



# The King's new clothes

Color and style for Tamiya's 1/16 King Tiger

*By Jeff Herne*

**A**lthough only 484 King Tigers were produced by Germany in World War II, they've always been extremely popular among armor modelers. So when a King Tiger model weighs in at more than 12 pounds and is more than two feet long from the muzzle to the exhaust, Tiger enthusiasts are bound to take notice. I knew I had to build this big kit, and after completing my 1/16 scale Trumpeter T-34/85 (January 2006 FSM), I needed something German to sit by it on the model shelf.



**Jeff's 1/16 scale King Tiger is fit for a king  
— big, colorful, and menacing!**

### Nuts and bolts

My 1/16 scale King Tiger was Tamiya's static version (kit No. 36204), so it lacks the remote control components like the gearbox and servos of earlier releases, but it retains the workable suspension and metal lower hull. This posed only a few minor problems, like replacing the mounting bolts for the side skirts with flush-sanded styrene rod and covering the unsightly screw heads on the engine deck that join the hull halves. I also plated the underside of the hull and added the various access covers with pieces of styrene. This was far simpler than trying to fill and hide the countless screws required to bolt the lower hull together.

Although Tamiya's kit is perfectly

suited for remote control operations, it lacks the fine detail 1/35 scale armor builders are used to, so I turned to John Delamater at Backyard Armor. His company imports and produces detail parts for large-scale kits, so I added photoetched screens for the engine grilles, clear resin periscopes for the commander's cupola, and metal spare tracks and hangars for the turret. I obtained a turned-aluminum barrel, but learned it was the early monoblock barrel for the Porsche-turreted King Tiger kit, so I turned a new barrel from aluminum stock on my lathe using the drawings and dimensions provided in Walter Spielberger's book, *Tiger and King Tiger Tanks and their variants*. I also obtained excellent steel tow shackles for

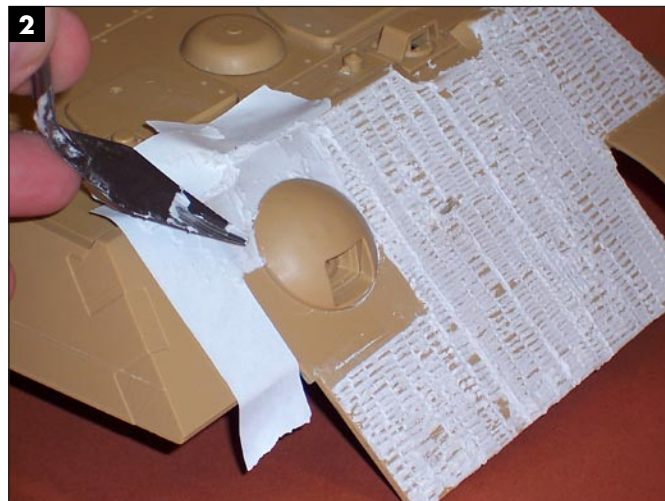
my upcoming Porsche-turreted King Tiger, but since my project budget was running low, I used my purchased set on this model and fashioned an extra set from aluminum stock, again using my lathe and drill press. The only upgrade I didn't pursue was replacing the kit's plastic tracks with the more-realistic metal aftermarket variety. Although far more accurate in shape, the cost was more than I could bear, especially for a static model.

### Zimmerit

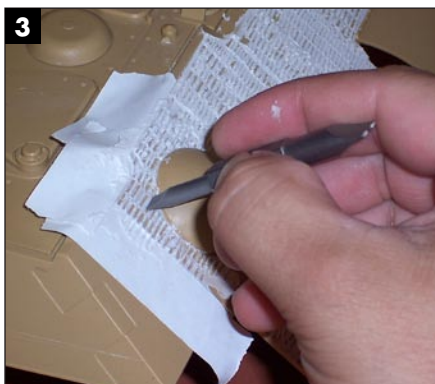
I built the hull and turret according to the instructions. I decided early in the project I wanted to add Zimmerit to the tank. I wasn't keen on melting the plastic, and the kit-supplied "stick-on" Zimmerit panels



