

Bill put a lot of hard work into this 1/48 scale Mosquito, especially while creating its amazing finish. His ten-step process will give your models a look that's just as good.



Before you weather your model, know your prototype and check your references. The Mosquito was largely wood, so using silver paint to simulate chips should only be done on "metal" areas.

To achieve realistic-looking wear, apply an oil-based wash and wipe it off in the direction of airflow around the aircraft. A layer of household varnish protects the paint from the oil wash.



AWARD-WINNING Mosquito

By Bill Pettyjohn Photos by Terry Thompson

Plus ten tips for putting a fabulous finish on your own model

This 1/48 scale Mosquito, built by Bill Pettyjohn, has one of the finest finishes we at FSM have ever seen – and the judges agree. Bill's Mosquito Mk.VI, built from the Tamiya kit, took First Place at KC-Con 2000, and Best Aircraft and First Place at the Topeka Combat Air Museum's 1999 contest.

Bill won't build kits straight out of the box, though – he can't resist adding scratchbuilt details and aftermarket accessories, even to a kit as good as this one. The real highlight, though, is its realistic weathered finish. We asked him to share his ten-step finishing process with our readers, and he has generously done so. We hope you'll be able to use it to take your models to the next level. Enjoy!

– Ed.

For the base colors on my models, I use AeroMaster, Floquil, Testor, and Humbrol paints (I'm still not too fond of acrylics, but this method will work with them, too). For clear coats I use common household varnishes, Future floor polish, and Testor Dullcote. I use washes mixed from artist's oils, Humbrol paints, and turpentine. Finally, I use pastel chalks for finishing the job.

I've divided the finishing method into ten steps:

Step 1: Basecoating. Apply the base coat of paint, then mask off different panels of the aircraft top and bottom and paint them lighter or darker shades of the base coat. Let the base colors dry overnight.

Step 2: Future. Now, airbrush a thin

coat of Future floor polish over the entire aircraft. Let this dry for about one hour.

Step 3: Decals. The Microscale Decal System works well for me. Follow their directions when applying your model's decals and soak up excess solvent with clean cotton swabs. After 24 hours, inspect the decals for silvering or bubbles.

Don't worry if the finish is spotted or splotchy after decaling – this will disappear as you go along. Now, lightly sponge off the model with water to remove decal residue, and allow the model to dry thoroughly. A painter's tack cloth can be used to remove any dirt or dust.

Step 4: Varnish. To protect your fine paint job from the oil-based wash, apply a thinned coat of varnish. I use common

household furniture varnish thinned with mineral spirits to airbrush consistency. Try to find a flat finish or semi-gloss (flat is best). Stir the varnish thoroughly in the can and also after you've thinned it with mineral spirits.

Spray the entire model (or subassemblies) with the thinned varnish. When the varnish dries it may have an uneven shine, but this will remedy itself. Let this varnish coat dry for at least 48 hours.

Step 5: Wash. For most mixes I use raw umber and burnt sienna artist's oils with a touch of Humbrol Flat Black paint, mixed with turpentine to a watery consistency.

The wash should be thin enough to freely run into recessed panel lines and around raised details. If the mixture is too thick, add turpentine; if it's too thin, add more color. Apply the wash into all recessed panel lines and around raised detail with a fine pointed brush – you'll remove the excess wash later.

Also apply this wash over the decals (protected by the varnish), where the panel lines run through them. If the wash won't flow through the lines, scribe carefully through the decal. Let this wash dry, which will happen quickly.

Step 6: Wipe. After the wash dries, use a clean cotton rag to wipe off the wash in the direction of airflow over the aircraft. The excess wash will pull off, leaving some in the panel lines and around raised detail. Don't be afraid to rub off the stubborn areas of wash; the protective coating of varnish is durable. If a panel line doesn't hold a wash, just reapply and try again. If that fails, rescribe the line and apply more wash.

For the final overall wipe, take a clean rag and pour turpentine on it, squeezing out the excess until the rag is nearly dry. If you have sensitive skin, wear disposable gloves. Now, wipe over the whole model again in the direction of airflow.

Let the completed oil wash dry at least 48 hours. Any dry-brushing to highlight raised details should be done now.

Step 7: Paint chips. I simulate metal chipping by brushing Floquil Old Silver or Humbrol Silver around panel lines and in high-traffic areas. Be sure you are chipping metal and not fabric or wood! Don't overdo it – you can add more later if you need to. Let this chipping dry 24 hours.

Step 8: Top coat. Make sure all clear areas are masked, then airbrush another clear top coat using Testor Dullcote thinned with Testor thinner. This coating will flatten out all splotches and shiny areas possibly created thus far. Let the Dullcote dry 24 hours.



All the panel lines are weathered – even the ones covered with decals. Carefully cut through the decal along the panel line and apply the same weathering as on any other area of the aircraft.

Step 9: Chalk. Now apply artist's pastel chalks. Use only chalk-type pastels, not the oil-based ones. Rub a pastel stick over wet/dry sandpaper (220 grit). To keep the powder contained, grind it over a jar lid or box. (Wash your hands to prevent fingerprinting the model.)

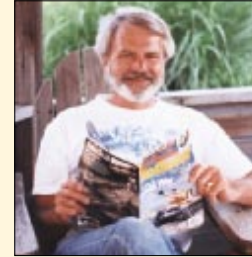
Using a small, pointed brush, apply a thin line of powder along the panel lines. Only work on a small area at a time. Take another slightly wider brush and stipple (tap) the powder all along the panel line. Blow off the excess, but not onto your work surface, or you'll get pastel powder on your model when you set it down.

Finally, take a soft wide brush and blend the pastels with small side-to-side movements. Be careful handling the model, but at this stage little of the pastel remains – it's blended into the finish.

Step 10: Another top coat. Believe it or not, the model is now nearly done. Apply a final clear top coat, which further enhances the finish and blends and protects the pastels.

The trick of the final top coat (Testor Dullcote) is a light application so you don't hide the pastel work. After it's dry, you can apply additional chipping with silver. This will give you fresh-looking paint chips along with the older-looking chips you've previously applied.

I use this finishing technique for cockpits, engines, undercarriage, and virtually all areas of the model. When building and finishing, I keep a log book on each kit as to what I've done in case I have to shelve a project for a while.



Meet Bill Pettyjohn

Bill is a communications technician with Southwestern Bell in Topeka, Kansas, and has been building models for 45 years. Married with two children, his primary modeling interest is 1/48 scale WWII aircraft. Although he does some conversions, he most enjoys improving kits by adding his own scratchbuilt details.

My method may seem to be overwhelming, but it really works and once you get going it all comes together.

If you choose to try the finishing method I used on my Mosquito, experiment and test on a scrap model first. This method isn't exactly magical, but when you follow these steps it's amazing how a great finish will jump out at you as you proceed.

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