

Product test – Odie's Oil

Steve Coonick finds out whether this finishing product lives up to the hype

It's not often that there is such a buzz about a new finishing product, but the finishing oil from Odie's Oil has certainly caught the attention of many makers online. My first introduction to the company was via Instagram last year; a maker from the USA was testing the oil and my attention was drawn to the results he was getting, with respect to aesthetic appeal and performance. After further investigation it became clear that many makers were getting great results; these makers had no direct connection to Odie's Oil, their blogs and posts on Instagram were simple but honest and all were positive. There is a great global woodworking community and I have always valued the information and experiences other makers share online.

So I headed to the Odie's Oil website to learn more. It was clear that this product was developed by people who understand the needs and desires of furniture designers and makers; in fact James, who developed the product, is a maker himself. My personal preference for finishing products has always been to use a finish that works with the wood, not against it. The oils and waxes in Odie's Oil are derived from natural sources, contain no toxic solvents, driers or hardeners and are safe for your family, pets and food.

In application the oils and waxes completely saturate the pores and surface of the wood, preventing the penetration of moisture and stains. Due to the highly concentrated mix of natural oils almost nothing evaporates during the drying process, delivering an effective one-coat product. When dry, it has a flexible consistency that moves with the wood and a sheen that increases with age and use, rather than dulls.

Plan your finish at the start

The surfaces of fine furniture need to be able to withstand the rigours of use. Applying an appropriate finish is essential to protect the wood's surface. Without a finish, wood can dry, crack and deteriorate or, if exposed to moisture, swell and warp.

The required level of performance (durability) of a finishing product depends upon the furniture's end use, for example kitchen work surfaces and tables require a high performance finish, whereas bookshelves and display cabinets may require lower performing finishes.

Environment is also an important factor when selecting a finishing product, and should be considered during the design stage. Testing a finishing product provides a helpful guide to aesthetics and durability of the final piece.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE COONICK, UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

Points to consider:

- Mechanical damage (i.e. resistance to scratches, abrasions, impacts, etc.)
 - Resistance to chemicals (i.e. resilience against oils, acids, wine, etc.)
 - Resistance to water (i.e. endurance to splashes, spillages, high humidity, etc.)
- Testing products on the wood on which they will be used is often skipped due to time constraints – but miss this step at your peril. Give yourself time to review finishes properly. Many finishes are touch dry in a few hours but can take a few weeks to cure, and once cured, the appearance of a surface may change. Surface preparation will also affect the finish. Testing this out well in advance of the start of a build allows you to properly prepare a process for finishing and calculate build and delivery timing accurately.

This is an introduction to a new product and, as a result, my tests are not exhaustive. My assessment is based on the preparation, application and initial performance of Odie's Oil. To get the best results preparation and correct application is important. I've been in direct contact with Odie's Oil and the method of preparation and application described here is their recommended process.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PHOTOHOUSE/SHUTTERSTOCK

PHOTOGRAPH BY SWAP HARRY/SHUTTERSTOCK

The lack of an appropriate finish can lead to damage and staining

Preparation, application and results



Spreading the oil on maple



Abrading to 600 grit will give a satin finish



Odie's Oil has the consistency of honey

As a designer I want complete control over the finish of a piece. I want to dictate if a surface will be matt, satin or gloss. Having multiple finishing products on the shelf is not always convenient or cost-effective. This product allows me to create the finish I desire via the level of abrasion, with no real loss of performance. I love the level of control that just this single product gives me. Odie's Oil is a clear finish product with the consistency of honey requiring stirring before use. It will darken woods but has no pigment. The product has no harsh chemicals so it's easy on your hands and has the most fantastic odour, which will make your workshop smell like a spa!

For functional pieces of furniture that will have moderate to heavy usage, abrade to 320 grit – this results in a matt/satin sheen and should give excellent long-term durability. For vertical surfaces or horizontal surfaces of moderate use, abrading to 600

grit will result in a satin finish and should give good durability. For a satin/gloss finish on low-use surfaces or gallery pieces, abrade to 1000 grit.

The oil can be applied with a lint-free rag, brush or pad; Odie's Oil recommend initially applying the product with a plastic spreader, 'pushing' the oil into the pores of the wood. A little product goes a long way – for my tests I found 3 grams of oil covered a section of wood 500 x 200mm with ease. As with other finishing products, surfaces should be dust free and clean with no contamination.

