

The "Hudson" Sprayer

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This tool is extremely helpful for achieving a loose spatter very quickly.

Kleenex is a name brand, but we often refer to many other brands of tissues as Kleenex in our society. The same is true of Hudson sprayers in theater. Often, they are simply a garden sprayer that would usually be used to spray weed killer or bug killer in gardens. The Hudson brand costs a lot more, but will last longer if well cared for. The quality of spray achieved with a Hudson brand also will be a bit better. This tool works kind of like the super soaker squirt gun of my childhood. Liquid is put in a tank to about the halfway point and the lid is attached, creating a seal. It is pumped full of air via a hand pump that is part of the device. The biggest difference between this sprayer and a super soaker is that this sprayer has a nozzle that allows the stream of liquid to either come out in a stream, or more spread out as more of a rain.

Sprayers can be used for a number of purposes in theaters, such as keeping on stand-by full of water while welding, just in case some saw dust starts smoking. They can also be used to spray starched water on fabrics that need to be stiff. The most common use, however, is for spattering techniques in paint land. Using for Paint Paint placed in a sprayer must be thinned considerably, and should be strained for globbiness and chunks. The exact ideal thickness does vary from sprayer to sprayer, but generally it wants to be around the thickness of two percent to skim milk, rather than whole milk or cream. Learning to eyeball the correct thickness takes practice. If you are close, but just a little thick, it can be thinned extra after the fact without any sort of permanent damage. It will just take a moment to work the thicker liquid out of the system. There is something to be said for hand spattering. A skilled scenic artist has a lot more control over hand spattering, and can use it to create a greater variation in spatters. Generally, the spatter effect achieved from a sprayer is a bit more blobby with larger dots of paint than that which can be achieved by hand. Sometimes this is the perfect effect, and when it is, there is no faster way to achieve it. Sprayers can achieve some variation in spray by twisting the end of the nozzle, however it is a narrower spectrum. Caution must also be used, as a sprayer will start to spit if the gets low on air, or if the liquid is too thick or globby and begins to clog the works. Don't leave it sitting too long with paint in it, or pigment will begin to settle on the bottom, because watering the paint down that much begins to break down its chemical composition. It is more likely to clog the sprayer with this thicker goo collecting at the bottom, and also becomes harder to clean at the end of the day. A further implication of this is that, if you plan on using the same color spatter for a few days in a row, it is better to mix the correct color at full thickness and then only water down what you intend to use that day. Cleaning the Sprayer To keep a sprayer working properly, thorough cleaning is very important. Some people think that you must hold the trigger until the air decompresses. I think this is a waste of time, so I open it just enough to let the air seep out. It's kind of like opening a can of soda that has been shaken; if you do it slowly, no one gets wet. If the paint has been especially thin, or if it wasn't used too long, it can be cleaned the fast way. This includes emptying the excess paint, rinsing all the parts as much as possible, and then adding water to the reservoir and running it through the sprayer until it runs clear. It is better, however, to take the time to clean it the longer way. This includes taking all the little pieces apart, especially in the nozzle, and cleaning them individually. Then put them all back together and run water through at the end, just to be safe. To get some of the little holes clean, it is good to have a straight pin handy. Adding just a little Vaseline to some of the rubber parts every now and then, if your sprayer has rubber parts, can help increase the life of the sprayer. Every sprayer comes apart a little differently, but once you've learned a few, they all make sense. The best way to learn how they come apart is to buy one new that needs a little assembly. By assembling it at the beginning, you will learn how it all fits together. Differences in Sprayers Personally, I usually purchase the cheaper smaller sprayers that have about a 2L tank and hold about half that in liquid, and I keep a few of them on hand in my paint area that are in working condition. I also own at least one larger sprayer in working condition, for those odd occasions where the larger one would come in handy. I try to always buy the same couple models, but not because one is better than another. The reason is simply that when parts break, I have old not working ones that I can salvage from that used the same parts. There are some differences in models of sprayers, but most of them have to do with how long the sprayer is meant to live, and not how well it functions while living. The only difference in the function of models that I have found, that actually affects my work, is that some have a trigger that can be locked in the on position. This saves finger muscles from trauma when spraying for a few days in a row, however it can also be a pain if left in the on position accidentally, or when the trigger lock is the thing that breaks, and it breaks in the on position. That feature comes down to personal preference. Below are the three I am most attached to. Check out these sprayers at Amazon.com

A 2.5 liter (my favorite size) One gallon

2.5 gallon