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THE LORD OF THE RINGS
STRATEGY BATTLE GAME

Over time, the Painting Workshop series builds into an invaluable resource of techniques, tips and tutorials covering every aspect of the painting hobby.

Chris Peach is a renowned army painter, whose work has graced many army books, White Dwarf issues and our website. With the release of War of The Ring this month, and the excitement generated by last month's Apocalypse releases, many of you will be taking up your brush and setting out to paint a whole host of models. This month's Painting Workshop is about just that – painting a whole army.

Chris: I often have to paint a whole army at a time, sometimes in a week or less, which means that when it comes to painting large numbers of models quickly and to a high standard, I've got a few techniques and tricks up my sleeve to help me out. Hopefully you'll find some of this advice helpful. Painting an army is not necessarily the same as painting a single miniature, so it's important to get into some of the theory behind army painting before I show you how I painted my Mordor army.

I always start by painting a single test piece. This gives me a good opportunity to experiment with my colour palette. I see what colours look good on the model, selecting a good basecoat colour, as well as picking out some good contrasting colours too. I studied colour theory at university, so I've got a basic understanding of the principles involved with colour contrast – certainly not to the level of 'Eavy Metal painters such as Darren Latham, but enough to get me by when it comes to picking colours that work for my army.

Once I've finished the test model, I start to plan out how the whole army will be painted. The way I do that might sound a bit weird, but hear me out as it's for a very good reason. I take my test model, hold it up and then squint at it. This blends all the colours together and lets me pick out the dominant colour of the model, which I then employ across the whole army. Try this trick with a fully painted army too – squint at it, and you should see the dominant colour for the army.

Using this colour as the basecoat ties the army together – if you squint at a model and can't make out a single defining colour, then the chances are it will look far too incoherent when a whole army is painted in this way. This may seem obvious for an army such as Space Marines, which has a bold, single colour, but it applies just as much to a multi-coloured army, such as Eldar. In fact, in such armies it applies doubly – a single, strong colour can really unify an otherwise disparate force.

ASSEMBLY AND UNDERCOATING

With any army I like to start by working out a rough army list, and then assembling the miniatures in accordance with that. Sometimes I just grab a box set and dive in, but it's always useful to have an idea of the size of units, and the options they're equipped with before you get started. I sometimes change my mind about my army list midway through a project, but that's OK – nothing is ever wasted in this hobby, it just provides me with more choice in the future.

On the face of it, it might seem a bit excessive, but I like to assemble a whole army at once. I think a lot of the reasons for doing this is to do with discipline – when I've finished, I know that everything is built there in front of me. If I've assembled that Chimera already, I know that I'm much more likely to paint it; if it's still unassembled in a box at home I'm much less likely to. There's also that incentive to press on and paint them all – after all, I've invested all that time in the assembly so the army is halfway there!

I don't go over the top with an army to start with, I make sure I keep it to a manageable size – with a horde army such as Skaven or Imperial Guard, I start with a smaller force (500 points, say) so I don't get overwhelmed. Whatever the army's size, I always make sure it's legal on the battlefield – that way, once assembled and painted, I can begin playing right away.

I tend to tip all the plastic kits onto the table and then assemble them a unit at a time. I like to mix and match as much as possible between kits, so it's handy to see them all together. This is just as true for The Lord of The Rings as it is for Warhammer – I quite often swap the arms of my Men of Gondor about, for example, turning spears into banners, and so on.

For my Mordor Orcs I assembled all of the plastic Orcs, then the Trolls, and finally the character models. Once the army is assembled, I base it all at once. I almost always undercoat an army with Chaos Black spray, using my painting stick.

Technique

Painting Sticks

I use a piece of wood (called Narsil) as my undercoating stick. Most of us in the Studio use a stick for undercoating, such as 'Eavy Metal's ancient stick, with a several inch-thick layer of old sticky tape from years of use. It's not just faster and more efficient, but also better than a box. With a stick you can rotate it as you spray, ensuring you coat every part of the model. With a box it's trickier, often leading to parts of the model getting missed. I stick double-sided tape to all four sides of Narsil and attach models to every surface – it may look like some sort of stone-age mace, but it means that there's less wasted spray; if it misses one model, it's bound to hit another! Once sprayed, I either balance the stick until the models have dried, or use a hairdryer to speed up the drying process.

