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November/December 2025

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FROM THE EDITOR

By Tim Kidwell

Putting the "fine" in fine modeling

You probably won't be surprised when I tell you I've been reading a lot of *FineScale Modeler* lately. Many readers have been with us for a long time, so I like to read our early issues, particularly Bob Hayden's editor pages. I've done this periodically over the years. His thoughts act as a North Star when charting a path for the magazine.

On Page 5, you'll find a copy of his "From the Editor" for *FSM*'s first issue in which he talks about the "fine" in fine modeling and the notion that the techniques used are as important as the final results. We've thought and talked about this quite a bit here in the office, but we've been less explicit about it in the magazine, letting our amazing contribu-

tors' work speak for itself. But I think it's worth saying more often.

Bob had another nugget of wisdom I often fall back on in conversations about fine modeling: There's nothing magical about achieving good scale models, only the consistent application of basic skills and techniques.

With that in mind, as 2025 draws to a close, gift yourself some time at the workbench to apply those basic skills and techniques. Try new ones or dust off a few you haven't used in a while. But also remember, enjoyment is the goal. We do this for fun and the reward of a finished scale model.

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This time, with feeling!

Sorry, but I too am experiencing “wide ranging dissatisfaction” with *FSM* as Mr. Lam expressed from Australia in the last issue. I’ve been a subscriber since the ’80s, and compared to what it used to be, *FSM* stinks. I pay for 12 magazines, I get six, and most of the content doesn’t interest me. Many of the great features are gone and the ones left are shrunken to worthlessness. I’m probably wrong, but I blame this on the last editor who seemed more interested in being an internet star than a magazine editor. I don’t pay for a bunch of crap on the internet; I’ve been paying for a magazine! I probably won’t renew after 40 years of getting your magazine.

All that said I was astonished that there were so many airplane articles in the current issue! The World War I aircraft and the how-to article on making your own wooden propellers by Bob Steinbrunn (one of my favorite author-builders from the long gone good old days of *FSM*) made me sit up and take notice. Those were excellent!

I build 1/48 [scale] airplanes, and being a retired Air Force officer, I’m interested in military models in general ... that used to be the focus of *FSM*. Now it’s “all singing and all dancing” with no focus or interest to any one group. What I would ask is take *FSM* back to the excellent magazine it used to be (12 of them a year) or be prepared to put it out of business because your core subscribers will take their magazine money elsewhere. I’m already planning on it.

— David Sampson
Bear Valley Springs, CA

Ed.: David, never having been one for beating around the bush, I appreciate your candor. With complete candor on my part, I drafted a response that took up the rest of this page, but I don’t want to focus on your negativity and doomsaying. Nor will I try to convince you to stay because, as you hint, your mind is made up. Probably. You plan to go elsewhere, and I wish you well. However, for

A hearty welcome!

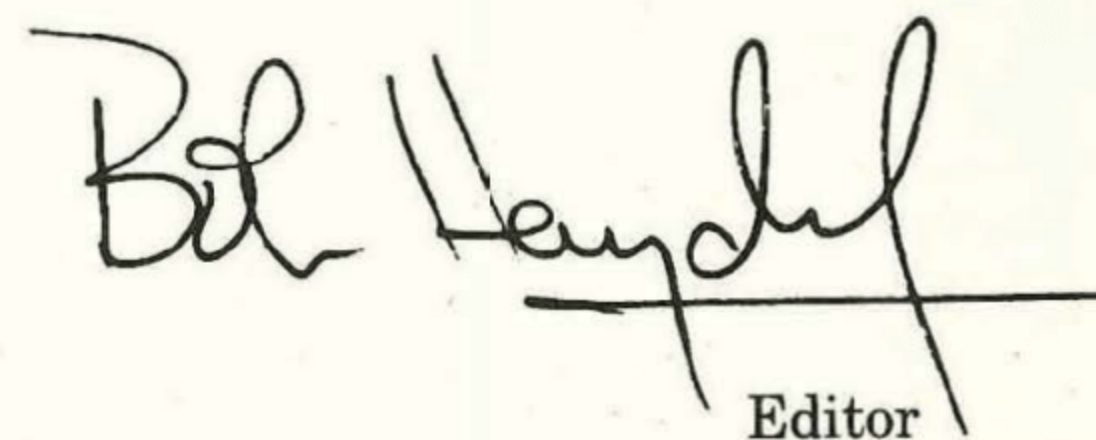
WELCOME to FINESCALE MODELER, a magazine created to bring you the best in modeling techniques. You’re probably wondering about our title, specifically about its use of the word “fine” to describe the modeling *FSM* covers. We chose “fine” because it best describes the quality and accuracy that careful modelers put into their work. Fine modeling is on a par with fine china, fine fabric, and fine silver; the common denominator for all is craftsmanship.

It’s the approach to modeling, not just the results, that interests us at *FSM*. The difference between mass-produced and one-of-a-kind, the difference between common and special, is technique, and technique is the focus for *FSM*. This magazine is written and edited for the modeler who wants his next model to be just one bit finer than his last, or even the one he’s working on right now. And we think that’s you.

This is your magazine, and I’d like to hear what you want in it, and, for that matter, what you’d like left out. I’ll try to answer every letter, and if you’d like to suggest articles for future issues, or if you’d like to contribute some of those articles yourself, by all means say so.

One final note, a technical one. Several *FSM* authors refer to colors using the letters “FS” followed by a 5-digit number. The reference is to Federal Standard 595a, a government color-matching document. Many modelers are already using this color reference system, and at least one hobby paint manufacturer will release a new line of Federal Standard colors this year. If you want your own copy of Volume 1 of the standard, which includes several hundred small color chips, the document is available for \$5.50 from the General Services Administration, Specifications Distribution Branch, Building 197, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC 20407.

Again, a hearty welcome to the pages of FINESCALE MODELER!



Editor

our current and future readers, I should point out a couple of errors on your part.

*First, one of the most persistent misrememberings about FineScale Modeler is that it was a monthly magazine. It never was. Ever. It was first quarterly, then bimonthly, then 10-times per year, but never 12. We reduced the frequency of the print magazine to bimonthly with four digital-only issues online (the *FSM* DLCs) for a time, but because relatively few subscribers availed themselves of the downloadable issues, we discontinued them, thus making us a truly bimonthly periodical. I expect that I’ll have to explain this again, but at least it’s out in a single spot that can be pointed to.*

*Second, I invite readers to go over founding editor Bob Hayden’s remarks from the first *FSM* issue, provided above. He does a marvelous job (unsurprisingly!) of explaining our mission — to help your next model be better than the one previous. There is nothing about military models being the focus, and, in fact, during Bob’s tenure, he included all scale-modeling topics when he could.*

*I get it, we all want more of what we want. And yes, folks will buy only what interests them, choosing what to support with their dollars. We want readers to tell us what they like and don’t like, but it is the community and techniques that are the soul of *FSM*, not individual genres.*

Scale modeling and loving it

Hi Tim, I had an experience similar to yours with the Fokker. (*Ed. See the September/October 2025 “From the Editor,” Page 3.*) I recently built the Model Shipways 1/48 scale New York Pilot Boat *Phantom* - 1868, adding the copper plates

one by one. I wanted the boat to look experienced, not brand new. I read up on how to get verdigris, did test strips, and then greened the bottom. Then I used a fine brush to add white dots for barnacle shells, as I saw on photos of the *USS Constitution* and *Pride of Baltimore*.

Total success! It looked just like the real thing. But anyone looking at it would think it was totally fake and wrong. Garish and bad. And as real as it was, I didn’t like the way it looked, either. I got a rattle can of antique copper spray, and I have to say it looks great.

ARA Press

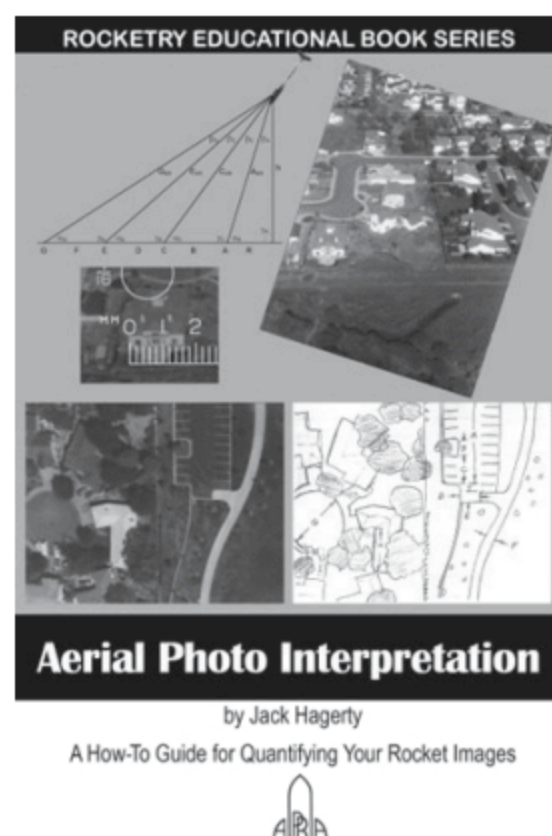
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SCALE TALK



Jim McKean

A particular fave, for both me and my son, was the woody station wagon.

– Jim McKean
Rutland, VT

Ed.: Jim, your Phantom looks fantastic! Glad to hear your son is reading the magazine, and Scott Glatstein's woody is a particular favorite.

Don't think about it too hard

Your recent editorial comments reminded me of an incident that occurred in my family's hobby store back in the mid 1960s. Two customers were debating whether the shade of yellow on the lettering decals for a B-17 model was accurate. Another customer informed them that when he was a B-17 crew chief in England during World War II, they couldn't get any yellow paint from the normal supply channels. Thus, they went down to the local "ironmonger" shop and bought whatever yellow paint they had on hand. He couldn't recall the name of the shade of yellow or even what brand of paint it was. He went on to say that they didn't worry about things like standard dimensions or placement.

Keeping in mind how quickly paint pigments faded even into recent times, and the

The fact is, while that verdigris and the rest was absolutely correct, it would have distracted everyone's attention from the ship itself. As a friend of mine who's a model railroader said to me, "Sometimes you have to fudge reality to make it look real."

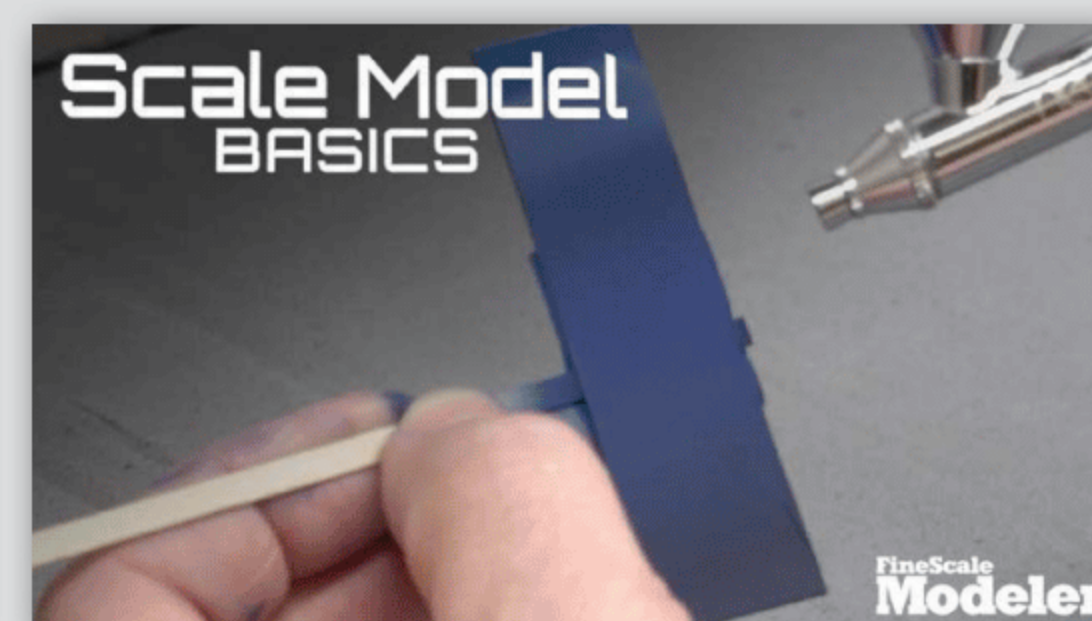
Love the magazine! There's nothing better than a cup of coffee and the latest *FSM*.

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WonderFest 2025 scale model show gallery

More than 1,000 models crowded the contest tables at this year's WonderFest, held in St. Louis, Kentucky. Drawing modelers from across the U.S., the quality of work awed visitors, and the contest room was packed consistently for three days. Of course, we can't photograph all the models, but we can share with you some of the standout entries that caught our eye. Visit [FineScale.com/show-galleries](https://www.finescale.com/show-galleries) and enjoy!



Catch up on Scale Model Basics videos!

That's right, *Scale Model Basics* are back with more information to help you learn skills to improve your next modeling project. Learn about painting convincing wood grain on plastic propellers, airbrushing gradients for color modulation, how to dissolve superglue, using filters to shift underlying paint colors, and so much more. Join us at [FineScale.com/videos](https://www.finescale.com/videos) for all the latest *Scale Model Basics* advice!

fact that most photographers used filters on their cameras when shooting black and white film, we really only have a general idea what color things were “back when.”

– Tom Kupferer
Rayville, LA

Thanks for the memories

I just checked, and I have *FineScale Modeler* back to January/February 1984, and I’ve been a subscriber since then. I thought I had some older issues but maybe not. And I have most of the special editions put out by *FSM*. Now, I’m getting on in years and starting to clear stuff out so the kids don’t have to deal with it. I’ve offered this collection and the file cabinet it’s in free to anyone who wants to pick it up. Yes, I even put it on the *FSM* Forum. Apparently, no one is close enough to take me up on it. Kind of a shame, really, but in today’s “if it ain’t electronic, it’s nuthin’” age, I’m not surprised. Looks like they’ll go to recycling.

I’ve been fortunate enough to have a couple of my suggestions published in *FSM*. Thank you for that. But, after all these years, I’ve decided to end my subscription. I have the skills and techniques that work well for me, many of which came from *FSM*. Besides, I build representative models, not perfect models, and like viewing the Mona Lisa, you stay back at least 3 feet to look at them. Another thing I’ve been doing for the last few years is building aircraft models as surprise gifts for others. They are always appreciated, and this lets me build and not have to buy another display cabinet.

The kit stash? I’ve sold some at the local IPMS swap meet and given some for the contest raffles. I’ll keep doing that to “thin the herd” and make sure the kids have someone to call to dispose of what’s left. Interesting how the kits that I really wanted aren’t what I really want to build now. Priorities have a way of changing as we get older.

To the people who think *FSM* should be only for the genre they build I say, like Nero Wolf, “Phooey!” There is something to be learned from each other. Relax and enjoy, people.

It’s been a long and enjoyable ride. Thank you.

– Bob Rogers
Highland, IL

Ed.: Bob, thank you for your thoughtful and generous letter. One of the best compliments we can receive is that FSM has helped fellow scale modelers improve their next model. All the best.

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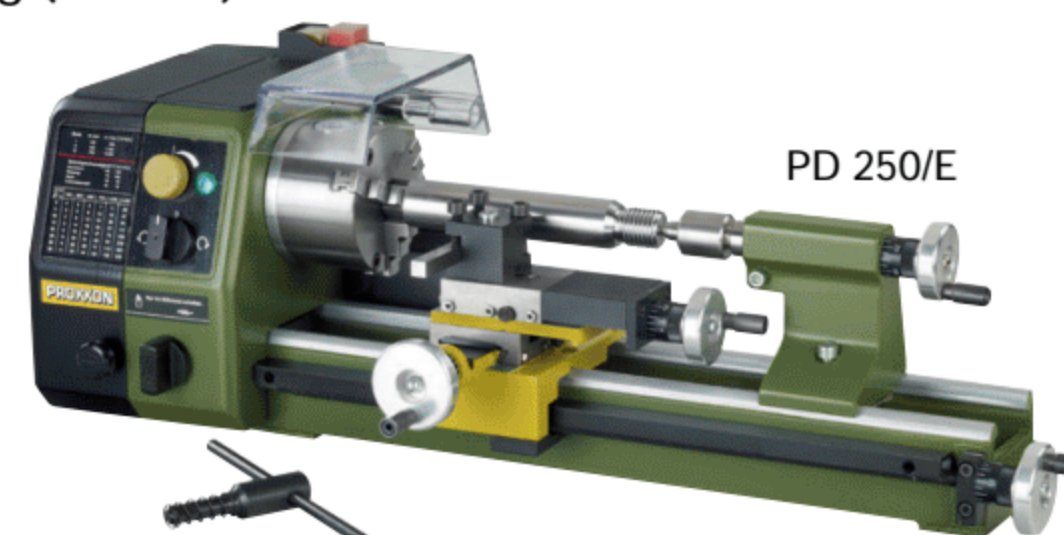
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Hs 123A-1 (late) WWII German attack aircraft No. 32015 \$96 from ICM.

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Junkers F13 with Winter Ski Early Prod. No. 48020 \$TBA from MiniArt.

P-47D-11RE Thunderbolt Zemke's Wolfpack Advanced kit No. 48034 \$79.99 from MiniArt.

P-47D-11RE Thunderbolt Basic kit No. 48037 \$47.99 from MiniArt.

1/72 SCALE

P-39 Airacobra No. 70058 \$30.88 from Arma Hobby.

Nakajima Ki-43 II Hayabusa Foreign Services No. 70079 \$24.89 from Arma Hobby.

P-51B Mustang China/Burma/India No. 70075 \$26.22 from Arma Hobby.

F-16AM of Ukrainian Air Force with PAG-14 No. 72145 \$29.99 from ICM.

1/144 SCALE

Airliner B 707-124 long body No. X144008 \$55.49 from X Scale.

