

DAVE'S PHR BEHEMOTH BUILD

I have a confession to make: I haven't painted a miniature in five years. For a bloke who spends his life sculpting them, you'd have thought I'd paint a few, but that's exactly it—I've been busy. Originally, I did all our studio paint jobs, and they took *time*. 'That'll do' isn't me, so I've not painted.

Years back, when I setup my (then) new studio, I sorted my paints, airbrush, desk lamp, and then... did nothing. Hobbyists' guilt layered on with the dust, but when I sculpted the behemoths, I promised myself that when I got my mitts on one, I'd paint it. It's been a long journey to get these apex kits made, and they're here, so I guess I'm about to find out if I've 'still got it'.

I'm painting mine in the order I sculpted them, so it's PHR first. I'm building the Cronus, the first variant I sculpted, since when I think 'PHR Heavy', that's what's appears. These will be for display, so I won't magnetise. Anyway, they'll have to be efficient as there's a mountain of exciting, important stuff to sculpt, and these days I've got a little Legionnaire in Training to look after.

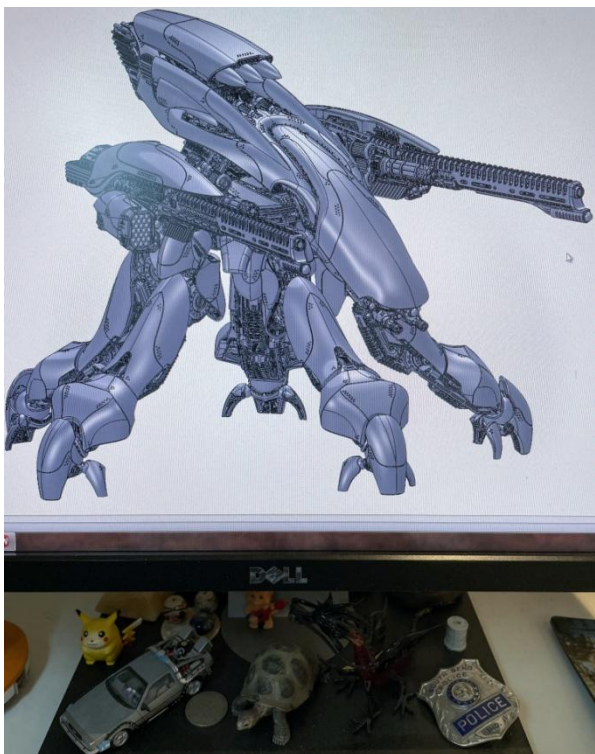
I don't have a macro photography setup here, so you'll have to excuse my quick iphone images. Also, for old time's sake, I'll be painting with the original paints I bought way back in 2010 for the very first Dropzone models—I'm super-familiar with them, so I hope they aren't gunk by now!

1: Prep and assembly

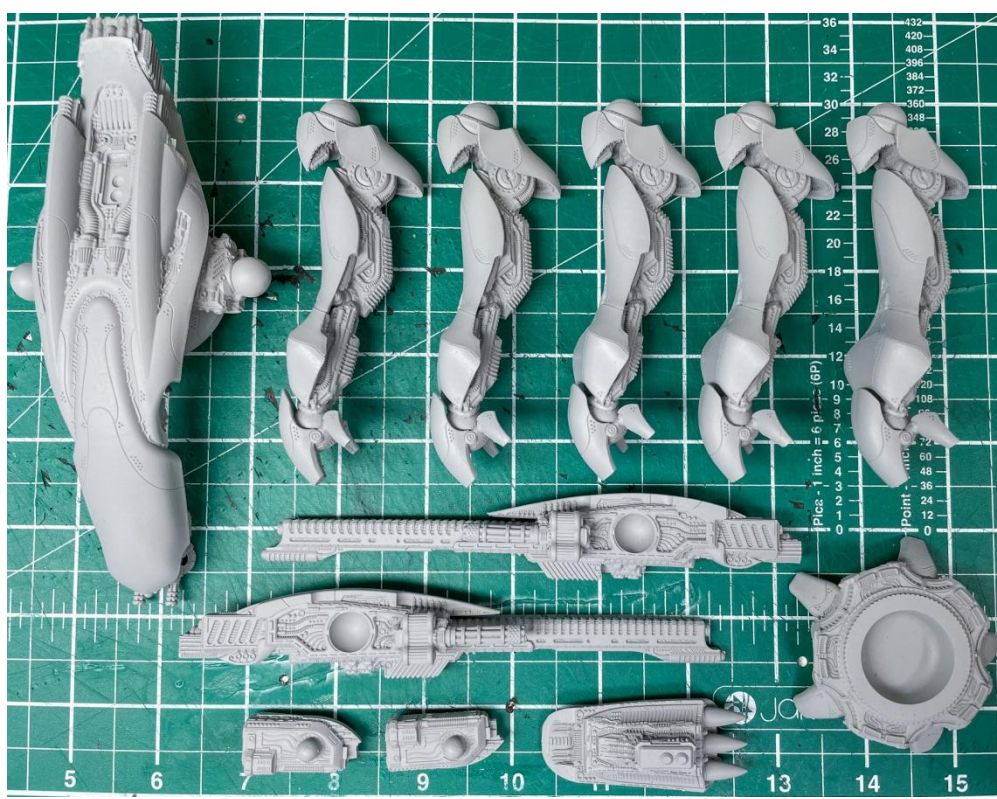
A massive grin ensued when I opened the box and unwrapped all that crisp, detailed resin. You get a bucket of chunky bits! Cleanup was quick with no real issues to report—I didn't even need my probably fossilised green stuff. Good clippers and a sharp scalpel sufficed.