Top Tip

Assembling Regiments

When assembling a unit for Warhammer you have to consider how the models will work together, especially with regard to how they rank up. I work backwards when assembling a Warhammer unit, starting with the back rank and moving towards the front. I try to make sure that any model will fit in any position. I sometimes use regiment bases, which are a great time-saver in game for larger units. I save the command group until last, as they can be assembled in cool poses.

With War of The Ring movement trays, there's usually no problem getting all the models to fit, but I always check just to be sure.

PAINTING UNITS

Before embarking on painting the whole army, Chris paints a single test-piece. This gives him the opportunity to experiment with different colour palettes and techniques, making sure they work on a single model before applying them to an army.

After undercoating the whole army, I then basecoat all of the models. If you remember at the start of article I talked about squinting at my models to discern an overall colour – well, that's the basecoat! In the case of my Mordor army, this was Scorched Brown. Actually, brown is one of the colours I readily default to when basecoating an army, especially one for The Lord of The Rings or Warhammer. Many of the fiddly bits of detail, such as the belts, are going to be brown anyway, which saves a great deal of time. From a distance it looks good across the whole army, as it adds an overall dirty and battle-worn appearance.

I apply the basecoat with the Spray Gun when basecoating an army, although I do sometimes use a tank brush when basecoating a small number of models. I tend to use the Spray Gun regardless of the colour, even spraying metallic paints such as Chainmail when painting largely armoured armies.

I then split the army up into formations or units, and begin to pick out the details.

With my Mordor army I started with my Mordor Orcs (yes, all 72 of them) and applied all of the brown, then all of the metal, and so on. I apply each colour to all the models in the formation – this might sound like a hard slog, but it does mean that once you're finished, that's the hardest part over with.

Batch Painting & Spot Colours

The reasoning behind painting such large batches at a time is simple: it's all about keeping up the momentum with an army. If I paint 72 at once, I'm much more likely to push on and finish the army – not least because I've got 72 painted already, but also because if I paint my models in batches of 10, once those 10 are done there's a tendency to sit back and think you're done, when in reality you still have the same to do six or seven times over.

It's worth talking about the colour palette I've chosen for the Orcs and the way I've applied it to the models. I try to limit myself to four colours in my palette, not including the flesh tones or the brown

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🔍 Technique

Painting Elites

The Morannon Orcs are meant to be more elite than the rest of the Orc rabble, and I've tried to reflect this in the way that I've painted them. I've added a second highlight, but I've also tried to make them appear more regimented by painting the areas of clothing the same on each.

In the case of more regimented armies, such as my Gondor or Imperial Guard, the converse is true. The novices, such as the Conscripts, look clean and fresh, whereas the more elites, such as Hardened Veterans or Osgiliath Veterans, look more battered and battle-worn.

basecoat. For my Mordor army these were red, grey, silver and brown/hide. When I apply these colours to the rank and file, I try to vary the areas they're applied to so that they don't all appear the same. So I might paint ten with a red tunic, then ten with red trousers and so on. It keeps the army coherent, but also gives it the appearance of a rabble, rather than a uniform army.

In the same way that a spot colour is often used in a colour palette to tie the different areas of a model together *(See Darren's use of Bleached Bone in last month's 'Eavy Masterclass for a good example of this – Ed),* when painting an army a spot colour can be used to tie the different models together. For the Mordor army I used red as the spot colour, and almost every model has red somewhere on it. The one exception to this is the Witch-king, who has deliberately been left without it to contrast with the rank and file.

Applying Washes

After I've applied all of the basecoat to a formation, I apply a wash. I use a 50/50 mix of Devlan Mud and Badab Black for most things these days – it looks good over metals, as well as flesh and cloth. I tend to have a couple of pots mixed up in these quantities on my desk. I sometimes use a tank brush to apply the wash, stabbing at the model from above so that the wash runs into the crevasses, but the Spray Gun works well for large numbers of models, making the whole process nice and quick.