ARMOR

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Raupenschlepper Ost RSO/01 Late Prod. No. 35482 \$TBA from MiniArt.

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FIGURES

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Land Utility Tractor Standard N Mod. 1935 No. 38091 \$TBA from MiniArt.

Sonderanhänger Ost 1.5T German cargo trailer No. 35487 \$TBA from MiniArt.

Garage Workshop Set No. 2 No. 35668 \$24.99 from MiniArt.

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Wooden pallets No. 35627 \$14.99 from MiniArt.

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Kursk 1943, \$25 by William E. Hiestand, 96 pages, softcover, illustrated throughout with 65 photos and 14 pages of color illustrations; ISBN: 978-1-47-286519-9 from Osprey Publishing.

German and Italian Tanks in Italy 1943-45, \$20 by Steven Zaloga, 48 pages, softcover, illustrated throughout with 40 photos, and 8 pages of color illustrations; ISBN: 978-1-47-286479-6 from Osprey Publishing.

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Convoy PQ-17 1942, \$25 by Angus Konstam, 80 pages, softcover, color illustrations throughout, including battlescene artworks, maps, 3D diagrams, and photographs; ISBN: 978-1-47-286427-7 from Osprey Publishing.

Royal Navy Force H 1940-42, \$23 by Angus Konstam, 80 pages, softcover, illustrated throughout with 40 archive photos and 13 pages of original color illustrations; ISBN: 978-1-47-287094-0 from Osprey Publishing.

The Modern British Army Volume 2, \$29.95 by Richard Rinaldi, 98 pages, softcover, 130 high quality full color photographs and 20 specially commissioned color artworks; ISBN: 978-1-80-451744-4 from Helion & Company.

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- The **Clarence Brown Convention Center** is located about 40 miles northwest of Atlanta, only 1 mile off I-75. The host hotel, **Courtyard Cartersville by Marriott**, is adjacent to the Center.
- A "Make It-Take It" event is scheduled for children 12 and under to learn modeling skills. A FREE kit is provided (*one per child per paid admission*).
- We offer an "Early Bird" admission pass (\$30.00) which will include entry to the contest.

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*Previous ACME award-winning models are not eligible, models must be entirely built and painted by the entrant. Other restrictions may apply.

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Command **UPGRADES**



Aftermarket parts and scratchbuilding turn a Tamiya 1/35 scale Panzer III Ausf L into a German command tank

BY HARALD FITZ

Arguably, in many ways, you can't beat Tamiya kits. Even older kits, like the 1/35 scale Panzerkampfwagen III Ausf L (No. 35215), which has been on the market for decades, are nicely tooled, a pleasure to build, and allow inexperienced modelers to achieve satisfactory results.

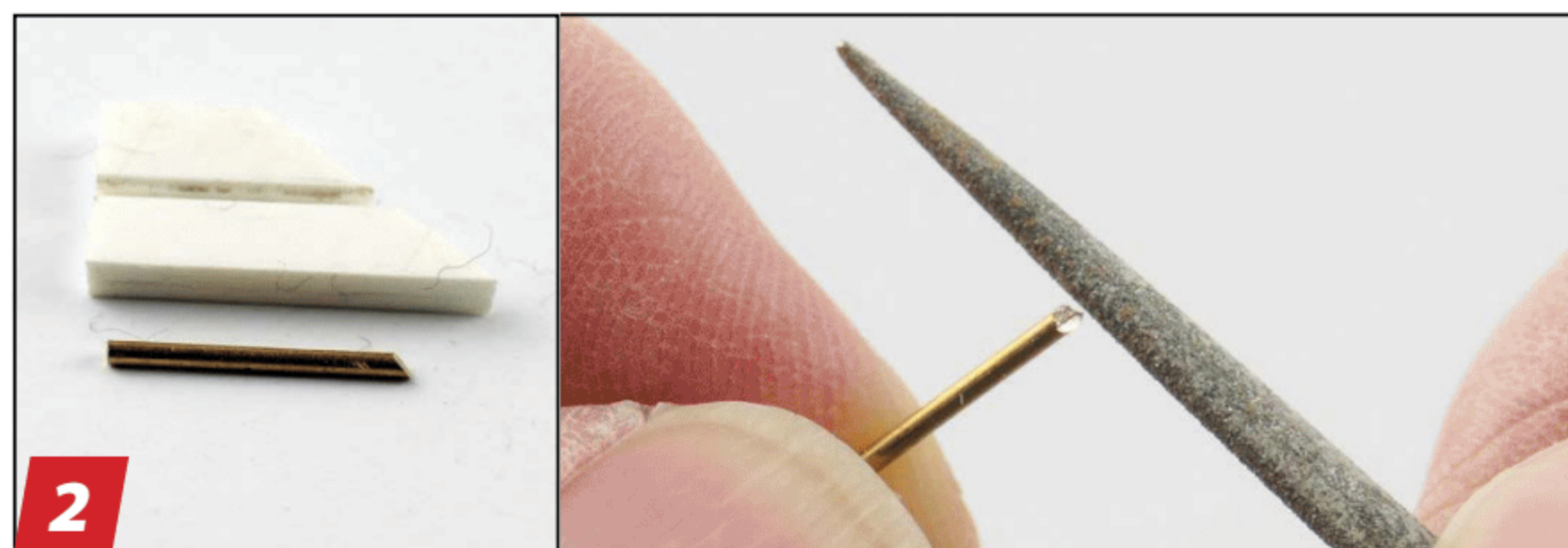
However, sometimes you want a challenge, and I found myself thinking about what I could do with the Panzer III kit.

How about modify it into an Ausf J command tank? The L and J versions were practically identical, but not visually striking. That sounded less interesting at first. On the other hand, the antennas and additional radio equipment would add visual interest. I could add armor and upgrade kit components with aftermarket parts, brass aerials, and a turned-metal gun barrel from my spares. That started to sound like a fun and challenging project I could get into.



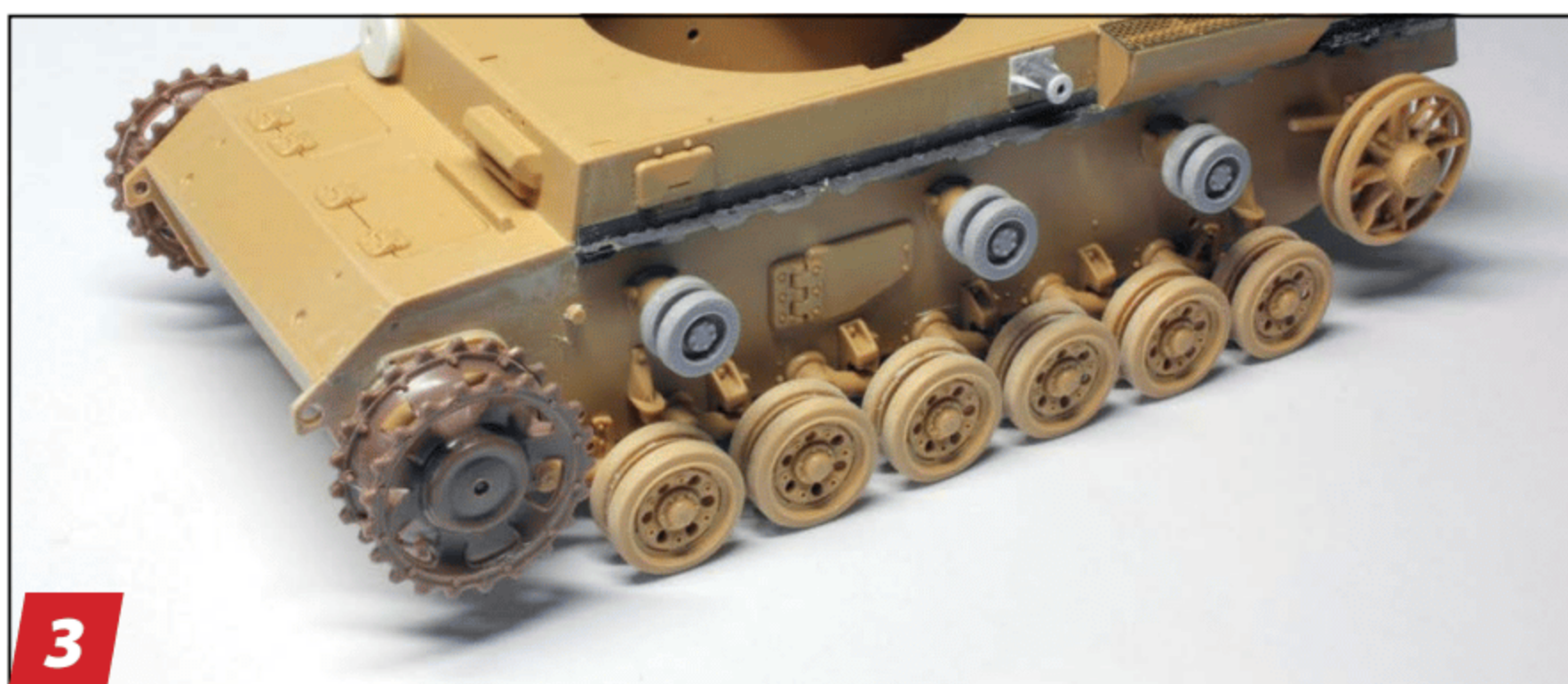
1

I turned to an Aber PzKpfw III Ausf J/L detail set (No. 35218) for its photo-etched metal (PE) fenders. Kits in themselves, I had to bend many individual parts and cut brass wires to length. The guards were so complex that I soldered the parts where possible. Yes, the detail set was developed for the Dragon kit, but I figured it would work with Tamiya's — and it did, mostly.



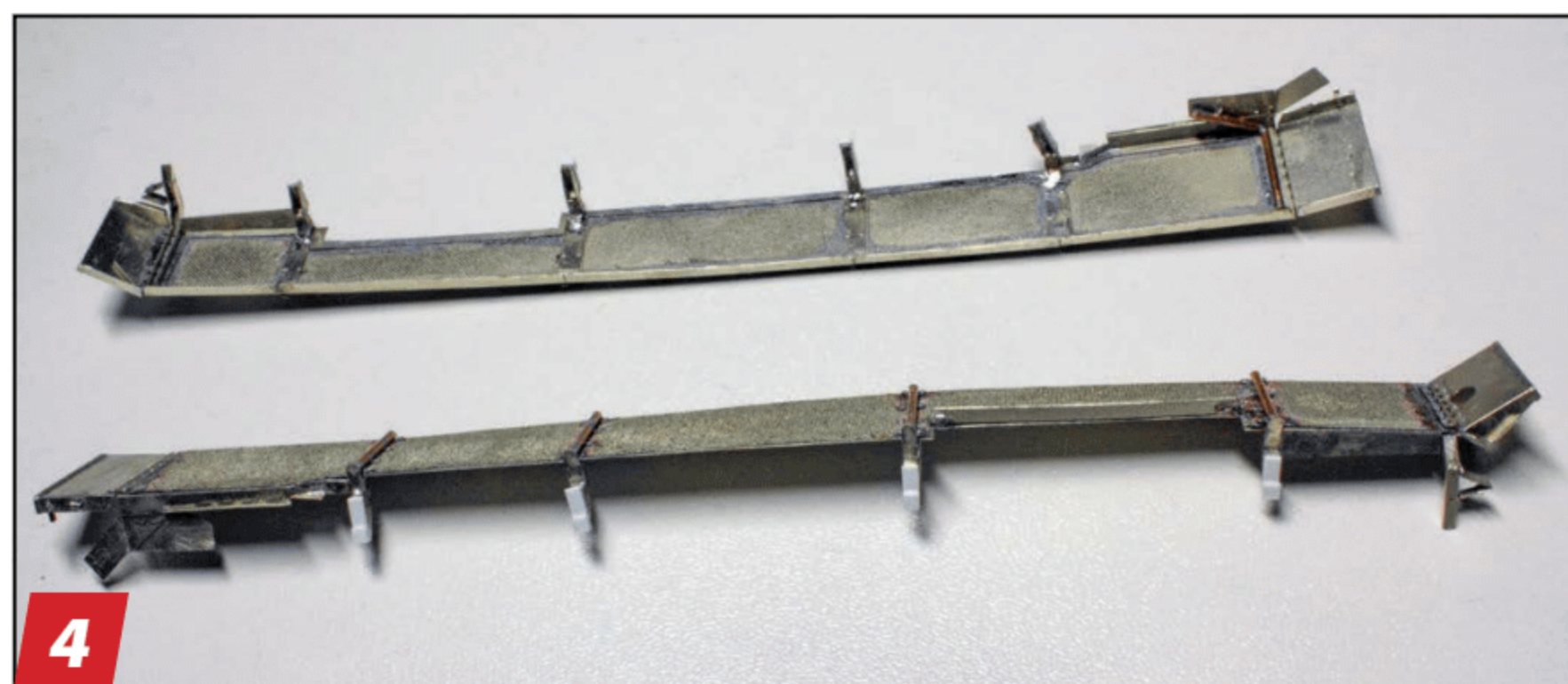
2

I cut the brass rods to attach the fenders to the hull at the 12.8mm indicated by the instructions. I made a jig out of styrene to ensure the angle was identical for each brace and cleaned up the ends with a jeweler's file. Then I soldered them onto the fenders. The kit fender attachment points were scraped away and replaced with PE brackets from Eduard.



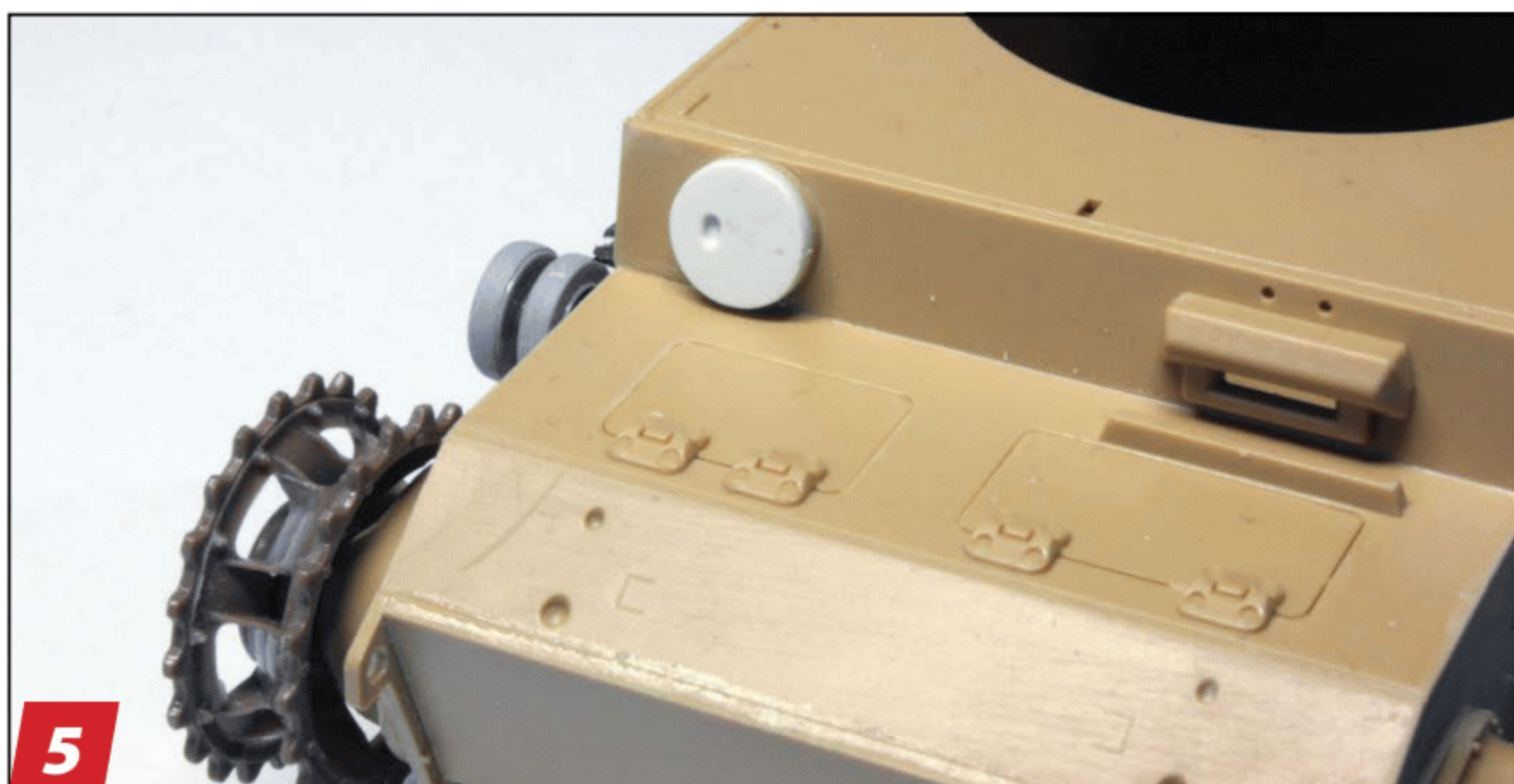
3

When I went to attach the fenders to the hull, they were too close to the chassis — the attachment braces should have been 1mm longer! Plus the Eduard attachment brackets I'd glued to the hull didn't have recesses to fit the attachment points for the fenders. While frustrating, it was fixable. I made recesses on the PE brackets with nippers.



