

RUTHUNA® 479 Black

Operating Instructions

Edition: 10 October 2017

- Acidic black ruthenium electrolyte
- Decorative dark to black layers
- Good colour constancy
- Simple electrolyte maintenance
- Long electrolyte life

Electrolyte Characteristics

RUTHUNA® 479 Black is a strongly acidic electrolyte from which decorative, particularly dark to black coatings can be deposited. The electrolyte is easy to operate, the deposits have a high colour constancy and retain their brightness.

RUTHUNA® 479 Black is used as a final coating for decorative applications, e.g. in the industries producing jewellery, spectacle frames and writing utensils.

Depending of the degree of blackening, the wear resistance of the coatings is good to excellent.

A strike gold layer as an undercoat under the black ruthenium layer is strongly recommended. If palladium-nickel or palladium are used as undercoats, strike gold plating is not necessary.

Electrolyte type:	Acidic	
Ruthenium content:	5 g/l	(2 - 10 g/l)
pH-value:	1.2	(65 °C)
Temperature:	65 °C	(60 - 70 °C)
Current density:	1.5 A/dm ²	(0.5 - 3.0 A/dm ²)
Deposition speed:	Approx. 0.12 µm/min at 5 g/l Ru, 15 ml/l Blackening Agent and 1.5 A/dm ²	

Coating Characteristics

Coating:	Black ruthenium
Colour:	Grey to anthracite (black)
Density:	Approx. 12 g/cm ³
Max. coating thickness:	0.2 - 0.3 µm, depending on degree of blackening

Important :

Please read this instruction carefully prior to the use of the process and carefully follow all the parameters that have a direct influence on the operation. We reserve the right to make technical changes. In the interest of safety, please pay attention to the hazard warnings on the labels of the containers. The minimum shelf life of the products is included on the labels.

For the storage of chemical products the HSG71 is suggested as guidance.

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Form of Supply

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Electrolyte makeup: | for 1 litre of electrolyte:
a) RUTHUNA® 479 Black Initial Concentrate, 50 g/l Ru
100 ml containing 5 g Ru
Storage stability: min. 3 years
b) RUTHUNA® 479 Black Blackening Agent, free from precious metals
10 - 15 ml
Storage stability: min. 2 years
c) RUTHUNA® 479 Black Accelerator, free from precious metals
20 ml
Storage stability: min. 2 years |
| Electrolyte replenishment: | for 1 g of ruthenium:
d) RUTHUNA® 479 Black Replenisher Solution, 50 g/l Ru
20 ml
Storage stability: min. 3 years
e) RUTHUNA® 479 Black Blackening Agent, free from precious metals
For amount see "Electrolyte Replenishment"
Storage stability: min. 2 years |
| Electrolyte corrections: | f) RUTHUNA® Wetting Agent 30
For corrections of the content of wetting agent. See paragraph "Electrolyte Monitoring and Corrections"
g) RUTHUNA® 479 Black Blackening Agent, free from precious metals
For amount see "Electrolyte Monitoring and Corrections"
h) RUTHUNA® 479 Black Accelerator, free from precious metals
For amount see "Electrolyte Monitoring and Correction"
i) For pH corrections dilute sulphuric acid (AR) and ammonia solution (AR) should be available. |

Electrolyte Makeup

Makeup sequence: To make up 1 litre of electrolyte, stir 100 ml of RUTHUNA® 479 Black Initial Concentrate into 800 ml of deionized water. Then add the amount of RUTHUNA® 479 Black Blackening Agent required for the desired degree of blackness and 20 ml of RUTHUNA® 479 Black Accelerator and fill up to 1 litre with deionized water. Heat up the electrolyte to 65 °C and measure the pH-value with a glass electrode. If required, adjust the pH to 1.2.

Operating Conditions

Ruthenium content:	5 g/l	(2 - 10 g/l)
Concentration of Blackening Agent:	10 - 15 ml/l	(0.0 - 30 ml/l) Depending on the desired degree of blackening.
Operating temperature:	65 °C	(60 - 70 °C)
pH-value:	1.2	(0.8 - 1.3) at 65 °C 1.0 (0.6 - 1.1) at 25 °C Correct the pH with sulphuric acid AR or ammonia solution AR (both diluted 1:10).
Electrolyte density:	1.02 g/cm ³ - rising 3 °Bé - rising	The electrolyte density normally increases during the lifetime of the electrolyte. If the electrolyte density should fall below 1.02 g/cm ³ (3 °Bé) due to heavy drag-out, it must be readjusted to specified value by adding RUTHUNA® Density Correction Salt 1. Approx. 20 g/l of RUTHUNA® Density Correction Salt 1 are needed to increase the density by 0.01 g/cm ³ .
Product agitation:	Strong agitation required!	At least 5 - 10 cm/s!
Electrolyte agitation:	Electrolyte circulation required,	at least 2 electrolyte volumes per hour

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Filtration:	Continuous filtration through polypropylene filters recommended.
Current density:	1.5 A/dm ² (0.5 - 3.0 A/dm ²)
Maximum coating thickness:	Depending on the degree of blackening, the maximum coating thickness is between 0.2 and 0.3 µm (at L* = 55 - 60 (CIE Lab System)). With very dark layers (L* < 47), the maximum coating thickness will decrease considerably.
Throwing power:	The throwing power of the electrolyte depends on the amount of Blackening Agent used. With increasing concentration of Blackening Agent, the throwing power of the electrolyte will drop.
Deposition speed:	The deposition speed strongly depends on the amount of Blackening Agent used. The more Blackening Agent used, the lower the deposition speed.
Density of the coating:	Approx. 12 g/cm ³

Dependence of Degree of Blackening, Deposition Speed and Deposition Rate on Amount of Blackening Agent Used

Deposition rate and deposit colour depend on the amount of Blackening Agent used. The data*) given in the table below are meant as a rough guide how to achieve the desired degree of blackening.

Blackening Agent [ml/l]	L* (CIE Lab System)	Deposition speed [µm/min]	Deposition rate [mg/Amin]
0	75	0.14 – 0.17	11 – 13
10	60 – 65	0.12 – 0.16	10 – 12
15	55 – 59	0.10 – 0.14	9 – 11
20	51 – 54	0.08 – 0.12	7 – 9
25	47 – 50	0.07 – 0.11	6 – 8

*) at 1.5 A/dm², 5 g/l Ru and 65 °C

Calculation of Coating Thickness and Plating Time

The maximum coating thickness should not exceed 0.3 µm (cracking).

$$\text{Coating weight in mg} = \text{surface in cm}^2 \times 1.2 \times \text{coating thickness in } \mu\text{m}$$

$$\text{Plating time in minutes} = \text{Error!}$$

Electrolyte Replenishment

The electrolyte should be replenished at the latest after depositing 10 - 20 % of ruthenium, otherwise the deposition speed will drop.

To replenish 1 g of Ru, add to the electrolyte:
20 ml RUTHUNA® 479 Black Replenisher Solution

The consumption of Blackening Agent depends on the desired degree of blackening and is different according to the initial concentration.

With decreasing deposition speed, add RUTHUNA® 479 Black Accelerator to the electrolyte in steps of 5 ml/l to maximally 10 ml/l since the accelerator reacts time-delayed (reaction time 2 – 3 h).

We recommend monitoring the ruthenium content by regular analyses.

Electrolyte Monitoring and Correction

Degree of blackening

The degree of blackening is controlled by replenishing RUTHUNA® 479 Black Blackening Agent.

If deviations (too light layers) should occur, the concentration can be carefully increased by adding Blackening Agent in small steps of 1 - 2 ml/l. An excess of Blackening Agent is indicated by too dark layers, very low deposition rates and defects on the parts. The Blackening Agent can be only partially removed by active carbon treatment.

pH-value:

The pH-value should be checked every day with a glass electrode and adjusted with sulphuric acid or ammonia solution (both AR quality and diluted 1 : 10), if required.

Caution: If the pH-value is too high, the electrolyte will become unstable!

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Content of wetting agent:

The wetting agent is mainly reduced by drag-out and should be replenished occasionally. If hydrogen pores should occur despite sufficient movement or after drag-out of half the electrolyte volume, 25 % (0.5 ml/l) of RUTHUNA® Wetting Agent 30 should be added.

Accelerator:

RUTHUNA® 479 Black Accelerator is removed during active carbon treatment. Afterwards the complete amount of accelerator has to be replenished.

Metallic impurities:

The electrolyte attacks the usual basic materials and is sensitive to metallic contaminants like copper, zinc, lead and other metals. See "Special Process Hints", paragraph "Pre-treatment". Common metallic impurities such as copper or zinc can be removed by dummy plating at 0.1 A/dm² with corrugated metal sheets or by means of special precipitation methods.

Special Process Hints

Pre-treatment: The acidic electrolyte attacks the usual basic materials and is sensitive to metallic contaminants. The parts, particularly materials containing copper and nickel, must be protected by a strike gold layer (layer thickness at least 0.1 µm). If sufficiently thick undercoats of PdNi or Pd are used, strike gold plating is not necessary.

Post-treatment: After plating, the parts should be rinsed under running water. Then post-treatment for approx. 15 – 30 seconds in a 50 °C warm dilute sodium hydroxide solution (50 g/l NaOH). This post-dip solution neutralizes any electrolyte rests on the surface of the parts and in pores. The solution can be removed by longer rinsing under running water. The last rinse before drying should be deionized water.

Loading of electrolyte when current is on: If possible, the parts should be immersed when the current is on.

Barrel: Due to the reasons stated above under "Pre-treatment", the electrolyte is only limitedly suitable for barrel applications.

If the parts have a complicated geometry, a 100 % protection of the parts by strike gold plating possibly cannot be reached which during subsequent ruthenium plating will lead to faulty deposits and contamination of the electrolyte. Using the bath for barrel applications should therefore be previously tested.

Equipment

Materials:	All parts coming into contact with the electrolyte must be resistant to strong acids. We recommend using polypropylene natural and titanium. All plastic equipment such as tanks, rack insulations, pumps, hoses, filter cartridges etc. prior to use must be rinsed in dilute acid (e.g. 5 % sulphuric acid) for several hours and afterwards cleaned of the contaminated acid by intensive rinsing with water which should be changed several times.
Electrolyte tanks:	Acid-resistant plastic (polypropylene)
Heating:	Adjustable immersion heater with porcelain or quartz sheath, or Teflon-coating
Anodes:	Platinized titanium, e. g. PLATINODE® coated with 2.5 µm of platinum, or iridium mixed metal oxide MMO, e.g. PLATINODE® 177. For fixing, we recommend titanium screws. Anode surface : parts surface at least 2 : 1
Racks:	With acid-resistant coating, contact points of stainless steel or sufficiently gold-plated
Exhaust system:	An efficient exhaust system is required

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Note

Our information relating to the storage stability refers to storage in closed original storage containers under the conditions stated on the label.

Precautionary Measures/Safety Hints

For information on safety, please see the corresponding Material Safety Data Sheets!

The valid accident prevention regulations and safety instructions must be observed.

Reference to

Trouble-shooting table: Available on request

Analytical methods: Available on request

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Umicore Galvanotechnik GmbH

P.O. Box 12 40 • D-73502 Schwaebisch Gmuend

Delivery address:

Klarenbergstraße 53-79 • D-73525 Schwaebisch Gmuend
GERMANY

Telephone +49 7171 - 607 01

Fax +49 7171 - 607 316

e-mail: galvano@eu.umicore.com

www.umicore-galvano.com