As for posing, I have the luxury of having the CAD, so I could cheat and experiment digitally. I first tried a hunkered down, leant forward pose, aiming for an aggressive look (left).



Having tried that, I couldn't escape my 'sculpting pose', the one I saw for weeks creating it (right). These poses are straight, wooden and usually lifeless, but, with the PHR, this lends a robotic, clean look, and I'd sculpted it to look 'right' in this pose. So, using my screen for reference, I assembled the articulated legs and body exactly how I sculpted them. This pose has the advantage of each leg being identical, making final assembly straightforward. I'm not a fan of painting kits in a highly disassembled state, preferring to see a model in 'built context', but these are too massive to fully assemble first, so this is as far as I'm going for now.



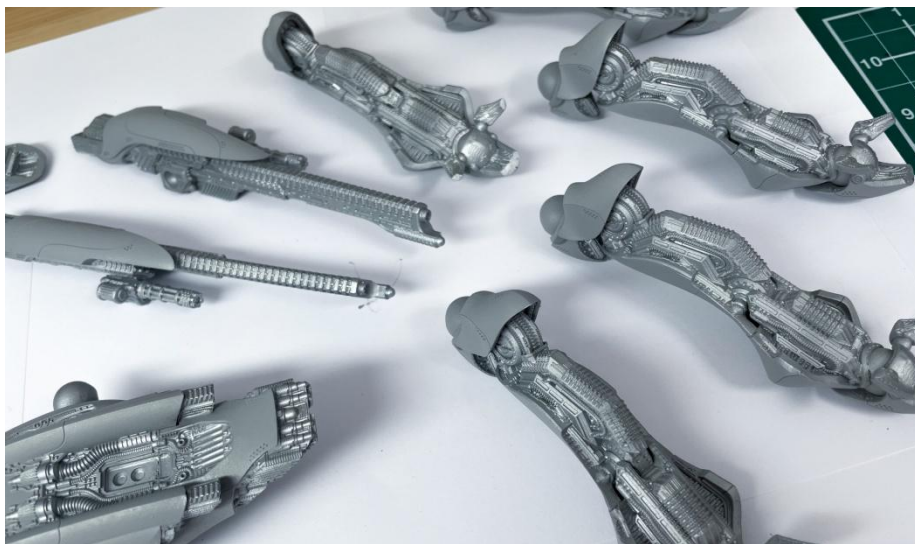
2: Grey Prime

Keeping paint layers thin preserves fine detail. Likely most of you know this, but when spraying, I always:

- Use a quality spray
- Spray in a warm, well-ventilated, non-windy space
- Shake well and test the spray first
- Spray from 20-30cm and keep moving
- Spray minimally with one coat if possible

3: Base Colours

I'm going for a militaristic, blue-grey scheme quite different from the stock colours. I'll be using every speed painting trick I know to efficiently reach a studio-ish standard, so first it was airbrush time. If you don't own one, get one—airbrushes lay down ultra-thin, opaque paint layers quickly while allowing for shading and other techniques. It always astounds me how many wargamers don't own one. You don't need a gucci model, but a gravity-fed, double action, detail airbrush is best. Don't skimp on your compressor—you need one with a tank to ensure a smooth air feed.

