

## Paint your wagon for £50

(available in full with pictures on the wiki and in the technical forum there is along running thread from other users, again with pictures)

### Introduction

The paint you need is [Rust-oleum CombiColor](#). It's an enamel that is UV resistant and you can actually apply it with a roller to steel and/or glass fibre - no primer needed. You use high-density foam rollers (not fluffy or cheap sponge rollers) and this allows you to paint relatively smoothly. The properties of the paint allow it to subsequently level out - *providing you've thinned it correctly*.

The process is - paint three to four layers (flatted back between coats) then a final flat and polish. Note that I said flatting back. If you don't do this, you will **NEVER** get a smooth and glossy finish so if you have any visions of a quick roller over and job done, this is not for you - well, unless that's what you're after.



However, if you DO go this route, you'll end up with a **hard durable paint finish that is resistant to fading and does not need primer**. It can also look incredibly good - if you put in the time on flatting back with wet and dry. Theoretically there is no reason why you couldn't surpass a good spray job - seriously.

### The Paint

Rustoleum CombiColor, the enamel that can be applied with a roller is available from <http://www.lawson-his.co.uk> Best deal I found as they said they offered full range. They mailed me with the following info:

CombiColor is available in the full range of RAL, BS4800, & BS381C colours along with many OEM colours. This tint range is available as follows:

1 Lt - £ 10.00 each

2.5Lt - £ 22.40 each

Clearly prices may have changed and you need to take into account VAT and postage etc. You only need one 2.5 Lt tin to do a whole T25 although considering the price, you may like to buy two tins just to make sure and for future repairs or touching up.

This paint is seriously good. Basically you mix it down like thin custard/watery (about 15-20% thinners), roller it on (thin coat) with high density sponge rollers (B&Q sell them cheap) and let dry. I recommend a week - a baking sun to harden is perfect but don't actually roller in full sun as it needs time to level out and full sun won't give it time. After paint is fully dry, flat with wet and dry (no rougher than 600 grade). Repeat three times. Advantages are that you don't need primer, it will even go over rust (although I treated all mine properly - see further down) and its a

VERY tough non-fade paint and possibly available in any colour if you ask for it to be mixed - not sure on that one (see below).

This paint has been formulated to work well via roller since it doesn't dry instantly like most other types of paint. Its this slight 'flow' that allows it to flatten out to a fairly smooth finish making subsequent flattening down a lot easier. The trick is not to overwork areas with the roller other than to catch runs and keep each layer thin.

Having worked on V-dubs since the late 70s and painted more bugs than I can remember, the vans tend to take far more abuse and coupled with the damned size of the things, spraying is a nightmare on a DIY basis. Besides, it isn't long before some inconsiderate car owner who can't even see over their steering wheel in an Asda car park will run a nice crease down the side of your once pristine panels. That's just the way it is.

However, with this paint, any slight damage later can be easily rectified by a quick roll over and flat-out to put right scratches etc. I'm told it doesn't fade. Its great for rust protection, and its a hard paint finish once its fully cured.

Other ideas that occur to me are camouflage paint jobs - armed with various greens in the combicolor range I see no reason why you can't use more than one colour and be fairly creative with it.

### **Rust & Body Preparation:**

To get you vehicle ready, do all the usual body filling work for dents and creases. Pay the same attention that you would if you sprayed the vehicle. As with any paint finish, its as good as the prep. For rust use 'Vactan'. I've tried other brands (all of them I think over 20 years) but Vactan is the only treatment that stops rust dead.

I don't wish it to sound as if I'm promoting a brand as such but I've tested it rigorously and its top notch. I've treated bare rust, left the vehicle a year and it has kept it at bay - even without painting so that says it all. Vactan can also be found on Ebay from time to time. Many wedge owners have followed my advice on Vactan and will vouch for its effectiveness. Damn it - the military use it! It absolutely perfect for seams too as its watery and will run into difficult areas..

A bottle of Vactan goes a LONG way but DO wear gloves as your fingers will go black after a few minutes and it has a consistency like dried evo-stick once it dries on fingers - takes some shifting. It turns rust black and leaves an acrylic type finish afterwards meaning it will protect even without paint so useful stuff to have if you own a bay, wedge etc.

