How are you going to finish the interior of your next model car project? I’ll bet you already have the exterior paint scheme all figured out – maybe Tangerine Pearl or Vanilla Shake with airbrushed ghost flames or a nail polish paint job with a dozen coats of clear. But, what about the interior – flat black or flat white? I know; it’s easy, quick, and it’s right there on the shelf. You usually can’t go wrong with black, white, or a nice shade of gray, but you know what? That’s boring.

There are only so many colors that you can correctly paint the interior of a Regimental Red 1967 Pontiac GTO – black would be just fine. However, don’t just paint the interior parts flat black; the true look of a vinyl interior has various levels of gloss.

Much of my time at my “day job” is spent dealing with automotive interiors. The inspiration for this article developed on the job, as I was spraying automotive vinyl dye. We use a product from SEM, which is made for putting color on flexible plastics and vinyl. Its finish has the same look as a vinyl seat cover or dashboard, and it comes in an easy-to-use spray can. A little experimentation at home with this stuff indicated that it was great for plastic model car interior parts as well!

I also decided to search out other ideas for finishing scale interior components. Yes, I was stuck in the “paint-it-flat-black” rut and decided that putting more color in my life could be a good thing. Looking beyond the usual sources for interior paint resulted in some interesting finds, and the idea here is to get you thinking about colors, textures, and levels of gloss. In the following pages, I’ll offer alternative choices for painting model car interiors and showcase some cool products that can give your model’s inside the same “gotcha” appeal as the fancy paint on the outside.
During the 1960s, manufacturers often offered interior colors to match a car’s exterior finish. An example of this is the 1962 Corvette color called “Fawn Beige,” available as both a body and interior color. Model Car World will sell you a bottle of Fawn Beige paint (no. 6010) that’s pre-mixed, and the bottle screws onto a Badger airbrush! MCW also sells the semi-gloss clear I used to produce the correct sheen.

Another source to check out when trying to replicate metallic vinyl is automotive touch-up paint. Rattle cans work, but I found this little bottle of aqua metallic lacquer to be perfect for my 1962 Chevy convertible project. Good reference material can be invaluable for replica stock modeling. I mixed this paint with a little lacquer thinner and shot it through the airbrush. No primer is necessary. The first light coat is shown on the right, with the finished parts on the left.

As a side note; if your model’s seats are painted flat black (or any flat color), rub your finger over the seat in areas where you want to show a bit of wear. The oil from your skin will add a little gloss to the paint and give it that smooth, worn look.

Model Car World also offers some ready-to-spray interior colors. These components were airbrushed with Medium Ivy Green Metallic (no. 6302). I found this color to be on the flat side (could’ve been too much pressure in the airbrush), so I used the semi-gloss clear as well.

Here’s the completed model’s interior. I could’ve gone with good-old black for the interior, but the aqua metallic is period-correct for the car and gives it more visual appeal. Note the matching sun visors and convertible boot.

**Sources**

Ken’s Kustom Kar Supply  
P.O. Box 85, Dept. SCA  
Fremont, OH 43420-0085  
E-mail: SmitAtoGrp@aol.com  
Catalog: LSASE w/$.37 postage

MCW Automotive Finishes  
Box 518, Dept. SCA  
Burlington, NC 27216-0518  
List: $2.00 and LSASE  
www.ourworld.cs.com/mcwautofinishes

Scale Motorsport  
3 Topside Lane, Dept. SCA  
Newtown, CT 06470-2023  
E-Mail: scalemotor@aol.com  
www.scalemotorsport.com  
Catalog: $3.00 (via e-mail free)
While I was building the Maisto Bug, I decided to paint the dashboard and steering wheel with semigloss paint. One of my favorite ways to achieve the correct sheen is to mix Testors Model Master Flat Black and Gloss Black. I put a little of each color into the airbrush jar (about a 50-50 mix). The gloss level can be adjusted by using more or less gloss black. I also added just a few drops of flat white to this mix to give the parts a deep charcoal look. It sure beats gray plastic!

The gray plastic interior of this Maisto die-cast metal kit needed some help. It's nicely detailed, but it’s bare plastic. A trip to Kmart yielded a can of this Krylon Make It Suede paint. A few light coats sprayed on from a distance yielded an improved appearance. Make It Suede gives the same effect as Faux Fabrix. This product is available in other color choices, if you want a different color, you can spray a light coat of flat paint over any of these textured paints.

