

BASE, SHADOW, AND HIGHLIGHT IN ONE?



We test Army Painter's new set of 24 Speedpaints to see if they really can help you 'base, shadow, and highlight in one' as the box claims.

The Army Painter (AP) have been helping gamers paint minis at speed since the company's inception; their Quickshade dips and 'get your hobbying done quickly and effectively' attitude are cornerstones of the company. The nucleus of AP as a brand can be found in the 'dipping' craze (the 'art' of dunking a basecoated figure into a pot of shader) that swept the hobby scene in the early 2000s. From this splattery beginning (see 'Speed painting before it was cool') AP's Quickshade was developed, a product that has evolved into a brush applicable paint in a dropper bottle.

But has The Army Painter taken its eye off the speed painting ball? With all the paints and hobby gear they've released lately, they seem to have fallen behind in the 'get it done quick' world of paints, usurped by several other ranges.

ONE THICK COAT?

The big new speed painting range came from Games Workshop with their mid-2019 release of Citadel Contrast. Despite a promotional campaign based on the terrible slogan 'one thick coat!' (Which would have been a great slogan if that method didn't produce vastly inferior results to 'a thin coat or two'!), the paints did a generally great job of getting fine looking results in very little time. Scale75 followed up with their Instant Colors range (in full transparency we must admit we haven't used them) and The Army Painter seemed to get somewhat left behind in the world of speedy painting ...

Until now! They've created a range of 24 new paints (well, 23 and a mixing medium) that seem to be the evolution of Quickshade and will, apparently, 'base, shadow, and highlight in one'. They've named them ... [Drumroll please - Ed]

... SPEEDPAINTS! We bet GW and Scale75 are wondering why they didn't think of that.

SPEED PAINTING BEFORE IT WAS COOL

Wi's Project Manager is a recovering dipping addict from the early days, completing large armies in mere days to get busy gaming. James recalls: "You'd quickly basecoat your figures then dip them into a tin of stinking, syrupy consistency, woodstain to tone them. This was actual woodstain, not a hobby product, and certain brands were better at it than others. There were whole forum threads dedicated to finding the 'Holy Grail' of stains for each depth of tone at local DIY stores. The brands that did it best tended to have an ultra-thick consistency and you'd have to repeatedly 'flick' the excess stain off your figure with a wrist whip ... until we worked out you could jerry-rig a modified drill bit to make the job easier and spin away the excess. Messy doesn't begin to cover it, so it's wonderful to have more workspace friendly solutions available now!"

ABOUT OUR TESTING

We've shown the time it took to paint each model. This does not include drying time for all of the figures, but is a record of the amount of time our painters were busy using their paintbrush or airbrush.

WHAT'S IN THE SPEEDPAINT RANGE?

AP's Speedpaint range consists of 23 paints along with a Speedpaint Medium, which can be used to thin the paints further. The paints come in standard sized 18ml AP dropper bottles, and each of these has two stainless steel mixing balls included to act as agitators when you shake the bottle and help with paint consistency.

A Starter Set of eight paints should already be available as you read this article. The Mega Set we tested will be released on 26 March and contains the full range along with a freebie paint brush.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS!

Painter Marc and Project Manager James ran some 'scientific' tests to analyse the paints, and used the AP Speedpaints to complete recent hobby projects. Here are their thoughts along with hobby advice to help you in your early adventures with Speedpaints.

COLOUR CONFUSION

The front of each label has a 'cube' image on it with different tones on each of its three visible faces. At first, we were a little confused - the paint from the bottle often doesn't bear strong resemblance to the colours shown in this image - but we think that the different faces are supposed to represent the shadow, midtone, and highlight of the paint when dry.



Some are closer than others, so you'll need to spend some time 'getting to know' your new paints. We've painted a splash of each colour onto paper and included it with the swatch along the side of this article's next page.