You can paint over rust with rustoleum, but Vactan stabilises it nicely so I do recommend this during body prep work. As with spraying, if you leave dents and dings, they will show up twice as bad when the paint is on, so do the prep fully. Finally key up the body with 800 grade to give the new paint something to bite on to. Don't rush this - aim for a matted finish and pay attention to difficult to reach areas like next to window rubbers for instance. You can use primer to help highlight imperfect areas if you want to. Rust-oleum will go over any surface so its not affected by other paint types.

Make sure there is no sanded dust or bits of hair etc anywhere on your wagon afterwards. A good wash helps and a run over with a damp, dust free cloth and then allowed to dry fully. You can buy commercial tac-rags which are designed specifically for the job but I find a slightly damp but clean cloth will reveal anything left behind. If theres still 'muck' on the rag - wash everything again! I use cheap washing up liquid as the more expensive ones are likely to leave a film that paint doesn't like.

Remove handles on areas you need to work on - as well as rear vents where applicable.

Use masking tape along window rubbers, gutter trims (unless you intend to fit new) petrol filler, wiper bases, rear lock. Paint is easy to remove from glass with a craft knife or stanley blade when its dry but a pig if it gets on window rubbers or plastic trim. I won't go into how you apply masking tape around bends but there are plenty of sites around that will show how to mask. All you're doing is creating a good seal so that as paint is applied, it runs just up to the rubbers. Yes you could remove windows if you're concerned that everywhere is covered but to be honest you could even do this at a later date if you wanted to as the paint doesn't fade and you can do window openings and flat level to blend in with paint you've already applied.

## **Materials**

B&Q do the small 4" high-density foam rollers. These are what you need to apply the paint. Do NOT use cheap roller heads or they will disintegrate in minutes - all over your beloved bus. My local pound shop does a cheap mini-roller and tray (lots of places do) - the rollers on these are no good but you can fit the B&Q high-density gloss rollers to these cheap roller handles which saves even more. Shop around basically. I bought eight rollers and trays and just swapped the roller heads for the B&Q ones! Last thing I want to be doing is washing a roller tray afterwards so for the sake of eight or ten quid, just buy enough rollers and trays for the job ok?

Foam brushes. Pound shops do these too - by the bag full. You need this for above and below gutters, inside doors (if you go that far). Ordinary brushes would do if you can't find foam ones but you're more likely to see brush marks then. Besides, foam ones are cheaper and easily disposed of.

Wet and dry abrasive paper can also be bought from pound shops as can white spirit but I found B&Q masking tape had a better tack quality - otherwise we are well under a fifty pound budget. Old flattened cardboard boxes are good to protect driveways from odd drips. Do lay these out BEFORE you start.

Latex gloves are good too - saves the hassle of paint-ridden fingernails during painting and/or sanding - again available in pound shops!

## **Application:**

Firstly lets consider conditions. Most people will be doing this outside - unless you have a really big heated garage. Thats fine (honestly) but timing is crucial. During certain times of the year, bugs are everywhere but as a rule you'll see few before 10am and thats possibly the best time to lay paint on. Heat is another factor. Dry but overcast is ideal and don't attempt this in damp or Autumn/Winter weather - Spring/Summer is a better bet - ideally Spring when there are less creepy crawlies and leaves blowing around. Hot sunny days are great for hardening the paint off. A perfect time would be May-June (May for all the prep, June for the painting).

You need to thin this paint down. The recommended ratio is 20-25% and you can test-paint to get the mix right. Start around 15% and gradually add more thinners. The right mix is dependent on outside temperature but you MUST thin it. It will almost be like water/very thin custard if you've got it right. Hard to describe but you'll know when you've got it right during painting.

Take time stirring as you do NOT want to introduce air bubbles. It could take an hour to fully mix thinners - on and off. No whisks, power drills with attachments - use a stick and 'fold' the thinners in.