Unlike undercoats and basecoats, I don't use my hairdryer to speed the process along, as this ends up blowing the wash out of the cracks. Instead I use it as an opportunity to take a break and go and make a cup of tea *(Aah, so that's why Nick and Chris have so many tea breaks – Ed),* which is important when you're painting large numbers of models at a time.

I find that when you're painting a whole army, it really pays to consider the order that you do things. So, whilst waiting for the wash to dry on the Mordor Orcs, I started applying the basecoat to the formation of Morannon Orcs. And as that dried, I went back to highlighting the now-dry Mordor Orcs. It helps break the whole process down and makes for a much more efficient use of your time.

Highlighting

Because I'm often painting such large quantities of models, I often only apply one highlight, and sometimes don't even do that for real horde armies. Leaving the wash as the final stage and letting it do all the hard work for you lends the army a really dirty look. At heart I'm a perfectionist, but time constraints often dictate otherwise.

I tend to use the base colour as a highlight, applying it as a simple edging highlight to the raised areas of a model. I don't usually bother with mixes for the rank and file – the washes have darkened the paint down already, so the basecoat stands out nicely with no messing about.

Three versions of the same miniature, showing how Chris applies different colours to different parts of the model. By varying the placement of colours across the model, Chris creates the appearance of a rabble.

✔ **Top Tip**

Command Models

I paint a command group at the same time as the unit. Once the rest of the unit is finished, I go back and apply another highlight to the command group, typically applying a cleaner highlight to more of the surfaces. The aim is to make the command group stand out, whilst still appearing to belong to the unit. The same is true for Warhammer 40,000, where I will spend more time on a sergeant, painting the face a bit better or posing the model a little more dynamically. I like to make sure that banners tie in with the rest of the army too. My Mordor formations all have black banners with red symbols, for example, which adds coherency across the army.

Two models from Chris' Bretonnian army, a Warden and regular Man-at-Arms, showing the extra detail and highlights he applies to his command groups to make them stand out from the rank-and-file. Chris paints the command group at the same time as the unit, to keep the painting consistent.

LARGE MONSTERS

✔ Top Tip

Rewards

I'm very disciplined when painting an army, painting all the infantry, then all the cavalry. I make this a bit easier by rewarding myself – after I finish a stage of one of my units I go for a cup of tea. But after I finish all of my models I reward myself with a painting treat; so I painted my Trolls after my infantry, and I painted my Heroes after I'd finished my cavalry. I find that this breaks up the painting, and is a nice incentive.

After finishing the infantry, I painted the Trolls as a treat for myself (see the Top Tip on the left). I wanted to spend a bit more time on the Trolls, so I painted them individually. I used the same palette of colours on them as I used on the rest of the army to avoid having them stand out too much. I used a similar technique as with the Orcs, but added a few more stages of highlighting. I concentrated the most time and effort on the largest areas – the flesh and the metal – as the eye is naturally drawn to them.

Because they are large centrepiece models, I added a few conversions to the Trolls to make them even more individual. I used short lengths of brass rod on one to represent arrows sticking out of him. I also repositioned the arms to give him a unique pose. I glued some casualties onto both of the bases – many of The Lord of The Rings character models have dead models on the bases, so I used a couple of these. I find little finishing touches like this really help to place the army in the context of the

battle, making them seem like they have already been in the thick of the fighting, rather than being new to the war.

The same is true for monsters in Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000. I like to paint my monsters, monstrous creatures and walkers to a higher standard than the rest of the army, but I make sure that I use the same colour palette, to make sure that they fit in with the infantry. I also like to add extra details such as battle damage or scenic bases – as they're centrepiece models I like to go to town. This is partly because the larger size of the models gives me the space to create a vignette or story – for example, the Scythed Hierodule in my Tyranid army has one of its claws plunging into the ground, and an Imperial Guardsman clinging onto the scales on its backs with a grenade in his hand. Likewise for monsters in my Warhammer army – the Shaggoth in my Warriors of Chaos army has a scenic base, with slaves chained to the rocks that it's standing upon.