SPEEDPAINT SHOWCASE

NORTH STAR OATHMARK REVENANT

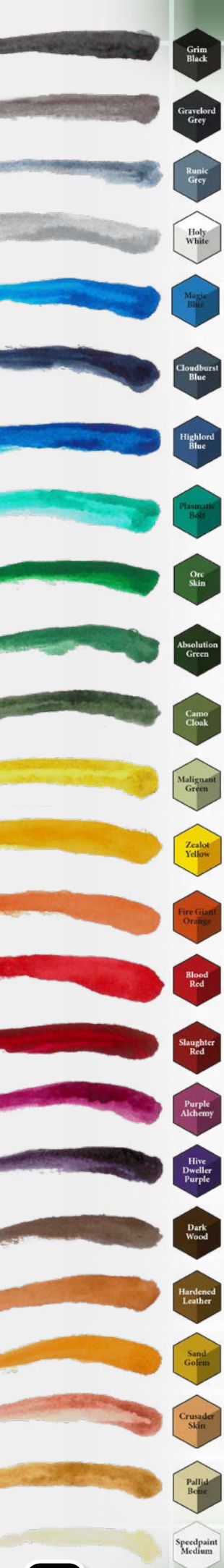
Marc: This figure was a chance to play around with the paints and see what potential they have when a painter puts in extra effort. I didn't just use the Speedpaints in one coat here; as is hopefully apparent, I applied them to the figure much as I would a standard paint range, bringing in my own colour graduations, shading, and highlight effects. I used a lot of the different paint tones, blending them across the surfaces. I was impressed with the transitions this created, and strongly encourage everyone - from army painters to competition painters - to give them a try.

The tarnished metal was particularly fun, all applied over a silver basecoat (the rest of the model had a zenithal primer) with some non-metallic metal techniques along with greens and oranges to rust things up.



The figure before the application of Speedpaints with a zenithal basecoat and metal parts painted silver.





HOW DO THEY WORK?

In simple terms, the Speedpaints 'move' as they dry to pool in recesses, have average coverage in the mid tones, and barely remain on the top points. In doing this they create a figure that looks like it's had shading and highlighting applied. That's the theory at least!

AP describe an 'innovative resin medium solution' that allows their Speedpaints to flow. The specifics of this go beyond our scientific method, but we suspect that what AP say is 'innovative' may actually be a throwback to art's past. Different types of resins - oleoresins - have been used in painting for centuries. While our hobbyist brains might read 'resin' and think of the casting material, oleoresins are a different matter altogether, obtained through an evaporation process of natural materials to produce a resinous extract that

has useful properties. If you process coniferous trees in such a way you get an oleoresin extract you may have heard of - turpentine - and there are other resins with similar properties that have been used as mixing mediums in painting for ages.

Different oleoresins can change the glossiness of paints they are mixed with, alter the flow, and have an impact on surface tension. This is, perhaps, the way that Speedpaints do their thing, with oleoresin ensuring paint smoothly flows and transitions across the surfaces of the model.

Does knowing this have any impact on how you use the paints? Perhaps a little, it's good to learn about the properties of your paints. If nothing else, it might help you look like a genius in a pub quiz in 36 years' time!

TEST ONE: COVERAGE OVER DIFFERENT BASECOATS

Marc: I built four *Bolt Action* Late War British (the figures that will be included for free in the next issue of *Wi*) and applied different basecoats before painting them. The basecoats were pure white, a black to grey zenithal highlight, pastel green, and Pallid Bone over white to test how Speedpaints apply over other Speedpaints. Further painting was then done by brush with the same Speedpaint colours on the same areas.

As you can see from the pictures each basecoat created a very different finish, and you'll need to consider what you want your army to look like when deciding how to start your figure. If possible begin with lighter paints and progress to darker ones. The darker Speedpaints will cover lighter ones if you have rogue splashes and slips, but light paints struggle to cover darker tones.

Ever since Contrast paints arrived with their own 'specialist' spray primers, there has been a misconception that the paints are best applied over white of a specific kind. This is simply not true. Paints have a multitude of applications, and Speedpaints have no hard and fast rules, hence me trying the different basecoats. Pure white gave a far brighter but less realistic look, while the zenithal, brown, and tan starts made for more nuanced and historical feeling finishes. Don't be afraid to mix the paints as I did to get more accurate colours on uniforms and fatigues.

