



# Building a Proxy Army for Epic

*Epic Army Comp Runner Up*

By Allan Shampine

Choosing and modeling a new army is always a fun process, but it poses particular challenges when you choose an army for which official miniatures are not available. Sure, you can use the 'counts as' rule and put down space marines as proxies for Tyranids, but how much fun is that? My personal goal for a proxy army is to field units that my opponent can identify without any explanation from me. "Hey! Necron warriors. Cool!" I also want to field an army I can win with. This article will give you a few tips on how to pursue both goals at the same time.

There are a fair number of lines for which official miniatures are not available. In some cases, historical miniatures exist but are not currently sold (chaos, for example). In other cases, no miniatures have ever been made for the line (such as my own army - Necrons). In either case, there are some guidelines that you need to keep in mind before you begin. First, if you intend to field the army in an official GW event, then you need to avoid using anything from another miniatures line. If you do, your army could be disqualified. I understand that there are a variety of copyright reasons for GW's stance on this, such as not being able to publish photos of such miniatures, but regardless of the reasons, it's something to keep in mind as you build your army. This does not mean that you are limited strictly to GW products. People can and do use all sorts of things in conversions - bottle caps, dowel rods, lead weights, string, cotton, etc. These are fine. The trick is to avoid copyrighted materials. Second, you need to make a realistic estimate of how much time and money you are willing to put into your army. Anything can be proxied given enough time and money. At the extreme, you can commission someone to sculpt brand new minis, or sculpt them yourself. Few people have the time, money or inclination to do so, but you may be the exception (for example, I know from personal experience that Joe Orteza and David Pauwels have both done this). Finally, you should be familiar with the Warhammer 40K miniatures lines for the army you are considering. People will expect your units to look like smaller versions of the 40K figures. The resemblance doesn't have to be exact, but the basic elements should be sufficiently reminiscent of the 40K line for people to identify them. For example, when proxying a tomb spider, pretty much

any metallic spider will do. When people see it fielded with a Necron army they will know instantly that that large metal spider must be a tomb spider, even if it doesn't look exactly like the 40K tomb spider.

Now you know what constraints you're operating under. The next step is a feasibility study. Look over the army list. Some things you will have to have. Others you will want to have. The must have items are a make or break decision. Can you come up with good proxies for them given a reasonable investment in time and money? If not, pick another army. If you can, then look at the units you would like to have. For each unit, you will need to weigh the game factors (how much you need the unit for your army scheme) against the practical elements (how on earth am I going to model this?). You probably won't be able to make every single unit in your army list given your time and budget constraints, so before you start you should be able to honestly tell yourself that you'll be happy fielding an army using the units that you can reasonably proxy. If you can do the basics, but not some of the specialist units that you really love the army for, you may be better off picking another army.

I'm going to walk through this process using my own Necron army as an example. A Necron army requires a phalanx unit, which is composed of Necron warriors. You are also required to have a Necron lord (character). If I can't come up with good proxies for Necron warriors and a Necron lord, then it's game over. So what are the possibilities? Wherever possible, I try to work with existing Epic figures. Is there anything that can be converted to look like a Necron warrior? I came up with several possibilities, which I'll list in order of quality. First, GW used to produce Epic scale chaos androids, which are perfect. Unfortunately, you can generally only find them on eBay, and not reliably. Another possibility is to use Eldar guardians with the backs of their heads clipped off. They look appropriately thin and skeletal. A third possibility is to use Imperial Guard infantry, with a paint job substituting for sculpting (i.e., paint them black and then paint on silver skeleton highlights like a Halloween costume). I went onto eBay and found a few chaos androids, but not enough for all my infantry, so I decided on the second option, and collected enough Eldar guardians to cover my basic infantry needs. I would use a couple of the chaos androids for the Necron lords.

At this point, I've covered the basics, but I don't have an army that I could actually field. After going over the army list, I decide that I want a diverse group of infantry in each of my phalanxes. At the least, I want to add immortals and pariahs. That means coming up with two more infantry groups. Luckily, I had come up with three options for infantry to begin with, so I simply take my remaining two choices and declare one to be pariahs (the chaos androids) and the other to be immortals (the converted Imperial guardsmen - on the grounds that they are relatively bulky figures with big guns - closer to the 40K immortals). I also wanted to field wraiths and tomb spiders. I turned to the



*A few of Allan's excellent Proxies.*

Warmaster line for a wraith proxy. The Ethereals from the Vampire Counts line fit the bill. The Warmaster line is generally too large to produce good proxies for Epic Armageddon, but it works fairly well for non-humanoid figures where the scale is indeterminate. For the tomb spiders, I turned to yet another GW line - the Lord of the Rings. Mirkwood Spiders, painted silver with gold and green highlights, turned out quite nicely.