Once the oil is spread, a rag can be used to work the product into the surface, however working the oil into the wood fibres and deep into the pores with an abrasive pad is more effective and should increase long-term durability of the surface. If you are not familiar with using a pad, the rule of thumb is to select a pad that is one step up from the initial abrasive used on the wood. For example,

if you finish sanding at 320 grit then a 600 grit grey pad will yield good results. Keep working the product into the wood until it has virtually disappeared. Using rags results in more product wasted, however they are an ideal method for cylindrical surfaces, or where a spreader is not appropriate. I also applied the product with a brush, but could find no advantages over the other methods described.

Once applied leave to dry for 45 minutes to an hour, at which point the product can then be buffed off. The manufacturer recommends doing this by hand and with clean, cotton towels or towelling material. I cut up some old clean bath towels, which were very effective, the increased surface area in comparison to standard cotton rags speeds up this process. This is a one-coat product, but if you choose to put a second coat on then I would suggest leaving 24 hours between coats. De-nibbing is not required between coats.

Multiple uses

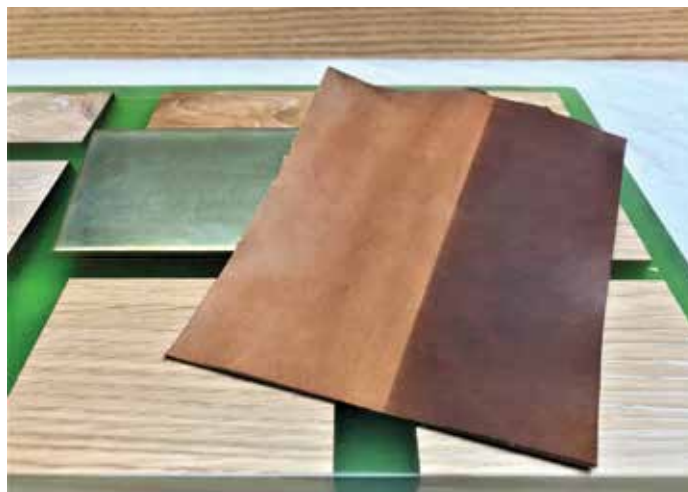


Odie's Oil can be applied to leather (left), brass (centre) and epoxy (right)



You can apply the product to other materials such as metal, epoxy or leather. The product adhered well to epoxy and metal surfaces, and finished well. The leather absorbed at least double the amount of oil as wood, and therefore took three hours to dry before it could be buffed satisfactorily. The finish was good, and the leather was very supple – I'm no expert on leather, but would happily use this on my own projects that incorporate leather writing pads, etc. The leather did darken significantly, which may (or may not) be desirable.

Regarding drying times, it was noted that after 24 hours the product was dry enough to handle without fear of it taking a hand print. I would leave any oiled product at least 48 hours before delivery to a client. Like many oils and waxes the product takes approximately two weeks to fully cure. If you are making an exterior piece, or for an area of high humidity or heavy use (such as a table or worktop) it is recommended to let the oil cure fully before delivery to guarantee a satisfactory result. These drying times are typical for oil or wax finishing products and are not always fully detailed on the tin. Repairs to surfaces are easy, I noticed no blending issues in the tests I performed using Odie's Oil.



The oil gives good results on various materials

F&C verdict

Overall, I was extremely impressed; it's a natural product that works with the wood. It's flexible, durable and water resistant and, when fully cured, exterior grade. In the US Odies has FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approval for contact with food, however, and just to be clear, this is not the same as an EN71 part 3 certificate. Preparation is simple and fuss-free, and it is extremely easy to apply and buff off. As this is a one-coat product finishing times are optimised, which is important in a commercial workshop. It was noted that no dust adhered to the product while drying – in a shared or busy workshop this characteristic is extremely important. The final finish is fantastic and brings out the natural beauty of multiple species, I felt like I had complete control over the level of shine, which I loved. This product is extremely versatile, and if my long-term tests reveal no surprises, then it will have earned a space on my workshop shelf and will be used often. *F&C*



The effect of Odie's Oil on ash sanded to 400 and 1000 grit



The effect of Odie's Oil on walnut sanded to 400 and 1000 grit



Odie's Oil on wenge sanded to 1000 grit with a white pad

Details

Price: \$34.99 for 9oz

Available from: www.odiesoil.com