



Jervis is off 'finding himself' this month (although we're not quite sure how he lost himself in the first place), and John Blanche has returned to the pages of *White Dwarf* to talk about two of his favourite aspects of the hobby – modelling and painting...

## BLANCHEHITSU

I was in our Warhammer World store the other week (at our UK HQ). I had no agenda, I don't even think I went in to buy anything, I was just hanging around and taking in the atmosphere. As I strolled by the packed painting tables I had a bit of an epiphany.

The reason I love this hobby so much – and the reason why I'm still so enthused with it 30 years on – is that it's a hobby full of craftsmen. Unless this is your very first issue of *White Dwarf* then chances are you've assembled a model and painted it so I'm including you in this category as well; yes, you are an accomplished craftsman. I'm not being glib here – our skill levels may vary but what we are all doing is creating bespoke collections of miniatures. No two armies are ever alike and the way we go about building our collections differs in the same way that individual craftsmen in other professions will approach the same project in different ways. Some build and paint up armies for a specific tactical combination, so it performs well in games and at tournaments. Others grow their armies thematically over time, often years; such forces are never finished and contain models that range from the latest release to those that are decades old.

I have always taken a far more esoteric approach to my models. I want to explore all the different avenues that our worlds open up. These avenues go off on all sorts of mad tangents and I never know where they are going to end. Exploring these

creative offshoots tends to dominate my life if I'm not careful, I lose myself in what I can only describe as close to an obsession, thinking about it all waking hours of the day, whether I'm shopping, sleeping or doing any other mundane task.

I have to somehow express these concepts trapped in my head and, being an artist, a lot of this comes out in my drawing but, perhaps surprisingly, I actually find modelling and painting miniatures to be the more therapeutic medium. It's the outlet my consciousness needs to expel these notions and create tangible representations of them. I don't necessarily think of these concepts as actually existing in the Warhammer world or in the 41st Millennium, but the possibility is there; they're my interpretation of the settings.

My mutated Guardsmen are a great example; the idea of using Skaven Clanrats for their bodies came about while exploring those aforementioned avenues, so I knew I had to do a squad. Already my mind is starting to ponder the next step in this concept – merging a tank with a Plague Furnace is looking increasingly likely the more I think about it! I'm not the only one to use the new Skaven kits in bizarre and grotesque fashions. In fact, before I started my rodent-flavoured Guardsmen, I came upon Colin Grayson's fantastic Skaven army when passing through the Studio (*Colin is our Army Master next month – Ed*). Colin is, of course, well acquainted with the ratmen,



Some of John's stylised Bloodletters including a Herald of Khorne (centre left). Note the glossy finish on the hellblades and tongues, created by using Citadel Water Effects as a substitute gloss varnish.

having been a key sculptor on some of the new kits. In fact it was seeing Colin's brilliant and disturbing collection that set my mind wandering on its current course.

It's not my only recent foray into the darker areas of my imagination. Along with my son, Christian, I've been working on a Chaos army that contains both Chaos

so I showed him a Terminator I'd recently been painting in store that very day. 'Wow,' he said, 'You've painted that in the style of John Blanche.' After getting over the initial embarrassment of explaining that I was John Blanche and finding out that my name is now more synonymous with a style of painting than me in person, the hobbyist went on to ask me how I get my models looking the way they do. Obviously it comes naturally to me to paint in this style but it's not the first time I've been asked this so it got me thinking exactly how I apply brush to miniature.

The first question I ask, albeit subconsciously, when I appraise a model for painting is whether to paint the model really neatly using blending and layering techniques or do I try to paint it more worn and decrepit – as a warrior that's been on the field of battle all its life so is scratched and grubby and dirty. I normally end up right in the middle of that scope.

Depending on which bit of the figure I'm actually painting, I'll veer from one extreme to the other. Take my mutated Guardsmen, for instance – the heads and muzzles were painted very neatly but when it came to the fur and the armour I've used drybrushing and heavy weathering techniques to make them look chipped, scratched and grimy. If the model is plastic you can really enhance this look before you even start painting by simply cutting small flecks and nick little bits of damage into the armour with your Hobby Knife.

