

# SNAPSHOT

## IMPROVE MODEL CAR WHEELS WITH DETAIL PAINTING

WHETHER YOU ARE ASSEMBLING a quick shelf model or competing for your next best of show trophy, adding painted detail to your model car's wheels is a quick and easy operation for a better appearance. However, do not treat all wheels or hub caps the same.

By Tim Boyd



**1**

The most basic step for detailing one-piece, plated model car wheels is to apply a black wash to add depth to recessed areas. If you make your own wash, use flat black enamel or acrylic paint with the appropriate thinner.



**2**

Often plated in car kits, real five-spoke alloy wheels display a different finish on the spokes to contrast with the polished rims. Flow slightly thinned metallic silver or aluminum paint onto the spokes with a paintbrush. Leave the center hub covers and lug nuts chrome.



**3**

Full-size aftermarket and racing wheels often have finishes that show unpolished or colored surfaces. Mix your own wheel colors by combining flat silver, gold, copper, bronze, and gray metallic paints and a double dose of flat black.



**4**

When you're happy with your color, brush the paint only on the spokes and center disc and leave the rims untouched; don't paint the rims! Leave them chrome for a polished look. You can use an airbrush to do this, but make sure to mask the rims first.



**5**

Polished alloy wheels (or in this case, the polished rims only) are not nearly as reflective as chrome, yet most model kit wheels are produced with a chrome finish. Mist a flat clear coat over chrome kit parts to provide a more realistic and scale appearance.



**6**

Remember to accent the lug nuts on racing wheels. Paint from a Molotow Liquid Chrome pen can be applied to the lug nuts with a fine-tipped brush. Note the different colors used on the rims as opposed to the spokes on these wheels.



7

Magnesium racing wheels quickly tarnish to dark gray. To replicate this, mix a dark gray metallic paint with flat black. The front hub covers and lug nuts are painted chrome, while the center rear axle flanges are black.



8

Period-correct steelie hub caps can also be paint-detailed. Flow thinned paint (in this case red) into the recessed logo and speed strakes with a fine-tipped brush. A wood toothpick can be used to gently rub off any paint that ends up outside the engraved surfaces.



9

"Salt flats" style wheels make great candidates for paint detailing. Compare the untouched wheels (top), with the partially painted wheel centers (middle) and the finished parts (bottom), which also wear flat gold accents on the three prong wheel knockoffs.



10

Building a traditional hot rod or 1950s/early-1960s Indy-type oval racer? Spray chrome Halibrand wheels with flat clear to tone down the shine (right) or treat them to simulate a tarnished wheel center while retaining the polished rims and center hubs (bottom).



11

For factory wheel covers, study references and replicate those colors in scale. Here, adding flat black, silver metallic, and red metallic paints to the hub of a 1964 Olds Cutlass model achieves a more realistic appearance.



12

These factory 15- x 7-inch Rallye wheels are found in many Mopar muscle car kits. Apply flat black to the recessed circular holes, flat aluminum or silver to the main wheel surfaces, and metallic gray to the center hub covers. The outer rims remain chrome. **FSM**