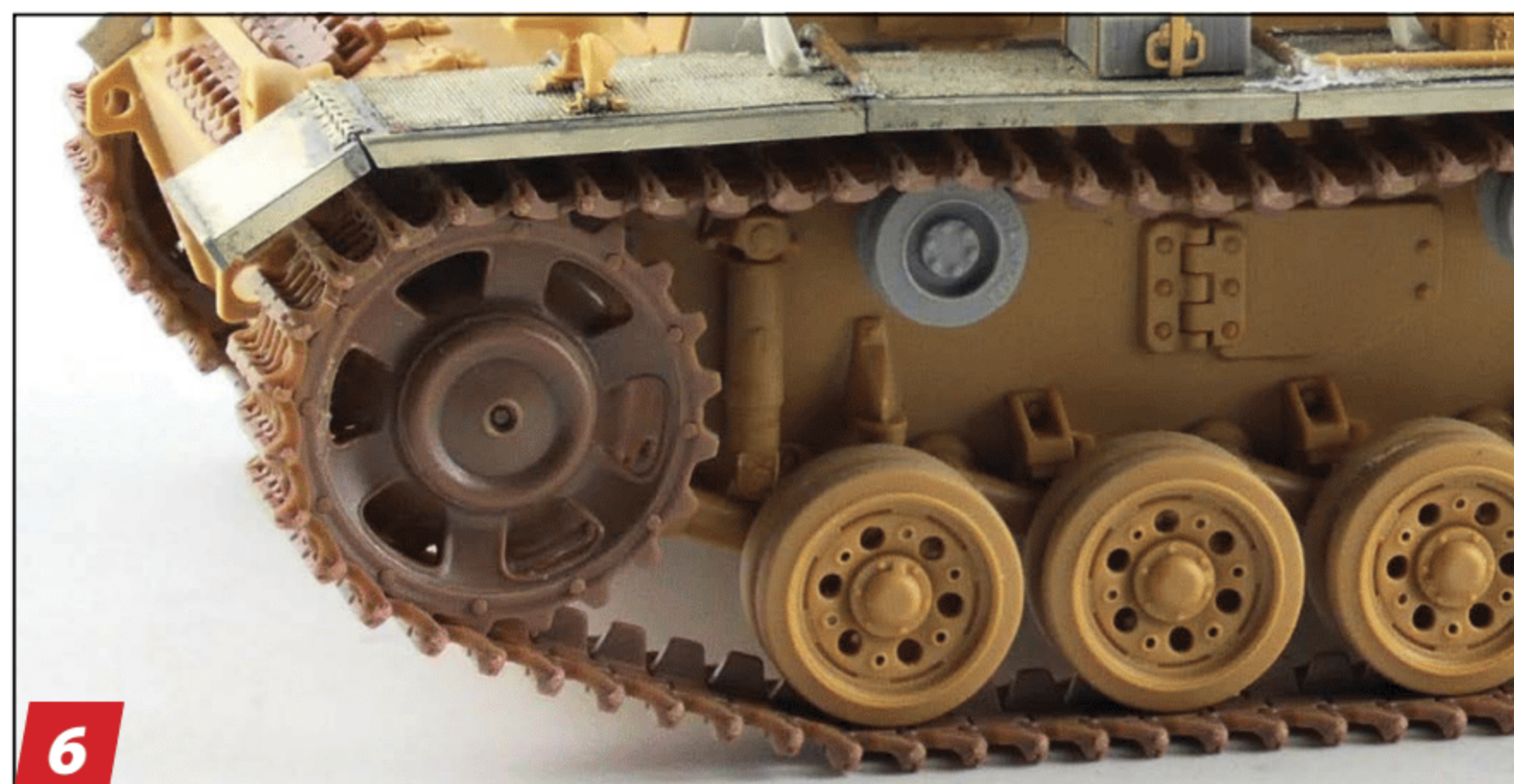
4

To get space between the hull and fenders, I added plastic spacers to the ends of the attachment arms that were previously soldered to the fenders. I can't be completely certain of the accuracy of the fenders' hull and track clearance, but because of all the stowage that will go on the fenders, the difference, if any, wouldn't be noticeable.



5

Due to the long-range radio equipment, the front machine gun was omitted and a pistol opening was installed instead. To represent this, I used a fine-toothed razor saw to cut off the machine-gun ball and replaced it with a round disk with an oval opening for the firing hatch.



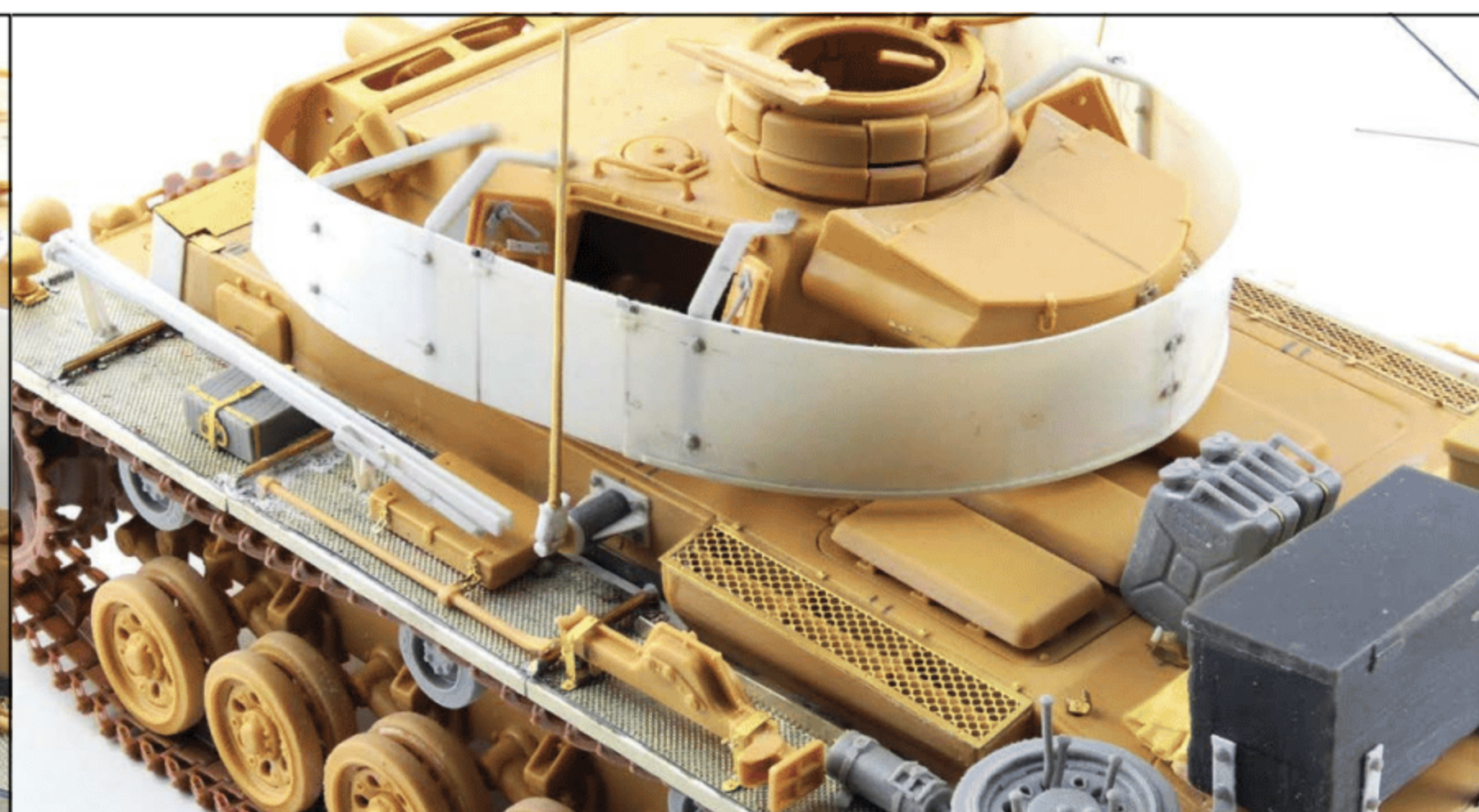
6

Modelkasten individual length tracks took a little longer to assemble than the kit's parts, but they looked better. I also replaced the Tamiya return rollers with Dragon ones from my spares box. The drive sprockets were another improvement from Modelkasten.



7

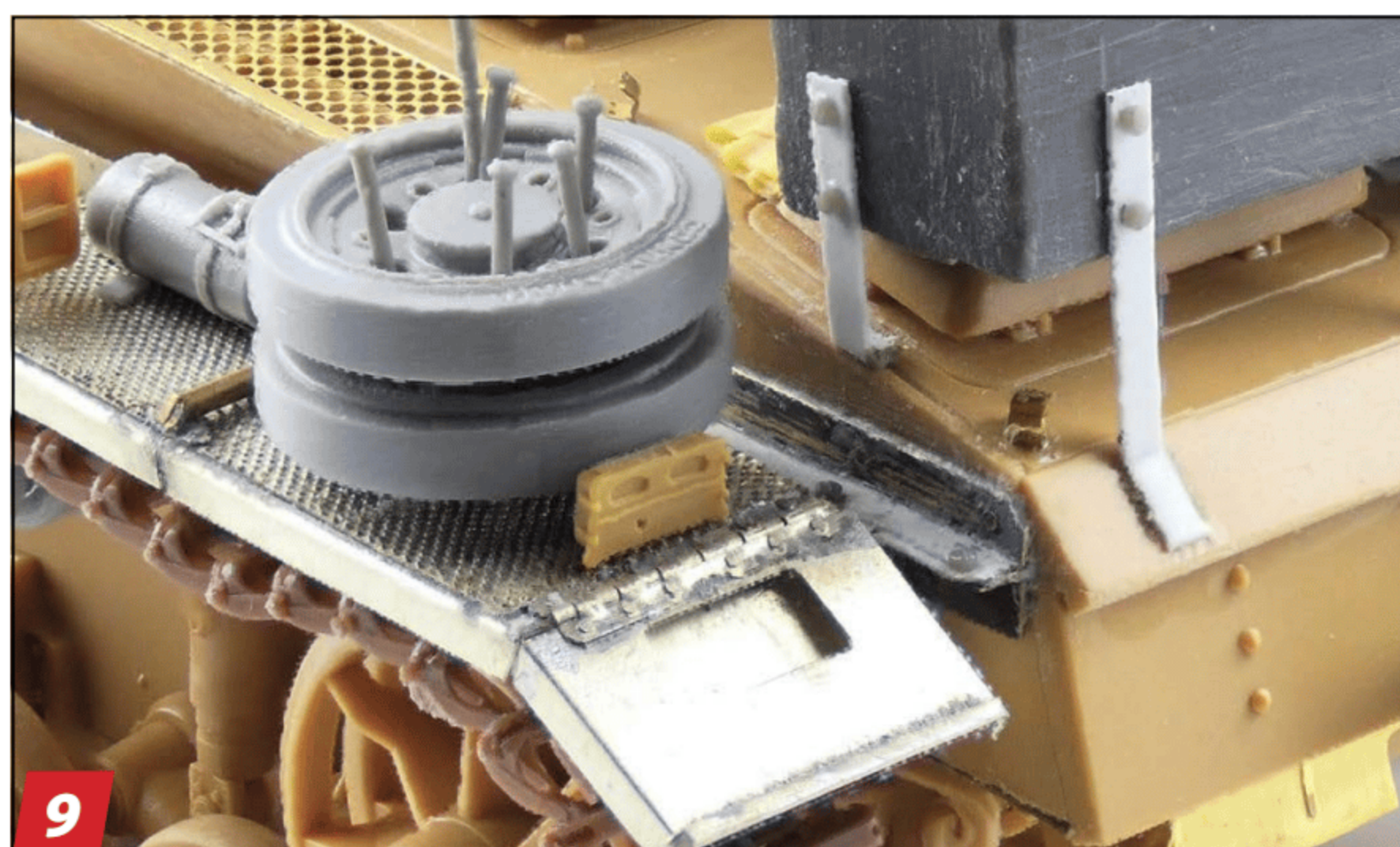
Extensive long-range radio equipment differentiated the Ausf J command tanks from other versions, expressed on the hull with three antennas. The antenna on the hull's starboard was original to the kit with a base and spring mount. I scratchbuilt the port antenna base from styrene tubing and sheet to match the original. The antenna spring mount for the second whip came from my spares box.





8

For the stern star antenna base, I joined lengths of 5mm and 7mm diameter aluminum tubing and nest one inside the other. That meant drilling out the inside diameter of the larger tubing to fit the smaller. The porcelain insulator came from my spares box.



9

Hunting through my spares box, I located spare wheels and bolts that would work perfectly to dress up the rear ends of the fenders on both the port and starboard sides.



10

I replaced the kit gun with an Aber L42 turned aluminum barrel, cutting the breech off the original part and fitting it to the turret. The tools were refined, and I added armor in front with parts from a Royal Model set, along with the ventilation covers and exhaust baffles. The Notek headlight came from my spares box, and I found the turret smoke launchers in an Asuka set.



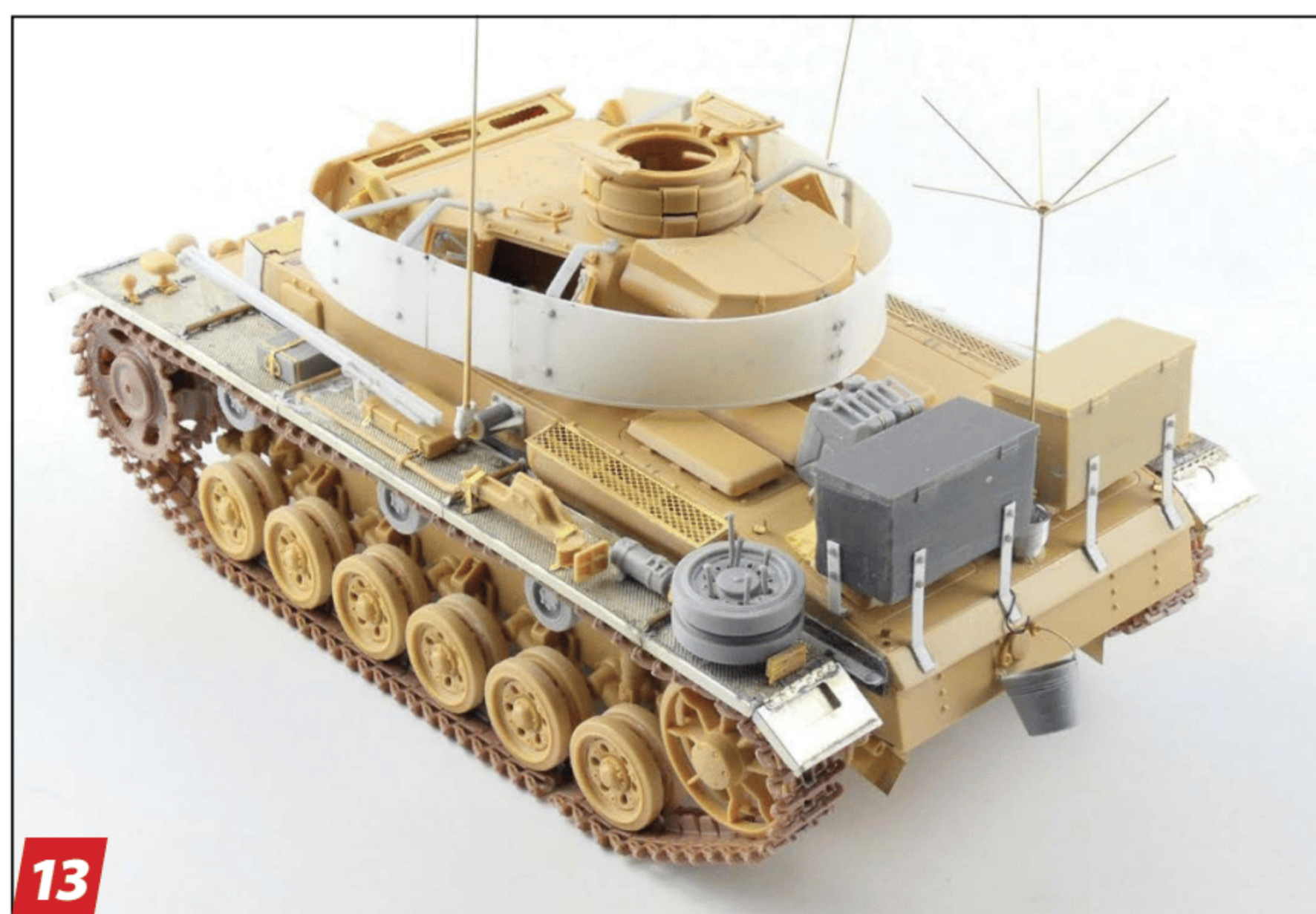
11

The L turret lacked the side vision hatches present on J turrets. I made a mold by pressing one from my spares into a ball of two-part epoxy putty. After the putty hardened, I heated sprue over a candle and pressed into the mold, firmly pushing the plastic with the flat side of a hobby knife blade. I cleaned up the hatches and glued them on.



12

Originally, I'd planned to add hull skirts, but the skirts I had on hand wouldn't work, and because I wanted to show off the antennas, I decided to forgo them. I made the spaced armor on the turret from .25mm styrene sheet and used brackets from a Revell Germany kit, adding missing details like bolt heads.



13

I found an reference photo of a 7th Armored Division Panzer III Ausf J command tank during the Kursk Offensive with spaced armor only on its turret. With artistic license, I added two large boxes aft of the turret, a tarpaulin, fuel cans, spare track links, and a bucket.



14

Because I'd used styrene, resin, and metal, I needed a primer that would adhere equally well to all those materials and hold up to some handling. For me, Tamiya acrylics have proven reliable, and I airbrushed the model Dark Yellow (No. XF-60). I had dry-transfers for the R02 on the turret armor. I rubbed them onto clear decal paper and then applied it to the armor with plenty of decal solution. It worked perfectly.



15

I was able to rub the inverted T markings of the 7th Armored Division directly onto the model. The camouflage of that time was generally green and brown spots or stripes on sandy yellow. I didn't give it much thought and airbrushed Airbrush Pro-Color Coffee (No. 60022) and Olive (No. 60018). I wasn't worried about exact colors because filters and washes would follow — good lines were more important.