**1** Liquitex model paste and simple tools are all you need for Zimmerit.



**2** Jeff applied the paste in small sections and used artist's tape to keep the rows parallel.



**3** Each dimple in the Zimmerit was hand-applied with a steel screwdriver bit.



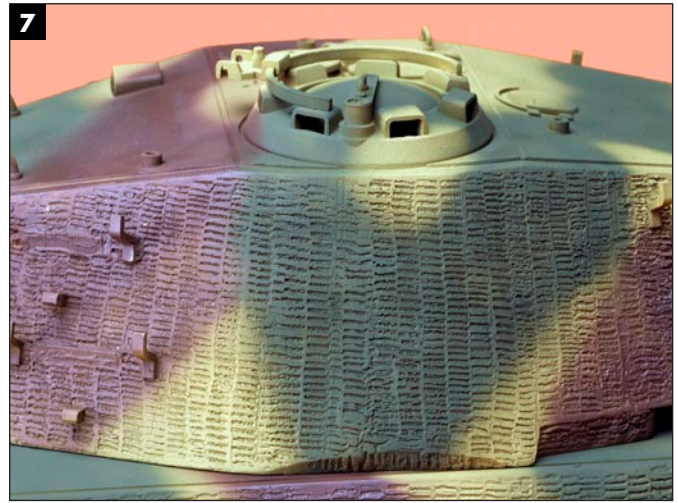
**4** Zimmerit really adds to the model's personality, but on a model of this scale, it's a daunting, repetitive task.



**5** Jeff sprayed the camouflage pattern with Tamiya and Gunze Sangyo acrylics.



**6** A black wash over the entire surface of the model blends the colors.



**7** Once the wash was dry, Jeff dry-brushed the base colors over the model.



**8** After several failed attempts to get the decals to settle over the rough Zimmerit, Jeff finally removed them and hand-painted the turret numbers and crosses.



**9** Jeff applied a second black wash to the lower hull. This heavy wash was needed to show through the weathering that was to come later.

were disappointing. I settled on the basic putty method familiar to 1/35 scale builders, but knew I needed a tool to simulate the pattern in the putty. I experimented with various-sized gears, a scroll-saw blade, and even a comb, but found a steel screwdriver bit worked nicely. It matched the width of the kit-supplied Zimmerit.

I tried a variety of putties, including Squadron white and green, spackling paste, but settled on Liquitex-brand modeling paste, **1**. It's basically acrylic gel medium (the same type used by ship modelers to simulate water) mixed with marble dust. The resulting paste is easy to smooth, provides ample time to work, and dries rock hard. Best of all, it binds well to the plastic, and with a little effort, chips away like real Zimmerit.

I started by applying a square of putty about 2" wide to the side of the hull, with one edge masked with tape, **2**. I smoothed

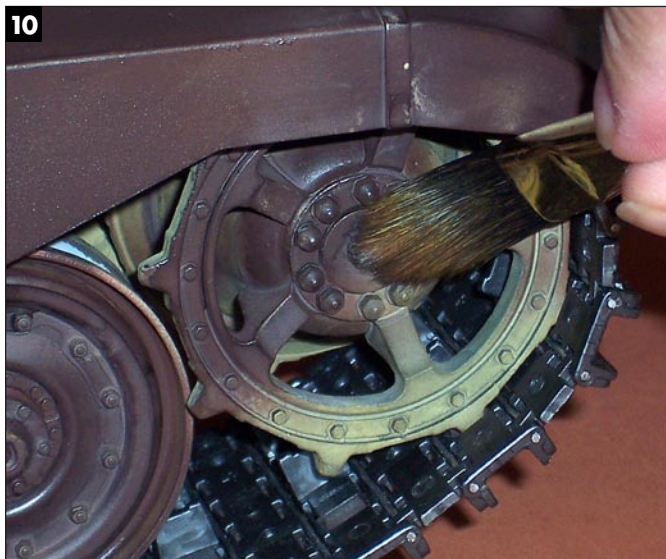
the putty and allowed it to set for 10 minutes. I found later that heating it with a hair dryer for 10 to 15 seconds really speeds up the process. Once the putty had skinned over, I made the impressions with the screwdriver bit, **3**. I made a few mistakes along the way, but found the putty was easily removed if it hadn't set overnight. The process was tedious, but the results were exactly what I wanted – rough, uneven Zimmerit that looks as though it was applied by hand, **4**.

