray granite for ballast, and when first laid in place it looks almost exactly like the sections of test track in our

stores, but as it sits and weathers, rust from the rails flows across the track, onto the ties and seeps into the ballast.

For my work commute I ride the dreaded Long Island Rail Road almost every day. I use this as an example because it's much easier to refer a student to a full-scale set-

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ting so he can actually see exactly how rails weather and ties erode. It's much easier for a student of weathering to look at a railroad bed than for dealers to try to explain the look they are after, especially when there is no visual reference involved. To color the ballast we need to introduce customers to another product, this time from Badger. We all know Badger as a premium airbrush manufacturer. What many have not learned is to compliment its equipment



A quick swipe with a Rusty Rails pen gives shiny track and rolling stock the look of an aged, hard working railroad.

Badger now offers Precise Design Model Flex Paint. These paints are airbrush-ready acrylics packaged in one ounce jars.

To color the ballast portion of the track, we will use the Rail Brown. Have your student again refer to a full-scale railroad. In many instances electric and diesel electric locomotives will share the same tracks, so there are different shades of staining, and the effect can be reproduced in a two part process.

For this application first brush on some Rail Brown and let dry approximately 30 minutes. An airbrush could be used, but there is a lot of masking of rail tops involved, and for this step brushing works very well. And it might be an easier sell to your customers, especially if their track has been laid out and is already secured in place. After the first application of paint is dry, take a cotton rag with a little Grimmy Black and rub it over the Rail Brown. This has the effect of dirty ballast in a totally random pattern.

Other areas where we can enhance our layouts are the trestles and bridges. Using a simple and inexpensive plastic bridge we will add some age to it. Before painting plastic, the usual preamble must again be repeated. Be sure to use soap and water to clean the plastic of any residual release agents and hand oils. These waxes and oils make acrylic paint pool and separate from the area painted, so be sure to think clean. The first color applied is the Weathered Black. Paint all of the steel surfaces and let this first coat thoroughly dry. It's now time to add some Rust color, but it's important to use a dry brush technique.

The idea in adding rust to a metal structure is to think, and once again if at all possible, observe the real thing. The person doing the weathering must ask himself, where does rust collect? The answer is rust is carried in water and is pulled down with gravity, and it then flows onto horizontal surfaces. Rust also forms where two surfaces meet and water is trapped. On the sample bridge these are the rivet and plate areas and the lower horizontal surfaces. Unless the look is one of a section of steel rotting away, it's important

not to over do it, and this is why a dry brush is used. What this means is to add just enough paint to moisten the brush tip then squeeze it gently with a rag to remove the excess. This will remove the wet paint and spreads what paint is left throughout the brush. Using a light downward sweep add the rust just a little at a time. We want to duplicate the look of a stain, so work slowly and lightly and allow the effect to grow. Hopefully your student took at some pictures and he can compare his work to what he sees in his photographs. Once he's happy, he's finished. It's that simple. All that needs to be done is to let the paint dry completely, and later add any touchup that might be needed.

An inexpensive entry level caboose is an artist's palette when it comes to learning how to weather rolling stock. The sample caboose benefited greatly from a simple application of Badger's Precise Design Caboose Red. This was applied free hand using a quality brush, working around the labeling. Some of the same Weathered Black and Rust were also used on the caboose platforms. For some additional weathering, Rusty Rails from the Woodland Scenics Track Painters pens was applied to the wheel discs, trucks and couplers using a light touch, a much lighter touch than was used on the track rails.

Weathering can be simple or quite involved. For the introduction, I stayed with simple techniques you can teach your customer without them getting frustrated and walking away. It only took a couple of hours of time, but the treatments greatly enhanced the look of the rails, improved the look of the bridge, and not only correctly colored the caboose, but gave the caboose character and the appearance of an aged, hard working rail car.



Photographs of full-size tracks and ties are a valuable asset when duplicating the appearance of a working railroad.

The products from Woodland Scenics and Badger are a great combination for an easy-to-apply look of weathering anyone can do with minimal instruction. All that is needed is just a little patience and guidance from shop owners. Most dealers have some old stock lying around or even trade-ins which can be used during a demonstration day. Another thought is to have a customer bring in an item to work on during an afternoon's mini seminar. Getting the customer introduced to these new products during a hands-on session at your shop is a guaranteed sale. What are you waiting for? Get your customers started in weathering techniques and do what it takes to motivate people. **HM**