16

Matte varnish protected the camo, and I applied two filters — Ammo Brown Wash for German Dark Yellow (No. A.Mig-1000) and 502 Abteilung Wash Brown (No. ABT-080) to blend the colors. For chipping, I painted VMS Chip & Nick Brown (No. 1BROWN) on select areas. After it dried, I rubbed away as much of the brown as I wanted with a damp brush, leaving irregular chips. Then I resealed everything with flat clear.

FINAL THOUGHTS

TO FINISH UP, I applied a variety of pigments and mud products to my Panzerbefehlswagen III Ausf J. The "dry mud" on the lower hull allowed the base color to show through a little. Earth-colored pigments, held in place with pigment fixative, provided an appropriately dusty appearance. Using slightly different colors gave a layered effect — fresher dirt was darker than older dirt — and I just worked around the entire model until I was satisfied with the final appearance.

Personally, I am very happy with the result. Apart from the mishap with the fenders, it was a lot of fun to turn a Tamiya model into an impressive one-off. **FSM**

SOURCES

Eduard, Panzer III/VI hull mounting brackets (No. 35363)

Aber, PzKpfw III, Ausf J/L Fenders (No. 35218)

Aber, 5cm KwK L42 (No. AB35L-64)

Schatton Modellbau, antenna set (No.3524)

Royal Model, Panzer III Ausf L (No. 167)

Modelkasten, Pz III/VI tracks middle model Type B (No. SK-23)

REFERENCES

Panzer Tracts No.3-4: Panzerbefehlswagen Ausführung D1, E, H, J & K, Hilary Doyle and Thomas Jentz, Panzerwrecks Ltd., ISBN 978-1-915969-26-2

Panzer III & Its Variants, Walter J. Spielberger, Schiffer Military History, ISBN 978-0-887404-48-1



Double the Fun

Building a *Star Trek* shadow box diorama

BY DARREN ROBERTS



There's no shame in being a *Star Trek* fan, and although my true passion lies with airplanes, I've always enjoyed watching *Star Trek*, starting with the original series (TOS). However, as a model builder, I didn't pay much attention to sci-fi models until I had my first contact (see what I did there?) at a hobby shop near me. Browsing the shelves, my gaze landed on an AMT 1/48 scale *Star Trek* TOS "Tomorrow is Yesterday" F-104 Starfighter (No. AMT953/12). The kit included both the jet and a 1/2500 scale USS *Enterprise* to re-create the episode in which *Constitution*-class ship gets shunted back in time and intercepted by U.S. Air Force F-104s, using actual USAF footage. Immediately, I thought this would make a perfect shadow box project!



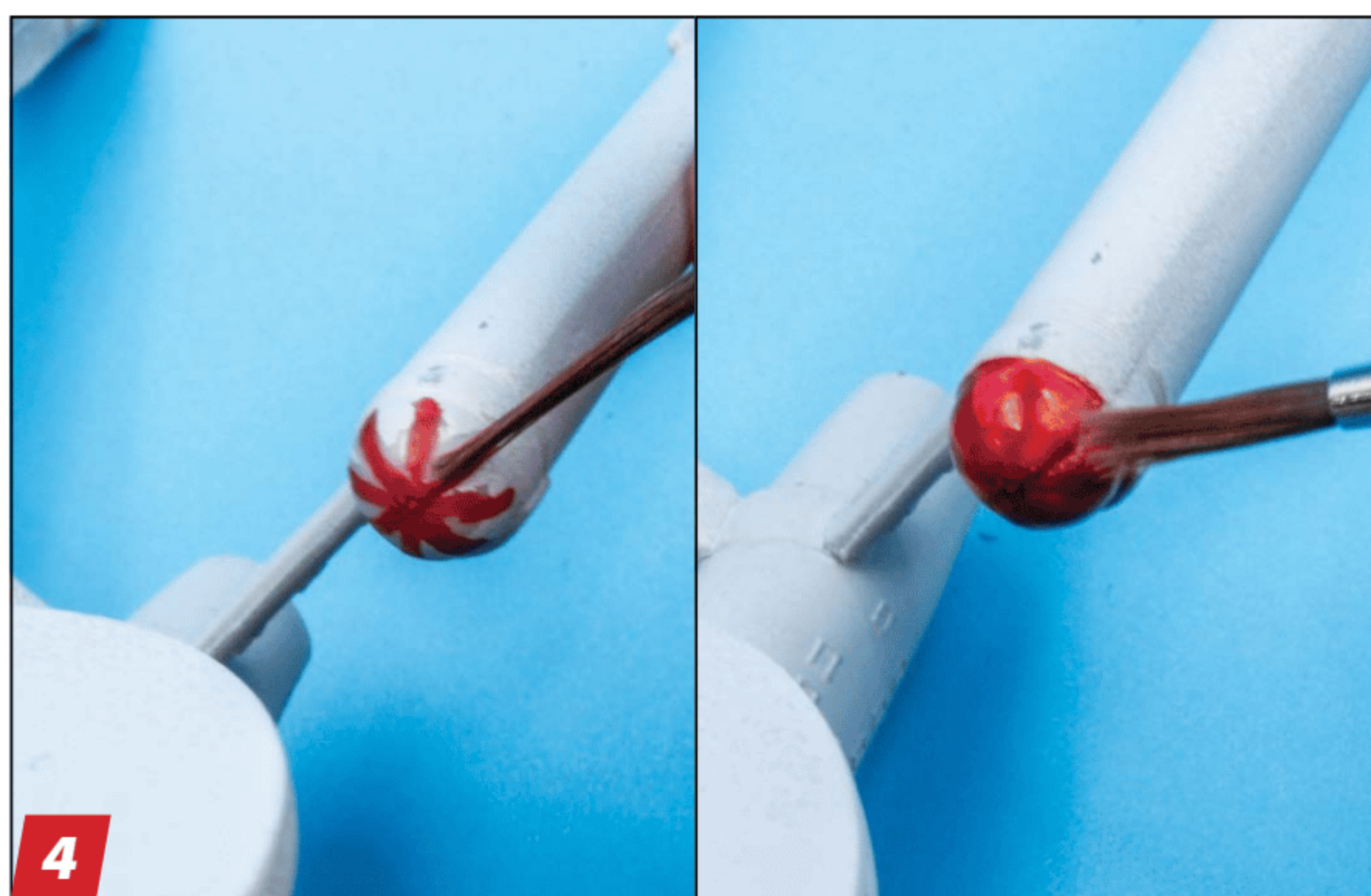
I built the *Enterprise* first. It was quite small and extremely simple, consisting of only a dozen pieces. I had it cleaned up and glued together in under 10 minutes.



A stand came in the kit, and the model had a hole in the bottom of the hull to accept it. Knowing I wasn't going to use the stand, I glued it into the hull and then cut the rest off. Some quick sanding, and the hole was filled.



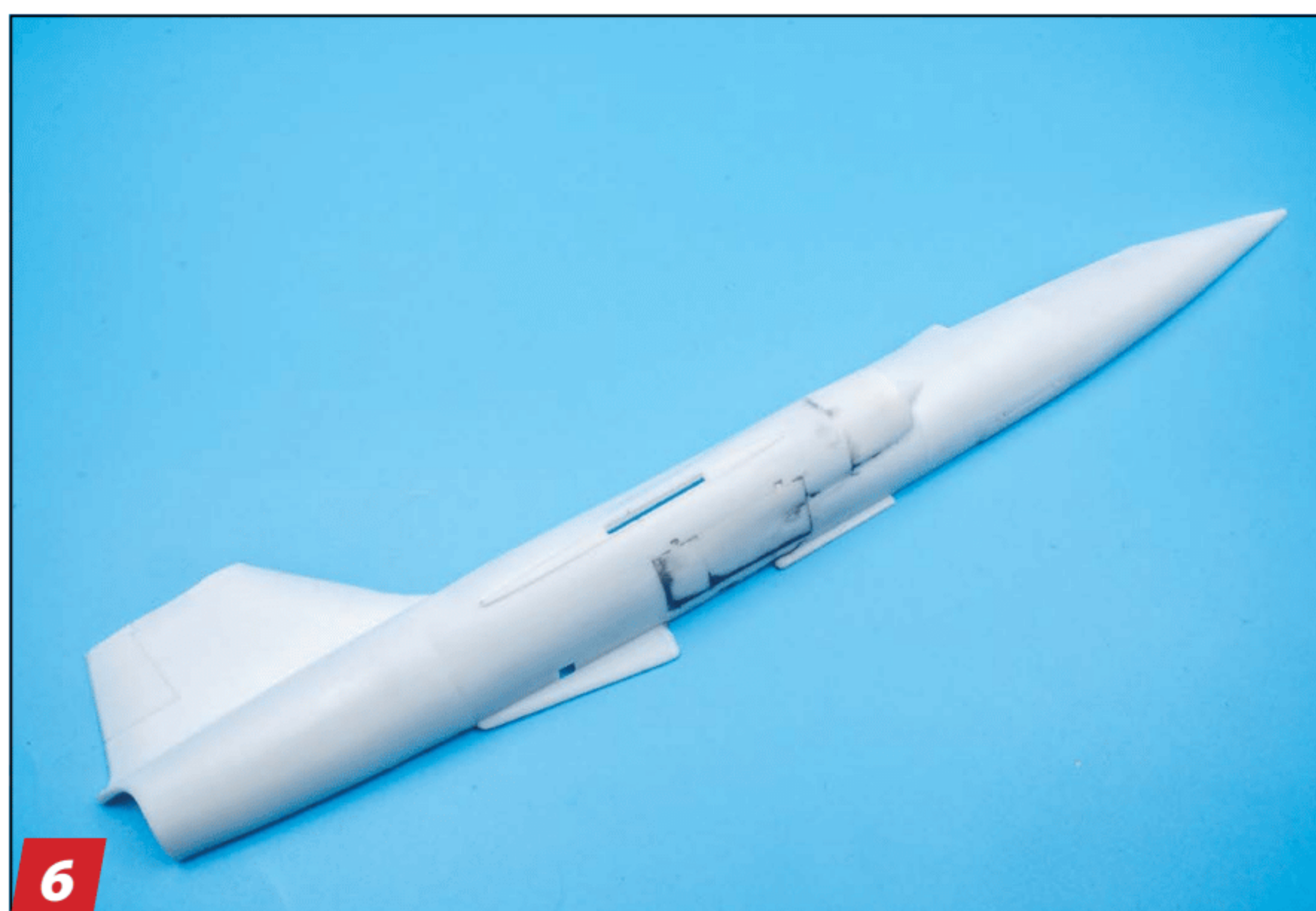
Painting quickly commenced, with the entire model covered in a light gray. Is this shade correct for the *Enterprise*? You'd have to ask someone much more knowledgeable about these things than I am! It looked correct to my eye.



With the overall model painted, it was time for the small details. First up were the Bussard collectors. I painted red stripes without focusing on neatness. When those were dry, I painted the entire area with Tamiya Clear Red (No. X-27). For the size of the model, the effect made for a decent representation of a prominent feature.



I painted other small areas on the engine nacelles the appropriate colors. Then I applied the decals, which were quite extensive for such a little model, and that finished up the project's first half.



With the *Enterprise* done, I pulled out the F-104. From the old Lindberg tooling, it's not exactly detailed or modern, and I actually thought about using a Monogram kit instead, but I figured I'd just work with what was provided. Knowing I was going to model the Starfighter in flight, I glued the gear-bay doors in the closed position and filled in any gaps left from the ill-fitting parts. I also attached the air intakes.



With that complete, I built the rest of the kit per the instructions. I didn't worry too much about cockpit detail, as it would be closed up. I also didn't glue the wings on, simply pushing them into place so they could be removed to paint the fuselage. I sprayed the entire model Alclad II White Primer (No. ALC-306).



This gave a smooth base for the metallic colors that came next. I laid down a coat of Tamiya Aluminum spray (No. AS-12) as a foundation. It dries quickly, is rock solid, and won't pull up when you mask over it.



9

I masked off areas at the rear fuselage and airbrushed Mr. Color Burnt Iron (No. C61).



10

After removing the masks, I brushed Tamiya Smoke (No. X-19) over all of the Tamiya Aluminum painted areas and lightly misted Mr. Metal Color Aluminum (No. MC218) over that to blend the two colors.



11

When that was dry, I rubbed SnJ Model Projects Polishing Powder (OOP) on all the metal areas.



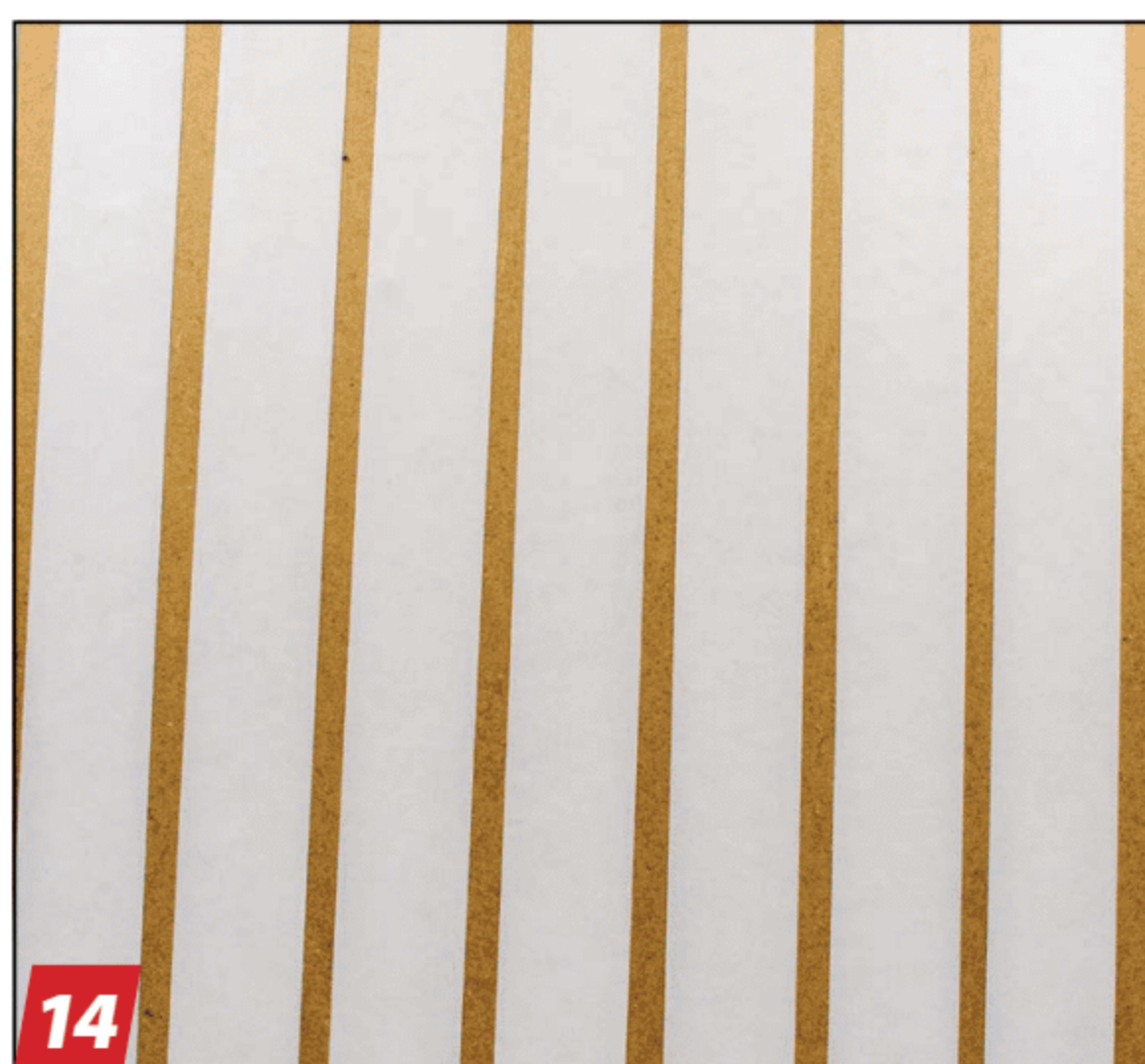
12

What's an airplane in flight without a pilot? A pilot wasn't supplied in the kit, so I procured one from a Monogram F-14. Of course, I had to watch the episode "Tomorrow is Yesterday" to get the painting correct.



13

With the pilot painted and secured inside the cockpit, I glued on the clear parts. Then I applied the decals, which matched the markings from the episode perfectly.



14

I chose a shadow box with a solid back and applied double-stick carpet tape inside. I had taken an aerial photo from an airplane window and had that blown up to fit inside the frame.



15

Oof! As I applied the photo, a portion in the upper right corner stuck prematurely and I had a heck of a time peeling it off and smoothing it out. It was a little wrinkled, but not super noticeable. But I knew that the photo was never going to come off the back willingly.