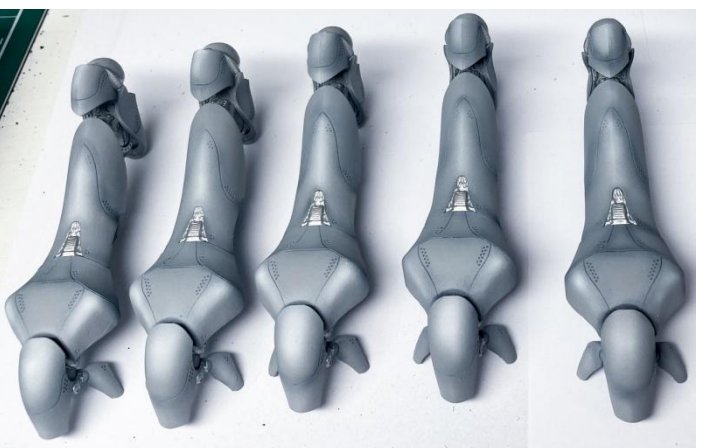


First, I airbrushed chrome over all the 'techy gubbins', mainly on the part's undersides. The PHR behemoth is very '2-tone', with clearly separate areas. I wasn't fussed about going over the edges a bit here, as this is before my armour base colour is applied, and chrome is a similar tone to my grey basecoat, so it won't interfere.

Next, I used an airbrush technique called 'pre-shading'. First, you airbrush a dark tone (black, here) over the panel lines and recesses of the areas you're about to apply a base colour to. Next, you lightly airbrush the base colour (a light, blue-grey) over the top. When done well, this subtly shades smooth areas in a way that's otherwise difficult to do fast.



Last, I lightly airbrushed white over a few choice raised areas to further shade the armour panels and brush-painted chrome over all the edges I'd just gone over, plus the bits too tricky to airbrush.

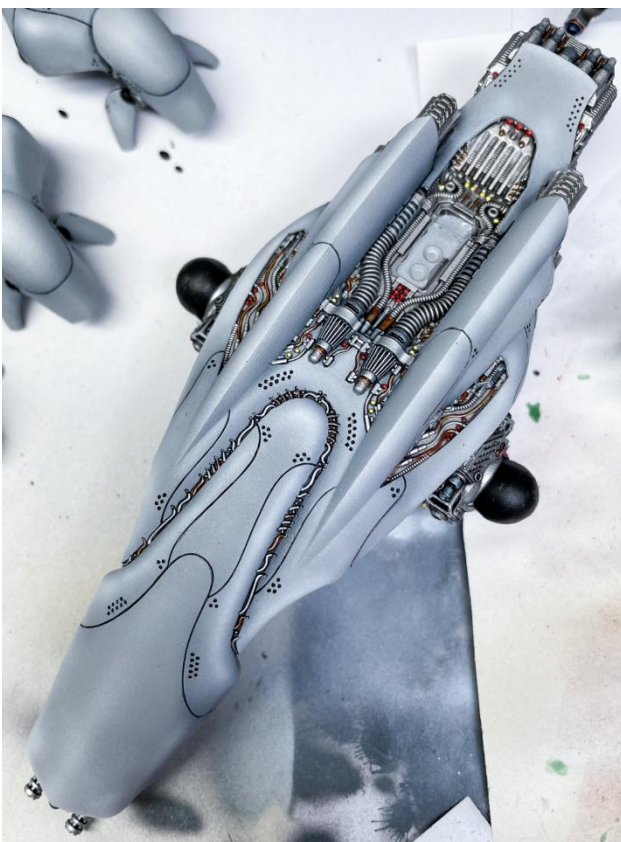




4: Metal and Panel Lines

For speed-painting, washes are your friend. First, I black washed all the chrome, giving the deepest areas two coats. Next, I gave some distinct areas two coats of blue wash as a base for blued steel. Next, I drybrushed chrome back over most of it, later using regular brush painting to ensure smoothness on the highest, flat areas.

Panel lines are always a pain. I used thinned black to get into these, quickly wiping off any overflow. These are thicker on behemoths than usual Dropzone models, so it's important to check that they're painted on each internal surface, or they'll look incomplete from some angles. Useful tip: you can always use a scalpel to gently scrape off unwanted paint.