The roller needs to be saturated with paint but gently squeezed out once it is. The idea is to leave few if any air bubbles in the roller so a few seconds spent doing this to start with will enable you to roller trouble free for about ten minutes. One tray full of paint is enough to do a door and the front so it goes a LONG way. Remember - thin coats. Don't be tempted to pile paint on or you'll have twice as much work afterwards getting it smooth again during the flattening.

Here's the fun bit. I do suggest you have a mate, son, wife around to point out bits you've missed or to spot any runs in time - it helps. There's a certain knack to the way you lay this paint down. Don't put too much paint on your roller - little is best. Work quickly with very light pressure (weight of the roller is about right), keeping an eye open for runs which you can catch with the roller but spend no more than a minute working any given area or you'll just be laying on more paint than you should and give yourself way too much work flattening back. You may see a whole heap of tiny air bubbles sometimes - just use the weight of the roller (no pressure) over them and after a minute they will vanish if you've thinned it sufficiently.

Trick is not to spend more time on an area than needed to cover it and work briskly, couple of passes of the roller to cover it, one or two to even paint out (ie remove lines) and a gentle roll (pressure of roller only) to assist any air bubbles out. Don't be tempted to go back to areas unless you have to (ie a bad run somewhere) as within about 3 mins it's unworkable and you'll end up putting too much paint on in one go. After about 8 minutes it'll level out and start to skin over. Every layer should be THIN. Go PRACTICE on something first - it REALLY helps. A steel panel you have lying about will suffice. Don't try to pile on paint as you'll give yourself no end of grief doing that. Just keep layers smooth (no hard lines) and then LEAVE IT ALONE to dry and level out.

One GOOD tip though - when you're holding the tray in one hand and rolling with the other - watch you're not pouring the contents of the tray on your drive or shoes! Best to put tray down. You can lay corrugated cardboard along the sides of your bus underneath in case you're accident prone or don't want the odd drip.

For guttering you use a foam brush (see materials). Rollers are only 4" wide and can get in anywhere really, particularly with the curved end, but where they can't, use foam brushes and lightly touch with a roller as far as you can afterwards to help those areas blend in better

No need to do all the masking you need for spraying. Just mask window rubbers, tank filler, that kind of thing.

I cannot recommend enough the word 'practice' BEFORE you touch your beloved T25. Find a steel panel, old washing machine, anything smooth to practice on. Once you start putting it on, don't panic if you see little air bubbles. Wait a second or two then run your roller over them using just the weight of the roller, wait a minute or two more and they should all magically vanish. Neat huh?

Now leave paint alone, quick check round for a creeping run but try to avoid going over areas you did four minutes ago or you'll get in a right mess if you do. Remember, the flattening sorts most problems. It takes 2 hours before you can drive the van/camper again but keep off any newly painted areas for at least a day.

You are fairly safe from bugs after 15 minutes. You can use tweezers for the real dopey bugs but if you do get the odd one, it'll generally vanish when you flat down.

Some claim they can flat back two days later but I honestly think that's way too soon. Paint 'skins' but it will often be soft underneath so I suggest a week to really set the paint - longer if

you can. In reality it takes weeks, possibly months for paint to really cure but you can flat back fairly safely after a week if the weather is warm - particularly if its been in the sun.

What I've noticed (and probably why this paint is different to others) is that even watered down with white spirit, its still a very dense paint - it doesn't go on transparent like other paints would so you get good coverage.

As indicated earlier, I don't wash anything out - I just dump each roller and tray and start with a fresh roller and tray each time - seems easiest way to do it and at a pound a go for roller handles and trays - why not.

### **One week later**

When I did mine I left things a week and fortunately I had at least a day or so of baking sun to really harden the paint up.

First I tackled the front (bonnet if you like) with soapy 600 grade wet and dry. I'd say thats about right for flatting back. You can use finer but you'll be working hard if you do. I basically flatted it back baby smooth again - few areas where the old paint showed through but thats to be expected - besides the follow up coats will sort all that.

Second coat is a lot easier as by now you'll have got the mix right and the technique too. Just keep layers smooth (no hard lines) and again - LEAVE IT ALONE to dry.

Don't be concerned if the surface looks slightly orange peely after a coat - this is flatted back to reveal a smooth finish although you'll see when you get going that even without flatting back, the surface isn't bad at all. You must flat down between coats as this will give you that final smooth coat. If you roller layers without flatting you'll simply amplify the orange peel.