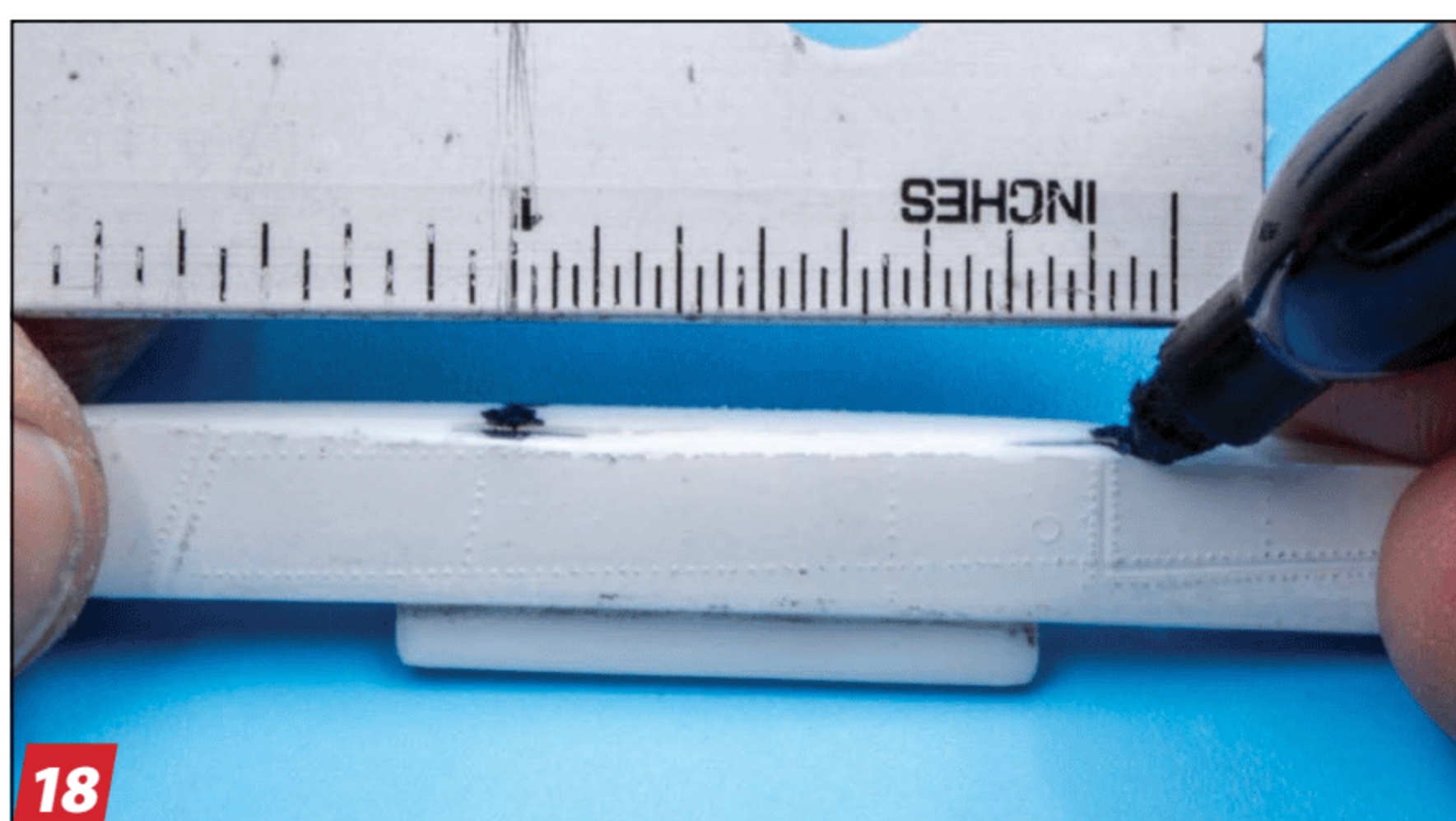


16

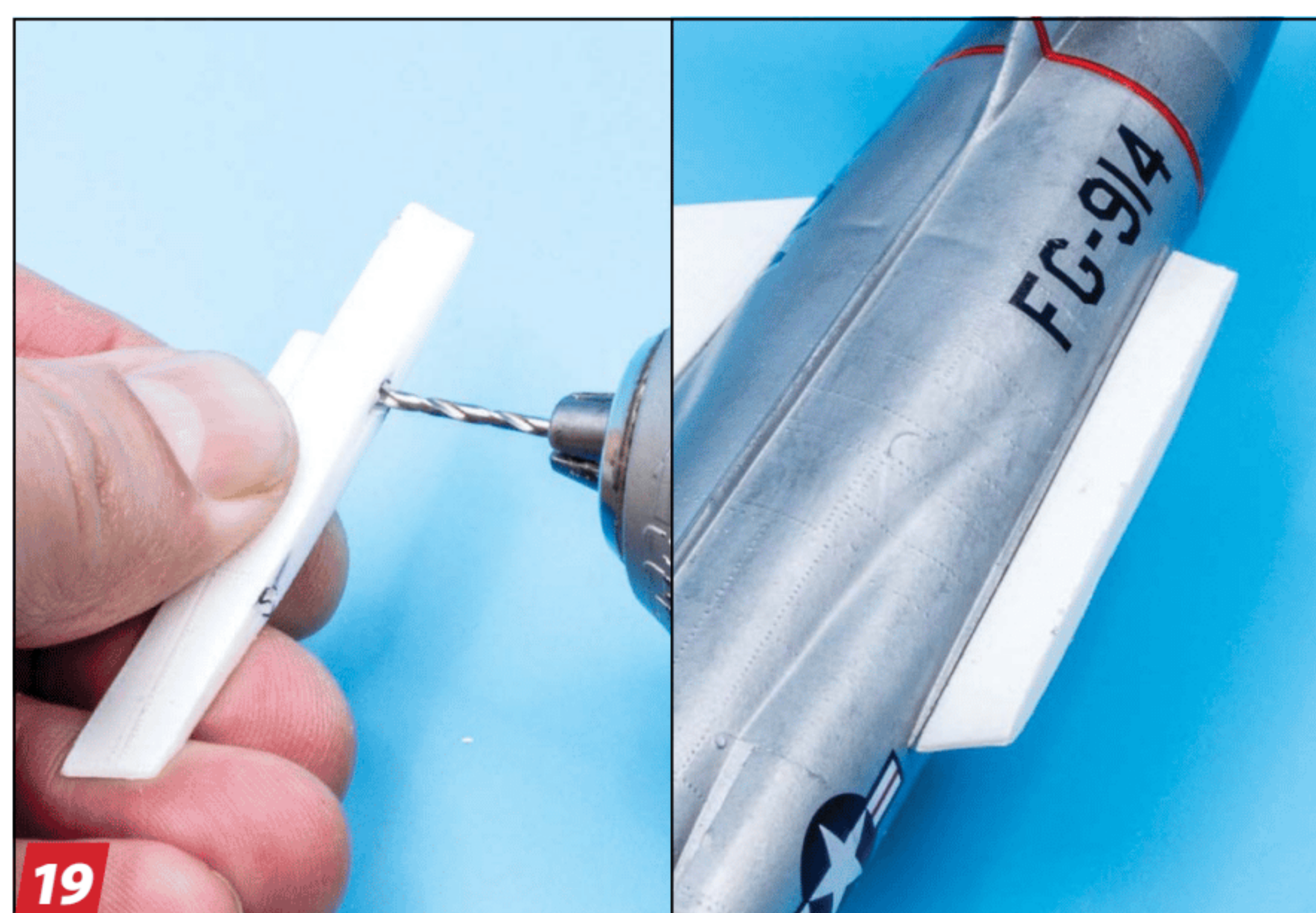
With the background in place, I needed to mount the models to it. I decided the best way to accomplish that task would be to mount them from behind with plastic rod. I started with the *Enterprise*. I drilled a hole where I wanted the Starfleet ship.



Then I drilled a hole on the edge of the saucer section and inserted a piece of sprue, securing it with Tamiya liquid cement. The sprue was inserted through the hole in the background and attached with superglue.



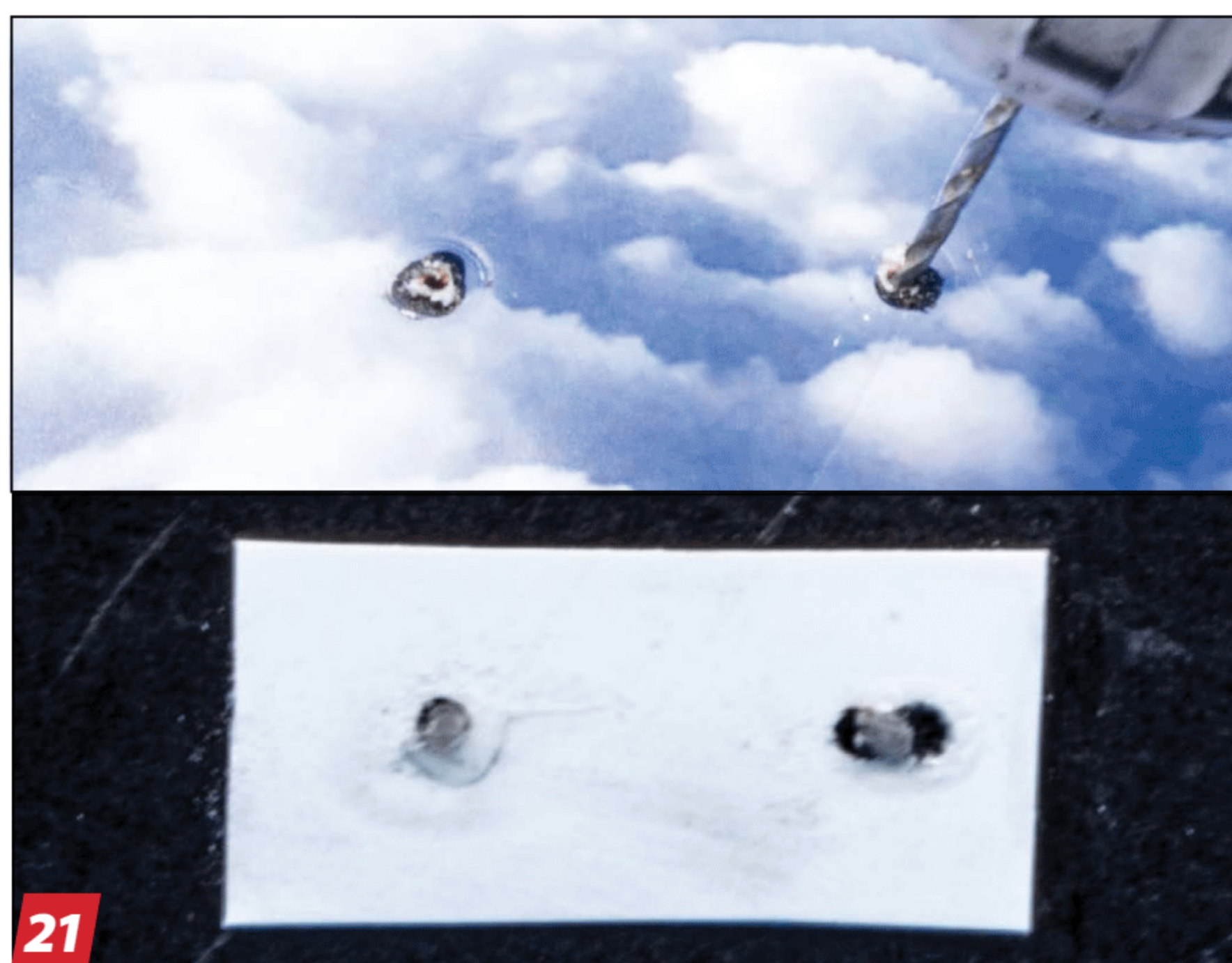
I began the same process for the F-104, but realized I had a problem: the shadow box wasn't deep enough to accept the airplane's full width. Using a razor saw, I removed most of the port wing and some of the port horizontal stabilizer so that the model's wingspan would fit inside the shadow box. The project was now back on track. Using a ruler and marker, I measured and drew two dots 1 inch apart.



I drilled holes in what was left of the port wing and glued it to the fuselage.



Placing the model on the background, I marked where the holes needed to be drilled using the holes in the wing as a placement guide so everything would line up.



I drilled holes where the marks were, glued pieces of sprue into the wing, and slid the homemade locators through the background. To make sure the model stayed in place, I cut a rectangle of sheet styrene plastic, drilled holes in it, and superglued it to the back. Done! A project like this is fun and quick and can make the perfect diversion in between bigger, more intensive builds. **FSM**

Lighting the **Falcon**

Adding extra lights brings the Bandai Perfect Grade
Star Wars Millennium Falcon closer to screen accuracy

BY ANDREW HILL

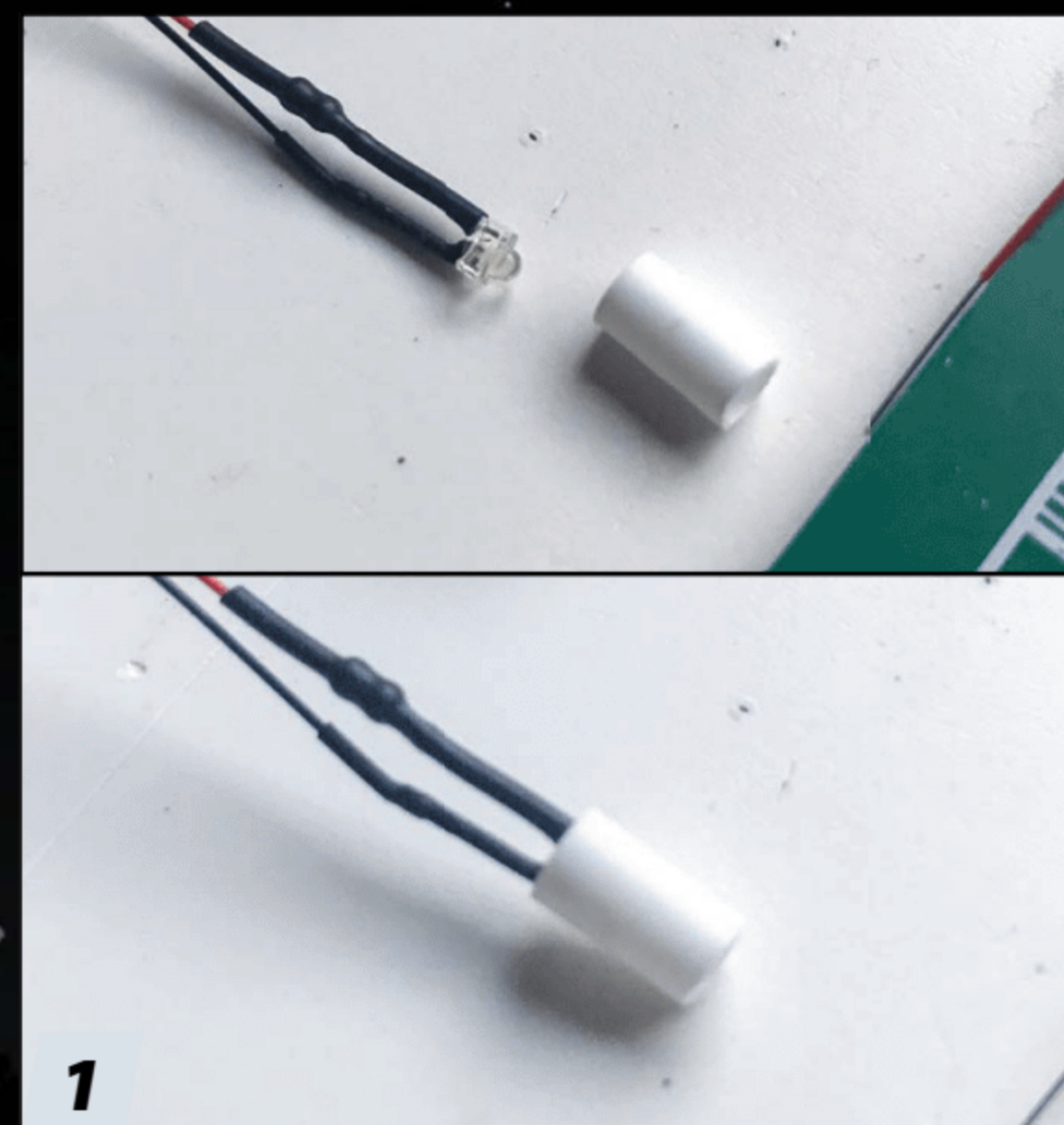


As a long-time *Star Wars* fan and model builder, I had my eye on the Bandai Perfect Grade 1/72 scale *Star Wars Millennium Falcon* (No. 2375614) from the moment I'd heard about it. Honestly, I lusted after it. As someone who loves photography, I knew if I ever added it to my collection, I'd want to photograph it — and that meant wiring custom lighting.