Now I have my phalanxes. Vehicles come next. The Necron army has obelisks (scouts), monoliths (gates/transports), and pylons (war machines). Here I run into my first serious obstacle. The 40K line has established the look for these figures, and they are very hard to reproduce at the Epic level. There are no miniatures available that I think made good proxies, and my sculpting skill isn't up to reproducing them from scratch. What to do? I compromise. I can't replicate the look, so I'll use something that looks different, but that is consistent with the look and feel of the army and is easily distinguished. I pick up a selection of black plastic pyramids in three sizes. I declare the smallest

size to be obelisks (the scouting vehicles) and put on a few green paint highlights. The medium sized pyramids I declare to be monoliths. I paint a green 'gate' on one side of the pyramid and add some green highlights. The largest pyramids I declare to be pylons. I cut the guns off of some GW robots and attach them near the peak of the pyramid, then attach one of my tomb spiders to the front of the pyramid as a decoration. This gives me a thematically unified look that matches the basic Necron fluff (glossy black pyramids with green highlights) and is easily distinguishable to the eye (different sizes and paint jobs for the vehicles, ranging logically from smallest and lightest to largest and heaviest). Not perfect, but visually appealing and easy for my opponent to identify.

I now have well over 2,000 points and am ready to field my army. However, I want a few extras to give me some flexibility in my army selection. How about some flayed ones (scouts)? These are Necrons who dress in flayed human skins. At the Epic level, there's not much detail visible to the naked eye from three feet away, so I simply take more converted Eldar guardians and paint them pink, red and silver. (Yes, Necrons aren't afraid to wear pink.) Again - easily identifiable by eye. Destroyers (mounted infantry) are trickier, but I've got a solution. I take historical Epic robot figures, cut off their tops, flip them over, and mount half of

a converted Eldar guardian on the top of each. Voila! Instant destroyer. I could also have used the current dreadnought line. Here I am taking advantage of the fact that there have been multiple versions of the 40K destroyers. My version looks a lot like the original 40K destroyers. The current generation of 40K destroyers is actually inspired by a conversion someone did. GW liked it enough that they replaced the old destroyers with a new line based on the conversion. This just goes to show that you shouldn't be afraid to field something that looks different from the 40K line so long as it is thematically appropriate.

Finally, I want the real exotic stuff - a C'Tan and an Abattoir. For the C'Tan, I run into a brick wall. The Nightbringer is a very distinctive figure, and I simply cannot find anything in the GW lines in the right scale that looks at all like the 40K Nightbringer. Time for another compromise. I find a figure from another miniatures line. That means the final figure I make will only be usable in unofficial events, but I'm not up to sculpting my own figure from scratch, so I decide that for this one figure it's something I'll just have to live with. I use green stuff to sculpt the bottom half of the figure into the flowing smoke found in the 40K Nightbringer figure, remove the cross, and use more green stuff to smooth out the cloak in back. The right hand gets chopped off, and a blade from a Mordheim sprue gets attached. The end result looks remarkably close to the 40K Nightbringer, and is the perfect scale for Epic. Again, I'll have to leave it out of my army in an official event, but it's a beautiful conversation piece for neighborhood games.

The Abattoir, unlike the C'Tan, doesn't have a model in the 40K line, so I have some license to come up with whatever honking big war engine I like that fits the theme. After kicking around a number of ideas, I take a Landspeeder chassis from 40K, gut it, square it off with the Landspeeder grill, and finally mount a pyramid on top. Even after some tinkering with bits, it doesn't look so good. I add a spider to the front. Still not so hot. Finally, I chuck it in the box for occasional use and hide it under a piece of padding. This is going to happen to you also. Sometimes you're going to sink a lot of time and effort into a conversion and it's just not going to work out. That's the nature of conversions. Go in with your eyes open.

The key to building a proxy army is to figure out what you can do with what is available to you. If you can't find or make good proxies for the required elements of the army, then you're better off just picking another army. If you can do the basics, then see which of the specialist units you can manage, and whether you can live without any specialist units that are too hard to proxy. Remember that building a proxy army requires a substantial investment of time, money and effort - much more so than for a regular army. The results are also much more uncertain. With a regular army, you know what you'll get, subject to your paint job. With a proxy army, you never quite know how things are going to turn out, and some experiments aren't going to turn out all that well. On the positive side, it's a lot more exciting designing your own units, and you will end up with something that your gaming buddies will love seeing, and love playing against. People get tired of always seeing Imperials, Space Marines and Orcs. Give them the Lost and the Damned, or the Necrons! Whatever you choose, think out of the box! It is more important that the units be readily identifiable than that they be slavish imitations of the 40K model lines. If you can come up with a thematically unified look for your army that will let your opponent immediately know which unit is which without any coaching from you, then you have fulfilled the goal of a good proxy army. I look forward to seeing more such armies across the table. Good luck!

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allan Champine is a big fan of Epic and a Necron player to boot (obviously!). This is Allan's first Fanatic Online article.