



A new way of weathering?

ANY GAUGE

Rating 85%

Model
Modelmates weathering dyes, 200ml aerosols

Price
From £6.74 at selected Modelmates stockists

Availability
Model shops or direct from www.modelmates.co.uk

Right: Buildings and scenery, in particular, benefit from careful use of these weathering dyes.

Below: Practice makes perfect and this is especially true when mastering the use of the Modelmates dyes.

Intrigued by the promises of Modelmates spray dyes, **GEORGE DENT** tries this innovative product designed to simplify weathering at a stroke.

The theory is simple. Supplied in 200ml aerosol cans, Modelmates weathering dyes are offered in nine different weathering shades (soot black, slate grey, light grey, mud brown, oil brown, rusty red, sand brown, moss green and snow effect) to suit a variety of scenic situations and formulated to a convincing hue. Having seen them demonstrated at various shows, I was eager to try them for myself.

Water-based and non-toxic, the dye is safe for use on all materials and, while it can be manipulated with a damp cloth, it cannot be removed completely, especially on porous or painted surfaces - an important



VERDICT

- + Useful weathering aid, wide choice of shades, non-toxic.
- Hard to control, permanent, takes practice to master the technique.
- i Verdict: Worthy of a place in your weathering toolkit, but use with care!

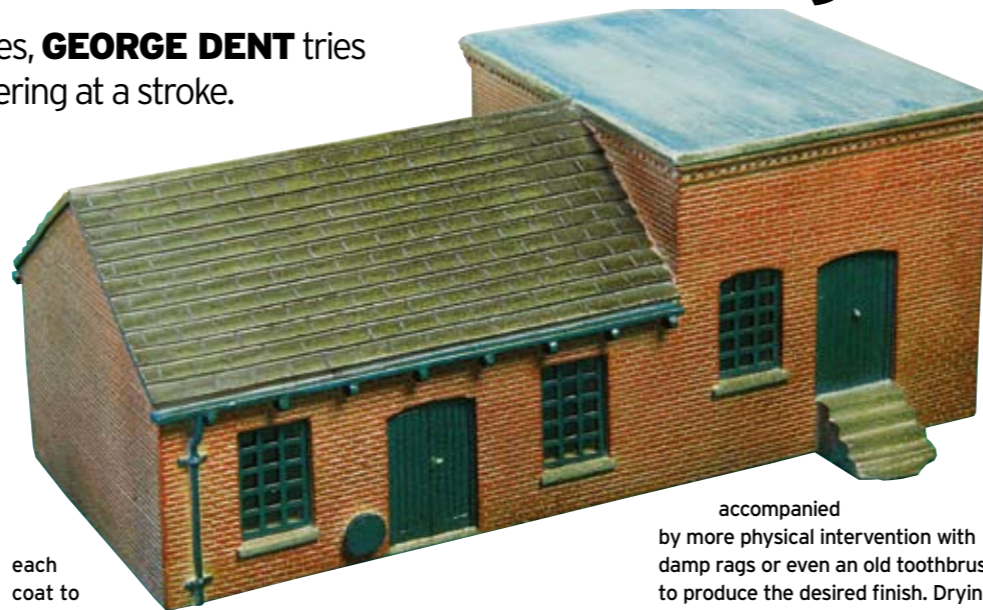
factor to consider. It's essential to practice on scrap material before applying to a treasured model.

Trying them out

Following the instructions, I covered my work surface with newspaper to catch any overspray (there was a lot!) and gave each can a good shake for a minute or two.

Having donned latex gloves and removed my wristwatch, a variety of models were treated, holding the can about 12in away from the surface. Just a single pass was enough, as quite a lot of dye is emitted with each press of the nozzle and it's easy to overdo it.

After waiting a few moments for



each coat to dry, further mists were applied to vary the shades and build up a convincing finish. Buildings and track, in particular, benefited from oil brown, moss green and slate grey.

On painted plastic or metal, a damp cloth can smudge or streak the dye to create various effects or to remove it from raised surfaces. This is perfect for brick or stonework where the dye is left in nooks and crannies. Masking windows is essential as the spray is difficult to remove from clear glazing.

Further sprays of colour can follow to suit your tastes,

Applying several very light layers of different shades can make for a realistic appearance.

accompanied by more physical intervention with damp rags or even an old toothbrush to produce the desired finish. Drying times are rapid - about five minutes for each coat. Practice will be rewarded by more convincing results.

Test results

Although it takes a while to get used to the dye's quirks, the correct technique soon becomes clear. Once applied, manipulation is not as easy as, for example, enamel paints which can be washed away with white spirit while wet. Additionally, the rapid drying time can result in some unwanted colouration.

Results were mixed. The more satisfactory weathering jobs were achieved on buildings and landscapes. Trackwork and grimy industrial infrastructure are particularly suited to these products. However, the inherent weakness of aerosols (an uncontrollable spray pattern) means that accurate application over smaller models can be very difficult.

While the scenic applications were satisfactory, I was less enamoured of the look of the treated wagons. Some vehicles looked good with a little oil brown and rusty red shades, but I found that the texture imparted on to the Bachmann paint finish was not wholly convincing. That said, the finish did look good when applied to van roofs, suggesting thick layers of soot and grime.

Following with a coat of matt varnish (sprayed) helps to even out the slightly shiny aspect of the dyes, and a further misting of 'track dirt' paint from an airbrush or aerosol



Before: A Model Rail limited-edition Civil Link VDA van in ex-works condition.



After: While it may be down to a lack of practice, George found that the finish imparted on this wagon was not to his taste.



Here's how to do it: Using weathering dyes



1 Cover the work area with newspaper and wear gloves as the process can be messy! Shake the can and spray from about 12in away, moving from side to side. Just a single pass should be enough.



2 The dye dries quickly and, after a minute or so, a damp cloth can be used to remove some of the excess colour. Keep strokes vertical to create realistic streaking effects while the dye will be retained in cavities.



3 Damp cotton buds and even an old toothbrush are useful for creating streaks and smudges in the dye. Experiment on a few scrap models first as the techniques take time to master.



4 Building up layers of different shades can produce convincing results, but be sure not to apply too much dye with each spray as it can be impossible to remove from some surfaces when dry.



5 The moss green dye was particularly useful for giving buildings a suitably neglected and damp appearance, as tried out on this Skaledale colliery structure. The glossy finish can be toned down with matt varnish.



6 Due to the lack of a fine spray from the aerosol can and the nature of the dyes, it's impossible to achieve the fine 'dusting' of dirt so prevalent on rail vehicles. Finishing the job with an airbrush refines the finish.



Above right: Practice the technique before working on rolling stock as the dyes are not easily removed.



Above: George had more success with this van, although the weathering was enhanced by a light dusting of enamels from an airbrush.

improves the appearance no end. I'm more than happy with the finish on my olive green ZRV 12t van, especially once a little airbrush weathering was also applied. However, I was not satisfied with my Civil Link van which looked too 'blotchy' in places. Being unable to

remove the dye, the model had to be completely stripped and refinished.

Final thoughts

While not an entirely successful trial, Modelmates' dyes have proved to be useful for creating specific effects. Used as part of a wider palette of weathering products and techniques, they will certainly prove helpful and rewarding in use, following a little practice. Good value and with a good choice of shades available, they are certainly worth investigating. On the other hand, I'd just be wary of what models they're used on. **MR**