Don't paint in blazing sun. It'll dry VERY quickly in the sun but if you have no choice, you must thin the paint even more!

Closeup its as good as any spray job but the finish is in the flatting and the final polish - not the rolling - simple as that. If you want it glass smooth it is achievable. I'm in no rush so will do odds and ends over the summer.

The biggest plus is not having to mask, no paint smells (well not much), no mess, and being able to drive it 2 hours later.

Lawsons in Southampton are the people to get it from. They had a slight price reduction at the time - £19 I think. Helpful bunch too.

### **Three weeks later (and a few more forum answers)**

The finish is down to the time you are prepared to put in flatting down and polishing out. On its own it will come out mildly orange peely but as a few have said, even without flatting back its still very acceptable.

What you're trying to do is lay on enough paint so that when you flat back you're not going straight through to the old paint beneath. I've been able to flat back to a smooth dead flat finish between coats and clearly if you polish out at that stage you'll match a spray finish. However, even the raw paint finish on its own makes the paint quite acceptable until its hard enough for you to wet and dry it flat so at least you can drive around in it. For some, the unflatted finish will be acceptable.



<<This finish is four coats of paint followed by flattening back with pound shop 600 grade wet and dry and believe it or not, pound shop metal cleaner (not much difference between Brasso and T-cut to be honest). The whole point of this project was to keep costs down remember.

Arguably you could say why not spray it, but there's very little mess this way and you still end up flattening back however you do it.

A neighbour was out there yesterday watching me roller and commented that there was virtually no

smell with this paint - that for me is a real plus. You can get out there and 'do a bit' whilst conditions are right and not annoy your neighbours.

Just remember to let the paint really harden up before flattening and ALWAYS flat with plenty of soapy water or you'll burn the paint.

### **About spraying/painting in general**

There are environmental factors as well as practical ones to painting vehicles. We are now faced with (as began to happen in Germany ten years ago), vehicles dumped on the side of the road because it costs money to scrap a vehicle with removal of brake fluids, oil etc becoming essential in the process of disposing of vehicles. Trabans in trees - been like that in Germany for a LONG while. I'm saying all this because I was recently lectured by someone who worked for my local council after I began rubbing some filler down outside my house. I soon ceased doing so although it's arguable what IS or ISN'T repairs.

I have done a great deal of spraying as well as airbrushing in my time but you really MUST have proper breathing equipment if you value your health (a dust mask is NOT sufficient) and with so much regulation being enforced on us by the EU, you're better off putting your vehicle in a proper spray shop with a pro or considering other ways to paint your vehicle. I'm trying not to sound negative (we all want to save money) but there are good reasons why spraying vehicles at home is discouraged. If you read the safety regulations that vehicle finishers have to adhere to, it's staggering just what is required to meet those regulations.

From an environmental point of view, Rustoleum has a negligible effect. The smell is minimal and providing you're not sloppy with your roller, you shouldn't spill any. Cardboard laid on the ground will minimise this anyway. None of my neighbours even noticed I was repainting my bus which is wholly different from someone who decides to spray their car in their garage. Spraying stinks - the whole street can smell it...

*This paint isn't even as strong as the smell of standard gloss paint.*

Lawsons, the Southampton supplier of Rust-oleum are **very** helpful (it's made in Holland by the way). However, the link above shows you many people doing Beetles, Type 2's etc. I think I'm getting better results than some of those shown actually but again, it's all down to the prepping before and after.

Between stages it's slightly orange peely but flats back lovely. Don't have the paint too thick and it's OK, even as it is.

As I say, after a couple of hours drying time I can drive away but it won't harden off fully for at least 48 hours. There's a spec sheet on drying/re-application but so much depends on weather. Ideal day is slightly cloudy and few bugs - mornings are good.

This *Wiki* paint aid should get you started. In the meantime keep an eye on the 'Paint Your Wagon - With A Roller' thread on 80/90 as you will no doubt find additional tips from others that have followed my lead on this [Club80-90 forum thread](#)