CAVALRY

After the large block of infantry and the Trolls, I ploughed on into my cavalry. When painting cavalry I assemble and paint the riders and mounts separately. I find this makes it easier to paint them – I use a drybrushing technique to paint the fur of the mount, which could make a mess of the rider if I don't paint them separately. I also find that it makes the cavalry models easier to store once they're finished.

I use the same palette of colours for the cavalry as I do for the rest of the army, to keep it consistent. I paint the riders exactly as I do the Orc infantry.

When painting the fur or hide of a mount, I like to use different tones so that they don't all look uniform in colour. I used three different tones of brown for the fur of the Wargs, painting six in one colour, six in the next and so on.

I use the same method in Warhammer when painting horses – or any mounts, in fact – using a mix of different tones. I make sure the tones are all similar, however, as I don't want any one model to stand out as different. The exception to this are the unit champions, and I tend to reserve a colour such as white or black for their mounts – I want them to stand out, after all.

The same is less true for Warhammer 40,000, with the exception of cavalry models such as Rough Riders or Krootox, as bikes and jetbikes tend to be painted to look the same. I do make sure that the 'mounts' are painted separately from the riders, so that I can get at all the detail.

When painting fur or hide, Chris picks a single colour and then uses different tones of that colour on different models to keep the appearance varied and naturalistic. In the case of his Wargs, he uses brown tones – Snakebite Leather, Bestial Brown and Scorched Brown. About a third of the Wargs were painted each colour.

Technique

Painting Riders

When painting cavalry riders, I like to paint them separately from their mounts. The fur of the mount is often drybrushed, so keeping it separate helps me avoid getting paint on the riders. When painting the riders, I temporarily attach them to a plastic tube or stick.

CHARACTERS

The Witch-king on dark steed

The Witch-king   *The Undying*

Top Tip

Movement Trays

With War of The Ring you can go one step further than just adding detail to the base – the movement trays are a great opportunity for modelling extra details on too. When I finish my Osgiliath Veterans, I intend to model debris and ruins onto the bases, placing them in the shattered remnants of Osgiliath. I've not added any Legendary formations to my army yet, but when I do they'll be the perfect opportunity for a similar treatment.

I save the characters in my armies until the very end. I know many people find it hard to resist painting them first, but I find it's far easier to motivate myself to paint the rest of the army if I haven't painted the best models already! If you paint the heroes first, then you still have the rest of the army to go. If you paint the rest of the army first, then you only have the heroes to go.

When it comes to painting character models, you really want the characters to stand out the most. For the Witch-king, for example, I used a completely different colour palette to the rest of the army, making him really stand out in a unit, as well as marking him out as something a bit otherworldy. I didn't go to the same extent with the Undying, and I included patches of red on his robes and his staff.

When painting heroes in The Lord of The Rings you need to remember that you need a hero both on foot and mounted, so that you can put them in either type of formation. I make sure I paint them together – I want them to look the same, but if I paint them at different times they're likely to end up looking subtly different. I once made that mistake with an Arwen miniature, and sure enough the two looked different – as a result I don't use them any more *(Wow, you said you were a perfectionist – Ed).*

The same principle applies in Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000. I like my heroes, lords and HQ choices to stand out – I want my opponent to know who is in charge, after all.

I use my heroes as an opportunity to spend extra time on the bases too, and the simple addition of battered shields, broken arrows or dead opponents really adds to the story of the character. With The Lord of The Rings miniatures this also allows me to place them in scenes from the movie, tying their bases into events or locations. I also like to paint shields and casualties in the livery of my opponents' armies, to remind them of the (irregular, admittedly) victories I've enjoyed over them.