#### A dash of color

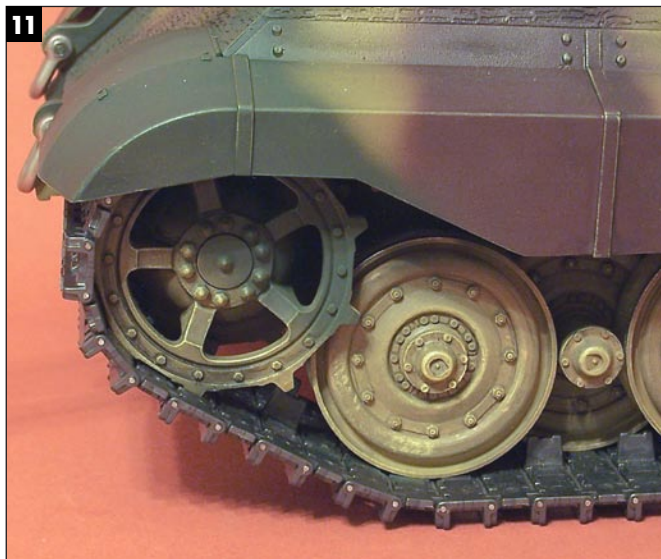
I chose to model a King Tiger from schwere Panzer Abteilung (sPzAbt) 503 in Hungary in late 1944. This allowed me to model a soft-edged camouflage pattern on a tank with Zimmerit. Once the Zimmerit hardened, I gave the model an overall coat of Tamiya dark yellow (XF-60), followed by olive green (XF-58) and

Gunze Sangyo chocolate-brown (H-405), **5**. I allowed the paint to cure for 24 hours before I applied a black wash to the entire model, **6**. This blended the colors but made the model too dark. I countered this by dry-brushing each of the base colors over the appropriate areas. This restored much of the color but kept the blended look provided by the wash, **7**. I allowed the wash and paint to dry for another 24 hours before I continued.

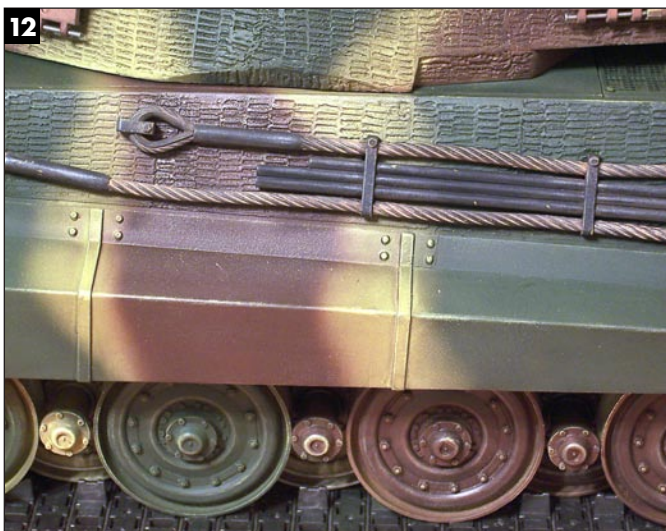
One of the long-standing problems faced by modelers of German armor is applying decals over Zimmerit. Originally designed as a rough-surfaced paste to prevent the attachment of magnetic mines, scale Zimmerit has the same effect with decals. I tried several applications of Micro Sol and Micro Set to get the turret numbers and crosses to conform, but I had no success. Finally, I trimmed the clear carrier film from the edges of the decals,



**10** Heavier-than-normal dry-brushing was applied to the drive sprockets.



**11** The results of the heavy dry-brushing: Although a bit too contrasty, much of the dry-brushing will be hidden by a layer of dust.