I suggest doing some testers before committing to the primer colour for your army. The time this takes will be more than made up for in the speed at which you can cover them with Speedpaints!



*Basecoats: Left - The Army Painter White primer spray.
Right - The Army Painter Pallid Bone Speedpaint over white.*



*Basecoats: Left - Vallejo Model Color Pastel Green.
Right two figures - a zenithal highlight of light grey over black.*

KEY

- Fatigues - A 3:1 mix of Camo Cloak and Malignant Green
- Leather and rifles - Dark Wood
- Skin - Crusader Skin
- Metallics - Basecoated with silver and then painted with Grim Black
- Submachine gun - Grim Black
- Backpack and kit - A 1:1:1 mix of Camo Cloak, Holy White, and Pallid Bone
- Left leg satchel - A 1:1 mix of Camo Cloak and Holy White

TEST TWO: COVERAGE AND DRYING TIME

Marc: A Perry Miniatures Agincourt French Infantry figure gave me the chance to watch paint dry! Not something that'd usually be recommended, but by observing the way Highlord Blue gradually changed as it dried over a zenithal basecoat, I got a better idea of how the Speedpaints work. First though, how do they flow when applied with a brush? Quite well actually - the consistency differs across the range, but they are all controllable and come from the dropper bottle at a consistency similar to what an experienced painter would mix their paint at. If you've used Quickshade, the Speedpaints are quite similar in how they flow, somewhere between a wash and a traditional paint.

WATCHING PAINT DRY

As you can see in the pictures, the change when drying is subtle for the most part before areas suddenly rather quickly 'resolve' with the paint tightening up and seeming to suck into the recesses and 'blend' over surfaces. I've marked some spots to pay attention to; one of these is a mould line that I didn't remove and was accentuated by the Speedpaint. You'll need to be even more careful when prepping your figures if using Speedpaints.

I often dry wet paint with a hairdryer to speed up the process but found that the final effect of the Speedpaints was slightly compromised by doing this. That meant that although the brushwork on this figure took barely 10 minutes to finish it all, there were breaks in between while waiting for coats to dry. This won't be a problem if you're working on a unit, of course, as by the time you've batched ten or so tunics the first figure will be dry and ready for his belt to be painted.



TEST THREE: THROUGH THE AIRBRUSH

James: I wanted to check the coverage through an airbrush with a basic application. Nothing fancy here, just a single spray of paint fresh from the dropper bottle and into the cup of my airbrush.



A Gripping Beast Order Militant Hexenjager was primed with Army Painter white spray before I airbrushed it with Fire Giant Orange. The paint flowed through the airbrush well at 20psi and I applied a thicker coat than I would usually do to really put the 'base, shadow, and highlight' claim to the test. After about 15 minutes of drying time, the coverage was good (if a little garish, but that's to be expected!) and it had done what it was supposed to.



Games Workshop's Spoilpox Scrivener was given a zenithal prime of Vallejo black to Vallejo grey before a final drybrush of white to pick out the edges. This has been my go-to technique when using Citadel Contrast paints. The stark drybrushing gets muted down to a more subtle final highlight by the paint application. The Zealot Yellow Speedpaint would face a challenge here - yellow has a tricky time over black - but I was pleasantly surprised by the result once it dried.

As I used the paints more, I began to thin the paints, adding two drops of the Speedpaint Medium to every three of paint. This gave me a more nuanced coverage with my airbrush application and allowed me to create smoother transitions like those on the dragon wings at the end of this article.



S P E E D P A I N T S H O W C A S E

CERBERUS STUDIOS SABRE LION

Marc: With a minimal selection of Speedpaints, I blocked in the initial colours then sketched highlights with a slightly thinned Pastel Yellow AK acrylic paint. I went back to the previous paints and blended these quite stark highlights down to make for smoother transitions. This illustrates how Speedpaints can make really effective glazes over traditional acrylic paints.



TEST FOUR: SPEEDPAINTS VERSUS CONTRAST

Marc: It felt important to compare the coverage of Speedpaints to Games Workshop's Citadel Contrast paints. To make the test even tougher for AP's Speedpaints, we picked 'home ground' for the Contrast paints by applying them to Horus Heresy Space Marines.



I chose similar tones to paint the Marines, applying Contrast Blood Angels Red and Speedpaint Blood Red over a zenithal basecoat as shown on the right. After a carefully applied coat with a brush and sufficient drying time the end result is similar, but overall I feel that the Speedpaint provided better depth and transition. Very impressive!

I finished the Marines by applying Speedpaints to the other details in smooth coats. It is noticeable that the Speedpaints are slightly thinner overall than Contrast paints, meaning you must give more drying time before painting connecting areas lest they start to blend.

When it came to the eyes, I tried several different finishes - precise white dots and more rough ones that touch the edges of the surrounding armour. By applying Orc Skin over the 'clean' eyes you get a striking finish, and on the 'messy' one you create a quick and dirty glow effect.



The two different approaches to the eye lenses. The armour trim was painted silver and given a 1:1 mix of Zealot Yellow and Hardened Leather.



The finished figures - Speedpaint Blood Red on the right, Contrast Blood Angels Red on the left. The other details on both figures are painted with Speedpaints.





S P E E D P A I N T S H O W C A S E

ELEPHANT

James: To fit with this month's Beasts of War theme, I snagged the second Victrix War Elephant frame from Marc (see page 90 for a whole article on painting elephants) and some Crusader Minis Half-Orcs (see Observation Post page 15) to make a fantasy war elephant. The crew were simple conversions but the elephant remained as standard, then I got the airbrush out to paint the bulk of the figure quickly.

I kept the howdah and crew separate and began work on the elephant, targeting the underside with Hive Dweller Purple, thinned to a more translucent consistency. I then built up the grey tones with the full range, even adding Holy White to the top. With this done, I changed to the paintbrush and gave things a more natural tone with Crusader Skin and Dark Wood in recesses.

The skin of the crew was applied with Malignant Green and even this was through the airbrush. Picking up the paintbrush and applying Orc Skin and thinned Highlord Blue into recesses, along with Slaughter Red in the underside of the cheekbones, made for two decent looking faces that took just a few minutes to complete.



Above: The initial airbrush coat of Malignant Green. With practice you can hit the parts you want with your spray, even on small figures, and really save some time.





S P E E D P A I N T S H O W C A S E

DUNGEONS AND LASERS DRACULUS THE CUNNING

James: I'll take a closer look at this beastie in next month's Observation Post where we'll review this impressive range of plastic dragon kits, but I think he stands as a testament to what can be achieved with nothing more than a zenithal basecoat, a couple of hours, and some knowledge of how best to mix brush painting, airbrush work, Speedpaints, and a standard white paint. Without a range of paints such as Speedpaints, I'd never be able to complete a model this big in two hours.



CONCLUSION

This has been a rapid exploration of The Army Painter's new Speedpaints; as with any new hobby product, we'll need time to collectively experiment with the paints, learn the intricacies and nuances of how best to use them, and unleash the true potential of the range.

It's safe to say that we are very impressed with this offering. The paints achieve the 'base, shadow, and highlight in one' claim The Army Painter makes and also allow a higher level painter like Marc to create his beautifully painted Revenant. The paint saturation is good (though some browns are a bit less consistent), application is easy, the dropper bottles are wonderful to use, and the price is very competitive.

Speedpaints compare favourably to the main competition, Games Workshop's Contrast paints, in every way - some painters may prefer the properties and 'feel' of one brand over the other, but that's a totally subjective view. At a basic level, both do a good job of speeding up your painting process, but Speedpaints do it a lot cheaper - close to half the price of GW's paints and in a far better bottle. That might be enough to swing it for many!

We like variety on our workbench and will gradually find our 'essential' Speedpaints to go with the Contrast paints we love, but the Speedpaint Mega Set from The Army Painter does something very few paint sets manage - it provides a collection of 24 paints that will all find uses on your projects. Every single paint works well and comes in a tone you'll find useful, and that is a rare thing indeed!