OTHER ARMIES

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This is the Blood Axe Ork army I painted for the Studio. I basecoated the army Scorched Brown in exactly the same way as the Mordor Orc army. This might sound counter-intuitive, but it's a solid basecoat to work over, and means there's less hassle when it comes to painting all of the belts, pouches and dirt. The unifying colour for the army is the vibrant green of their skin, and the distinctive camouflage patterns used across all of the models.
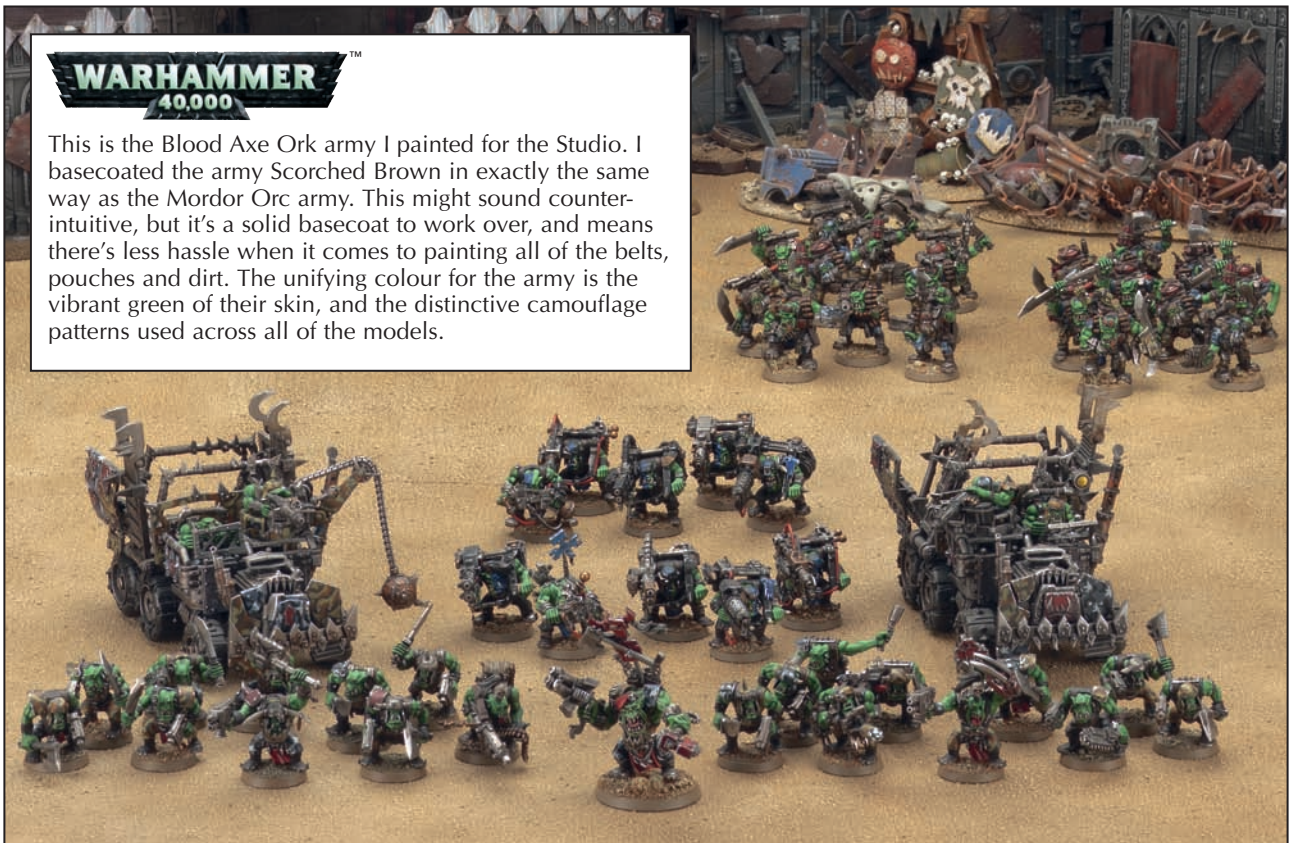
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Me and Nick Bayton painted this Warriors of Chaos army for the Studio web team. Rather than a single, unified force, it can be thought of as three mini-forces devoted to different Chaos Gods. Each of these forces is tied together with the same colours, but they remain distinct in their own right.