I usually undercoat my models with Chaos Black and then paint flat colours on all the areas. I know a recent trend is to focus on one area until it's done but I'm more of a traditionalist, having a basecoat on every part of the model before progressing to the next stage. Another quandary I always ask myself around this stage is whether to wash and drybrush or

**“I take, and always have done, a far more esoteric approach with my models.”**



*Here are more disturbing conversions from John's collection. A behorned female warrior of malevolent intent and another Skaven creation, with blades instead of claws.*

Space Marines and Daemons with a heavy weighting towards Khorne. It's the Bloodletters I really like to play with here; they offer so many possibilities, from the different textures on the model to the many colour palettes you can use. I'm already thinking about having a legion of them emerging from lava, cutting the models in half horizontally at different levels as if they're charging out of a deep pool of hellish magma.

### The 'Blanchian Style'

As much as I enjoy painting my own models, I love admiring other people's projects just as much. It is at events like Golden Demon where the craft of what we do really comes into its own and I always leave feeling inspired. It's also why I take pleasure in spending time in Warhammer World, watching hobbyists play games or paint miniatures and sharing the results of their painting with each other. One of the great joys of the hobby is to show off and be rightly proud of your work. I was doing just this with a fellow craftsman on the very same visit to Warhammer World as my earlier epiphany. He was showing me a rather wonderful Space Marine army and



### Showcase: John's Skaven

Here are some of the Skaven from John's collection, including some of the mutated Guardsmen he mentions above. Also included is a heretical Confessor, made from the Corpse Cart Necromancer alongside other bits.

Here are a couple of Colin Grayson's more disturbing conversions from his Skaven collection. We'll be featuring the whole of his army next issue; you have been warned!



paint and blend. Again, I take an approach somewhere between the two – I allow the sculpted surface to dictate what the technique should be. The more texture there is, the more likely I'll be to wash and drybrush. The flatter the area, the more likely I'll tend towards more blending techniques. I'm aware I may be preaching to the choir here but sometimes it's just worth stating the obvious, it helps clarify things and it is the thought process I go through when painting. I'll give you a good example: when painting the scales on my Bloodletters, I don't want to paint each scale individually – I don't work in 'Eavy Metal! – so I use a drybrush as a quick and effective way of getting them done. But some of the scales are a lot bigger, a lot spikier, so when I come to those I paint them, blending up the highlight.

Whichever route I take, I then give the whole figure a 1:1 wash of Gryphon Sepia and Devlan Mud. I'm already one of those painters that struggles to remember a time before Devlan Mud and would never do without it now. The wash ties the model together but what I will do is reapply a flat colour if it has been dulled down too much or even paint some pure Devlan Mud directly into a recess if I want to darken the area even further. I think it's this stage that really defines my style. It's not something I approach casually – I give a lot of thought to which areas need further shading or repainting. After this I apply a light drybrush of Skull White onto every raised surface. When I say light drybrush I mean an effect so subtle as to be almost imperceptible. There should be hardly any pigment on the brush at all; applied to the raised areas and edges of equipment, blades, belts and so on, I find it really lifts the miniature even though it's almost an invisible technique.

If there are any details or free-hand work needed for the miniature I then paint that on, be it icons or glinting effects on

gems, dotting pupils in the eyes, and so on. We then come to the weathering. Most people view this part as an afterthought, if they use it at all, but for me it's one of the (if not the most) defining parts of painting the model. I strive for a battlefield

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patination. I want my paint scheme to suggest that the model isn't just off the parade ground but has been in the field of battle. I achieve this through the use of extensive weathering techniques. I always use Boltgun Metal for armour and blades, dulling it down with washes, so it looks like a bit of iron that's been exposed to the elements for years. I never use Mithril Silver, even for representing new and recent scratches I'll go no lighter than Chainmail. You can create rust and oxidation effects by adding brown to metal areas, and bluey-greens to copper or bronze surfaces.

Finally, I matt varnish my models, then apply Water Effects onto the figure, picking out certain areas to give a slimy or glossy look. For example, I carefully applied it to the eyes of my Skaven to give them a wicked gleam.

And that's it really. This isn't an exhaustive guide on how I paint my models but I never intended it to be, I just wanted to give some insight on how and why I paint the way I do. What I think is more important is to develop your own style – as I said at the start of this ramble, we're all craftsmen and as such our miniature collections represent a body of work we should all be proud to display.

*John is often in Warhammer World of a weekend – if you see him, why not say hello! Don't forget you can write to John Blanche and, of course, Jervis Johnson at:*

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