

The matter of streetlights and "wet looks"...



It may seem excessive, but for a layout that is set at 3AM on a wet and drizzly NYC morning, getting the physical and illumination characteristics of NYC streetlights is a critical modelling detail. Physically, Brawa produce an illuminated streetlight that "looked the part" straight from the box.

The sticking point was the appearance of the factory LED lighting. The surface-mount miniature LEDs cast a very definite "Blue-ish" white. This nicely simulated the "white" from prototype Mercury-Vapour streetlight bulbs as popular in the US in the 70s and early 80s.

However, it simply didn't match the definite "Orange cast"

colour evident in contemporary prototype photos. A little research turned up the fact that most NYC streetlights had been converted to High-Pressure Sodium between the mid and late 80's, and are only now (since 2005) being converted to LED light sources.

SO, how to adapt the Brawa lights to "High-Pressure Sodium" bulbs? While replacing the factory LEDs with suitably small orange LEDs may be possible, the soldering required seemed to be "a bridge too far". With 7 streetlights to convert and scant few spares available, there wasn't much room for error.



A quick test with LEE theatrical gels showed that #021 "Amber" was the closest match to the prototype High-Pressure Sodium streetlights.

LEE gels were available locally in a minimum quantity of an A2 sheet. This then provided easily enough gel to convert the entire layouts streetlights to accurate "High-Pressure Sodium" bulbs. I will also be in good shape to convert

any streetlights I may face for the next 10 years of layouts I might build...

With the major 3AM light sources organised, getting them to reflect off a scale "drizzly rain-slicked" surface was the next challenge. In most realms of modelling, avoiding glossy surfaces is the rule. However, when replicating rain, strategic applications of gloss overspray appeared to be a logical place to start.

It has taken some "logistical planning" to make sure the parts that "should be wet" are, and the bits that "shouldn't have rain on them" are not, but an overall coat of Dulux spray "Gloss" really has brought "a drizzly 3AM morning in Brooklyn" to life... ☺