Before the kit arrived, I researched how I might light it, studying reference photos and poring over builds on the internet. It was clear the kit instructions would be little help, and I'd have to make many modifications myself. Bandai based its *Falcon* on the original *Star Wars* (1977) 5-foot filming miniature, so the kit's lighting handled the engines, landing gear wells, cockpit wall, and boarding ramp. However, I wanted details from *The Empire Strikes Back*

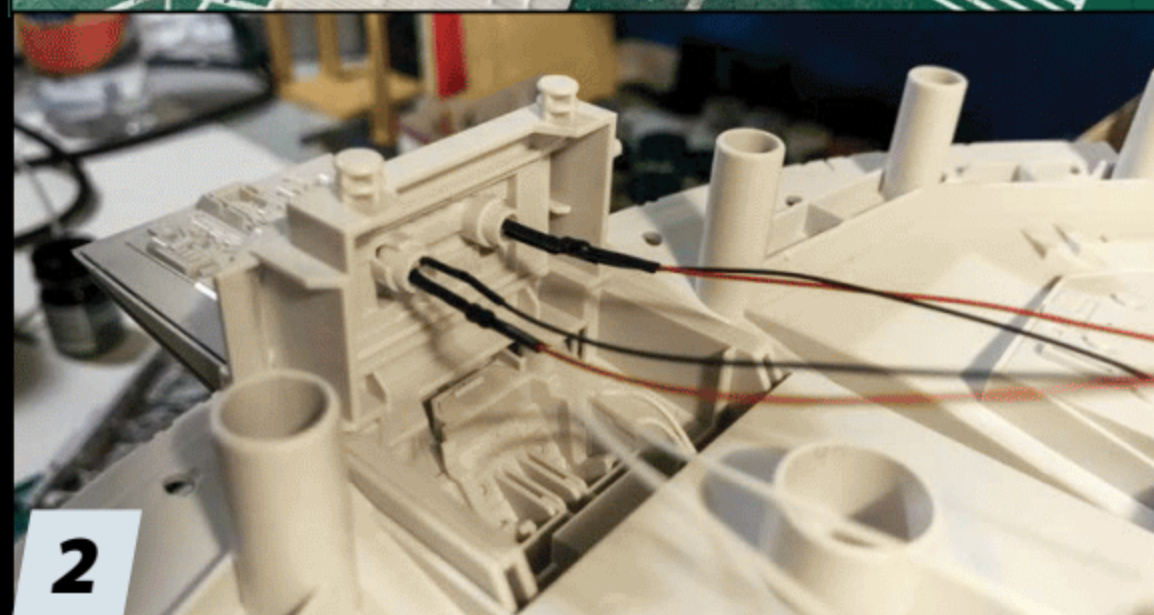
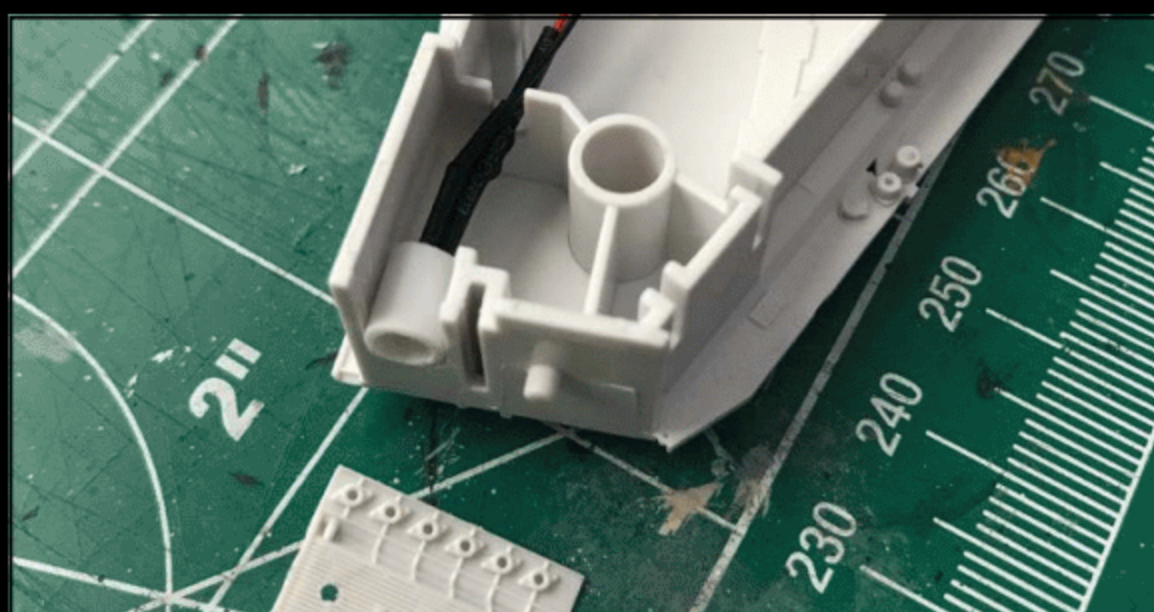
(1980), including recessed landing lights, forward floodlights, red running lights, cockpit lights, and interior control panel lights. The best guide I found for light placement and sizes was 3DSF.info, which included an annotated blueprint of the filming model.

With that in hand, and ignoring the prissy voice in my head that said my odds of success were 3,720 to 1, I ordered my lighting supplies and got to work. Never tell me the odds.



First, I determined there would be three separate power harnesses: the one that came with the kit powered by AAA batteries, and two powered by 9-volt batteries — one for the landing lights and floodlights, and one for the red warning lights. I fitted 1.8mm LEDs into short lengths of $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch styrene tubing. The fit was secure enough that they didn't need any glue, which in turn made it easier to affix their positions without getting glue on the lights themselves.

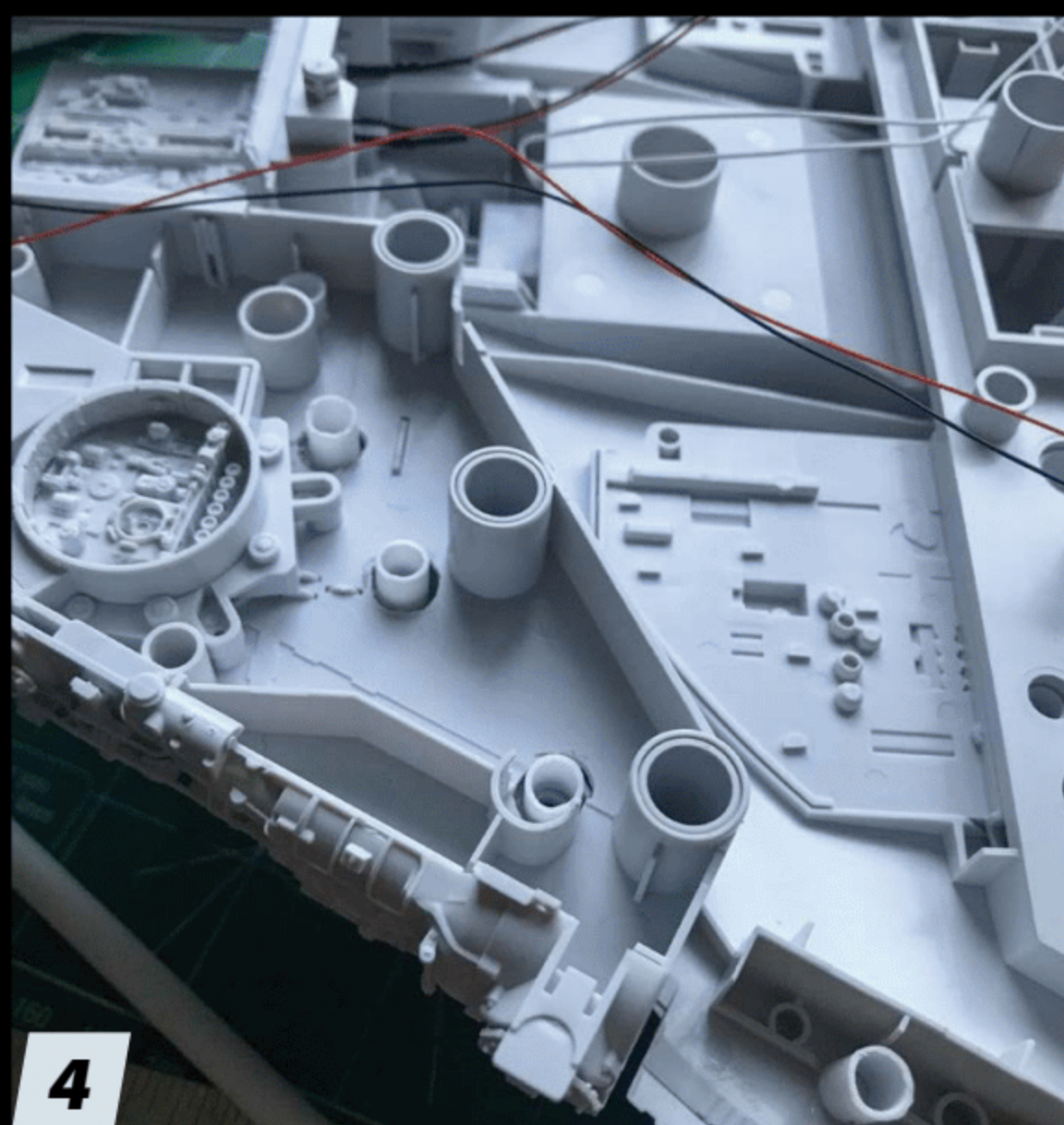




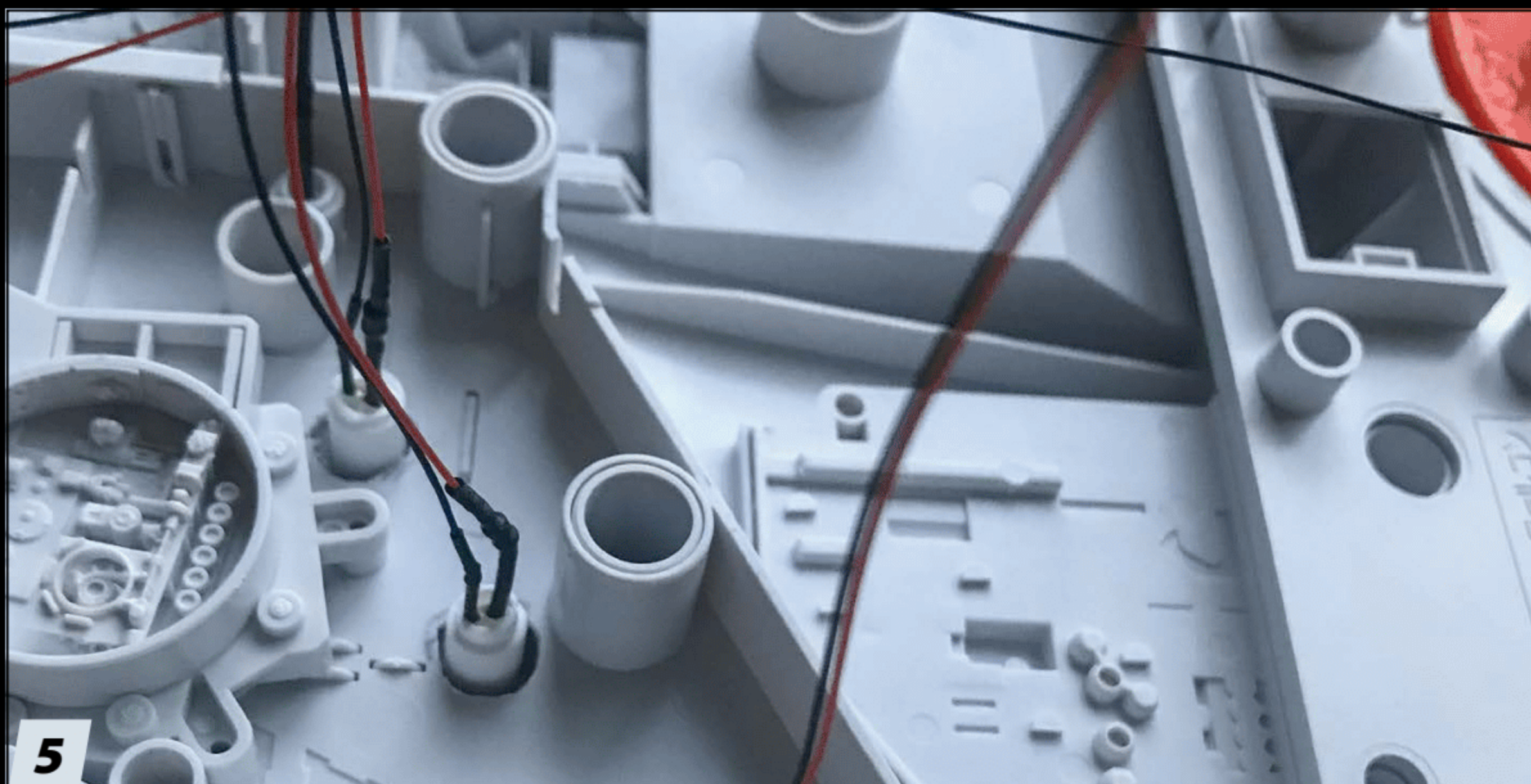
2 I glued my $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch mount behind the forward section of each mandible and installed 1.8mm LEDs for the inner floodlights. Bandai molded channels for wiring into both mandibles.



3 Using the blueprint I found on 3DSF.info, I measured and marked where each of the warning lights (.040-inch diameter) and landing lights ($\frac{1}{8}$ -inch diameter) would be and drilled them. In some cases, I had to remove internal supports to make room for the lights. The lights to either side of the entry ramp are larger, so I drilled them with a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch bit.



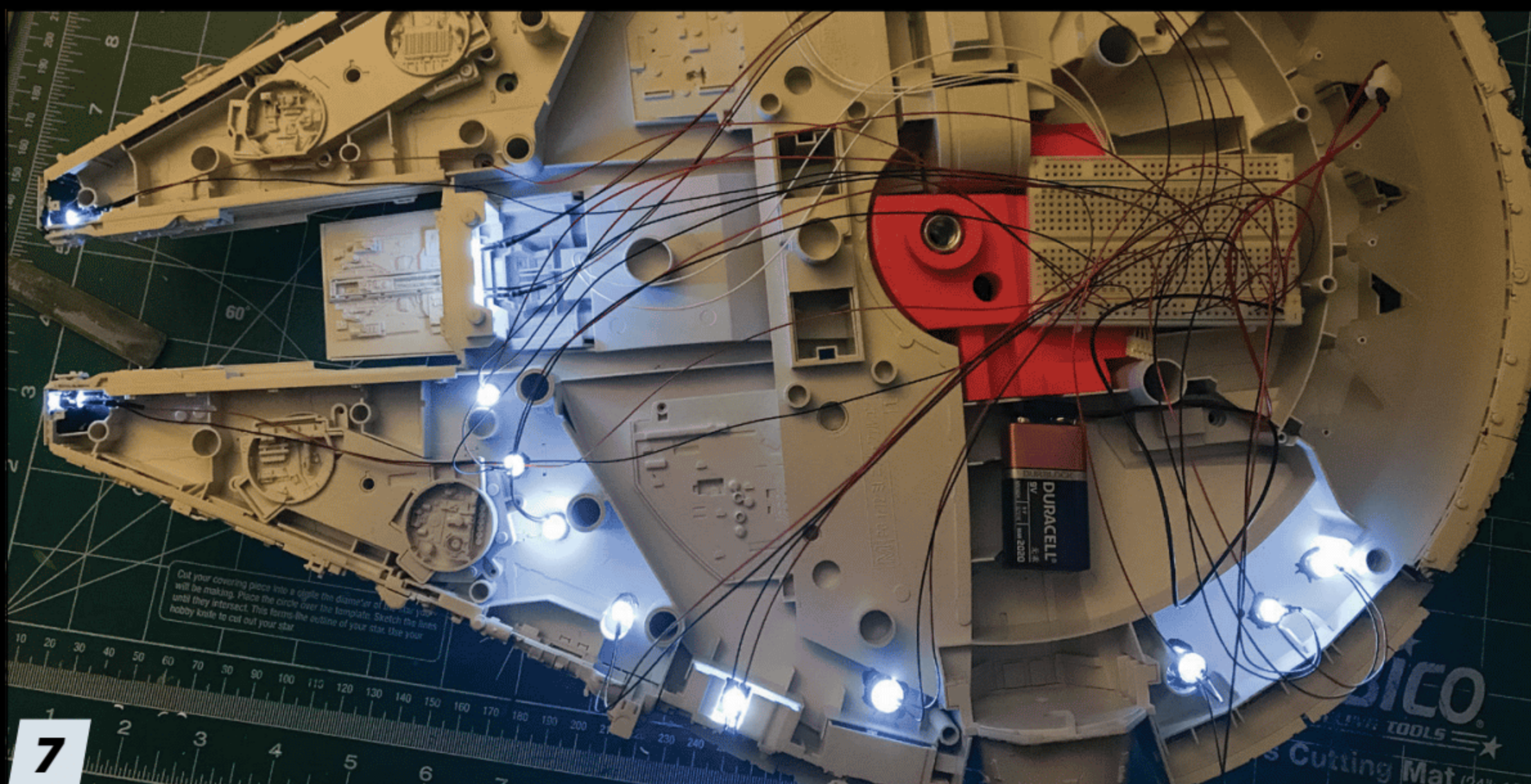
4 While trying to figure out how to center the LEDs in the light housings, I realized that the $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch styrene tubing would nest neatly inside $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch styrene tubing. So ...



5 ... I glued $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch styrene tube housings inside the hull *surrounding* the landing-light holes and drilled holes into the mandible parts large enough to fit around the housings and attach to the saucer. Then I nested the $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch tube with the LED glued inside into the larger housing. The lights were perfectly centered.



6 I used the same technique for the larger boarding lights, starting with $\frac{5}{16}$ -inch tubing and nesting smaller diameters until reaching the $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch tube and LED.



7 With only a basic understanding of electronics, I found the LEDs from Evan Designs were simple to use. Each LED came pre-wired with the proper resistor, so all I had to do was provide a power supply — a 9-volt battery in this case. I used a breadboard for temporary connections, letting me test the lights without soldering anything permanently until I was ready.