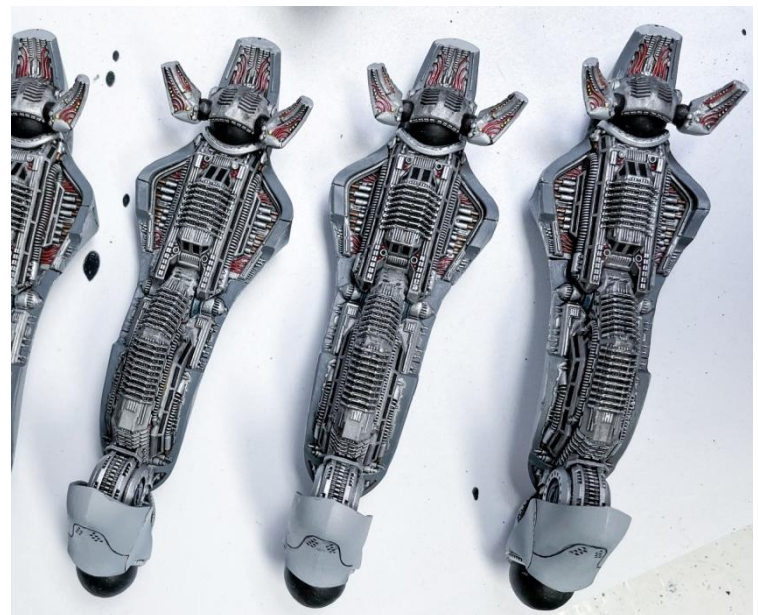


5: Detailing

There aren't many 'tricks' here—it's just about patience and steady brush work. For copper/aged bronze, I used an ancient pot of Flesh Wash (remember that one, old timers?), following up with gold highlights.

There are usually a ton of hemispherical details on Dropzone models—I treat these as lights, optics or buttons/caps. I base-coated the lights white then bright yellow, painted the caps/buttons + some of the wires red without any highlights to keep them as matte as possible, and used the typical 'gemstone technique' to layer-paint the optics with a blue-purple coating.

Lastly, I mixed a slightly darker grey than the base colour to sharply define all the underside armour areas that meet chrome bits, which weren't much airbrushed earlier so as not to interfere with the chrome basecoat.





6: Highlighting

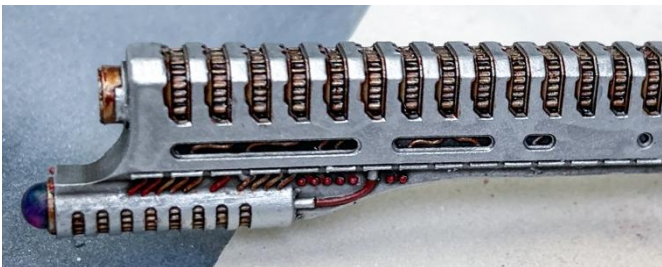
This step will separate my paint job from a proper studio one. Highlighting to that standard is, by far, the most time-consuming thing about studio painting Dropzone minis. They need to be fine, crisp and bright, bringing scale to these small models. I'd spend 70% of any job's time on this. Given the size of this beast and my limited time-budget, I'll rely on my earlier airbrushing/drybrushing to do most of the legwork.

I brush-painted the most prominent edges and not to the same crispness I'd want on a studio job. Behemoths are huge, so I can get away with this.

7: Effects

Befitting the PHR aesthetic, I want this model clean and fresh, but some signs of action are nice. I'll stop short of battle damage and paint chips, though—it will have murdered everything with arrogant prowess before taking return fire. Mainly, that leaves heat-discolouration of gun muzzles.

I airbrushed these sequentially with washes: sepia, purple then blue. You can airbrush washes, but it's tricky as they dry slower, making them prone to spreading in ugly lines with the air pressure. Also, weirdly, they block nozzles maddeningly fast, despite being water-thin.



After, I repainted the brass barrel section, since brass doesn't colour with heat, then re-highlighted all the brass tubes inside the barrel shroud.

