

Comparative Report on the Suitability of the Wescott Glue Pen with Improved Feeder Puller* for Costume Crafts Applications

Tara Maginnis tara@costumes.org

This report was written in the interest of improving glue gun suitability for costume applications. Craft glue guns are used for many reasons, but one of the main group of users of them are people involved in theatrical costuming, cosplayers, and “normal” folks making Halloween costumes.

I've completed 3 groups of tests. The first test was for a project that is such a typical costumer's use of hot glue, it literally was the first how-to lesson I was taught in my first costume class in college. Basically, one uses glue to create raised decoration, and bezels for rhinestones on an object like a cut out piece of cardboard, directly on costume fabric, or (as in this case) onto recycled duct tape rolls “bracelets”. Both the old and new glue pens can do the project, though not generally as well as other guns do so. The new pen operated better than the old one on this project, but both pens make lines a bit too lightly for easy build-up, and are more difficult and slow to do this.

**The difference between the Wescott Glue Pen and the improved version of the pen may be seen in these images. The improved version is shown at left in both pictures, and includes a larger and wider puller for the pen's feed that makes the feeder easier to operate, and, because it operates smoothly, the feed is considerably smoother, and so the gun does not “splort” glue.*



The second and third tests were seeking out for a project that would play into the main strength of this sort of small-format glue gun/pen. I promised to the folks who were in my workshop at Costume College that I would try to figure out what the Wescott glue pen might be good at, and these two styles of work seemed most likely I tried making stiff "lace" and small earring bobs out of glue by drizzling onto cooking parchment. (See images. Alas the pen I purchased at Michaels still tanked, but I'm happy to say the new one with the improved pull back performed much better. Not only does the better pull back make it easier on the hands to operate, the pull ends up making it pull back more evenly, which leads to less random glue splorting when it dispenses the glue. You can see the difference in the results of the test of the two guns. The second gun does very good at the lace making, and fairly good at the earrings. However, I tested these projects with other types of guns both similar (and not so similar) so that the results can show you how the Westcott Glue pen (with improved pull) compete against your actual competitors.

The good news: The improved version Wescott pen is the best at replication of lace in terms of lightness and detail. The bad news is it is also tied with the older pen for being the slowest at doing the project. It is still not so ergonomic for this sort of job on a flat surface and glue flow is very slow. Cosplayers might be OK with this as they tend to want close-up details, and often don't care if it takes longer to do them. Others may find the pen hold form perfect for them even flat, and anyone might do so if working on a project that is at a 45-degree angle.

The bad news: This slow speed is partly why the lightness and detail is possible, but it makes it more than twice as time-consuming to get a result, which is something that might well be the kiss of death among theatrical costumers. It is possible to make very good results in quicker time with a normal AdTech low temp mini gun and in less than half the time with some of the other guns. Indeed, as theatre costumers tend to want to make designs bigger in format anyway, so they "read" at a distance, even the clunky (but fastest) Stanley glue gun version is likely to be preferable to many.

The reason I tested 5 guns with 6 variations in total is that I'm hunting for a true ultimate glue gun. This is not technically possible as different guns work better for different applications, but testing this way reveals certain things. For instance, the Mod Melter (devised for filling little silicone molds with highly liquid glue) has a really nice trigger feed and angle of work for doing the lace & earring applications, but the temperature is wrong for that purpose. However, it becomes one of the best/easiest to use if you lower the temperature (I used a dimmer switch). The overall width is a bit fat and strange, but it really has advantages in flow speed and angle on flat applications. Your pen is nice and slim which makes it generally comfortable to hold, and with the improved pull is a lot smoother flowing, but its exit aperture is too small, (smaller even than a normal mini glue gun) which makes it interminably slow to function. The constant need to reload slows things as well. I feel as though you might want to split the difference between your pen and the Mod Melter somehow. Any glue gun would be improved with a true dimmer switch from high to low, so a person can get the exact temp for the type of glue and the application.

Results (in my view) are as graded as follows: **0=poor 10=excellent**, but you may choose to form your own opinions based on the photos of the test samples.

#1 Glue Gun Type: Wescott Glue Pen with new improved pull

Temperature: Low

Speed: Slow

Ease of operation: 4

Surface Decoration on bracelet: 3 (too tiny)

Earring Bobs: 8

Stiffened lace for collar: 10 (Light Weight)

Appearance: It looks pretty, like an attractive bit of office equipment.