SOURCES

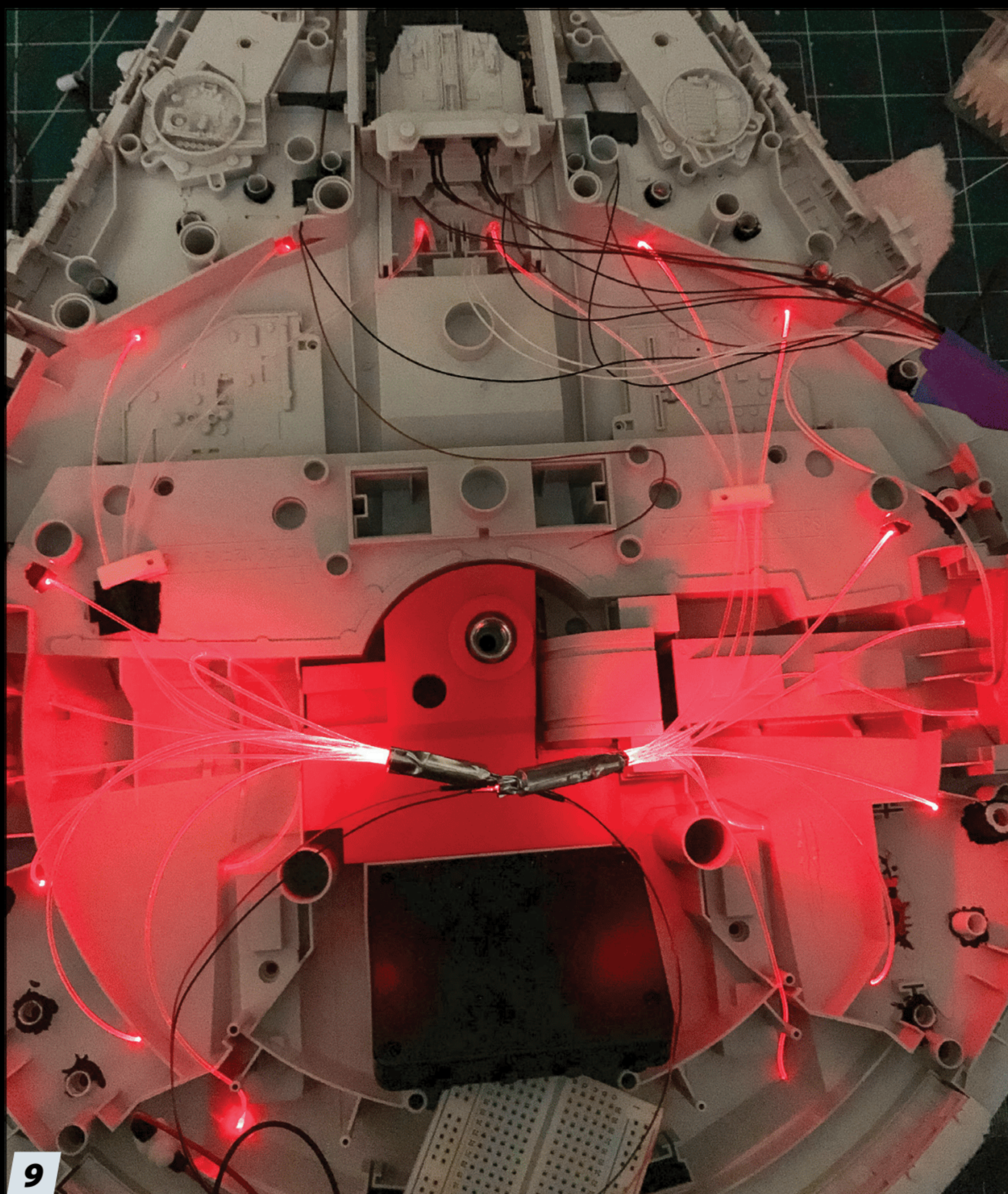
- **EvanDesigns.com:** 24 1.8mm Cool White 5–12-volt LEDs (for 18 landing lights and 6 for three pairs of front-facing floodlights, in and between the mandibles); two 3mm Red 5–12-volt LEDs to illuminate the fiber optic warning lights; one 1.8mm Red 5–12-volt LED to illuminate the fiber optic filament for the cockpit tube side lights; three snap switches; two 9-volt battery snaps and leads; shrink tubing

- Fiber optic filament in 1mm, .5mm, and .25mm diameter



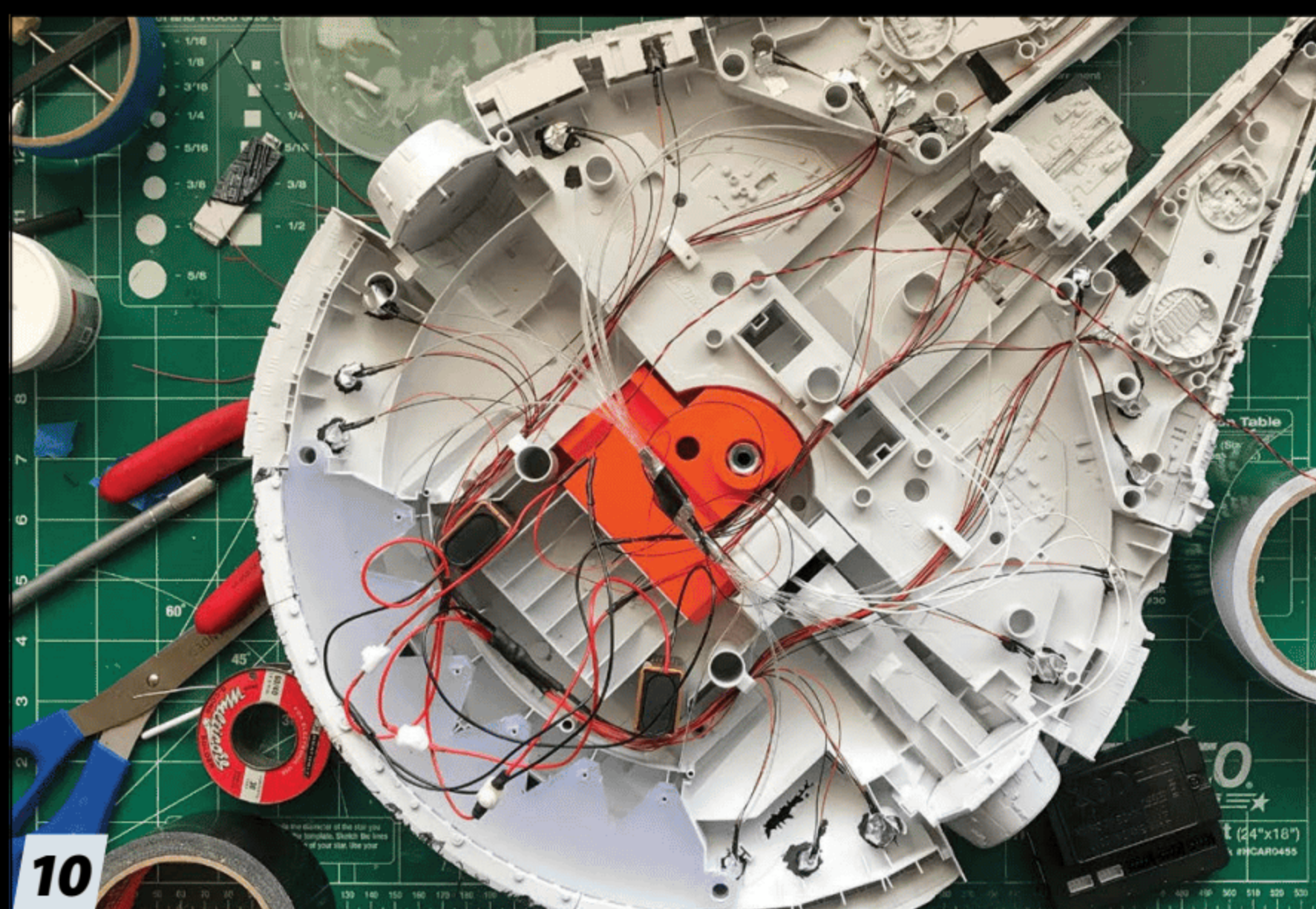
8

I ran 1mm fiber optic filament to drilled holes for the red warning lights and held the filament in place with white glue. Avoid superglue because it can crack the filament.



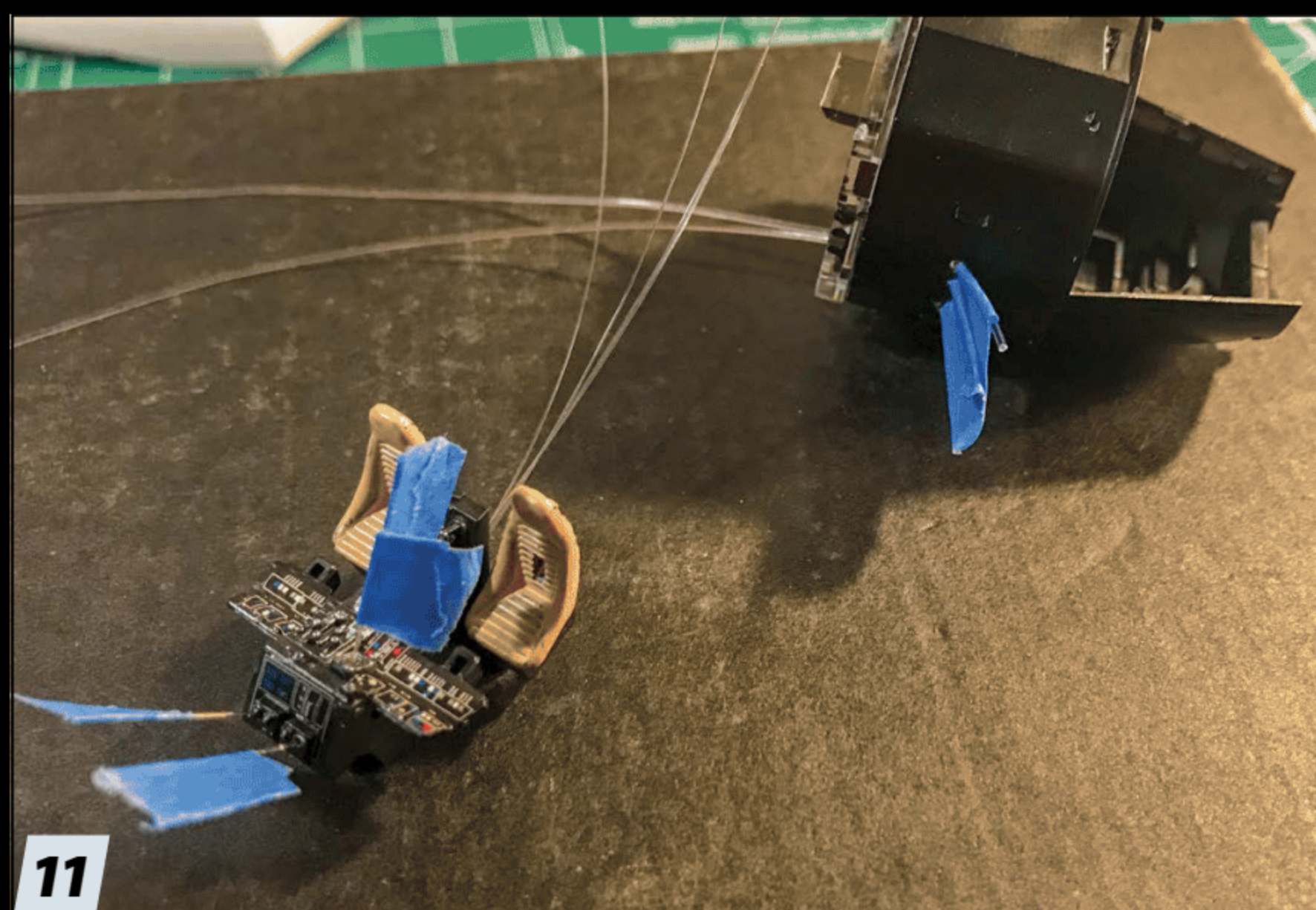
9

I collected the filaments into two bundles, inserted them into styrene tubing, and slid that into a larger tube housing a 3mm red LED. Then I wrapped the housing with foil tape. Again, with the breadboard, I tested the red LEDs and fiber optic filaments to make sure everything was working correctly. Also, let's be honest, it's satisfying to see all the work start to come together.



10

After I was satisfied that all the lights were working correctly, now came cable management. The goal was to make sure all the wires and fiber optic filaments were neatly routed to avoid damage or interfering in their operations when the *Falcon's* top went on.

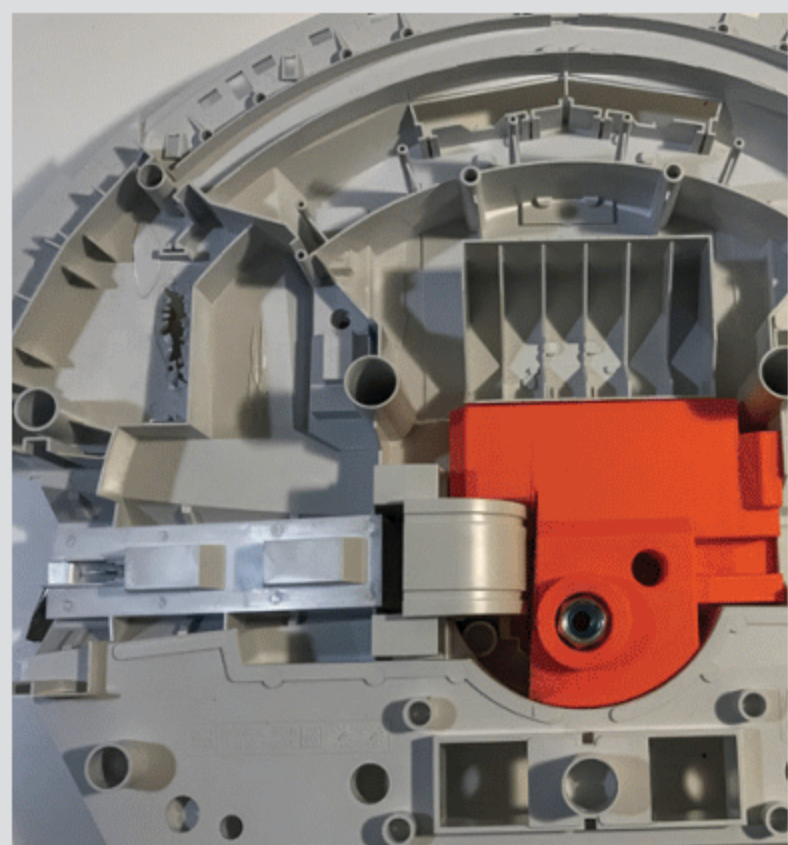


11

The kit provides parts for lighting the cockpit's back wall but not for the front console. I ran four .25mm fiber optic filaments from the back wall up through holes drilled in the console, snipped them flush, and colored the two front strands red and blue with permanent marker.

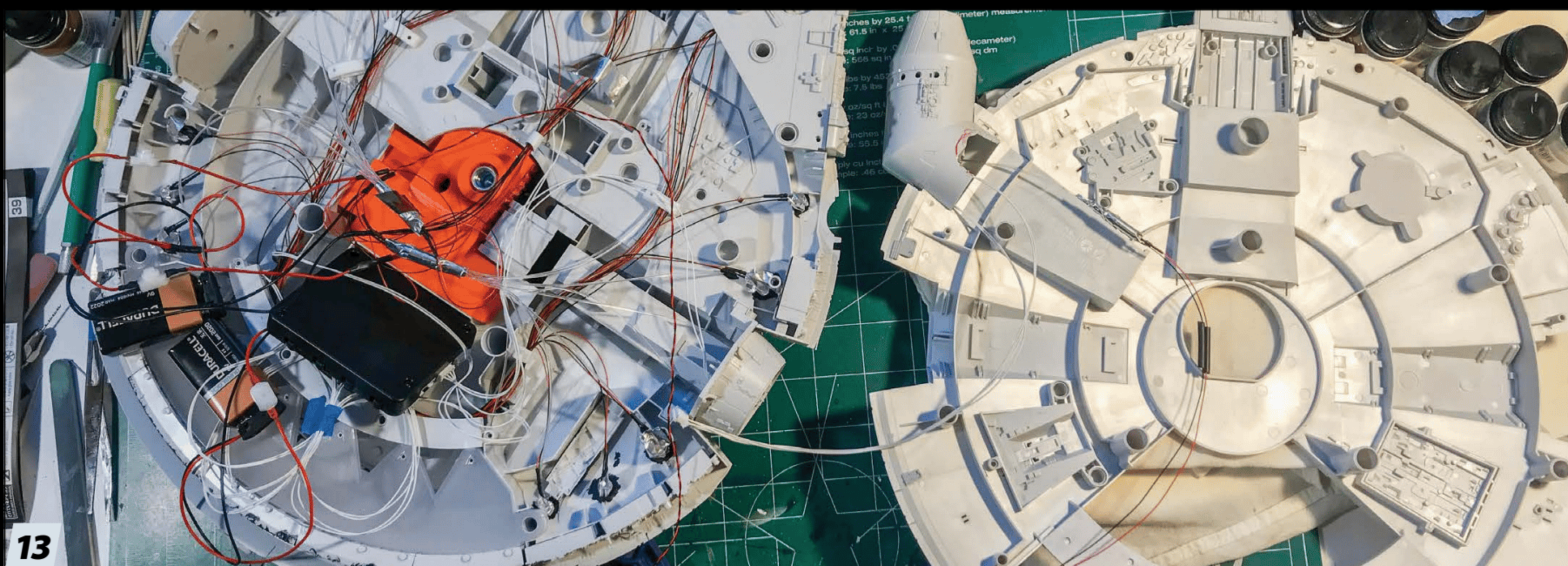
WHAT THIS HECK IS THAT ORANGE THING?

THAT IS A 3D-PRINTED TRIPOD mount I found on The Replica Prop Forum (RPF) that was designed specifically for this kit. Not only did it allow me some flexibility when building the *Falcon*, but it also lets me pose it for cool, in-flight photos.



12

Two .5mm fiber optic filaments routed light for the lights rear of the cockpit from a 1.8mm red LED in the main body. A piece of Scotch Magic Tape diffused the light for a larger appearance.



13

After testing all the lights one more time, checking for light leaks, and being reasonably sure all the lighting was secure and wouldn't interfere with the *Falcon's* top, I pressed the part in place. As with the rest of the build, I used no glue, but had no fear of it coming apart. The foil tape around the LEDs did a great job eliminating light bleed from the source.



14

I made small covers to protect the LEDs in the recessed lights from the paint and weathering to come. You can see the fiber optic filaments were purposely left long. After completing the painting, I could cut them flush with the hull and the light would be unaffected.

