



RAMBLIN'- Hot Diggity Dog Paint Mixer

by Bruce Bowie

As the title for my **Flatwheel** submissions infers, my articles will tend to “ramble” and often take different direction than you might have been expecting, given content of the last Ramblin’. This is such an example. In the fall of 2011 my layout at the time was well along the way, giving me time to partake in a side of the hobby I very much enjoy, structure construction.

I have scratch built structures, kit bashed structures, built craftsman structure kits such as Fine Scale Miniatures as well as straight from the box kits. I truly enjoy adding details and weathering, trying to make them as true to life as possible. One aspect however – painting - while obviously very necessary, always presented some frustration to me. Not as you might guess in the quality of my work, although that too can sometimes be an issue, but simply the act of getting the paint ready for the brush, or airbrush.

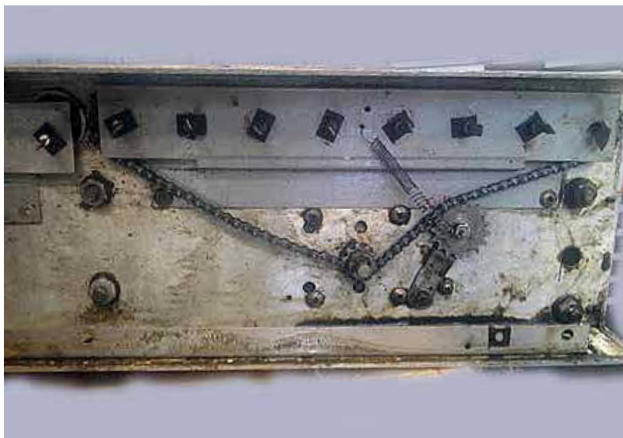
With a little self-analysis that Freud would be proud of, the basis for my frustration has nothing to do with the paint itself, but rather my lack of patience. I find myself needing to paint a small detail only to find it taking more time to ready the paint, e.g., mixing the lump at the bottom of the jar, than the time to make a couple brush strokes prior to moving on to the next color needed. What a pain in the buttocks! More self-analysis also highlights my Scottish heritage coming to the forefront as I realize I waste more paint in the mixing process than the often very small amount used on the detail. At the



cost per ounce of model paint, my Scottish dander quickly rises.

I have used a number of tools over the years to mix paint with sticks and screwdrivers being the most common and actually useful. As a tool junkie, I have of course “invested” in a couple electric mixers as can be found in the Micro

Mark catalog. The electrically operated shaker looked very promising when purchased but in actuality, only works well with paint already mixed. Duh. If the jar has the ubiquitous lump in the bottom, you can shake until the engines are back in the roundhouse and there will still be a lump in the bottom. The battery operated stirrer works



well to mix paint of any age and consistency. However, if you run the mixer while removing from the jar in order to leave most of the paint in the jar, it can be quite messy. I now own more clothing with paint on them than my bride of 43 years approves of! If you do not operate the mixer while removing it from the jar, then you leave a good

deal of that expensive paint on the mixer. Neither option is very appealing. What to do?

With a whisky (not misspelled, but rather the British/correct spelling for single malt scotch) in hand and my engineer’s hat on I started giving the problem some thought. Okay, the issue is the settling of the pigment to the bottom of the bottle. Hmmmmm. Sip. What if I could prevent the problem in the first place? So what I need is a way to rotate the bottles on a frequent or continuous basis. Hmmmmm. Sip. What about a



hot dog cooker like you see in gas stations and carnival food stands? Hmmmmm. Sip. Google "hot dog cooker". That could work, but ouch, the price would reduce whisky funding too much! Hmmmmm. Sip. I wonder if Ebay would have a used cooker in my price range.

After a reasonably brief Ebay search, I actually found a number of used hot dog cookers. The price eliminated some of course, and the size eliminated a number of others. I was looking for a unit large enough to cook mix a fair number of bottles. If you decide to go down this path, the next issue is the cost of shipping. As I eventually found out, the weight of the size unit I was interested in is considerable. Between size and weight, the cost to ship could easily exceed the cost of the cooker itself. Using the Ebay "watch" feature, I kept on the lookout for a while. A few weeks after initiating my watch, I came across a unit that fit my capacity and financial criteria, \$50.

The location was somewhere in Ohio. I contacted the seller indicating my interest and asking where in Ohio he was located, noting I hoped it close enough to be within a reasonable



driving distance. It turned out he was 50 miles away, so we made the deal, I purchased it online from Ebay and coordinated a pickup date and time with the seller. I soon had my new hot diggity dog paint mixer in hand!

In conclusion, the attached photos show the unit as purchased and as rebuilt. The rebuild consisted of totally tearing down the unit, necessary to remove the grease from 1 million

or so hot dogs! The mechanical and electrical components were in pretty good shape. I had to redo a previous owner's repair of an idler sprocket as he had put it in backwards, causing a hitch in the rollers' motion. I also removed the heating elements from inside the rollers as hot paint is probably not a good thing.



With the unit reassembled, I gave it a try. Eureka! The bottles slowly rotate just like the hot dogs at the corner gas station! I now open any new

paint I purchase, add 3-4 stainless steel BB's (used in jewelry cleaning), reseal and place on the mixer. From that point forward when I open the jar the paint is ready for use! I have also experimented with a cheap mechanical timer to reduce the time the unit operates. To date I have found 12 hours on



and 12 off still keeps the paint well mixed.