Strength/Weakness: This is now a usable glue gun for small fiddly detailed applications. It is very slow-working, and requires lots of reloading for larger projects, but it is the best one for very tiny stuff. However, the angle of operation is not the best comfort or accuracy for working on squirt-onto-cooking parchment projects, which is one of the main applications that tiny accuracy is useful for. The improved pull not only makes the loading easier than #2, but because it pulls back smoothly, the feed itself moves more smoothly so the glue comes out with an even flow that is notably absent in the splorting, burping, spider web producing #2 pen.



Westcott Glue Pen with Improved Feeder Puller



Westcott Glue Pen with Improved Feeder Puller

#2 Glue Gun Type: Wescott Glue Pen

Temperature: Low

Speed: Slowest

Ease of operation: 2

Surface Decoration on bracelet: 3 (too splorty)

Earring Bobs: 5

Stiffened lace for collar: 2 (too messy)

Appearance: It looks pretty, like an attractive bit of office equipment.

Strength/Weakness: Kind of a mess. It just splorts and inflicts injury on the user, and has the trigger fall off regularly. It's only strength was it looks pretty. (Note: Part of the problem on the sample below is it also was the first sample, so I was less adept at creating a pattern from the original. However, the gun could get nowhere to creating any sort of pattern, which is mainly why it scrambled.)



#3 Glue Gun Type: Mod Podge Mod Melter

Temperature: High
(normal)

Speed: Medium

Ease of operation:
7

Surface
Decoration on
bracelet: 2 (too
melty)

Earring Bobs: 7

Stiffened lace for collar: 2 (too melty)

Appearance: Another pretty looking “pen” style
with a fun Pop Art look.

Strength/Weakness: Perfect angle for operations
on flat surfaces, with a good trigger feeder. But
the temperature is too high for anything but it’s
intended purpose (melting glue to go into
silicone molds). Glue bubbles and pools.



Mod Melter at its Normal Temperature



Mod Melter at its Normal Temperature



Another project (currently incomplete) made with the Mod Melter. These I did before the dimmer switch arrived, so I made the glue flow slower by plugging and unplugging the gun during the process. The one above was made with assorted glitter glues.



#4 Glue Gun Type: Mod Podge Mod Melter & Dimmer Switch to reduce temperature

Temperature: Low (altered with switch)

Speed: Medium-Fast

Ease of operation: 8

Surface Decoration on bracelet: 10

Earring Bobs: 10

Stiffened lace for collar: 10 (Heavy Weight)

Appearance: Another pretty looking “pen” style with a fun Pop Art look.

Strength/Weakness: Perfect angle for operations on flat surfaces, with a good trigger feeder. When temperature is lowered, it makes for a terrific medium-fast speed glue gun for making flat projects onto parchment like jewelry, crowns, iron-ons, and stiffened “lace”. A Mod Melter that came pre equipped with a high-low temp switch would be a good investment for any costumer.



#5 Glue Gun Type: AdTech Lo Temp Mini Glue Gun (in gold)



Temperature: Low

Speed: Medium-Fast

Ease of operation: 8

Surface Decoration on bracelet: 10

Earring Bobs: 10

Stiffened lace for collar: 10 (Medium Weight)



Appearance: Gold finish makes it a bit cute, though it is pretty much like any other good quality mini glue gun in looks otherwise.

Strength/Weakness: Next most perfect detail (after the Improved Westcott) on the lace, and perfect results on the bracelet and earrings. Speed is good, though for size issues, not fastest. Small size makes it a little fiddlier to operate than the Stanley Glue Pro but this has very good ease for a gun that will do fine detail.



#6 Glue Gun Type: Stanley Glue Pro Using extra-long pointy tip



Temperature: Low

Speed: Fastest

Ease of operation: 10

Surface Decoration on bracelet: 10

Earring Bobs: 9

Stiffened lace for collar: 8 (Heavy weight)

Appearance: Looks like a macho-tough tool in the Stanley line. This is the perfect glue gun for the teen boy crafter who wants a present for Xmas that homophobic relations will buy.

Strength/Weakness: Is in fact a good tough reliable glue gun, with comfortable handling, good even glue flow, an auto shut off, and dual temperature switch. It uses bigger (cheaper) sticks which is handy as well. However, it also is a bit too heavy for tiny detail work, and is lumpy for that, though it is perfect for bigger flow projects like the bracelet and most costume work. This is hands down, the fastest



Stanley Glue Pro on its Low Temperature Setting with Extra Long Tip



Stanley Glue Pro on its Low Temperature Setting with Extra Long Tip

working gun, however, so it is probably the best one for a theatre company to use for big items seen at a distance that must be made to a deadline.

More images of projects made with a Stanley Glue Gun on Low Temp:



More images of projects made with a Stanley Glue Gun on Low Temp:



More images of projects made with a Stanley Glue Gun on Low Temp:

