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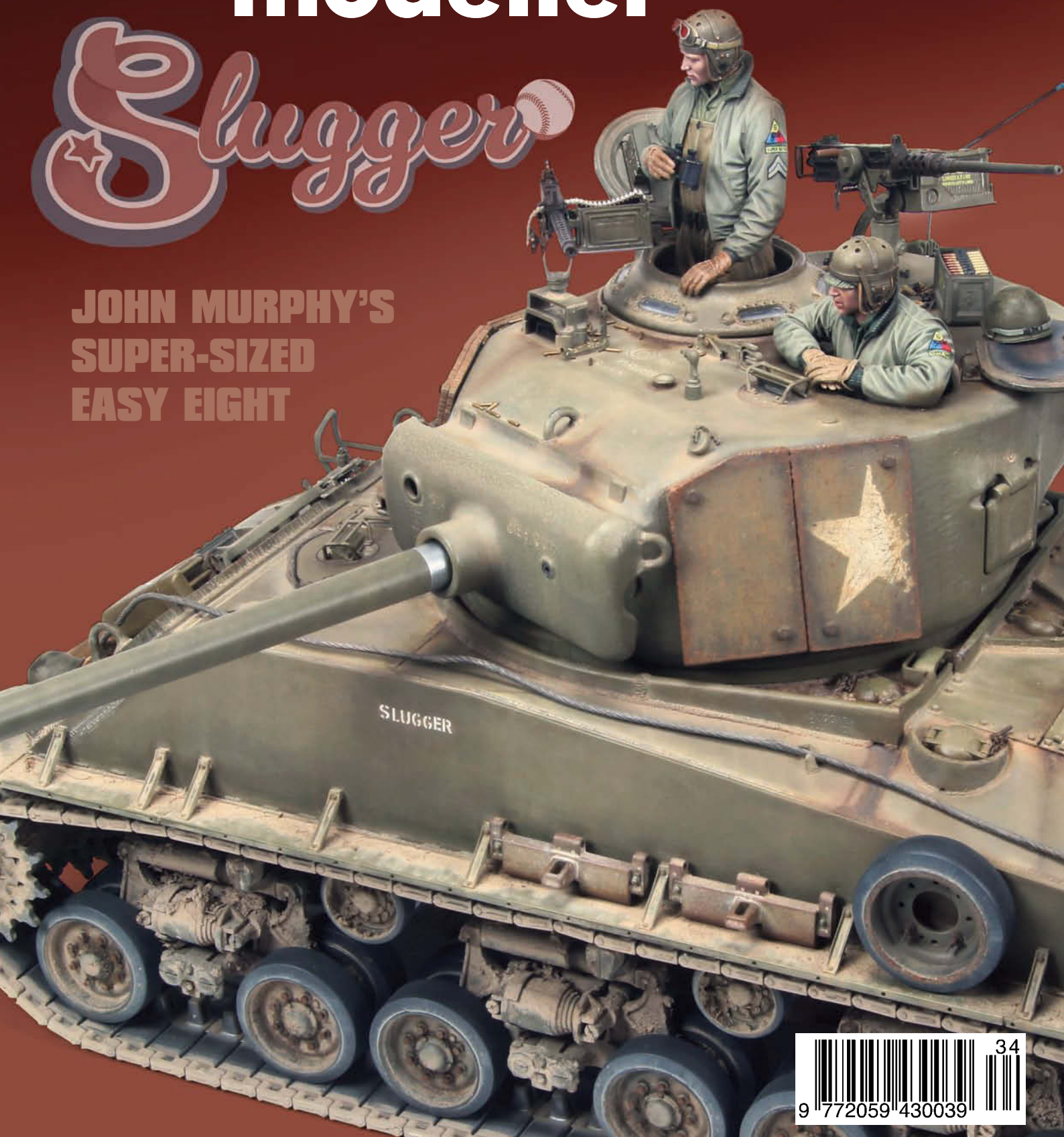
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CONTENTS

2	1:16 Sherman Slugger. Part One. John 'Spud' Murphy returns with more big-scale armour antics.
16	AEV3 Kodiak Gary Matthews digs the 1:35 Border kit of the Leopard based engineer.
26	"Gather Up" Elco Elings snowy 1:35 StuG scene in Operation Konrad One.
36	Original Technical Could the Opel Blitz with mounted Flak 38 be one of the first Field-modified technicals? Lukasz Orczyc-Musialek talks us through his project.
46	1:35 Ukrainian Leopard 2A4 Zak sex sets his Leopard loose in the current conflict.
56	Hetzer! László Gaál builds the simple 1:35 Tamiya kit with a not-so-simple camo job.



SEASONS GREETINGS
TO ALL OUR READERS

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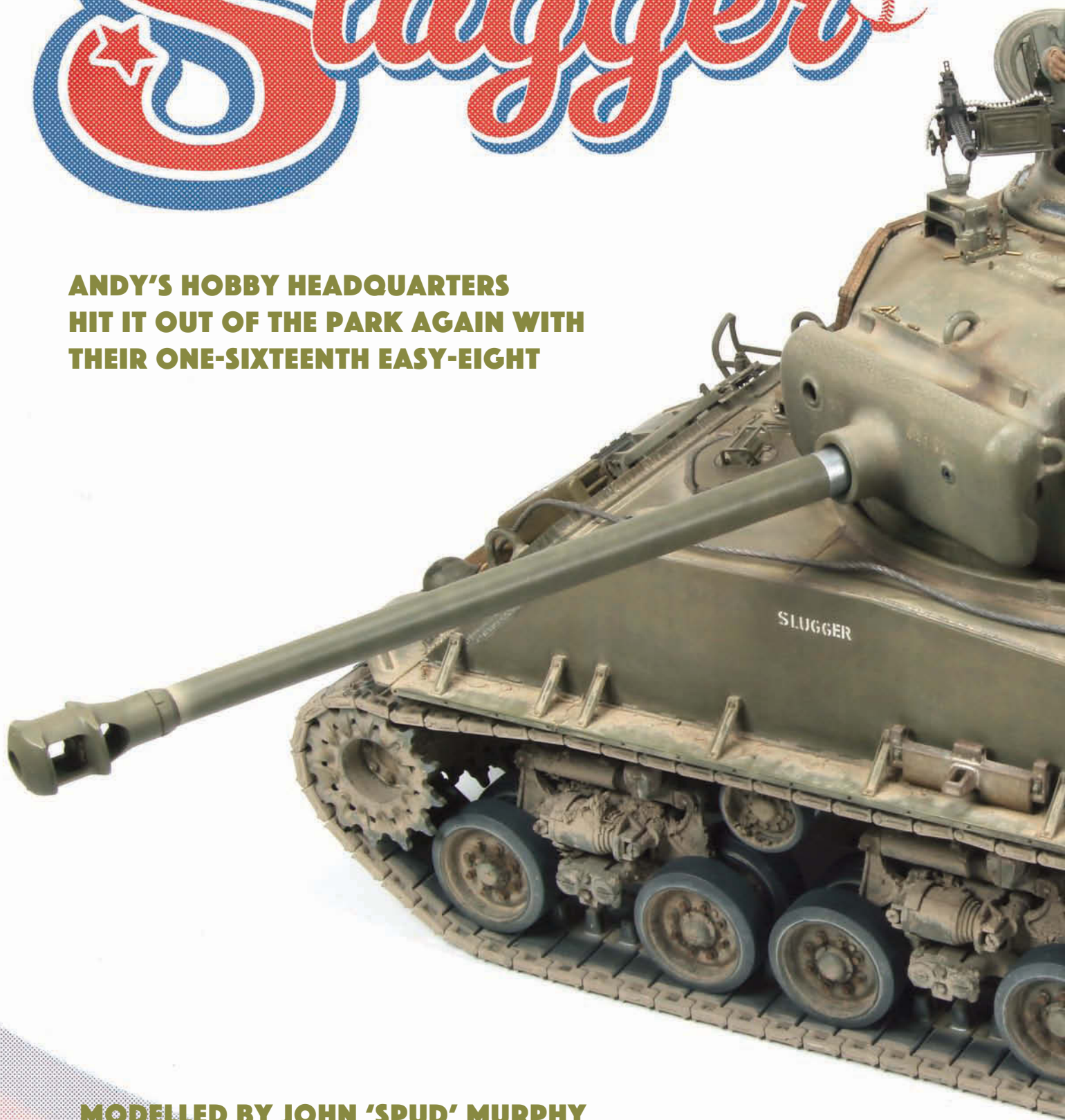
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Slugger

**ANDY'S HOBBY HEADQUARTERS
HIT IT OUT OF THE PARK AGAIN WITH
THEIR ONE-SIXTEENTH EASY-EIGHT**



MODELLED BY JOHN 'SPUD' MURPHY



1:16

PART ONE



The Easy-eight Sherman armed with the 76mm gun has always been one of my all time favourite tanks from WWII. So with the announcement from Andy's Hobby Head Quarters (AHHQ) that their next (first armoured vehicle in 1:16) was going to be the M4A3 (76mm) HVSS and this had me a little excited to say the least, yet also a little apprehensive if I'm honest, as this truly is a large model in this scale. My first foray into 1:16 had been the Classy Hobby M5A1 (issue 122 of AFV Modeller), which I didn't find too much larger to work on compared to say your average 1:35 modern MBT! My next project in this scale really was a step-up in size, the Das Werk StuG III Ausf.G, this did prove to be a big lump of plastic to man-handle around on a modelling bench, that I'd only really designed for building 1:35 armour, as space is at a premium in my work room, I've had to reevaluate not only how I construct these large models, but also conditioning my mindset to not get overwhelmed with the daunting task of keeping my concentration focused during not only the painting, but the weathering as well. Its definitely something to bear in mind when working in this scale!

Construction

I won't bore you with a stage by stage rundown of the complete construction process, but I'll just mention any points of interest or things to be aware of that I discovered whilst building mine. Firstly there is no mention of how many tracks links need to be assembled to make the correct length for each track run, it should be 77 links per side. Moving on to the upper hull, I noticed on my example that there were shallow but long sink-marks running

parallel with the top edges of the hull sides. This was remedied with the application of a couple of thick coats of Mr.Surfacer 500 and then sanded flush. Whilst dealing with this, I also removed the mounting points for the armoured first-aid box on the left hand side. This was a Post-War addition and shouldn't be there if modelling a WWII vehicle! With these removed I could now add a little texturing to the hull armour, although in reality the hull plates on the real Shermans are actually very smooth, but I think it just looks too smooth on the model and I wanted to add a little visual interest. The first step was to pool some liquid cement onto random areas of the side plates. Once these had been left for a few minutes to allow to soak in, it created shallow recessed patches, which nicely replicate surface imperfections in the homogenous rolled armour, I then stippled on some Mr.Surfacer that had been thinned with more liquid cement and once dry was gently sanded with a Scotch-Brite pad to tone down the effect. With the hull's basic texture in place, numerous casting and foundry numbers marks were now added from The old Archer Fine Details 1:35 Casting Numbers set. This was then followed by adding the missing chains for all of the engine deck filler cap retaining-pins.

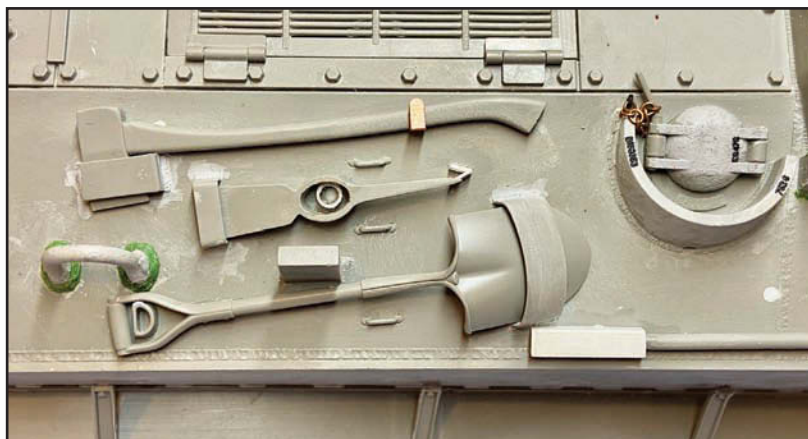
The pioneer tools had the moulded-on brackets carefully shaved off and items like the shovel had the edges of the blade thinned for a more scale look. Lastly any missing weld seams, or ones I felt needed to be improved were addressed with Green Stuff epoxy putty. These included the tail light guards, lifting eyes, pioneer tool mounting brackets and finally the filler cap and turret ring splash-guards.



The final drive housing was missing the distinctive texture I'd seen in reference photos. Shallow horizontal grooves were added using a round Burr in a mini-drill before brushing and stippling on Mr.Surfacer 500 before a final coat of primer revealed if the finished effect resembled my references.



These fittings for the first aid box on the LHS of the hull need to be removed as this was a post WWII addition.



Some of the tool brackets were remade and their small welds were added from thin plastic card strip.



The right hand part highlights the prominent mould seam on the turret ring guard that needs to be removed before the part is textured.



Green stuff epoxy putty has been used here to create the missing weld from the splash guard. Note the casting number added to the filler cap and the retaining chain.

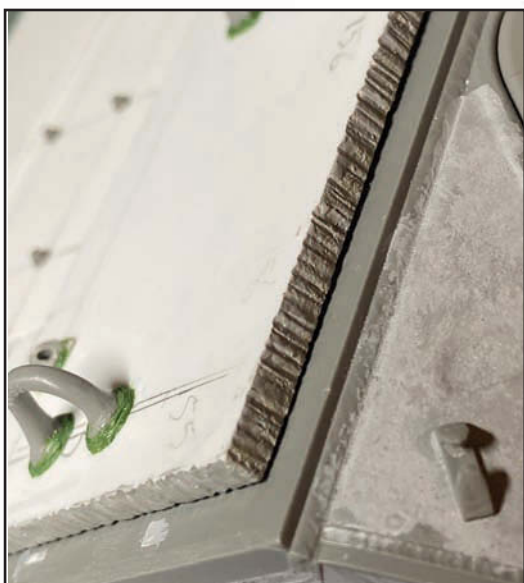


Without thinking, I added this weld, even though it's not at all visible on the finished model.

Up-armouring

From the outset of this build, I knew I wanted to model an 'Expedient Jumbo'. These were field modified Shermans, normally the 76mm armed M4A3s with either VVSS or HVSS suspension, which received extra armour in the form of plates cut from other knocked out Shermans. The workshops tasked with this, standardised the process to an extent. The entire glacis plate would be cut from welded hull large hatch M4A3s along with most of the hull side plating. The tank to be modified had its all its glacis plate fitting removed, including lifting lugs, gun travel lock, lifting eyes and headlight guards, before the donor plate could be welded on. The side plates from the scrapped Shermans would be cut into two rectangular sections to cover the final-drive housing and then bolted on.

Some, but not all of the 'Expedient Jumbos' received supplemental turret armour. This is where the standardisation went out the window, thus allowing for some unique approaches and methods being used and accounting for so many different styles in use.



More hidden treasure! Casting numbers added to the drive sprockets. Archer Fine Transfers offer a good selection of these.

Aber's .30Cal barrel adds a touch of sparkle too.

Here we can see the rough torch-cut effect added to the appliqué bow armour. A needle file and Mr.Surfacer did the job.

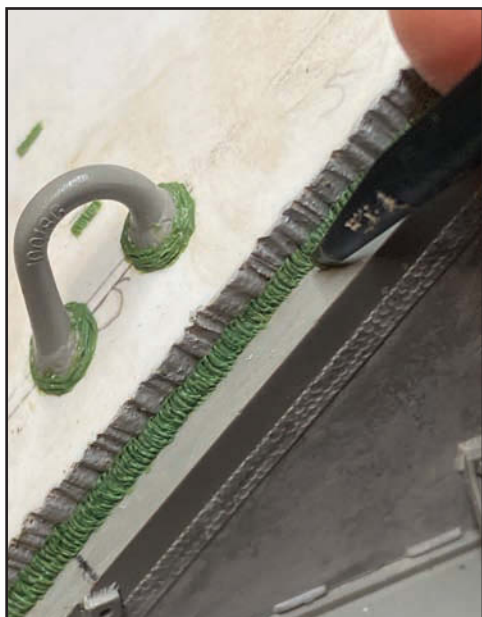
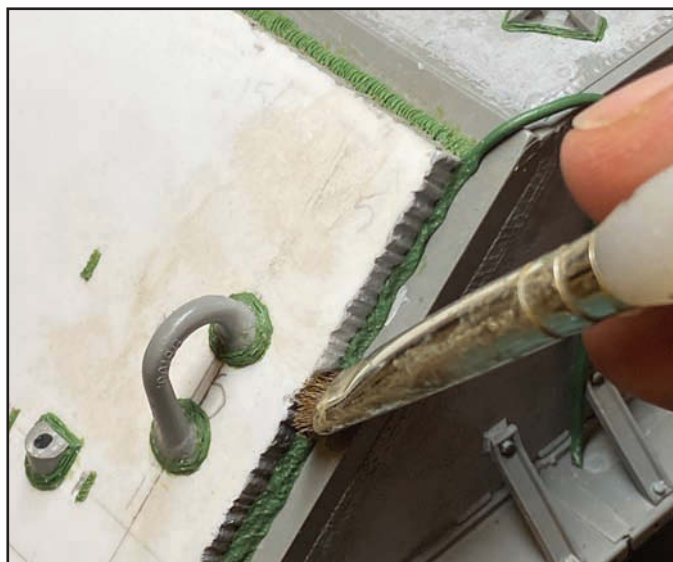
Although hardly visible on the finished model. The triangular support brackets for the bow armour received some weld detail.

I've chosen to model mine on a vehicle that's had the turret appliqué armour fitted at some point after the initial up-armouring had taken place, hence it hasn't been repainted after installation as the bow armour would have been.

Knowing that the appliqué armour was cut from other M4A3s and that the armour on these tanks is well documented, it was straightforward to scale down the 3" bow armour and 2" side armour to 1:16 and calculate the correct thickness plastic card 4.76mm and 3.12mm respectively.

Once cut to size, I ran a rat-tail and three-square (triangular)

needle files across the edges at 90 degrees to give an irregular semi-jagged look to simulate the Oxyacetylene cutting-torch effect. Once happy I then stippled on Mr. Surfacer 500 along these edges to soften the effect. As a point of interest, where the Mr Surfacer had blobbed a little on the edges, I left some of these in place, as it replicated the molten metal effect caused by extreme heat of the cutting torch. To finish off the 2.6mm mounting-bolts on the armour covering the transmission all came from Meng Models Large Bolt and Nut Set.



Weld seams

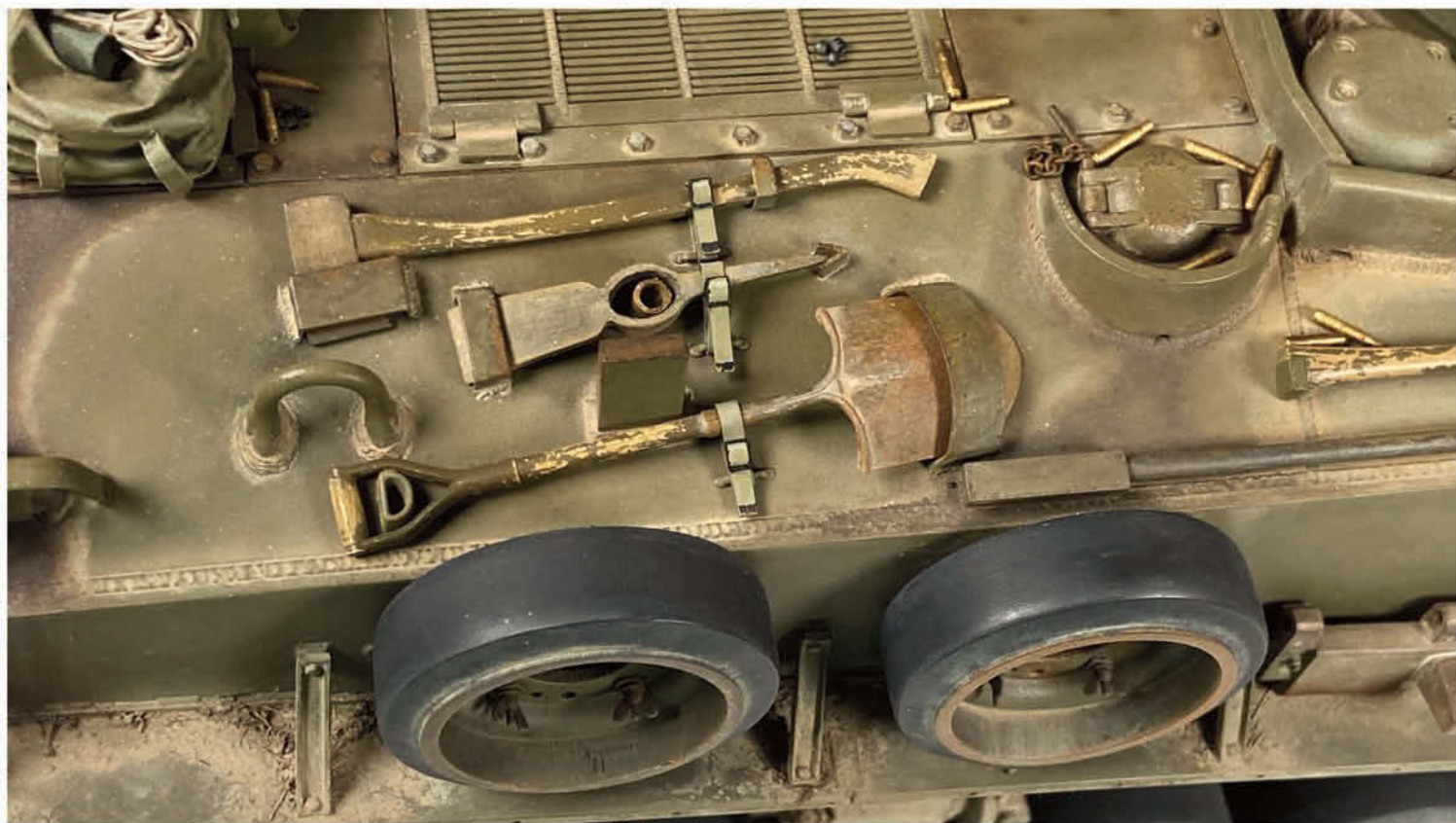
To create all the welds around this extra-armour I used my favourite product for this, Duro Green Stuff. For me this stuff is perfect and pretty easy to use and in my eyes offers a really convincing effect.

First of all, I'll mixed and rolled it into a long and very thin sausage, enough to do one complete seam at a time. The sausage was carefully laid along the inner edge of the appliqué plate and carefully coxed into place with a paint brush and a small amount of water. Any final adjustments were done with a cocktail stick. Once happy it was pressed quite firmly into the join

between of the two plates, I started to add the actual weld effect, by gently pressing in a tiny curved-edged Jeweller's chisel. This created the distinctive crescent shape weld effect. By allowing each crescent to slightly bulge over the previous one, it simulated a nice scale replica of a real weld seam effect.

Any excess Green Stuff could then be carefully trimmed away and a point worth mentioning is the thinner the initial sausage is rolled into, the less excess that will need to be removed. Finally a small flat brush loaded with water can be used to soften any areas that look a little too sharp and the process can be repeated if necessary until it looks right.





Turret

Unlike the hull, the turret does feature an irregular dimple effect around the turret sides, although this effect is visible on some preserved vehicles. I wanted to replicate the rougher more irregular effect seen on many turrets. These have a distinctive scalloped effect from around the sides, which has been caused by the shaping of the sand moulds used to cast the turrets. To replicate this, I first sanded back the moulded texture, then using the amazing reference photos that David Hobbs had uploaded onto the AHHQ 1:16 Sherman build group on facebook. Initially I used a round-headed burr in a mini-drill and ground out oblong dents, but it didn't look right. So for my second attempt, I applied a layer of Vallejo acrylic filler in small sections at a time and while it was still wet, used a small curved No.15 Scalpel blade, to carefully scoop away the filler in the same way I guessed it was done on the real thing.

After all the appropriate areas had been covered and the filler allowed to dry fully, some areas were sanded down and then a final thinned coat of Mr.Surfacer 500 tied it altogether.

Final turret detailing involved scratch-building the mount for the Commander's .30 cal machine gun that had been welded above the Gunner's sight and adding some more casting numbers and a couple of retaining chains for the mortar and .50 cal pintle mount caps.



The rear mounted turret ventilator housing received some texturing, some missing weld-seams and foundry marks on the .50 Cal stowage mount.



The pedestal mount for the 'Fifty' was also missing casting numbers and the retaining chain for the dust cap.



The Antenna base was chopped up and a real 3mm diameter Spring replaced the moulded part.



This strip and bolt-head detail only needs to be added, if you aren't fitting the canvas mantlet cover.

Painting

In this scale the Sherman is no small feat to paint and I found from my previous 1:16 Stuart project, to make it look visually interesting it would take a bit more effort than just dipping it in a bucket of olive drab paint. Although I'd have to admit that would have been a lot quicker!

The initial painting process started with a coat of automotive acrylic grey primer, as I always do. This not only offers a great key for the model paints to adhere to, but also allows you to get a first glimpse to see if all of the extra work that's been added actually ties in with the actual basic model. I find this stage really satisfying as it marks the start of the bit I enjoy most, the painting and weathering.

I opted to use No.304 Olive Drab from the Mr.Color Lacquer range, thinned with their Self Levelling Thinner to give the entire model a solid base-coat, in fact it actually took three full jars to cover the entire model.

This was followed by some freehand fading using various Olive Drab, and beige-green based colours in a very loose rendition of the modulation effect. Once happy with the amount of fading I'd applied, I then swapped back to No.304 and then sprayed this through a marbling stencil from Artool, and once the entire model had received this effect, it was then defused by applying some freehand mottling using the lighter tones I'd previously used for the fading.

At this point I stopped the painting/weathering process on the upper hull to now focus on the running gear and tracks. I found this approach worked well for both the Stuart and StuG projects. My logic is two-fold, firstly I like to get the running gear and lower hull finished completely, before continuing with the rest of the painting and weathering. I do this as I am notoriously clumsy and if I leave installing the tracks to the very end, I know I'll end up damaging smaller fixtures and fittings and this would no doubt prove harder to repair or touch-up if all of the weathering has been completed.

Secondly, with the running gear completely weathered at this stage, it gives me a perfect gauge for judging just how much I want to weather the rest of the vehicle.



Hopefully making it look both realistic and natural, but without covering all the previous effects I'd used to create tonal variations and visual interest to the olive drab.



Here you can see the resulting 'mottled' effect of the Olive Drab. 1:16 demands a different approach to painting not to mention the sheer volume of paint needed!



Tracks

Assembling the tracks on a kit this size is a project in its own right. Once completed, each run was easily over two feet (60cm) in length. Thankfully they are well engineered and go together with no real problems, apart from the mind numbingly repetitive nature of the task. Assembling individual track links, has to be one of the biggest downsides to armour modelling, I guess?

The first task was to get a base colour on, and for this I chose Tamiya Dark Iron XF-84 thinned with Tamiya's lacquer thinner, which I think helps the paint bite into the plastic a little better than say something like Tamiya's regular X-20A acrylic thinner. This colour is fantastic for base coating tracks and I've used it many times before with pleasing results. This time I wanted to try something different, as the wartime reference photos I'd seen of Easy-8s fitted with the T66 tracks showed highly polished contact surfaces.



With this in mind, I sprayed both the inner and out faces of the tracks in a mix of Mr. Metalcolor Super-Iron 2 (203) and Aluminium (218). At this stage they looked ridiculously shiny and toy like, but that's just what I wanted.

For the next stage, I used some premixed acrylic mud with finely chopped Sea-Grass and tea granules from a tea bag added to it (top tip from Lester Plaskitt). This was thinned with a little water and carefully applied with a brush to the recessed portion of each link, one link at a time. Although this was time-consuming, keeps sloppy application to a minimum and definitely prevented me from covering too many unwanted areas, which could prove extremely difficult to clean-up later, due to how rapidly this stuff goes hard and being acrylic based it can't be reactivated.



Once I'd completed both runs, I mixed a suitable dust colour from Tamiya Yellow Brown XF-92 and Buff XF-57, this I then airbrushed along the edges of the tracks and over the central guide horns to ensure that the bright metal finish wasn't visible in any areas of the tracks not in contact with the road wheels or ground itself.

Now I had some bulky texture added and any unwanted shiny areas addressed, I set about adding a couple of layers from the final stage in my weathering step by step process. The mud mix this time is oil paint and enamel based and unlike the acrylic products used earlier, offers a much longer drying time and is easy to clean-up and manipulate, even after it's dried by using enamel thinners or White Spirit in my case.

For this mix, I used a combination of AK's Dust and Dirt Deposits, Abteilung 502 Cream-Brown oil paint and VMS Pure Texture pigments.





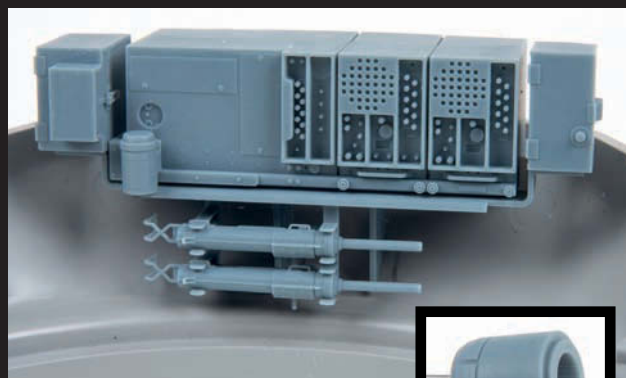
This lot was stirred into a paste, thinned with a small amount of White-Spirit and then 'speckled on' by loading the brush with the this slurry and then flicking a cocktail stick though the brush, being careful to prevent it from ending up in unwanted areas. Any speckles landing in these unwanted areas were simply cleaned up with a cotton stick soaked in White Spirit. Once dry the tracks could then be installed and final lubricating grease effects could be added with Abteilung's Engine Grease oil paint along with some subtle rust chipping on the road wheel bolts, to simulate frequent tightening during routine maintenance.





CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE





1:16 M4A3E8 SHERMAN UPGRADES

SCR 538 Radio Set Designed for the AHHQ kit but will also fit the I Love Kit model this radio set fills the visibly empty turret bustle. Printed in 3 parts the set includes a pair of stowed M3 Grease Guns.

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Model by Fabio Sacchi



1:35



CAN YOU DIG IT?

So looking through my phone at images that I have collected over the years, there is one image that I kept on coming back to, in 2008, I had grabbed an image of a some huge construction like vehicle in a Nato Camouflage scheme, quite impressive I thought at the time, if only I thought to myself.

Jumping ahead to 2022, I started seeing renders of this vehicle that I had a photo of online, Border were about to go into production of the said vehicle, that being the Rheinmetall Landsystemme, Kodiak, based on the Leopard 2 chassis.

Well, this was going to be quite something, it was finally coming to fruition, all comes to those who wait I guess.

I had kept an eye on the release of it, knowing that it would probably be realised in the Asian market first as most are,





WE CERTAINLY DIG GARY MATTHEW'S BUILD OF THE
BORDER MODELS LEOPARD2 BASED WORKHORSE

AEV3 'KODIAK'





I knew I wanted to be one of the first to own this beast, thankfully AMS in Glasgow came to my rescue, I think Alan and Brian were the first ones to receive it, they must of camped overnight at the port, then hurriedly sent me the kit the following morning, thanks guys.

So opening this rather large box, you are greeted with a mass of sprues 13 sprue in total, 3 sheets of PE, a thin gauge "hose" used for the Hydraulics, and the obligatory Instruction manual, which is quite comprehensive and neatly laid out, at times though it was a little confusing, but nothing a good think wouldn't put right. You have to make your mind up quite quickly as to which version you want make, either the German version, or the Swiss version, I chose the German version, as I wanted to add to my modern German Bundeswehr collection, which now has two. There is nothing unusual about the construction, I like to start on the tracks first on all my builds, I find this is the easiest route, I just zone out to some music, and find that the repetition is quite therapeutic at times, I had only just bought the Master tools Track Jig at the IPMS Scottish Nationals the previous weeks, this was invaluable, I highly recommend this delightful tool.

After the tracks came the wheel assemblies 14 in total, using a 2 part construction with Poly caps, which aids construction and painting as these can be removed for that part of the build. Torsion bars as well, so scope to have sort of movement if required.

So as said, early into the build you have to choose which version you want to make, that choice as early as section 4 of the build, there are subtle differences at this stage, a few holes to drill out at this stage for the Swiss version, there are some antennas to fit to both, I don't think I will be fitting yet, these will be left off till nearer completion.

I went through the instruction manual, and put masking tape over the Swiss version so not to get confused, which this builder finds easy as the years progress...

There are some clear vision ports that need to be installed, but found these could be installed after most of the build had been completed, seems like there will be lots to add after completion at this rate.

The usual finicky parts need to be made and installed onto the main body, mirrors, hatch's, guidance systems, smoke canisters, front mudguards etc, these can all be fitted without much problem. Once all these parts are fitted, I dried fitted this to the main tub, just to see what the fit was like, and also wanted to see how imposing it was at this stage, well I was happy to say that Border have made an excellent job of the engineering side of this build so far, it fitted like a cliched glove.

Hope the rest of the build was going to as marvellous as this.

The rear deck was next, this involved the first piece of PE, in the form of 2 mesh discs which were beautifully produced, I knew that spraying primer would be an issue, as the mesh would clog, so its either high PSI or spray from a distance to alleviate that problem, I went with spraying from a distance using a few passes with the Airbrush, these were then glued to the deck, knowing that I would have to do the same with final finish.

The tools were cleaned up and put aside for fitting after the major work had been done,...I also left the "rope" off as this needed to be fitted after as well, I am not a builder who installs everything then paints it in situ, I find that too time consuming and also if you slip with the brush, normally end up in some sort of disaster, plus the constant handling to try to paint in different, normally tight spaces.... it becomes quite stressful, well for me anyhow.

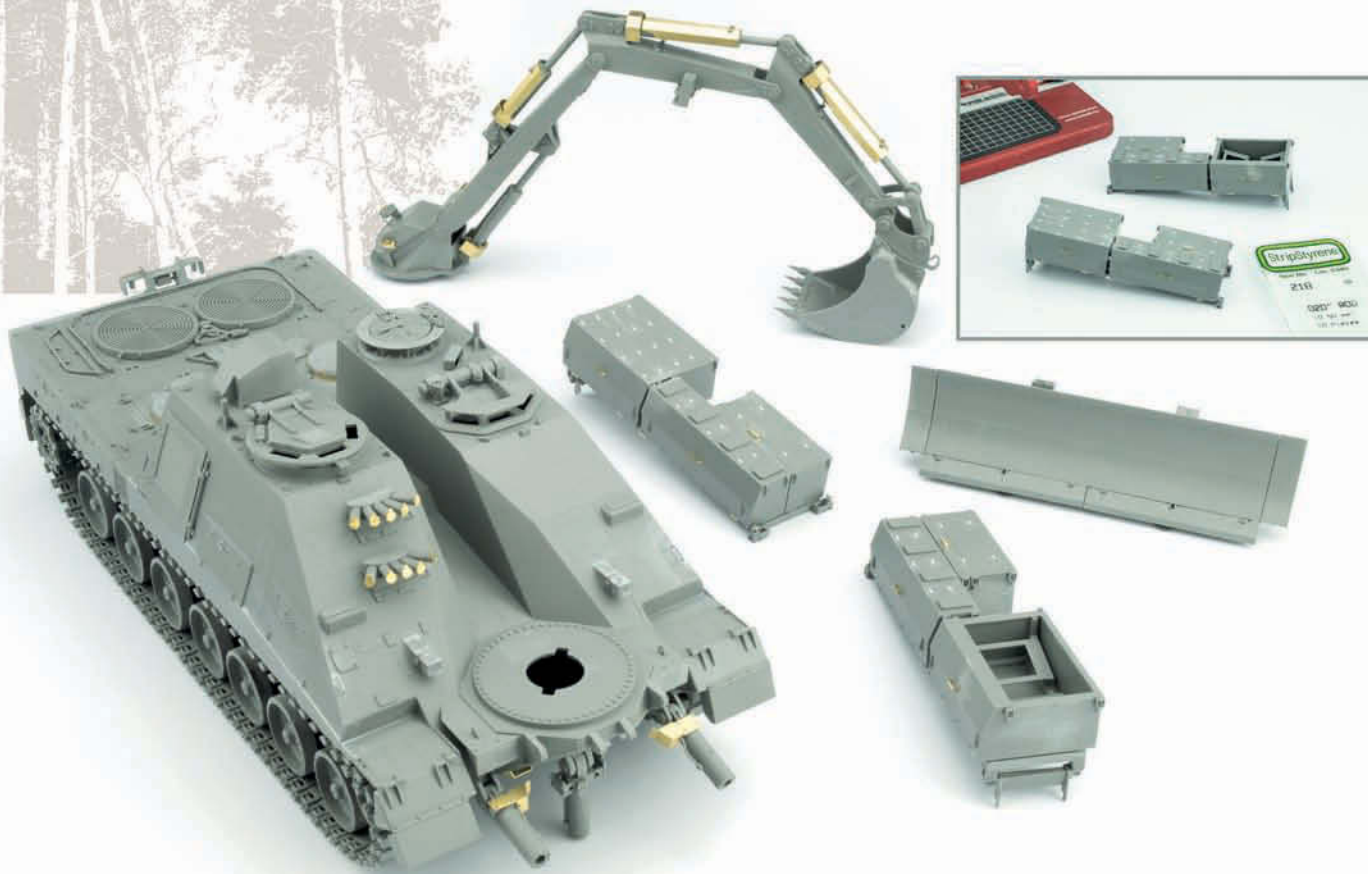
Once that main body was complete, I stood back and admired this wonderful machine, very impressive, its only the bottom half that looks like a tank as such, obviously based on the Leopard 2, it still remains fearsome at this stage.



The next part which will make it come alive, is the "shovel" and huge arm with the bucket attached, this was going to stretch me in terms of I have never built a construction vehicle of sort, and there seems to be a lot of moveable parts as well, as well as a fair amount of PE to fit as well. I was actually looking forward to this in a way, the moveable parts I will say are a pain....

I knew this would eventually end up in a Diorama, knowing how this was going end up and what I wanted to achieve in the space I had, was where I started from, like a lot of Modellers I have a couple of the Ikea Detolf glass units I put my finished work in, the dimensions of my Diorama were to fit one of the shelves, I had also seen on You Tube a demonstration of the Kodiak in action for the public, so wanted to go down that route for the Diorama, this would fit snugly into the Detolf unit, more on this later.





The first of the 2 moveable parts were the "shovel", these were basically a kit in themselves, there are hydraulic rams that move, the shovel mechanism can move up and down also, there are 3 fixing points for the hydraulic rams to fit to the main body, which again I thought I would have to leave off until this was complete, and positioned in the Dio, yet the arms still had to be moveable at this stage, it made painting the steel rams quite a challenge as soon as you painted it, the paint would be stripped off due to in - out motion, in hindsight I should of left the painting till the very end, this was the case for the mechanical arm also.

So onto the mechanical arm, this definitely is a kit in itself, there are many moveable parts 3 Hydraulic rams, with telescopic arms to match, also the moveable bucket, which I was looking forward to weathering, there are plenty of PE details to be added to the arm, these basically are a cover for the hydraulic rams, as to not get damaged in the field I suspect, these were a pretty straightforward bend in 5 places to form the required shape, nothing too Intimidating if you are a PE rookie, these were glued using Cyano.

Once all these were fitted, this is where this part of the kit becomes unwieldy, as there are 3 moveable parts, that seem to have a mind of their own, you move one part, the other 2 parts move, I fully understand the reasoning behind it, but this starts to

become a creature with its own mind....again in hindsight, knowing how the arm articulates, it would have been nice to fix in its final position, but I didn't have that option as yet.

Moving onto the bucket, this is pretty straightforward, and once this was connected, it really did come alive, this also was moveable as well, yet another ingredient to add to this moveable mix of plastic. Again this was quite frustrating, painting the rams and arms I used AK True Metal oils for the shiny part of the rams, maybe an Alclad/True Metal would have been a better choice, maybe next time.

Once this was all put together for the first time in all its glory, the body, the articulated arm, and the Shovel, the first thing that hits you, as how big it is, it has a large footprint, when the arm was in its full projection, and bucket tilted to full extension, but it did look very impressive in its grey form, what would it look like in its full painted mask, that was the next part of the build.





I had wanted a Nato finish, this obviously would be a 3 tone effect, and getting these colours right were paramount, looking on various sites and video's the German versions were as much as you can get straight out of the jar of paints from the AK Range, but I found the green slightly too dark.

I used their Nato Green in 3rd Gen for the base, but as said was too dark to my eyes, so I lightened this slightly with AK 11358 light Green, this seemed to match after mixing, once I sprayed the base primer using Mig's One Shot Black



It was time to lay this lightened green down, as usual a flawless finish from the 3G Range, once this has dried, I followed this with the other 2 Camo colour's, these again consisted of AK, but I used Real Colours this time, these were AK Nato Brown (RC081) and Nato Black (RC082).

I didn't want a hard edge, so wanted to freehand with my Iwata Custom Precision, only use this AB in this type of scenario, I tried closely to follow the lines suggested in the instruction call out, it seemed to turn out well, a slight overspray in places, but I knew hopefully the Filter would knock this back, which it did fortunately, and for that I used Mig's 3 tone Camo Filter (Mig 1510). Once this was set aside to dry completely for a couple of days, my attention turned to the Diorama, the YT video I had seen was a crew from Bundeswehr putting on a display for the public showing off this mighty beast, that was my intension as well, I did have one caveat though, I wanted earth/debris falling from the bucket at height... this was something I had never attempted, I knew this would add a bit of a dynamic feel to the scene hopefully, how I was going to achieve it would be a different matter completely.

The footprint to the Dio was going to be as said earlier, going to have to fit the Detolf shelving unit, so the parameters of this would dictate the size, I also knew that a simple Dio would involve a hole being dug and moved to make a pile, and onlookers watching this being demonstrated behind fencing, that was the thought process anyhow.

I made the base from Builders Foam, like an Insulation materiel, this was then coated with diluted PVA to give it a key, I scraped out the "hole" using a Pad-saw, fortunately this produced jagged edges in keeping with the bucket's teeth, a nice accident.

For the ground covering I used a concoction of materials which are easily to get hold of, and are wonderful to work with, that being dried used Tea Leaves, Ground Coffee (used) and hopefully

you will have Mole Hills near you, the earth that is produced from the Moles is a great materiel to use with the other 2 ingredients, I mix these together, with a 33% each consistency, just dry at present in a tin, then I liberally scattered the "earth" all over the base, I used a fair amount to be honest, so start collecting!! Once I had a general idea of the layout, I used a 50-50 mix of diluted PVA glue and water, and using a Pipette, I liberally soaked the dry Earth, some parts will dry quicker than others, but I did try to speed up the process by putting in a window, but unfortunately this cracked the "earth" in places, it did look realistic, but there was too many of them, is infilled these with the mixture, next time I will let it dry naturally, lesson learnt.

Once this had dried, I turned my attention of placing static grass in places, using one of the Railway Modellers static grass dispensers, the grass was randomly placed in position using PVA again.

The edge of the hole, I fixed some small rocks to represent what you would find when digging up the ground, these were from Woodland Scenics and also random small chippings you'll find in gardens, again these were PVA'd in place

Once this was completed, I sprayed the whole thing black with primer, I then proceeded to spray the whole scene in various Earth colours, as per Martin Kovac, (Aka Uncle Nightshift on YT Ma friends), he opened up this world of the Diorama, by painting in this manner, you get fake/false shadows, that appear very natural, the difference is amazing, scary to think that all that work is going to be black and there's no going back, but believe me, you won't regret this method, it becomes more natural, and you can colour it to what ever the environment you want, add washes/filters, pick out certain colours to enhance the look, its a fantastic technique.

Once this had dried I tended to the area for the public, I wanted a Tarmac finish for the spectators to watch from, I used Vallejo Tarmac from their range, this dries nicely, and you can use a wet pallet to smooth out the surface then it starts to set. the fencing



I had fortunately in my stash a set of AK Photographers, I knew that this would be a perfect combination for the spectator element to the scene, these were duly painted in a contemporary style, I even painted the crouching photographer with a pair of Gucci trainers, the standing guy had a Canon lens, which I endeavoured to put a red ring around the lens to show he had a top of the range lens....I guess its the little details that count.

Once these were painted, time to weather the Kodiak, nothing exceptional about this, a dark pin wash, various 502 oils in various shades to pick out certain area's, pretty straightforward armour weathering.

I decided to try that evening to get some Florist wire, dilute some PVA and dip the wire in very fine sand, then after this has dried I coated it again and applied these smaller "rocks" from Woodland scenics, this was then painted Black, and coloured to suit the mound that it was falling onto, I then fitted these at an angle to the bucket, to hopefully look as if the bucket/arm were moving and the debris falling from it instead of straight down, adding to the dynamism of the emptying bucket, different angles when you look at it, looks great, other angles not so.... And that was about it, the Diorama almost took as long as the kit

to build, and whilst on the kit, the Border Kodiak is an awesome kit, easy enough to follow if you a seasoned builder, not for a novice builder i'd say, the engineering is top notch, hardly any fit issues, Border have done an outstanding job on this, and for me, this was a long wait, and well worth waiting for.

Would I build another one, always the litmus test....more than likely, like most kits, there is always something you'd do differently, be it a small fit issue, or paint and weathering issue, isn't that the joy of Model Building?







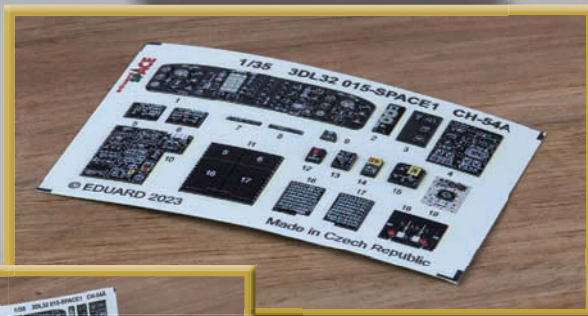
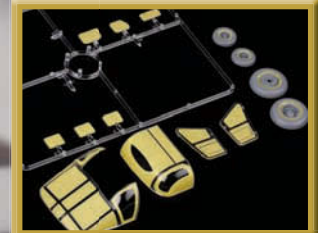
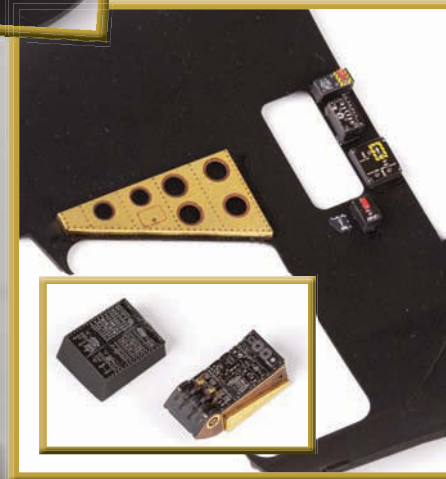
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CH-54A

for ICM kit 1/35

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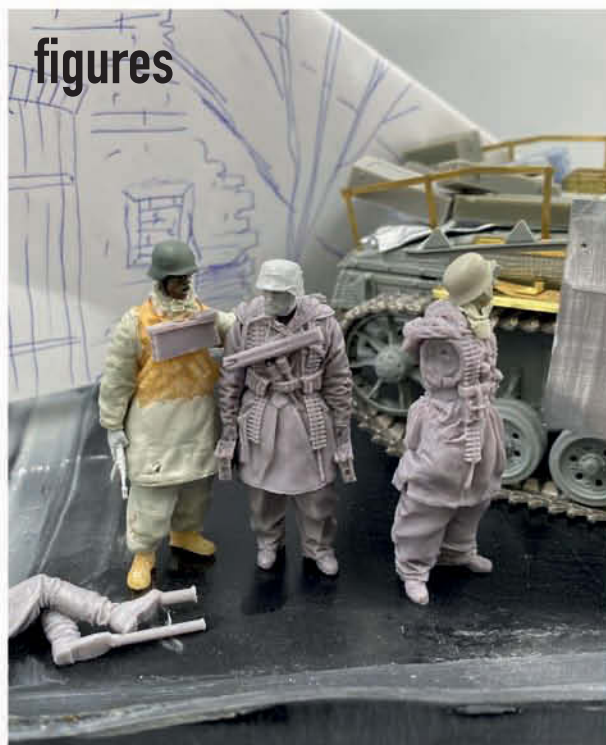


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One of the last major battles in WW2 took place in Hungary. To secure the oil fields for the war industry Operation Spring Awakening was launched with the lead role for the 6th Panzer Army consisting of several Waffen SS units to stop the Russian march. The SS, units, a shadow of what they use to be, faced harsh battles at the bloody Hungarian battle fields. Under strength and with replacements out of Navy and Luftwaffe personnel the SS fire brigades units were deployed in 3 relieve attempts of the sieged city of Budapest starting off with Konrad 1 the beginning of January.

The Stug G is one of my favourite vehicle and a well-known picture of a heavily beaten Stug from Totenkopf at Szomor was used as inspiration to start this diorama. The harsh conditions needed to be seen looking at the vehicle and figures and some help was provided by Mirko Bayerl and Roger Hurkmans. As far as I concern this is the dream team when it comes to the Hungarian battles and creating diorama's. By getting to know more insights about the harsh conditions I started to work on the figures first to set up the story.

I wanted to create a dark atmosphere with exhausted soldiers during this battles. To give the scene that little bit extra I needed to convert figures to fit the scene. The center are the first two figures, one putting an arm around his exhausted comrade. Putting them close to each other gives a dramatic image while the rest of the soldiers doing whatever they need to do. Sculpting, reviewing and do it all over again made this project a long and learning experience. The first set up with the Stug in front of a typical wine cellar didn't make it and more urban look was chosen.



Maybe not the most original idea but sometimes things just fit! When the first two figures were done the Stug crew was sculpted and finally a soldier next to the Stug for the final connection between all figures. Playing around with the set up I had to resculp a few figures and the last soldier didn't make it to the final cut. Two figures were added from the Alpine range completing the story. All figures were airbrushed with AK acrylics from their figure sets range. Oil paints are used for highlights and shadows. An almost black thin oil paint mixture was carefully added to all seams from the uniforms popping out the details. The spilled wash is also worked into the uniforms giving it a more grime appearance.

I added earth tones oils simulating dried earth on to the uniforms. Ultra matt varnish sealed the paintwork because we don't want glossy uniforms. The eyes, nose and lips are touched with satin varnish so the figures are coming more to life. At the end when the figures were placed on the diorama the same wet mixture used for the groundwork is also blended into the uniforms to give them more dirt layers.



Finally the figure with the panzerfaust didn't make it to the cut. The Stug crew is also reworked in a later stage.



Interior before closing. The figures blocking most of the sight but I know it is there!

The StuG III

The kit used is the Dragon 6633 with moulded Zimmerit. The Dragon kits are quite nice and are a pleasure to build. More details are added with 3D printed tool clamps, PE and a Panzer Art metal barrel. Friul tracks adding some weight to the model and giving the tracks a nice sit. The suspension is adjusted to irregular terrain giving the Stug a more dynamic look. The kit is supplied with a few interior details that I upgraded with a PE set for the radio's. Small touches like a few magazines, headphones and a bit of weathering was done. Although the hatches are open no details can be seen because of the crew blocking the view so no further detailing is done inside. The main focus was painting and weathering a plain yellow vehicle giving it a interesting appearance. As always I started with the one shot primer from Ammo. I prefer the black version for natural shadows and in case the basecoat is a bit thinner on the edges no plastic will shine through. A mixture of Tamiya dark yellow, buff and white is used for the basecoat sprayed in several thin layers constantly changing the colours from light to more dark working down the vehicle.

Stowage for the reardeck to give it a more dynamic look

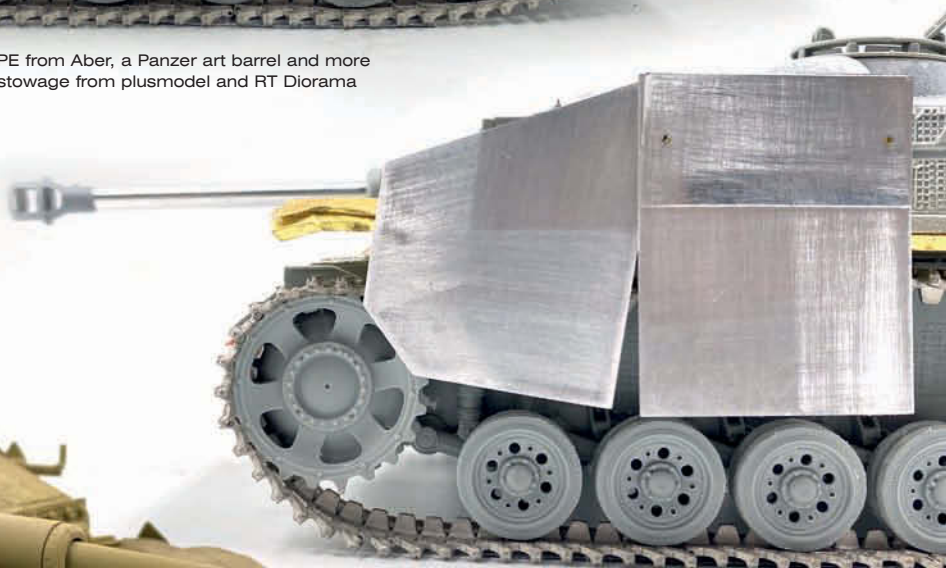


The base kit, before all extra additions.



PE from Aber, a Panzer art barrel and more stowage from plusmodel and RT Diorama

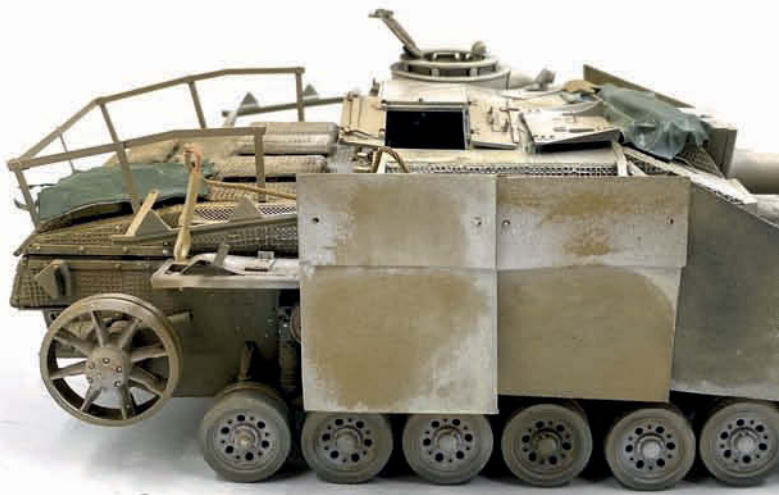
The wheels got the same treatment to avoid a monotone look. Once firmly dried a couple of thin layers satin varnish were applied to prepare the whitewash using the hairspray technique. The setting is January so a heavily worn whitewash was in place.



The first stage of painting was an overall coat of Ammo 'One Shot' black primer.

Basecoat is various colours from the Tamiya range mixed and mottled by eye and gradually built up in strength.

Whitewash and Weathering



Hairspray method for a worn whitewash effect



Flat white spayed on and was removed again leaving fragments of white paint in the corners and logical places. To protect this layer it is sealed again with satin varnish. When I apply the pin washes I start from light to dark, again to avoid a monotone appearance. First a thin layer of odorless thinner is added to let the pin wash flow better. The most dark colours are on the edges. Spilled wash is worked into the paintwork for more variation like always. The skirts got some extra attention next to the applied whitewash. I dept acrylics on the skirts using a wet cloth and removed the excess paint again until I got the look I wanted. Another thin seal of varnish was sprayed on the skirts. Using this method giving the surface a nice diversity of worn whitewash. After the whitewash it was time for the first chipping rounds. I always start with the light chipping and scuffs using the base color with a touch of white. The second step is adding a dark colour, in this case AK chipping colour to the chipping to get that 3 dimensional look. After this 2 rounds oils are used for more tone variation. By placing tiny dots of paint (cold colours, like blue, white etc.) the surface will be flattened down. To work panel by panel you avoid a monotone vehicle, and it is good to take a few days distance and review your work again.

Schurtzen got a few streaking effects and after that I run through the whole model sing the splatter technique. This is my favourite part of weathering a model and in my opinion bring the model really to live. By using earthtone colours you can create a nice dept into the paintwork and finish it off with several "spot"panel lining sessions like a more glossy wash into a few corners or a more light colour next to darker area. The spots creating by splattering with thinned oils or a ready to use products can be toned down again by working the more heavy spots into the paintwork.

Working one area at the time and not use the same colours for the whole model at one your model will not look monotone and especially with close up photo's the effect are great to see. The tracks are airbrushed in Vallejo track color and sealed with satin varnish also. A mix of plaster and weathering products are applied on the outside of the tracks together with small roots and dried seagrass. When the mix was dry several dark washes applied on the outside of the track giving it more variation. The inside of the tracks is more polished because of the friction from the wheels and only the outside will get more weathering. Since the setting is January 1945 the weather conditions were cold so I only weathered the tracks in dark colours without fresh mud! We discussed this with a few modelers and came to the conclusion no fresh mud is seen on pictures from that timeframe. The contact points from the tracks are sanded so the bare metal is seen just like the real thing.

Once dried a third chipping round is applied to simulate the fresh chips. By letting it review by others I decided to go a bit further and touched all edges with Raw Umber oils again to give the vehicle even more depth. finally the edges were rubbed gently with gun metal pigments in an irregular way. The tires from the wheels were scrapped a bit to give it a more worn appearance





Chipping is done in several rounds to avoid a monotone look and creating older and fresh chipping.



Note the heavy build-up of mud due to the missing section of fender.



The stowage is handled the same way as the model, giving this extra attention will pay off at the end finishing your model.



Extra oils are used for more variation on the shurtzen.



More careful paint damage on the twisted fender.



Scratch'd Building

I prefer balsa foam over blue foam for my buildings. As it has no memory the carved details remain sharp and the handling is more accurate. The roof tiles are from the excellent range from TM Models and kindly provided to try. Other accessories are from RT diorama and are excellent for your dio houses. The scattered glass is made from periscope glass between two pieces of clear adhesive tape and gently pressed till it brakes. The house got a few treatments of thinned plaster to give it a bulky look. After the primer I sprayed it flat white and weathered it with several earth tones out of the Ammo range and again dry brushed it with flat white oils to make it more interesting. The roof tiles were painted for more variation and slightly weathered. Sodium bicarbonate is used as fresh snow on the roof and groundwork.



the groundwork is a mix of sand, white glue and dark pigments. To give it extra volume fine tea leaves are added to the mixture. Sea grass and fine debris was added to the wet groundwork and the sodium bicarbonate is used pas last to avoid it is being blended with the dark groundwork. The tree I had laying around for a long time and decided to add it to the diorama giving it that sober look. The Stug and figures were gently press down into the wet groundwork to give them the proper sit.



working on this diorama was very enjoyable and learned a lot. Even switching lay outs from time to time and redo figures all over. It didn't bother me at all. The help and constructive comments receive from my fellow modelers meant a lot and I would like to thank Roger Hurkmans, Mirko Bayerl, László Gaál and Erik Gideonse for their support during the build of this



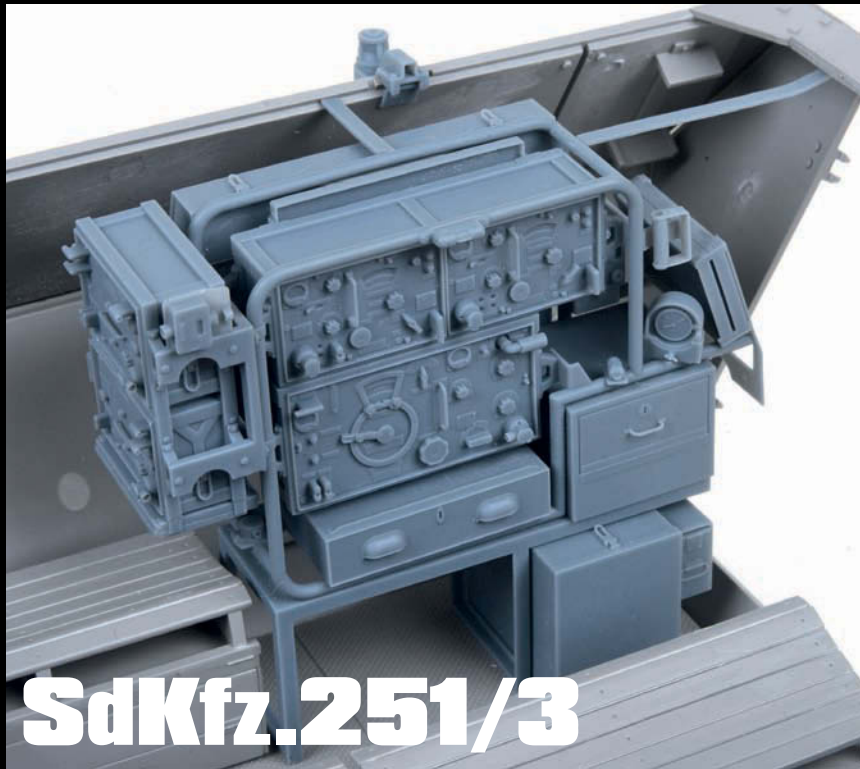
SdKfz. 251

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UPDATE PARTS

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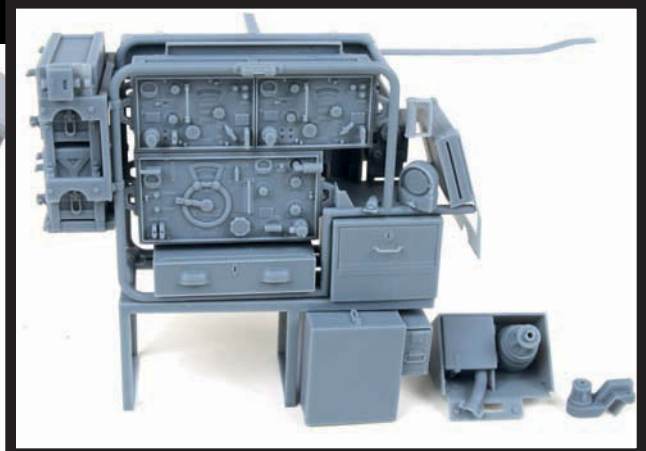
FOR THE DAS WERK & TRUMPETER KITS



SdKfz.251/3

SdKfz.251/3 Radio Installation

Now available, this conversion provides the extensive radio installation that replaces one of the bench seats in the Sd.Kfz. 251/3. Our 3D printed parts come with a wiring diagram and colour guide.



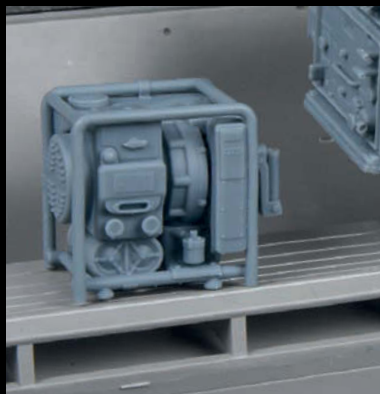
GG 400 Portable Generator

This generator is the perfect companion piece to go with the Sd.Kfz.251/3 Radios as it was used to power the radios and was also carried by the various German Command Tanks to power their additional radio sets. Printed in one piece, just add paint.

SdKfz 251 Interior Stowage Set

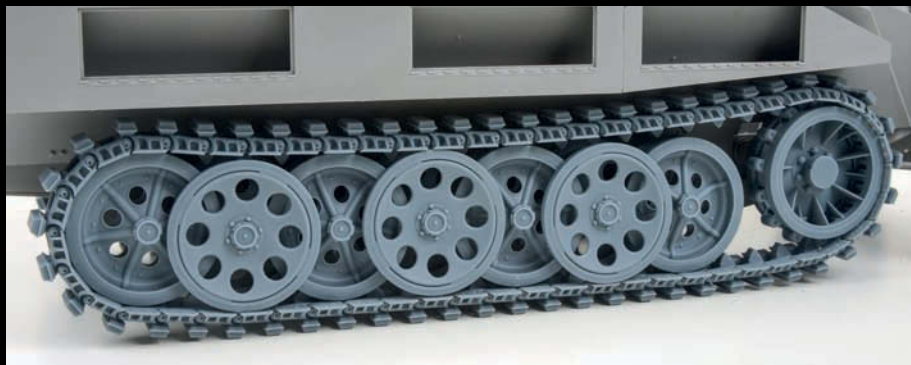
This set provides the missing stowage elements from the rear seating area with two stowed Anti-Aircraft Tripods and the two stowage rails for the dismounted MG42s. Within the rifle rack bins there were spare MG barrel cases and an extension rod for the Anti-Aircraft Tripods. Two sets of each are provided.

Available as a separate part we have an MG42 fitted into its stowage rail on the hull side wall.



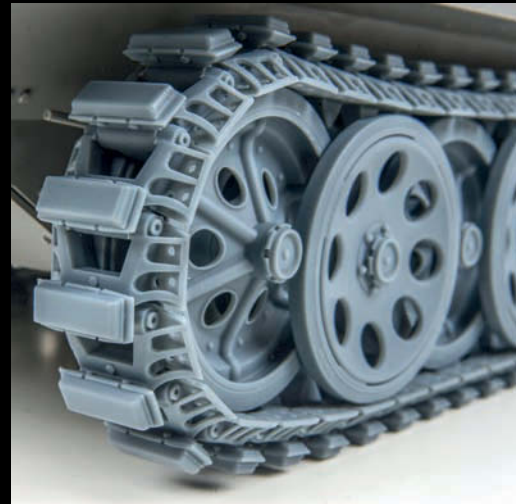
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AFV modeller



CORRECTED TRACKS

The limitations of injection moulding means that the hollow ribs on the distinctive 251 tracks are impossible to recreate. 3D printing allows these to be recreated perfectly and with minimal clean up these individual links and separate track pins give you the most accurate replicas of the real thing. The tracks will come with a set of sprockets to work with them.



COMING SOON CORRECTED ROADWHEELS FOR DAS WERK KIT

Our replacement roadwheel set gives you the correct scale diameter wheels with the correct rim profiles and hub details with welded rim detail on the outer wheels. They come with optional early style hub caps as well as the later version seen here.



SdKfz. 251 Tow Pintle

This two-piece replacement tow pintle both corrects the shapes and ups the levels of detail on this area of the kit.



IN DEVELOPMENT

SdKfz. 251 Bench Seats / Lockers

Designed to correct the Ausf.C seats modelled in the Trumpeter kit these corrected seats will be printed in two pieces allowing the angle of the slatted bench to be raised from the combat position to the higher transport position.



Lukasz Orczyc-Musialek looks back in time to one of the original 'Technical' gun trucks





ORIGINAL TECHNICAL



I've wanted to build this model for a long time and I was waiting for the right time to fire-up this project. I knew exactly what I wanted it to look like and what components would be involved. First of all, the readily available Opel Blitz from Tamiya was the basis for the entire project. Also the flak 38 from Dragon, a mix of figures from Master Box, Alpine and Djiti and a base from Dio Dump.

Of course, there were also small elements that complemented the whole project and a few aftermarket added to the basic models; wheels from Panzerart, flak barrel from Master Model, ammunition boxes, canisters and towing rope from Eureka XXL and equipment from Dragon and Plus Model.

Generally, it can be said that this is one of the first field modified 'technicals' (a commonly used modern term for heavy calibre guns mounted on a basic truck), used in numbers on the battlefield.

ORIGINAL JAPANESE

The construction of the model went smoothly. Very Tamiya!

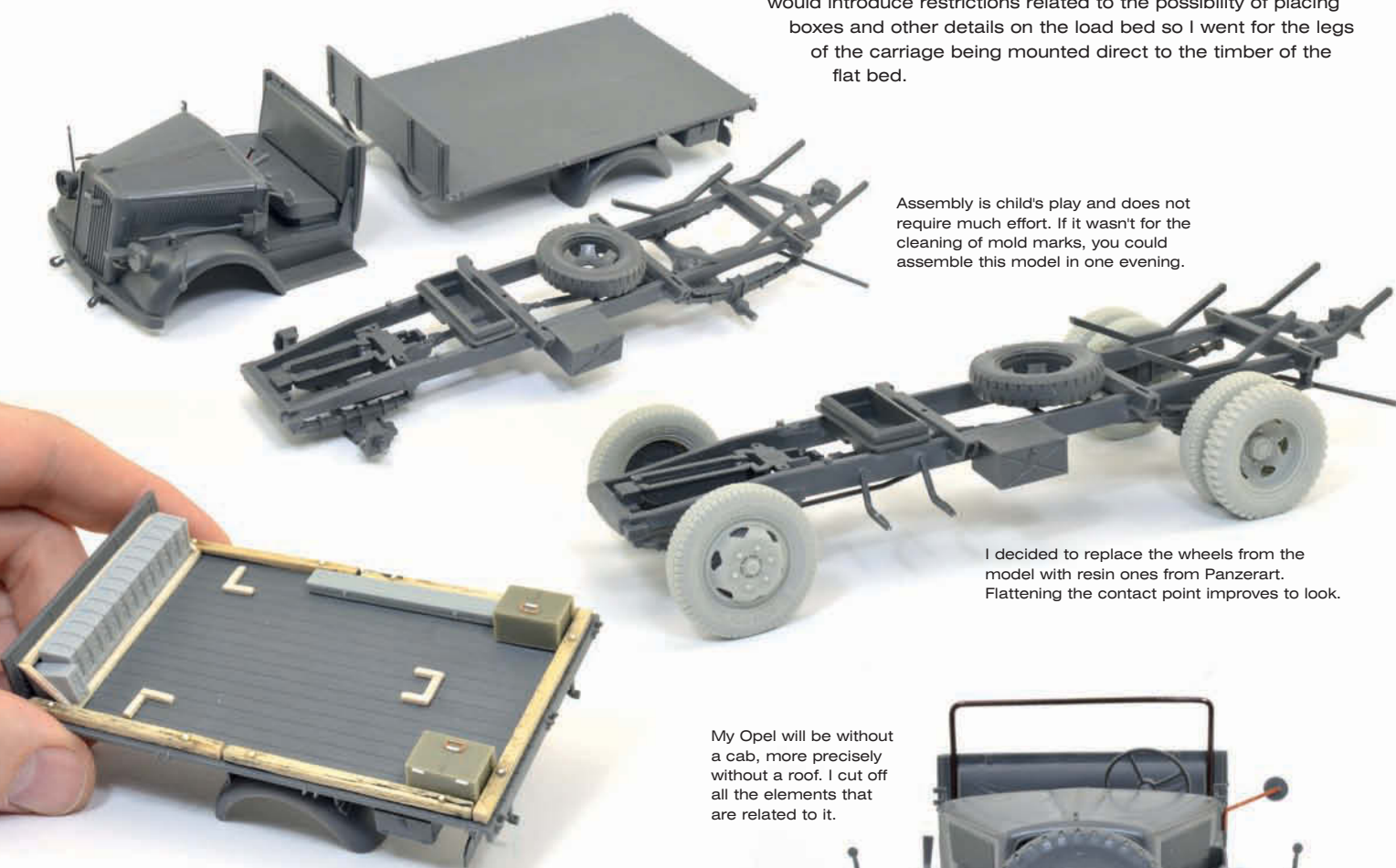
First, I cut out all the parts from the sprues to save space. After reducing the amount of plastic, everything fits in a small box and if not for the cleaning of mold marks, you can assemble this model in one evening. I drilled the exhaust pipe and in no time at all I had a complete chassis. Nothing special, just the base of the model with reasonable detail. My Opel would be without a cab, more precisely without a roof so I cut all the elements that are related to it. The front scuttle was removed and the rear wall of the cab was shortened changing the truck's appearance somewhat.

Attaching the cab assembly is a walk in the park, a few drops of glue and a few minutes and it's onto the next step. I decided to replace the wheels from the kit with resin ones from Panzerart which I remembered I had in my stash. They don't have the same tread and it's more of a commercial tyre, but they look a lot better than the plastic ones. One of them comes from another set remembering I made a similar swap when building a desert Omnibus (featured in the AK Interactive DAK book). The problem I found with these wheels is the lack of weighted effect but I found a solution for this, a slice removed and sand the

edges. I realize it's not a perfect solution, but the wheel looks much better than without it.

Some time ago I found an interesting photo of a German column of vehicles from the end of the WWII and in the foreground there was an Opel with a spare wheel attached to the front. There are also fragments of the fastening, which was probably based on an ordinary metal pipe welded to the bumper. I decided to add such a solution to my model. In fact, I haven't seen any other models with such an upgrade before, or I don't remember seeing them. Due to the fact that the model is to show a vehicle from Africa, additional canisters are an inseparable element. On the sides of the cabin I attached simple holders for two jerry cans. In addition, at the bottom of the load bed, I prepared a set of 7 fuel canisters fastened together in a frame made of profiles.

On the load bed, I prepared wooden frames made of balsa strips. I prepared some bolt heads by punching out several hexagonal screws on a punch and die. Scrap photoetch was used to replicate washers. I was wondering whether to build a platform for mounting the gun which is sometimes visible in photos from the period of fighting in Africa. It would probably look very nice, but at the same time it would introduce restrictions related to the possibility of placing boxes and other details on the load bed so I went for the legs of the carriage being mounted direct to the timber of the flat bed.



Assembly is child's play and does not require much effort. If it wasn't for the cleaning of mold marks, you could assemble this model in one evening.

I decided to replace the wheels from the model with resin ones from Panzerart. Flattening the contact point improves to look.

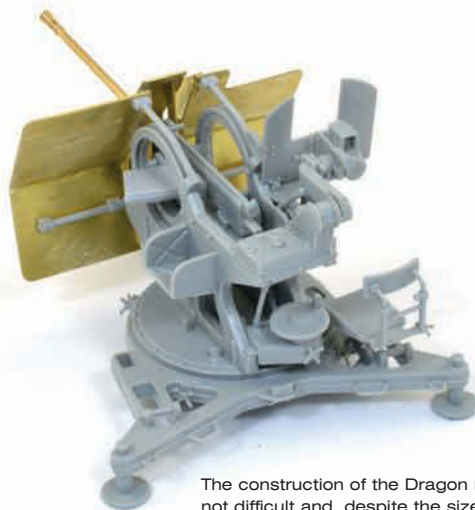
The mount for the anti-aircraft gun was made of thin wooden stock, adding imitation bolts. In addition, I also attached ammo cases and additional equipment boxes.

My Opel will be without a cab, more precisely without a roof. I cut off all the elements that are related to it.



Mounting the wheel on the front of the vehicle was inspired by a photo of a destroyed Opel somewhere in Europe. I realise that such a solution in hot conditions could not quite pass as practical, but it looks great.

Additional fuel canisters are an integral part of vehicles in Africa. On the sides of the cabin I attached simple holders for two single jerry cans.



On the underside, I prepared a set of 7 fuel canisters fastened together in a frame made of styrene profiles.

The construction of the Dragon model was not difficult and, despite the size of the parts, was quite easy. I replaced the barrel with one from Master Model which was easy, it was enough to cut the plastic barrel off and drill the appropriate hole for the metal element. I attached a resin magazine from Eureka XXL, which after a small modification, fit perfectly.

The model looks very good at this stage, all elements work together and create an interesting replica.



Time for Some Colour



I cleaned all the elements with Model Degreaser and covered the metal elements with a metal primer which increases the adhesion of the paint. I covered the entire model with a black primer from AK Interactive, applying it straight from the can.



The first color is panzergrau. I choose AK's 'Real Color' paint as a realistic match.



On the gun, I decided to paint only the shields in a sandy (yellow brown) field applied colour. In my opinion, it makes the model more interesting. Almost immediately I started to damage the paint but in small areas, not at all like with winter camo. I worked in small sections, focusing mainly on the edges. Of course, I also did some damage in the middle of the individual panels with restraint.

On the rest of the vehicle, I followed exactly the same procedure, first applying easy chipping medium and then applying brown (RAL 8020) paint, common on German vehicles of the period.



Before the actual coat of paint, and after panzergrau, Easy Chipping Medium was applied on all elements. In this way I was able to 'destroy' the top coat. Wood colours have been added to the cargo bed where the crew moves the most. I also added elements of equipment such as the ammo boxes.



I painted all the elements in a random 'patchy' way. Generally, it is a simple method to build different colour intensity, and gives an interesting appearance to our model. And now the fun part; damaging the paint. I focused mainly on the edges and contact areas where naturally damage occurs. The next element are wheels and tires. The rims are painted with colours used for the bodywork, but the tyres should not be black but gray. There are a dozen different shades that are perfect for this, but I prefer 'rubber black'. A well-rested hand and a good brush are enough to effectively do this painting.

Painting the chassis components was so quick and easy that there is not much to say here. There is more to paint looking at wooden elements on the cargo bed. I painted everything 'raw' light brown. A few drops of dark wash will do the job later, but that's in the next step. For now I polished the screws and washers with a pencil. In addition, I did some initial rubbing on the boards to simulate paint damage done by crew boots. First it was drybrushed and then I painted some lighter and more precise scratches.

Going back to the wooden elements again I used acrylic paint with

a light shade and I did some more painting. Generally, I applied paint diluted in different ratio, irregularly building various intensity of colour on individual beams. After finishing painting, I started placing all the boxes I planned to add. I also installed a set of extra jerry cans on the underside.

The model decals are not impressive being based only on license plates, one Afrika Korps marking and victory symbols on the flak shield. The application was simple using setting solution from Microscale. Small details were now worked through, the frame for the spare wheel is dark brown with a very small amount of a rust coating. Of course I also painted the inside of the headlight and placed the clear cover. I also painted some additional welds of the field mods. For the driver seat I used 3 shades of brown - from light to dark, applying paint with a good dilution. The effect is pretty good. At the very end, I laid the tow rope and painted it in the base color. Now I have all the elements base painted and ready to be married together and begin weathering.

Desert Damage



A good matt varnish is a worthwhile protective step before further weathering.



To begin with I applied gloss varnish for easier distribution of the wash. For the first wash I used 'Earth Grime' and thinner over most elements especially the sand colours. Thanks to the glossy varnish, the wash flowed perfectly where it should, filling all the cavities and emphasizing the details. I removed the excess with clean thinner. The dark wash also emphasized the details and surfaces of the wooden elements and filled the gaps between the boards on the rear bed.

The second wash is the colour of the dust to begin the desert dust effect. The first place this colour hit was the spaces between the boards on the load box. I did a strong filter over the base colour, so that it looked like heavy dusting of all the elements. It is important during such a process to control how the filter dries and avoid ugly traces of excess liquid and 'tide' lines.

Three oil paint colours were enough for me to change the shade and introduce some colour diversity. Thanks to the extended drying time of the oil colours there is chance to blend, add and remove the light grey, ochre and yellow tones. It is important to have clean thinner and dry brushes at hand for any unexpected moment.

For this model, the most visible and at the same time the best place to apply the tones is the engine hood. The large surfaces are ideal for applying colour changes and you can go from a dark to a very light shade here.

This is quite a laborious and time-consuming technique and it is worth leaving a little time to analyse the surfaces of your model without haste and determine where discolouration and additional colours should be added.

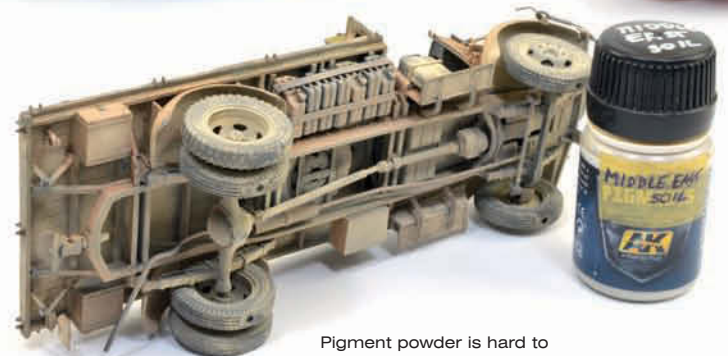
I covered the whole model with a thin layer of matt varnish to protect the oil paints. Thanks to this, I do not have to wait long to work on the model again. The layer is thin enough to protect the colours and give a uniform finish.

The heavier dust application was replicated by pigment powders paying attention to where it would naturally settle and also be brushed away by crew contact. The chassis and lower body obviously have the heaviest application as do the wheels and tyres, note also the area under the gun mount where dust has accumulated and even the cab seat.



The use of oil paints significantly changed the shades of the base colours and additional effects on the surfaces of the model.

A little rust on the elements added to the vehicle in the field could be justified.



Pigment powder is hard to beat for convincing heavy dust. The matt varnish helps with the adhesion.





Some buffed metal areas of high crew contact are easily replicated with a soft graphite pencil.

Under the fenders was the only place where I put heavier pigment and fixed it with white spirit. The rest of the chassis is safe from handling and there wasn't any need for fixing which helps the semi-transparent dusty appearance.

The flak 38 was given a bit of a metallic sheen around the edges. Simple and effective, and in addition, once again, you can build a contrast with this effect. Which is what I like the most.

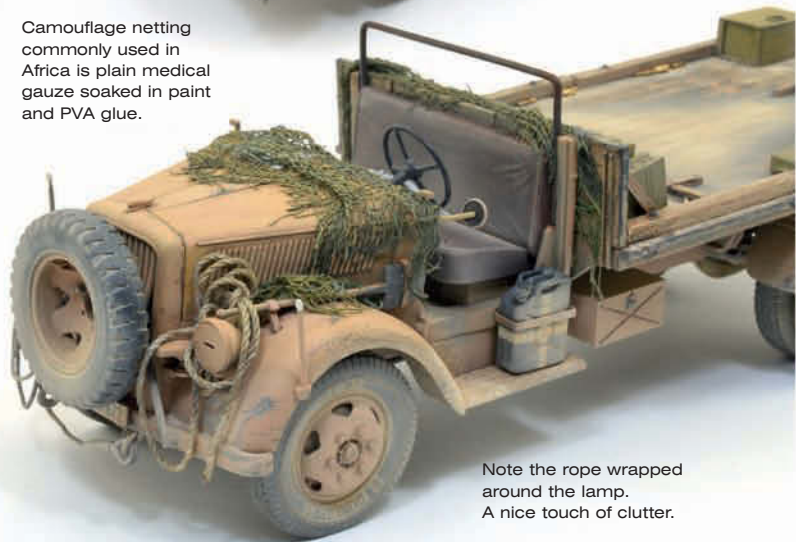
Afrika Extras

Contrary to appearances, camouflage was also needed in the desert and the Germans used camouflage nets often for this purpose. There are period images where you can see different types, from thick to thin, some with additional elements woven in. I will use my proven method, where the base material is medical gauze. Painting is very simple and all you need is acrylic paint, for example gray green, a bit of PVA glue and water. Soak the gauze with this mixture and dry it. Simple. The advantage of this is that once dried, the mesh can be softened again with water and arranged in any shape.

The front of the vehicle, in addition to the tow rope, has also been enriched with a heavy rope. It is a piece of thin string from another Tamiya model, which was supposed to be a steel tow rope but for obvious reasons it didn't become one. Here, after laying on the model, I soaked it with PVA glue and water, but in some places I glued it to the model. Its appearance is quite cool and adds a bit of clutter to the vehicle. When dry I applied a wash to emphasize its weave. At the same time, light brown gives it a natural look.



Camouflage netting commonly used in Africa is plain medical gauze soaked in paint and PVA glue.



Note the rope wrapped around the lamp. A nice touch of clutter.

I decided to prepare a few elements of personal equipment and put them on the cab seat. An MP40 with a draped sling, paper map, a rag and water canteen. That's quite enough.

A great addition are the spent ammo cases from Master Model, which I first cover with a black-brown wash. After drying, they are ready to be placed on the model. A little pigment cement applied with a thin brush is enough to hold them in place, especially since this glue is completely invisible after drying.

A length of chain was draped over the rear tow pintle. To colour it, or rather to blacken it, I use liquid from AK. A little is enough to completely change the colour. For the model, I need about 85mm, which corresponds to about 3m in length. Once again, Pigment Cement is the perfect solution.



A black rectangular box with a green band across the middle. The band has the word "AFRIKAKORPS" in white capital letters. On top of the box is a diorama of a desert landscape with sand, small tufts of grass, and a white column. A small white tank is visible on the right side of the diorama. The background is white with the text "ORIGINAL JAGH" in large, stylized letters.

I glued clumps of grass to the surface with PVA glue. A few points will be enough, after all, you must not forget that this is a rather hot and dry terrain.

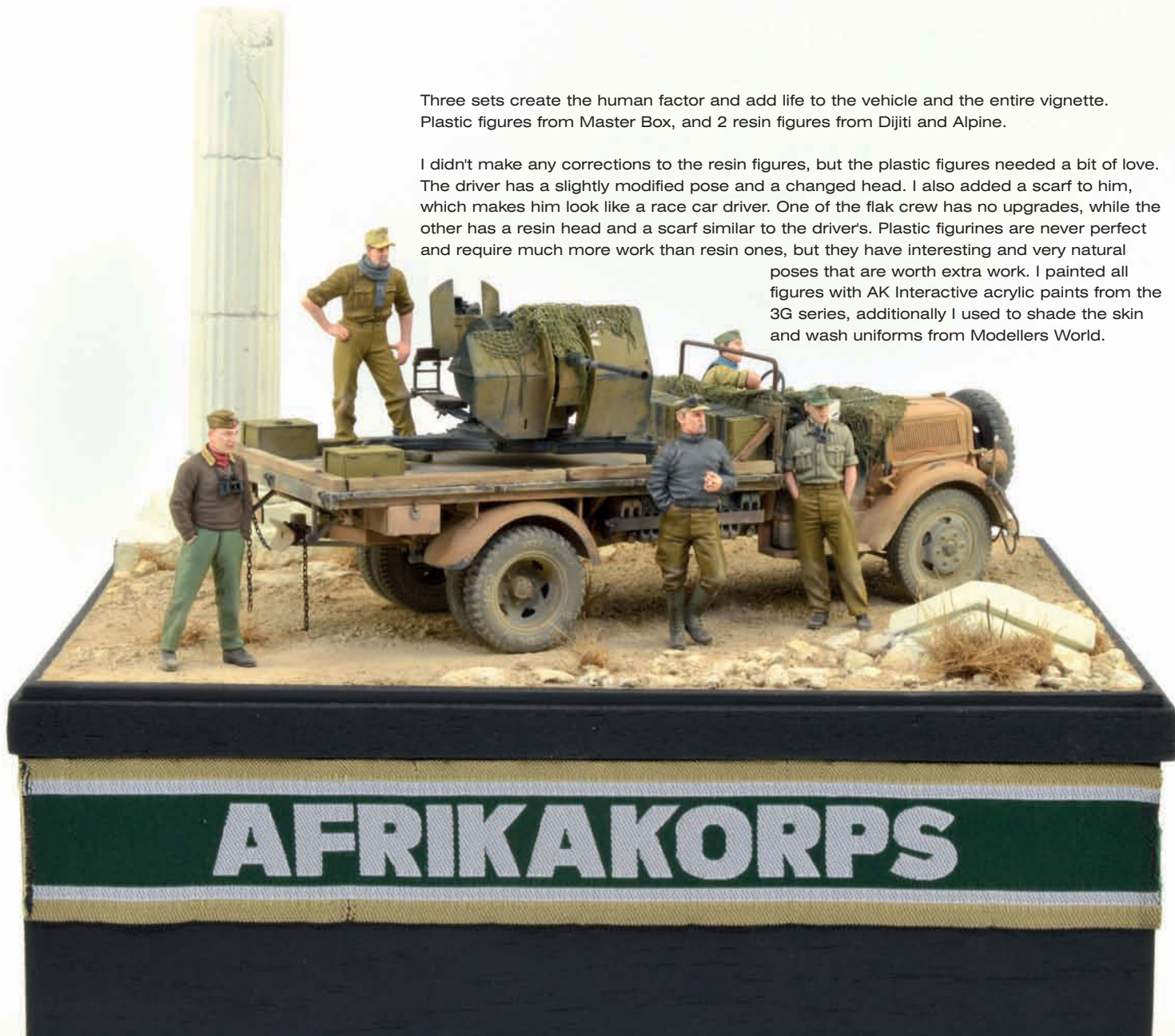
Finally, the icing on the cake. A few months earlier I bought a replica wristband of the Afrika Korps to wrap around the base. After cutting to the right size and gluing with double-sided tape, this element makes a great touch to the presentation.

I painted the architectural elements with Ivory, and shaded the entire ground with a fairly diluted sand wash. I shaded the stone elements with gray wash and rubbed with a dry brush in the base paint. the whole ground was dusted with pigment, and it was fixed with white spirit.



Three sets create the human factor and add life to the vehicle and the entire vignette. Plastic figures from Master Box, and 2 resin figures from Dijiti and Alpine.

I didn't make any corrections to the resin figures, but the plastic figures needed a bit of love. The driver has a slightly modified pose and a changed head. I also added a scarf to him, which makes him look like a race car driver. One of the flak crew has no upgrades, while the other has a resin head and a scarf similar to the driver's. Plastic figurines are never perfect and require much more work than resin ones, but they have interesting and very natural poses that are worth extra work. I painted all figures with AK Interactive acrylic paints from the 3G series, additionally I used to shade the skin and wash uniforms from Modellers World.



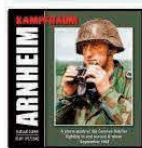
Summing up the whole project, I must say that I am a bit surprised that from these simple elements combined I managed to build a unique, irregular vehicle, not very common, but documented photographically. As I mentioned in the title, it's probably the first technical that was created in the world in large numbers, having its descendants still fighting around the World now and probably for a long time into the future.



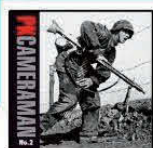


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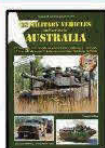
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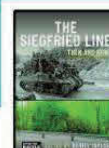
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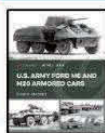
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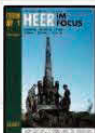
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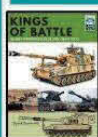
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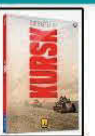
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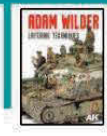
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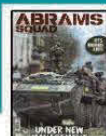
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The Leopard 2A4 has seen service for many decades with NATO forces along with such nations as Chile and Indonesia. Its debut with the Ukrainian forces however has been a politically fraught and dramatic episode.

Zack Sex brings us up to speed with his take on the subject utilizing Meng's offering

1:35

In early June 2023 in the region of Novopokrovka, a district of the Zaporizhzhia oblast, Leopard 2A4s of the 33rd mechanised brigade of the Ukrainian army are proceeding to their bridge head. These MBTs along with the US supplied M113s were moving up to their jump off positions. The Ukrainian mixed column moved slowly through the leafy countryside along rutted path with fresh foliage on the tree line offering some modicum of cover. Unbeknownst to the tank and APC crews however were the Russian spotter drones above feeding back information in real time to artillery units and anti tank missile teams based along neighbouring hedgerows. Soon Russian artillery opened up on these vehicles causing some vehicles to drive off their paths into the minefields laid near by. Worse was to follow the next day when Leopard 2A6, M2A2 Bradley IFVs along with BMR 2 and Finnish donated Leopard 2R mine clearing vehicles.

The tanks and IFVs belonged to the 47th separate mechanised brigade, a famous unit armed with western equipment such as M16s, they had recently traded in their Slovenian donated M55S tanks for the US Bradleys and German Leopards. Under a massive concentration of fire many of these vehicles ended up driving into a similar killing ground before having a chance to engage the enemy. Shades of Operation Citadel or Operation Goodwood come to mind, where large tank armies attempting to break through enemy lines only to have large numbers of their vehicles knocked out. The out cry on various websites and news channels was not unexpected but in the west we had grown used to the notion of easy technological based victories against the likes of Saddam Hussein's fairly one dimensional army in Kuwait. What is happening in Ukraine is an altogether different affair with Ukrainian forces fighting a well armed and much larger aggressor in well prepared positions with numerous mine fields, artillery, Lancet Kamikaze drones and missile firing KA-52 Alligator



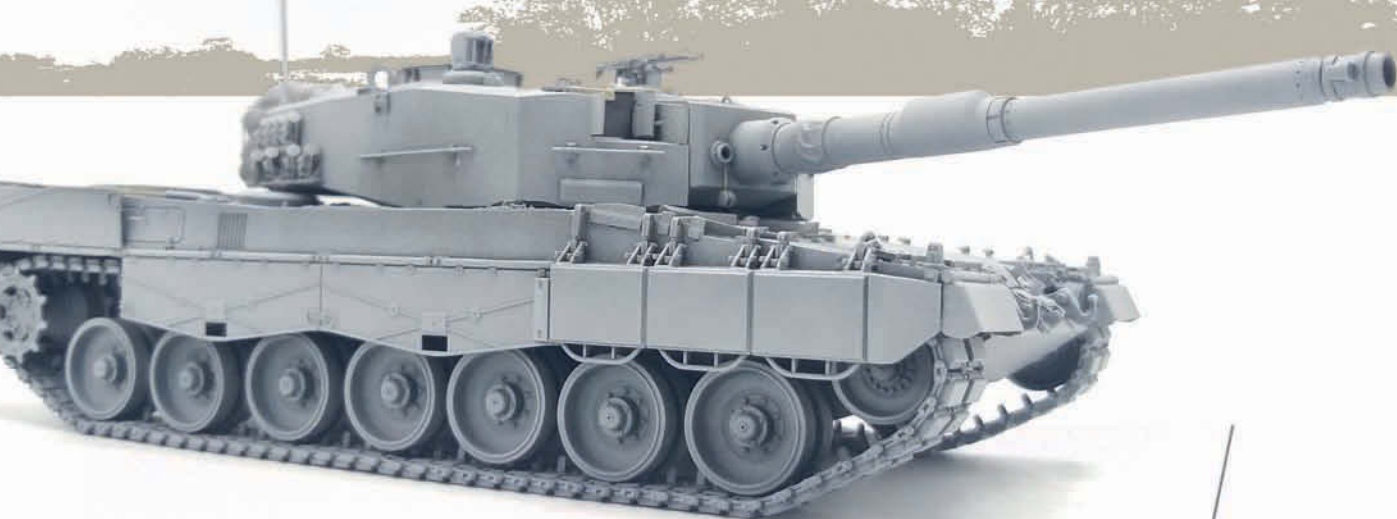


The Ukrainians quickly changed tactics to infantry assault squads dropped off by HUMVEE storming Russian trenches in the tree lines with artillery, HIMARs and drones backing up such actions, such is the pace of tactical evolution in Ukraine's bid to liberate it's territory. It is impossible to predict the outcome of this David and Goliath conflict but the Ukrainian David seems determined to resist the deadly embrace of this mordant reincarnation of the Russian empire. Furthermore while the Ukrainian Leopards have not yet shone, when these vehicles do indeed break through Russia's defensive positions their L44 120mm main guns will prove lethal to any of Russia's current tanks.

The Leopard 2 was developed by Kraus-Maffei in 1970s as a logical outreach or evolution of its earlier Leopard 1 program as this tank with its 105mm gun was nearly obsolete with the appearance Soviet MBTs such as the T64, T72 and T80 all armed with 125mm main guns. The Germans had initially been interested in developing the MBT-70 with the Americans in the 1960s but both parties went their own ways when the MBT-70 appeared to be going no where. After looking at improving the Leopard 1 the Germans decided to evolve the aspects of MBT-70 under the project officer Paul-Werner Krapke. The next major change was on choice of turret based on combat reports and observations from the Yom Kippur war in 1973. A number of Leopard 2s prototypes were tested by the US army in 1976 but the US went with their own XM1 which went on to become the M1 Abrams. Full scale production of the Leopard 2A4 started in 1979, since its introduction into service and manufacture over 3,600 Leopard 2s have produced and serve in the armories of 14 countries. Leopard 2s have seen wide scale service and action in Afghanistan with Canadian and Danish forces and in Syria with Turkish forces, Turkey having lost a number of Leopards to ISIS IEDs and ATGMs. As mentioned already Ukraine has only recently acquired Leopard

2A4s quite recently despite Germany's initial determination not to allow delivery of their MBTs, eventually Berlin acquiesced and a collation of nations began donating A4 and A6s to Kyiv, the list included Portugal, Spain, Poland, Canada, Sweden and of course Germany many of these vehicles having various features that allow the sharp eyed guess their nation of origin. One other point of interest is the recent update or addition by some Ukrainian units of original Soviet era explosive reactive armour boxes or CONTACT 1 to their Leopard 2A4 but more on that at a later date.

Like its World war two predecessors the Leopard 2 A4 is an impressive lump of a vehicle, when I compare the A4 and A6 I'm reminded of the differences in the Tiger and King Tiger. Meng's A4 is a gem of a kit with working suspension and well designed workable track along with a sizeable sheet of photoetch in contrast to Tamiya's Leopard 2A6 which I built shortly afterwards which has no photoetch (it has to be purchased separately) and rubber-band tracks.



That said, there are a few areas you might want to improve on both. The solid grab handles on the Meng Leopard hull and turret, for one. I carefully cut these sections off, drilled them out with a mini drill bit, and bent and formed wire handles from steel and brass guitar strings. These were superglued from the inside and add an extra sense of realism to the model. The other area that may seem unimportant but needed detail were the small chains added to the smoke launchers. These are not supplied in the Meng kit. The Ukrainian Leopard 2A4 that I based my model on had its rear mudguards removed and final two side skirts flipped up to allow debris and stones to escape from the rear of tracked section of the vehicle. I also added a tied down tarpaulin, some straps, a ruck sack and netting, along with sleeping mats as based on the rear of the actual vehicle. The last additional attachment to the Leopard was an improvised flag pole with a tissue flag sized with super glue painted yellow and blue in the Ukrainian colours, again as based on the reference image. Other than these small additions or subtractions, the Meng kit assembly is detailed but straightforward. Having completed the construction I gave my old

pal Arturas Skyrius a shout and we organised a spray day. and The first thing I did before Arty came out was prime the Leopard with a can of Tamiya primer grey. This gives the model an appealing flat grey shell on which to apply the various layers of colour later.





Arty and myself had a clear idea of the colour scheme required on this particular Ukrainian Leopard 2A4. It consisted of a simple scheme of NATO green and black, which gave it the appearance of a Danish vehicle. I think of the NATO brown having been painted over by the Ukrainians for some reason. On the basis of this, Arty gave the model overspray of Tamiya black followed by a base coat of NATO green XF-67. I then drew out the pattern of black and brown areas for standard Leopard camouflage based on the kit colour reference as this matched the pattern in the number of reference photos. These two colour areas were sprayed with a mix of German grey XF-63 and Black X-1. This mix worked nicely so we packed up, had a few beers and left the paint to dry for the evening. The next day I set about creating the Ukrainian Counter offensive markings. These particular ones consist of a bunch of World War II style German white crosses and a number of white squares with grey duct tape crosses. No unit numbers or markings are applied to this particular Leopard or other ones so far seen in the campaign. I quickly remembered seeing German jerrycan marking from an AFV kit which seemed the right size for these particular markings. The AFV fuel can markings were in fact a little too long on three sides so only had to be trimmed down to fit

perfectly. Next I cut out the white squares. Again raiding the decal box, I cut the squares out of Tamiya ISU 152 Soviet invasion strips and hand painted the grey cross in the centre of them. At this point I noted the fluorescent or luminous green markings on the rear of the Leopard turret (presumably for other tank drivers behind the vehicle to maintain safe distance at night time). These two green crosses were added with a child's luminous green colouring pen and did the trick nicely.

The last major step in the process was now weathering the beast. This brought me back to the original inspiration for the entire project. The shots of the Ukrainian Leopard 2A4 showed it with a major coat of dried mud and dirt on the hull but a comparatively clean turret. As noted in the photo reference, the hull has two shades of mud, so I did a version of this with Mig European dust pigment and white spirits last over which I mixed Wilder red earth pigment with European dust and spirits. I sloshed this on pretty liberally, let it dry, then gently scrubbed it back in parts with an old bristle brush. Lastly I dry brushed it with a mix of Raw Umber and lamp black, all of this is done in a measured and careful fashion.



A similar process was used on the sides and rear of the hull, but with a series of pigments flicked against the sides and rear toward the back and around the rear sections of the vehicle in the direction mud and dirt would be thrown up by forward movement. To add to the tonal range of these pigment's splash effects, I also flicked diluted lamp black oil paint and white spirit splattering. As this process is applied, I generally work away with a dry brush the bigger splash effects on the top of the hull and turret.

This is easy to overdo but the whole process can be repeated a few times until you achieve the desired effect. Other small actions to take on the vehicle were to paint various tools and luggage on the hull and turret. This I did with various life colour and AK acrylics. At this point I was pretty happy with how the Ukrainian Leopard 2A4 had turned out but just for the craic I added a figure of a suitable Ukrainian tank commander. This chap started off as a standard Tamiya Leopard 2A6 figure but I dremmed his face off and replaced it with nice Hornet head and scratch built microphone. The figure is based on one spotted in a Ukrainian Leopard 2A4 dressed in black, rather than German camouflage like some others. All in all, I enjoyed this new venture into Leopard territory, its a new one for me but one than with the large amounts of Leopard variants currently operating and in the process of being delivered to Ukraine I for one will be looking at Leopard 1s and Bergpanzer builds in the future. So happy modelling and Slava Ukraine.







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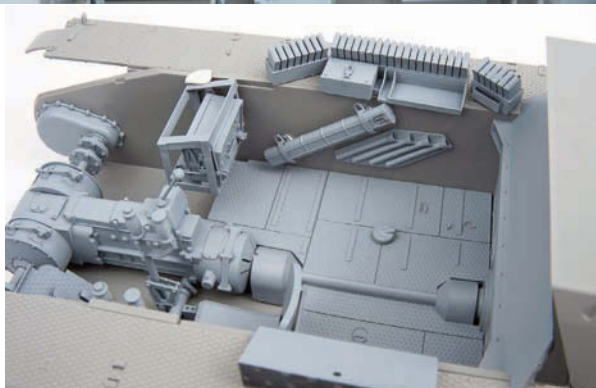
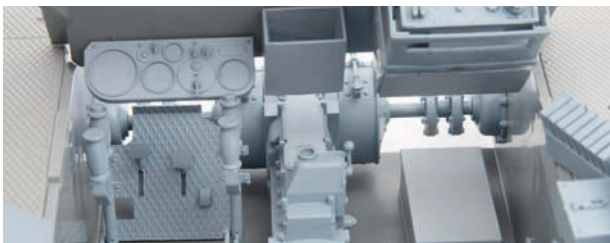


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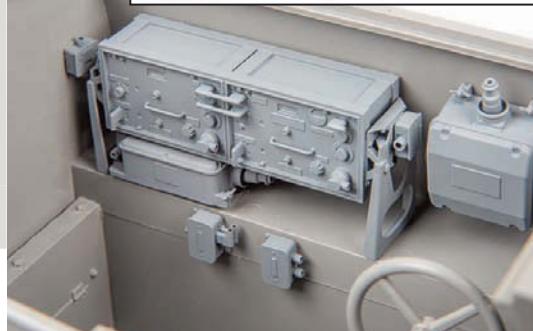
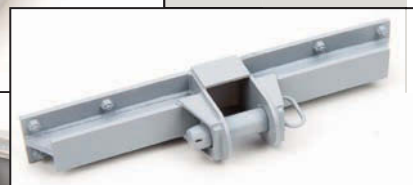
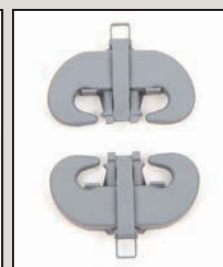
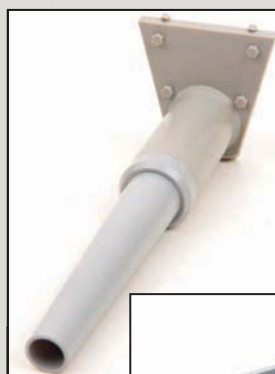
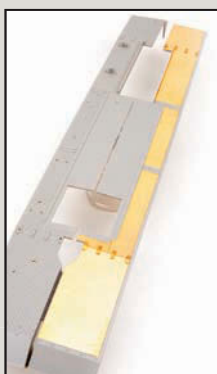
TAKOM 1:16



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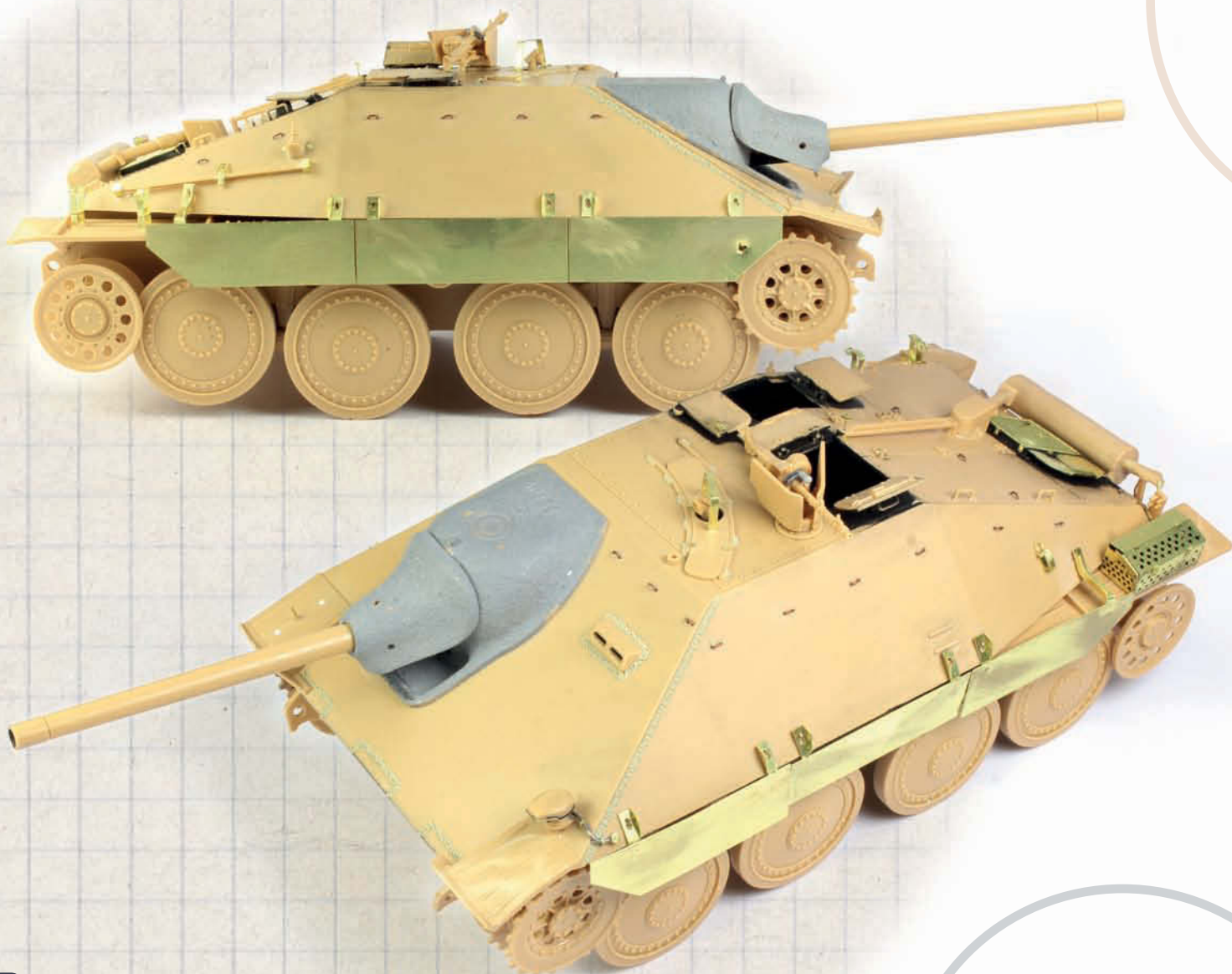
Hetzer history

The Jagdpanzer 38(t) was developed in early 1944 by the Böhmischo-Mährische Maschinenfabrik factory in occupied Czechoslovakia. The design was based on their LT vz.38 tank, which the Germans had adopted as the Panzer 38(t). Its small size made it easy to conceal, but also meant the crew inside were cramped and struggled to operate it effectively. Today they are popularly known as Hetzers, but this name was far less common at the time. Most Jagdpanzer 38(t)s were used by anti-tank companies in infantry divisions. These units had very few other vehicles and limited mobility. Crews would hide and camouflage their Jagdpanzers then use them to ambush advancing Allied tanks. The Jagdpanzer 38(t)'s 75mm PaK 39/L48 gun was powerful and effective against all Allied tanks, although its thin armour meant it was very vulnerable to their return fire. BMM and Skoda produced a total of 2,827 of this vehicle until May 1945.

Tamiya Hetzer construction - Easy as usual

I've always wanted to build a Hetzer, but never got the inspiration. Until my friend Áron Vrbovszki made 4 of them, for his vignette series. On his advice, I bought a Tamiya Hetzer (No.285), because as it is usual with Tamiya models, it can be built quickly and accurately. The vehicle itself is quite simple, there are not too many details that need to be reworked and worthwhile to get a nice looking model. I thinned the edges of the fenders with a sander and bent them a bit with pliers, imitating the damages. However, the side skirts and engine bay ventilation grille are all worth replacing with photo-etched parts. For this purpose, I used Aber 35112 PE set, which has all the minimum replacement parts needed to complete the tuning of the Hetzer. The cannon barrel and the tracks are also from the tamiya kit (if you don't want to show any major offset on the running gear the plastic version will also give acceptable results). The tool clamps and rear holed storage box are of

course also from the Aber kit. I didn't detailed the inside of the tank, as I had previously planned to put figures inside, but that is in the future...in any case, I painted the inside with matte black before gluing the body together. I reworked some of the welds from Magic Sculp. On the gun mantlet and gun base, I have made the stronger casting texture with surfacer stuffing, then lightly sanded the surface. I replaced the casting numbers with the numbers that I found on the sprue of the model. I carefully removed them from the frame with a shaving blade, then glued them to the top of the cradle with tamiya extra thin glue. I reworked the tarpaulin holder tabs with thin copper wire, taking care to be able to put the wire holding the camouflage through it later. I also kept the MG-34's shield from the kit, but sanded the edges. In my opinion, the photo-etched shield gives the impression of a too thin steel plate. Actually the build was done.





Ambush camo "Licht und Schatten"

Since the construction of the vehicle is so simple, I thought I would choose a more complex pattern for the camo. Well, halfway through the painting phase, I realised that it wasn't so simple, I think the BMM factory camo is quite complex and detailed.



The tamiya model is a medium version tank, so based on original photos we can say that this pattern was painted from the second half of 1944. In several publications there is a well-known photoseries of an ambush camo Hetzer, on BMM factory yard. Based on these photos, MXpression has produced precision-cut masks for the pattern, which can be used several times! The stencil is perfect, but while we applying it, need to check it on the period photos to make sure they are in the right place after bending. For the primer, I sprayed on flat white and black paint for a light and shade effect. The yellow base colour (AK-RealColor 060) was applied first, followed by a lighter coat (RC060+RC013) sprayed on from above. The first masks were applied to cover the yellow spots. The edges of the masks should always be checked as the plastic is a slightly stiffer material than, universal tape. You can even cut the masking for large patches to make it easier to apply, but then you have to make sure that the paint doesn't go under it. After that, I paint the brown patches (RC068) and after masking the green ones (RC047).



The wheels were painted to green or brown colours of the camo (strangely, the yellow wheels are not seen on these production hetzers). After removing the masks, the pattern was beautifully drawn on the tank. This was not the end of the painting session, the hardest part was still to come. A lot of tiny masks had to be applied, to make the small patches. I stuck them on, and started to paint the colours. They painted yellow on the green and brown patches and green on the dark yellow ones. Unfortunately I underpainted a lot of the masking with the airbrush, so I decided to hand paint them one by one! It's a slave job, only recommended for modelers with strong nerves! However, once you're done painting, the cavalcade of colours is dazzling, thanks to the precise masks.



The gun barrel can be seen in many period photos to have been painted a different colour to the rest of the vehicle, presumably grey (RC249). To save the camo before weathering, I sprayed the whole model with Tamiya X-35 semi-gloss varnish. The decal areas were given a gloss varnish (Tamiya X-22). There was not much markings on these vehicles, so only the crosses were applied to this Hetzer. Subsequently, the decals also received the semi-gloss varnish. Next came the filtering with good old MIG P242 Tan and the washing with MIG P220 Dark Wash. When everything was completely dry, the whole model was thinly varnished with Vallejo 70.520 matt lacquer.





In my experience, the next step, drybrushing, is more effective on a matt surface. For this, I used different Humbrol paints. I lightened the spots in 2 phases. I painted the chips with Vallejo paints. In an effort to vary the paintwork, I made red primer metallic chipping, not overdoing it considering the young age of the vehicle. I used Ammo A.MIG-1408 for the oil stains and bleeds. I imitated fresh mud on the running gear as well as on the tank surface where the crew could climb up, using AK products (AK8017, AK016). The splattered, dried mud was done with A.MIG-1750. I rusted the exhaust with Lifecolor Rust Wizard liquid

pigment wash. On the vertical parts of the vehicle, I imitated some rain streaks here and there with A.MIG-1702. To give a little connection between the vehicle and the environment, we can place tree branches typical of the theatre of war in one or two places. In this case I made a pine branch, in a really authentic way, from moss from the Ardennes.





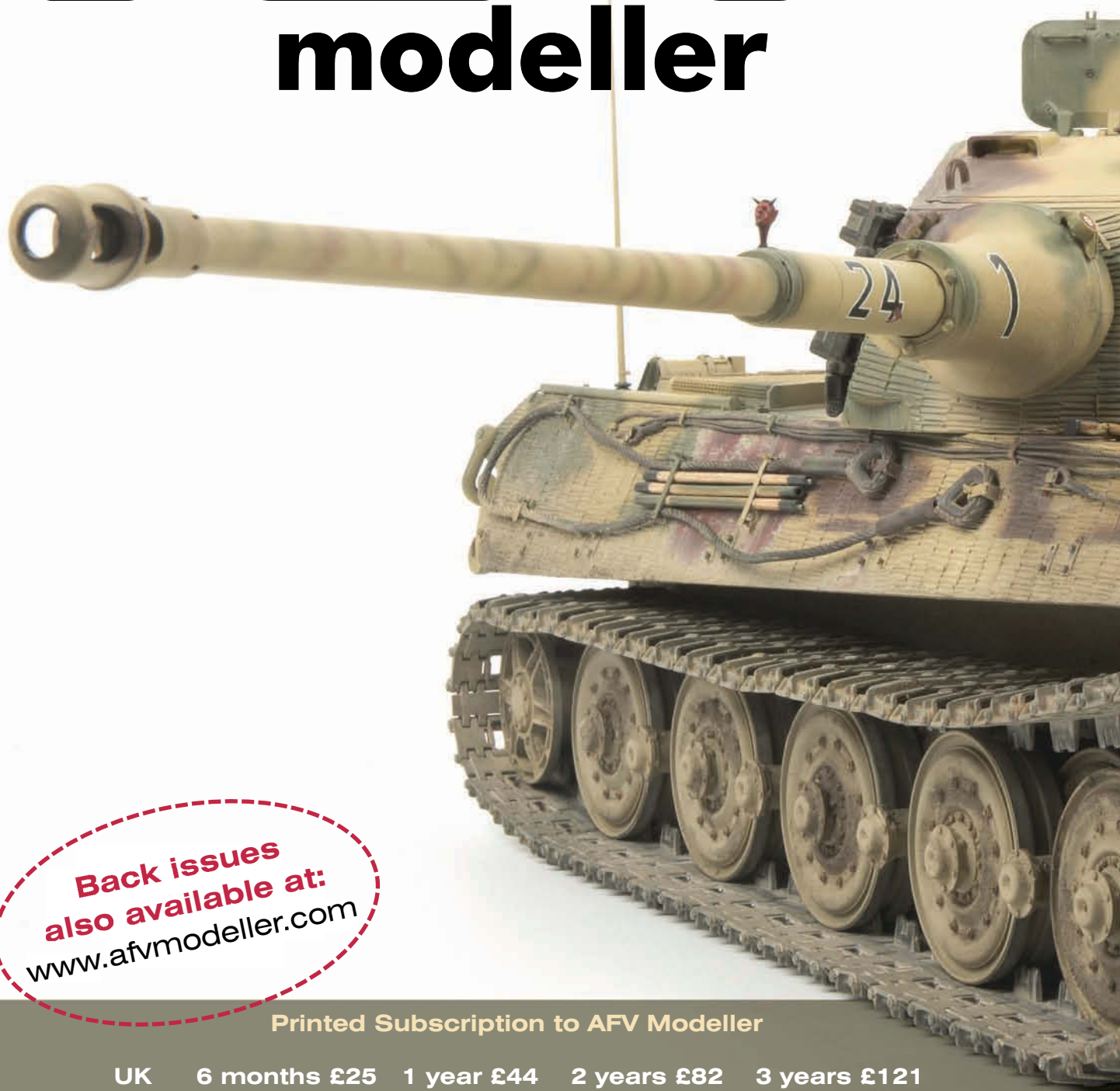


The Tamiya model is simple and good, but in order to get an acceptable model it needs to be minimally upgrade with photoetching. I really look forward to the new release of Takom Hetzer family, of which I expect all Hetzer versions will be released. I recommend this ambush painting, however, only for advanced modelers, as it requires more routine than anything I have painted before. I would like to thanks the helping hands for Aron Vrbovszki, Roger Hurkmans and everyone who followed the project on Facebook and contributed constructively.



HETZER!

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