

Painting an Army in a Weekend

Chances are, you're just like me. If you are, you've got way more armies than you could possibly play, and none of them are painted. I'm a slow painter. It takes me a long time to finish a single model and exponentially longer to finish a unit, let alone an entire army.

I do try, but by the time I'm making headway, another army grabs my interest and I never finish. This has always been a sore spot with me. It's not that I don't want to finish the army, but the new army just makes the old army look, well, old.

Let's start this with a bit of a history. I purchased most of the models in my World Eaters army for the 2003 Eye of Terror campaign. While paging through the Chaos Codex, I was quite taken by the look of the Violators and thought, "If I ever do a Chaos chapter, that's the one for me." As luck would have it, GW was cracking down on Internet Sales and many retailers were offering huge discounts on their stock since they wouldn't need it anymore. Being an opportunist, I decided to collect a Chaos Space marine army. I purchased roughly 3,500 points worth of models and they slowly began arriving at my door.

Unfortunately, SLOWLY was an understatement and I really never had time to model and paint the entire army before the campaign ended. I lost interest in finishing the army. So the army sat in the shed, some models assembled, some painted, some new in the box. The was taking up space, but I really didn't see any sense in completing it as my focus had shifted away from them.

As my attention shifted back to 40K, I was looking to start a new army for two reasons. First, my Dark Angels were stalled because I needed details for the vehicles. Second, I really wanted to do a house army for people who came by and were interested in playing. I started looking on eBay and was struck by two facts. "Pro-Painted" on eBay equates to "painted by a room full of blind monkeys", and painted armies were grossly over-priced.

I did a heap of thinking; if only I had the models, I could do better than that. Then I thought, "wait, I have the models and I'm a blind (on the left side) simian". Close enough. So I pulled out the Chaos army and started considering my options.

I didn't want to spend a lot of time on this army because I have enough half finished armies. I decided my goal would be to get this army into a playable state in as little time as possible. Ideally, a single weekend.

I started considering how to go about doing this and decided the best way would be to use a spray on base coat, and not to get hung up on all of the things I could do to make

the coolest army anyone had ever seen- aim small and hit small. I decided to select an army theme that I had the models for and had a simple, but not bland color scheme. The World Eaters seemed to fit the bill. I had enough berserkers to make the core of the army and the basic red and brass color scheme looked nice and seemed simple enough to paint.

The first task was priming and base-coating the army. I use Krylon Ultra Flat Black as the primer coat. I really like this paint as it covers evenly and is very black. It can go on rather thick at times, so be sure to shake the can often, and only put on a light coat.

For the base color I used Krylon Satin Burgundy. The satin colors have a bit of a shine to them, although it is hardly noticeable if the paint is applied correctly. The burgundy is a dark red and the technique to apply it took some time and involved some casualties. I laid the models outside on a large sheet of cardboard. I stepped about two feet downwind and sprayed the models. It's really more of a misting and it turns out that the hardest part is knowing when to stop. You want the model to pick up the color just enough so that, at two feet away, it looks like the color you're using, and has black in all of the areas that should be shaded. Don't worry about the high areas that need shading. Those will be added up later.

The next step is, of course, drying. If you paint in small batches, it's entirely possible that the first models will be dry while you are painting the last. You could work like this, but the goal here is to do it quickly, and the smaller the batch of models to paint, the longer it will take to finish the army. Treat the whole army as the batch.

Once the models are dried, take them back in doors and set up your work area. You should have some idea of the colors you're going to be using before you begin. Take these paints out and set them in the middle of your work surface, but leave room to work. Now's a good time to bring out your brushes. Use brushes that have as large as tip size as you can possibly get away with.

For information on priming in the colder climates, see the document about how to build a drying box.

Set all of your models off to your right side. Try to group them in like poses so that you will need to spend less time deciding what needs to be painted and what doesn't. As you apply a color to the model, move it to your left side. Once you've worked your way through the whole army, reverse the process by moving models from your left to your right as you paint them.

Start by applying black to everything on the model that will be metal. Usually, this is weapons, and in the case of fantasy, armor. Take a minute and think about your color scheme and make sure you're applying black to everything that needs it.

The next step is to dry brush the metal with the metallic paint of your choice. Be careful with over-brushing. A little is alright, here and there, as it probably won't even be noticeable from a distance, but you don't want to get too crazy with it.

The next step is picking out the details. This can be time consuming. Stick with applying a single color to every miniature and working with the left-right/right-left system. Using the largest brush possible will greatly speed up the amount of time it

takes to apply the color. Some colors don't go on well in one coat. However, stick with the system and apply those colors twice, instead of trying to get a nice, even coat in one go.

The next step is to apply some ink. There are only two colors of ink you need to have to do 99% of the color schemes: black and brown. Black will work well for cooler colors such as blues and greens, while browns work well for warmer colors like yellow and red. Sticking to the left-right system, apply watered down ink to all of the divisions of the legs. By division, I mean any where two colors meet, or there is a detail in the surface. For example, the gap between the grieve and boot on a Space Marine. Once all of the legs are done, move to the torsos and repeat. It may help to subdivide the model further to prevent boredom. For example, the backpacks can take a while, so maybe they should be done separately. The problem with boredom is that it can make your work sloppy. By working on the areas separately, you decrease the likelihood of forgetting areas of the model, or lapsing into drowsiness and painting the wrong things.

To finish the bases, try using watered-down dark brown. You can use a hairdryer to speed the drying process. Just be careful no to let the model get too hot. Drybrush on some medium brown and finish with a drybrush of light brown or yellow.

Upon completion, you may decide that you don't want the entire army to look "Pro-Painted". An army deserves a center-point. Large models and heroes are perfect candidates for creating visual interest. Concentrating more on vehicles and monsters, as they tend to stand out on the table, is not a bad idea. You can easily go back to them and add more shading and highlighting to the model. Adding more details and highlighting will cause the overall look of the army to increase, as the larger models tend to draw attention more than rank and file models.

Still, the army can be brought to a playable state in a single weekend. But what do you do now that it's finished. Well, get some more models. You have a playable army to use while you struggle over the finer painting techniques with the new unit or character you want to add. As your painting skills increase, you can swap entire units out of the army, or simply add the new ones in and play larger point value games.

The point is that you have a finished army. It doesn't matter that each model wasn't painstakingly converted, Golden Demon winners don't see you models and decide to give up the hobby, or that you could have done this or that better. What matters is that a finished army looks better and feels better than an unfinished one. Your opponents will appreciate facing off against an army and not have to face the plastic and pewter corps they've grown accustomed to. And you're parents, spouse, significant other can't argue when you announce that you'll need to get another army, because you're done with this one.