**12** The tow cables and cleaning rods were painted with acrylics and weathered with MMP powders and washes.



**13** Jeff gave the exhaust pipes a coat of Vallejo red-brown, followed by a coat of MMP rust sprayed through his airbrush.

and sprayed a light coat of clear over the area. Once the clear dried, I removed the decals with tape, leaving the outline of the numbers. I painted the numbers black, then used a liner brush to trim the numbers with white, **8**. I was quite happy with the results.

### Adjusting the contrast

Once the turret markings dried, I applied a heavy black wash to the fenders, road wheels, drive sprockets, and idlers, **9**. I followed this with some dry-brushing to accentuate the contrast, **10**. I dry-brushed a little more than usual for two reasons – the scale is considerably larger, and I was going to apply a layer of dust over the running gear and lower hull, so I wanted some of the contrast to show through the weathering, **11**.

With the major painting and assembly completed, I started working on the small parts that give the King Tiger its personality.

### The King's accoutrements

On a smaller 1/35 scale tank, details often blend into the model and serve to enhance the appeal of the overall subject. With a large-scale model, this is often difficult to achieve. With this in mind, I decided to treat each small detail on my King Tiger as a separate entity and weather it to differentiate them from the other parts.

I started with the most-visible components on the hull, the large tow cables. German Tigers were notorious for mechanical failures, so the tow cables were in constant use. I painted each part with Tamiya flat black, followed by a coat of

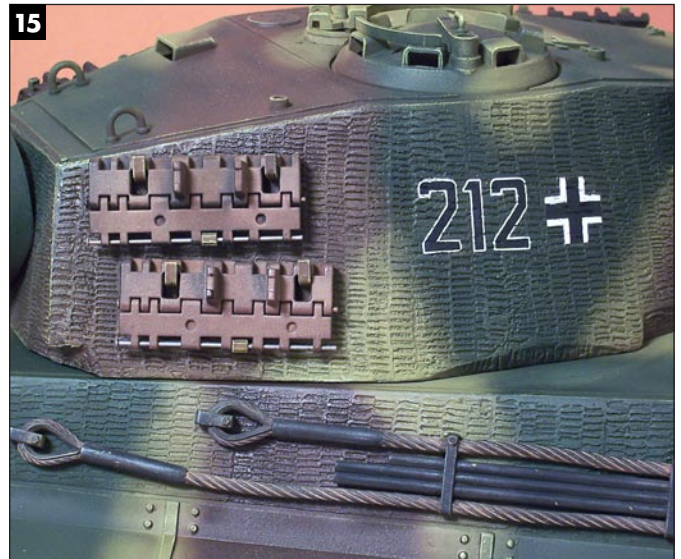
MMP earth dirt (WP#007) weathering powder mixed with rubbing alcohol and sprayed through an airbrush. Once the powder dried, I wiped the excess from the cables and brushed on a black wash. This was followed by a light spray coat of MMP rust (WP#009) and another black wash. I decided not to apply any rust or dust to the gun-cleaning rods, since these parts were most likely cleaned before being used on the Tiger's gun barrel, **12**.

I added the exhaust pipes to the rear bulkhead after painting them with Vallejo leather brown and giving them a spray coat of MMP rust, **13**. A small amount of black wash around the tips gives the illusion of carbon buildup, **14**.

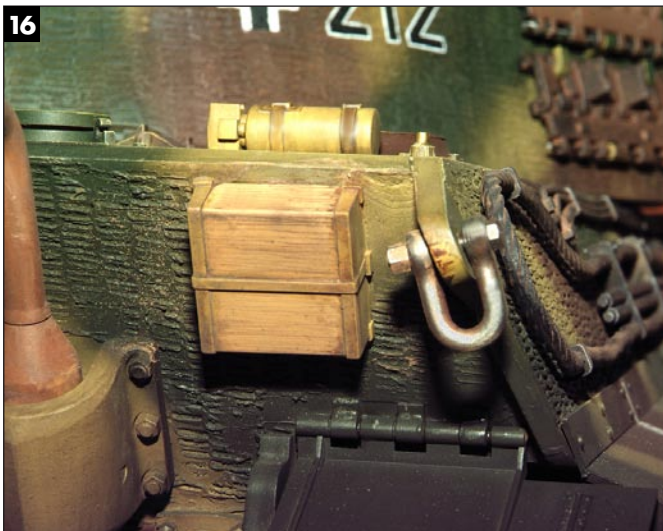
I sprayed each set of spare tracks with Tamiya flat black and allowed them to dry. I followed with a coat of MMP rust