If you like a paint finish that has more of a fabric look, you need a can of Faux Fabrix. This product sprays on easily over bare plastic and adds a cloth-like texture to parts that you can’t get with ordinary paint. This custom Chevy pickup’s seats, door panels, and bed cover were sprayed with Faux Fabrix. The carpet area has been done with Fuzzi-Fur in a contrasting color. Faux Fabrix is available in tan and gray and by the time you read this, they should have two new colors available.
Ken’s Fuzzi-Fur works great for simulating carpet. To apply it, simply paint the area to be “flocked” with a matching color paint and liberally sprinkle the area with Fuzzi-Fur while the paint is still wet. Remove the excess Fuzzi-Fur by turning the part upside down and tapping it. Here, Testors’ Sublime Green (no. 2767) was sprayed straight from the can and is a great match for Ken’s Fuzzi-Fur Chartreuse (no. 133). Don’t forget to flock the kick panels at the bottoms of the doors.

The color choices, including the lime green flocking, make more sense when the completed model is seen. The body was fogged with Testors Sublime, White, and darker shades of green.

I liked the button-tufted seats from the Catalina custom kit so much that I put one into a 1960 Chevy pickup kit. This photo illustrates the various levels of gloss on the interior components. The SEM-painted seat has the look of vinyl, while the semigloss black-painted floormat replicates rubber.

The final result of my interior detailing pulls the overall look of the car together. It has a distinct 1960s, hip retro look.
You can buy spray cans of SEM’s flexible vinyl paint in automotive paint supply and parts stores. It can be sprayed from the can or transferred to an airbrush. There are lots of colors available for finishing anything from a custom 1932 Ford interior, (left) to a ’49 Mercury, (center), or ’66 Mustang buckets. These parts were sprayed without primer. If you can’t find this product, Dupli-Color also makes a vinyl spray.

These parts from AMT/Ertl’s 1962 Pontiac Catalina custom kit were taped to a piece of cardboard and sprayed with SEM Super White. This color is actually an off-white/eggshell shade, which is perfect for custom interiors. Spray the dye from a distance of about 12-inches; several light coats should do the trick.

VINYL PAINTS

MULTI-COLORED INTERIORS

These seats and door panels are from the current AMT/Ertl 1958 Plymouth Belvedere kit. My reference material shows vinyl upholstery with multi-colored cloth inserts. (I couldn’t find any photos of a ’58 Belvedere with the seat inserts laid out in this pattern; I’m just showing you how to paint in this article.) The seats and panels were painted with SEM Red then the inserts were masked off with masking tape.

The exposed areas were then painted gray. I used Testors Graphite Metallic (no. 2712) mixed with a little flat white.

The parts were taped on cardboard and placed on the ground. Black, white, red, and chrome-silver were misted onto the gray painted areas by standing two feet away and spraying toward the parts. The color will slowly build up as the paint settles onto the seats and door panels. You only want misty overspray to land on the parts, but don’t worry if a big spot lands where you don’t want it – you can dab a little gray base paint over it with a brush and continue.
Notice that the seat looks different than the decal on the sheet. The decal has some clear sections that let the red base color show through.

One of the best products for modelers to come out in the past few years is Scale Motorsport’s line of interior upholstery pattern decals. One of the latest designs has the look of a Mexican blanket, which was a popular and inexpensive “seat cover” back in the 1950s and ‘60s. I sanded the top of the seat smooth with a file, since none of the molded-in upholstery details would show through a heavy blanket.

The interior bucket was painted with some SEM Portofino Red vinyl dye and allowed to dry. The Mexican blanket decals were applied according to the instructions. You’ll need some decal setting solution, a hair dryer, scissors, and foam cosmetic wedges. (The complete process for installing these decals was covered in the October 2001 issue of Scale Auto Enthusiast.)

You’re looking at a project that is far from finished, but this photo illustrates how the interior can become the focal point of a model.

Brand new to the Scale Motorsport roster is a sheet of “Cow Hide” interior decals. (You will find other uses for them, I’m sure!) This 1955 Chevy ragtop, built by “Almonte” Montefusco, shows just how “udderly” cool they can look.