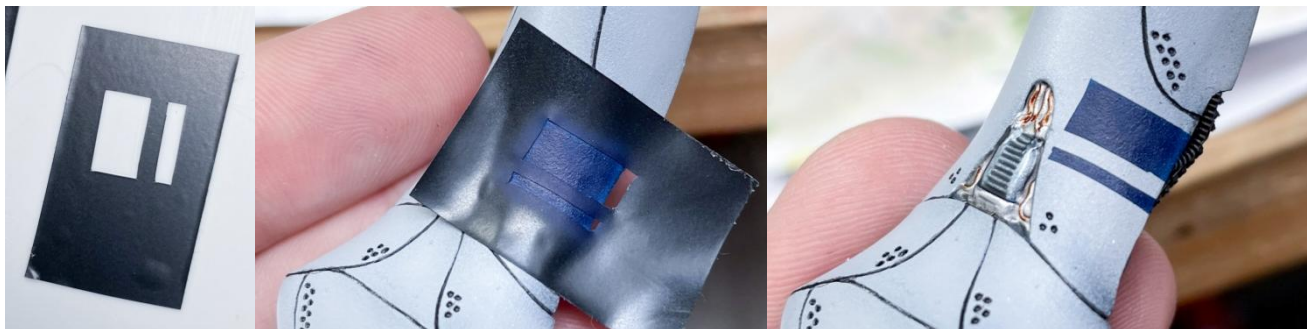
I did the same with the minigun barrels, then re-highlighted all the affected edges with chrome.



8: Unit Markings

Behemoths aren't exactly bulk, run-of-the-mill units, so their markings could be very simple. I'm going for a few graphic designation stripes, which usually look good on PHR while making them less 'usual human military'. To achieve consistency and very clean, crisp edges, I'll be airbrushing again.

First, I stuck some electrical tape to a sheet of plasticard then used a sharp scalpel to cut the two bands I wanted for the marking. It took a few goes to get it right, but it wasn't tricky. Next, I tentatively tested it on an underside section to make sure it wasn't going to pull up any paint. Next, I stuck the tape to the required area and carefully airbrushed dark blue over the exposed area from a close range, letting minimal paint out to prevent overspill. Peeling the tape off revealed the crisp stripe—very satisfying. Electrical tape stays sticky after many applications, so I could use the same piece to do this with all five legs, the massive rocket pod and the left arm.



8: Varnish and Finishing

Now the airbrushing is done, it's time to think about final finish. The armour is a little too matte for my taste, so it needs a finish along with a few other selected areas.

Gloss varnish generally looks horrible over large areas, so I made a satin by mixing it 50-50 with matte. I painted this generously over all the armour plates, creating a nice, smooth finish with a touch of 'fresh from the factory', ceramic-like gloss. It looks best in person, which is how I'm intending this to be viewed, as opposed to studio photography, which hates all things shiny. Next, I painted full gloss over the optics and blued steel parts. Lastly, I airbrushed sepia wash then black paint over the toes for some light 'stomp fouling' on top of the varnish, since grime would be too.





8: Final Assembly

Now for the best part! First, I scraped paint off all the areas which would come into contact, down to bare resin—gluing by the paint will haunt you later when your model falls to bits.

To achieve the exact pose I wanted, I went back to the CAD and measured the height from ground-level to the hips (it's 70.5mm to the hip's underside ring with all the big holes, incidentally). I made a paper tube 70.5mm high at a diameter to match the correct ring, and sat the hips on it. Next, I glued the legs on one by one, doing my best to space them equally. Here, I realised my first mistake: gluing the feet on at the start. At this hip height, the toes don't touch the ground, and I'd found it hard to paint behind them. Impossible to change now—there's always one niggle! After the legs, it was just a case of gluing the arm missile pods to the arms, the big pod to the hull, then the arms to the hull. I left the hull loose as it sits perfectly on the hips without glue, and it's easier for transit.

So there it is, all done! I'm extremely happy with this, the first model I've painted in five years, but I'll leave it up to you guys to decide if I've 'still got it'.

I've had a ton of fun painting, and it's reminded me of one of the joys of our wonderful hobby. Now there's just the other four Heavy Behemoths to do...

On that subject, this has taken me a while, and I'm not sure when I'll get the time to do the others. If you've enjoyed this, please make some noise about it—re-post, comment, shout from the rooftops, or whatever. If we can agree it's been worth it, this won't be the last time you hear from me with my tatty, old painter's hat on.

Anyway, over the next few pages, enjoy the finished gallery. Happy painting!

- Dave