**14** A small amount of black India-ink wash simulates carbon soot.



**15** The spare tracks received a coat of red-brown followed by sprayed-on MMP rust and a black wash.



**16** Jeff added details from Backyard Armor, including steel towing shackles and cast exhaust shrouds.



**17** Backyard Armor also supplied the clear-resin periscopes for the commander's cupola and other periscope openings on the hull.

sprayed through my airbrush. Once dry, they received a black wash. I wiped the tracks down to allow some of the black basecoat to show through, and then sprayed a coat of clear flat. After attaching the track links to the turret, I subtly dry-brushed with Polly Scale old steel, **15**. I finished up the details by adding the shovels, picks, towing clevises, and headlight to the hull, **16**. The last step before weathering included installation of the clear resin periscopes to the commander's cupola, **17**.

### Tiger tracks

With the majority of the work completed, I started on the tracks. I gave each set of tracks a coat of Testor Dullcote, followed by Tamiya red-brown (XF-64), **18**. I allowed it to dry and sprayed a heavy black wash of rubbing alcohol and India

ink, **19**. Once the wash dried, I rubbed the tracks with a coarse eraser. This lifted some of the red-brown paint and allowed the metallic-gray-steel plastic to show through. Since I flat-coated the plastic prior to the basecoat, it looks like worn steel underneath. I dry-brushed Polly Scale old silver on the drive-sprocket teeth, the tracks' guide teeth, and on the high-wear areas of the cleats. My last step with the tracks was a final coat of Testor Dullcote to seal everything and prepare for the weathering.

### Weather or not...

Before sPzAbt 503 arrived in Budapest in late 1944, the unit was re-equipped with King Tigers, so I decided my weathering would reflect the relatively new condition of the vehicles in my reference photos.

These photos were taken when the unit was within the city of Budapest, operating in an urban environment, so I knew that heavy mud or caked-on dirt wasn't necessary. Using my trusted technique of spraying MMP weathering powders mixed with rubbing alcohol, I gave the model a light coat of ETO dust (WP#018) overall, making sure I misted the upper surfaces of the tank instead of applying the mix directly. When satisfied with the results, I added several coats of earth dirt and medium earth (WP#006) to the road wheels, lower hull, and suspension arms. After the weathering powders dried, I scrubbed the surfaces with a stiff brush to give the weathering a random effect.

I added black-wash stains to the drive sprockets and attached the antenna to the engine deck.

18



The tracks received a coat of red-brown over Testor's Dullcote. This reduced the sheen of the plastic underneath and provided tooth for the paint.

19



After a black wash, Jeff scrubbed the tracks with an eraser, revealing the dark-silver plastic underneath. Dry-brushing Polly Scale old silver onto the edges of the cleats brings out the high points.

As my final step, I wore down the paint to simulate the high-traffic areas on the turret and upper hull. I used a common school eraser to scrub away at the paint, which smoothed the surface and left a slight sheen.

### The moral of the story

Building this model was more fun than any 1/35 scale tank I've built. On the downside, attention must be paid to the little details on the tank, because they're much more obvious in this larger scale. I confess I'm hooked on large-scale armor, though, and I can't wait to start on my next project, a late-war Tiger I. **FSM**

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### SOURCES

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**MMP Weathering powders WW2**  
Modelmaker, [www.ww2modelmaker.com](http://www.ww2modelmaker.com)



The finished model measures 28" from the muzzle brake to the exhausts, and weighs more than 12 pounds. This is a big cat!