FINAL THOUGHTS

NAVIGATING MY CUSTOM lighting often felt like I was flying by the seat of my pants. I didn't want to build too far ahead and block access to tight spaces, so I kept adjusting as I went. Studying other lighting projects online was important to my success, and I have to call out The Replica Prop Forum member Steven Bills. His lighting and weathering were a big inspiration. Looking back, there are definitely things I'd do differently knowing what I know now. But, overall, I'm really happy with how my *Millennium Falcon* turned out. I look at it and can hear Han shout, "Chewie, punch it!" **FSM**



◀ **GILBERT MONDRAGON**
CHANNAHON, ILLINOIS

This amazingly lifelike depiction of Lt. Nyota Uhura from the *Star Trek* original series is a 1/4 scale bust sculpted by Antonio Dato. Gilbert airbrushed the base colors with acrylic paints and finished up with artist oils and inks.

▼ **RIVA MEDINA**
MIAMI, FLORIDA

"This [Johnny Lightning] model re-creates the 1940s Batmobile in a small, 1/64 scale size," Riva said. "Made with die-cast metal parts, it's an easy and enjoyable way to own a piece of *Batman* history." Riva, we couldn't have said it better ourselves.



◀ **EDWARD VINARCIK**
WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA

This Tamiya 1/35 scale *Parasaurolophus* was built out-of-the-box. Edward sprayed the base coat and then layered colors to finish the model. For the base, he embellished dried tree bark with moss and added a special Easter egg — a miniature *Dragon* magazine!





▲ **JEFF CAMP**
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

Jeff finished his Earthbound Studios/Pestilence Labs 3/4 scale *The Bride of Frankenstein* to look like she just stepped off the silver screen. He painted this amazing model with Liquitex acrylic gouache, using black Stynylrez for a base, gray for midtones, and layered in shadows and highlights.



▲ **KENNY WALCH**
COLUMBUS, OHIO

Immersing himself in the world of *Battletech*, Kenny depicted a scene from "The Battle of Tukayyid" with a 1/200 scale Summoner mech. He reposed the original figure, scratchbuilt internal details, and kitbashed the base from a number of 3D-printed buildings. Kenny brush-painted the entire scene, feathering and layering the colors for volume and visual interest.

▼ **CURT HASKELL**
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

Pro Acryl and Scale 75 acrylic paints color Curt's Arconic Disintegrator. He combined an airbrush and hand-painting for a unique steampunk car with an enormous — and probably extremely dangerous — cannon.





▲ **TODD MALNAR**
YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN

Todd's 1/6 scale scene of Haruo Nakajima, the original *Godzilla* suit actor, is inspired. He only adjusted the tilt of the head on the Sci-Fi Models figure, but the rest of the diorama was completely scratchbuilt. Todd painted the figure with both a brush and an airbrush, utilizing a mix of techniques to get the black-and-white appearance just so.



◀ **STEVE HILBY**
ISSAQUAH, WASHINGTON

Steve calls his scratchbuilt 1/350 scale sphere ship *Aldulio*. Built from a craft sphere, florist's tube, and styrene sheet, *Aldulio* flies high above a forest of sponge trees inhabited by dinosaurs and accompanied by a flock of birds. The bridge inside the florist tube is detailed with photo-etched metal controls and crew.



▲ **KEN ERICKSON**
GRANT PARK, ILLINOIS

"This 'what if' represents an engineering APC constructed from things acquired by a small nation's defense forces," Ken said. Called *The Junkyard Dog*, he started with the hull of a Trumpeter 1/35 scale Brazil EE-T2 Osorio and went to town adding parts from his spares box, styrene sheet, and resin-cast ERA panels. Ken painted it in the MERDC tropical scheme and decided not to weather, instead presenting a carrier ready for inspection.

► **RICK KEASEY**
EDWARDSVILLE, ILLINOIS

The 3D-printed 1/10 scale sculpt for Rick's "Maverick" came from R2 Miniatures. He painted the bust's face with artist oils and applied acrylics everywhere else — all over gray auto primer. "Kind of looks like Tom Cruise," Rick said. Huh. Imagine that!





▲ **DAVID O'CONNOR**
RICHMOND, KENTUCKY

David built his Wingnut Wings 1/32 scale Halberstadt Cl.II (early) out of the box, except for EZ Line rigging and Aviattic lozenge camouflage for the wings and tail planes. He chose to mark his Cl.II as the striking "4" from the Royal Bavarian Schusta 26b in 1917.

► **JOHN TINAY**
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

Always up for something eye-catching, John settled wild "crocodile" decals over his Provence Moulage 1/43 scale Audi R8 as it ran in Adelaide, Australia, in 2000. And yes, the livery is entirely decals. We're sweating just thinking about it.



◀ **MARK SPALDING**
CUMBERLAND, INDIANA

A Brassin engine set powers Mark's Eduard 1/48 scale RF-51D Mustang. Tamiya, AK Interactive, and Vallejo paints with just a touch of artist oils for weathering give the fighter an appropriate appearance for flying recon out of Kimpo Airbase, South Korea, 1951.

Combine unlikely kits to model a 1/25 scale Ford Model AA truck

BY ROY SORENSON

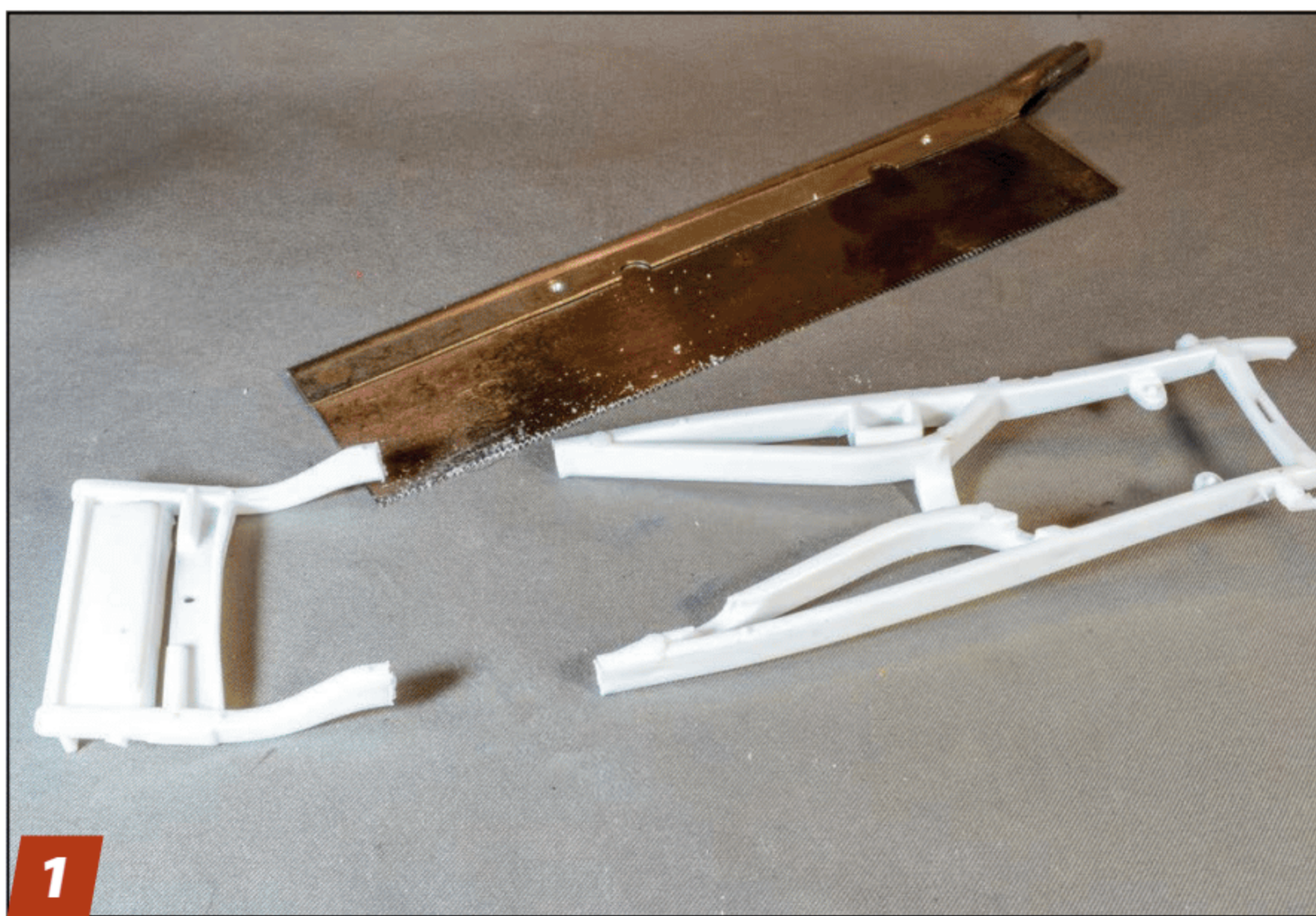
Every once in a while you'll run across something that inspires you, something that captures your imagination, and you think to yourself, "I want to build a model of that someday." That's what happened to me about 10 years ago when I was attending the Grand National Roadster Show in Southern California. Parked out front was a 1932 Ford AA Gilmore gasoline tanker truck. It wasn't restored, but it wasn't hot-rodded either, and it had a lot of cool patina. Obviously it wasn't a working tanker, it's just one someone drives around for the fun of it! Can you imagine the looks this truck gets as it's driving down the boulevard? I fell in love with it the second I saw it. I took about a dozen pictures of it and decided that I'd build it one day. Well that day came, and I opened a Lindberg 1/25 scale '34 Ford pickup (No. 72157) and a Monogram 1/24 scale 1926 Mack Bulldog tank truck (No. 89-7539) to do it. The different scales would mean I'd have to do some creative editing to get everything to work together.

This is the real truck that inspired Roy's replica. As you can see, it's not an actual working tanker truck, but it definitely turns heads as it drives by!

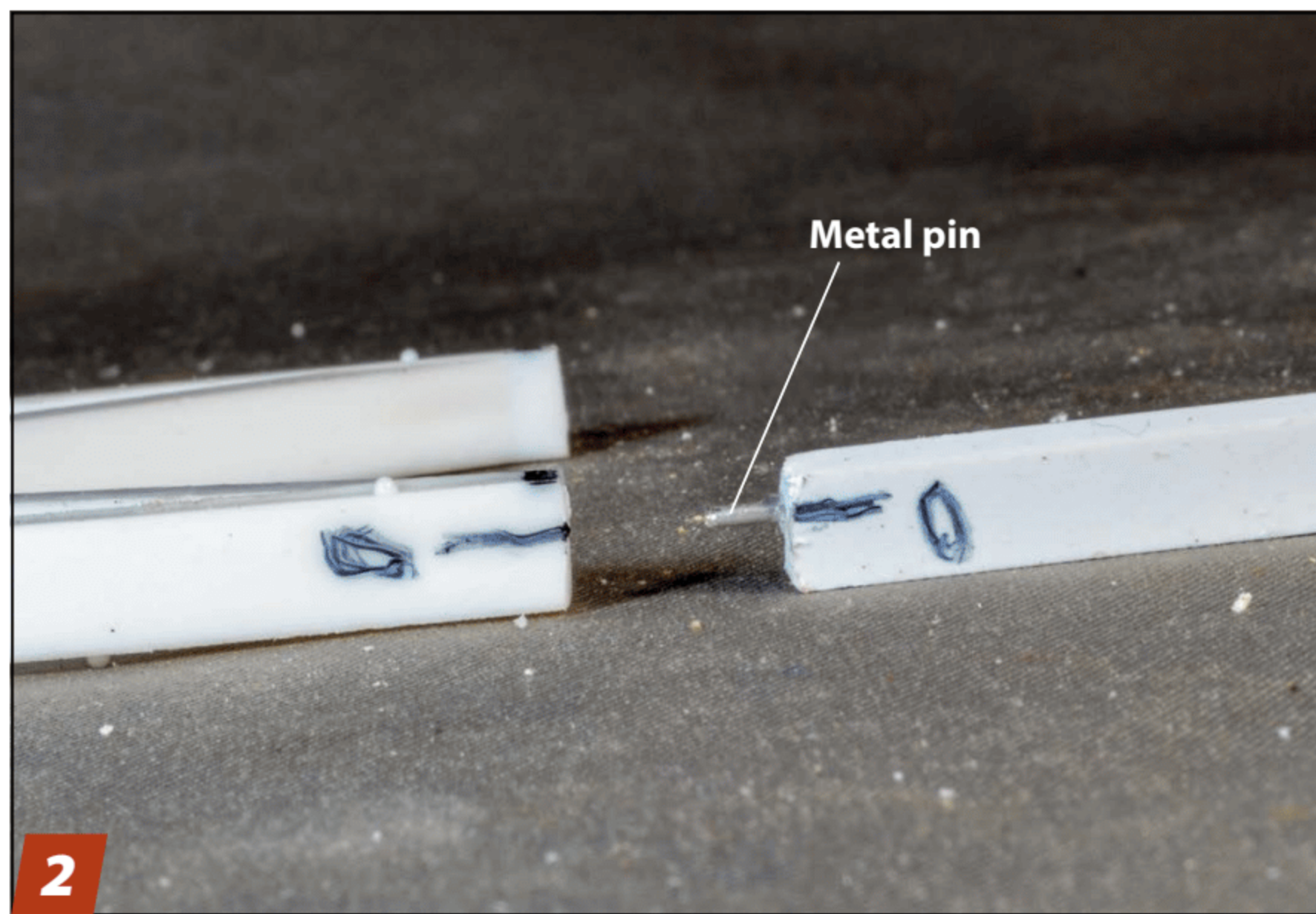


Kitbash a **GILMORE TANKER**





1 To stretch the pickup chassis, I cut off the rear end behind the crossmember with a razor saw and cleaned up the edges. The frame extensions and two new crossmembers would be made from Evergreen 100mm x 188mm styrene strip (No. 178).



2 I aligned the new frame extensions with the pickup chassis and drew a line across both parts. Using that line as a guide, I drilled both parts, inserted a metal pin, and superglued the frame sections together. Then I finished the frame by gluing the crossmembers.



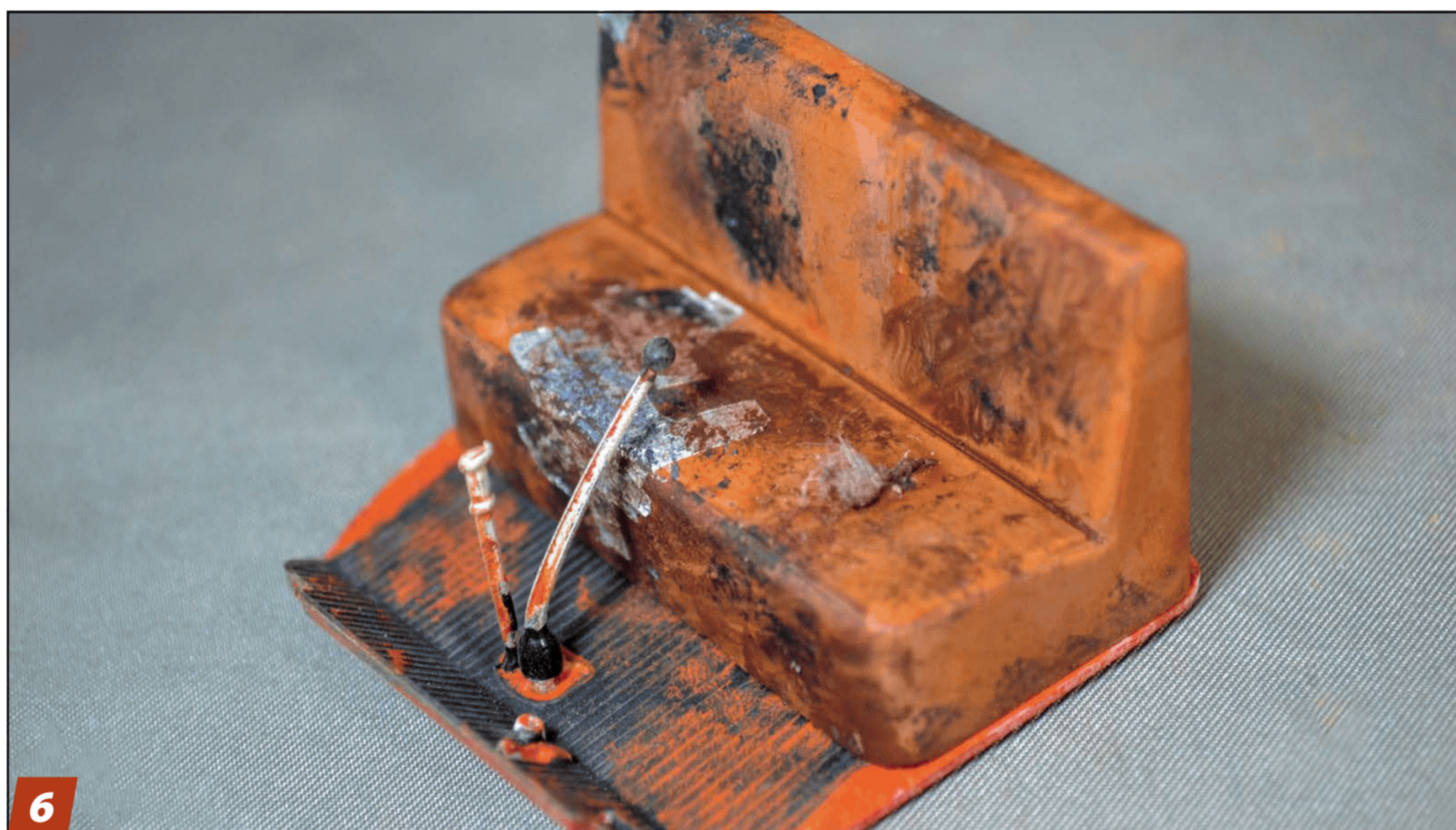
3 I built the pickup suspension box stock. In back, I swapped in the Mack Bulldog outboard leaf springs and added details with styrene sheet and 3D-printed nuts. Another option, would have been to make them from styrene or brass strip. The Bulldog rear axle is a bit small at 1/24 scale, but looks close to the right size.



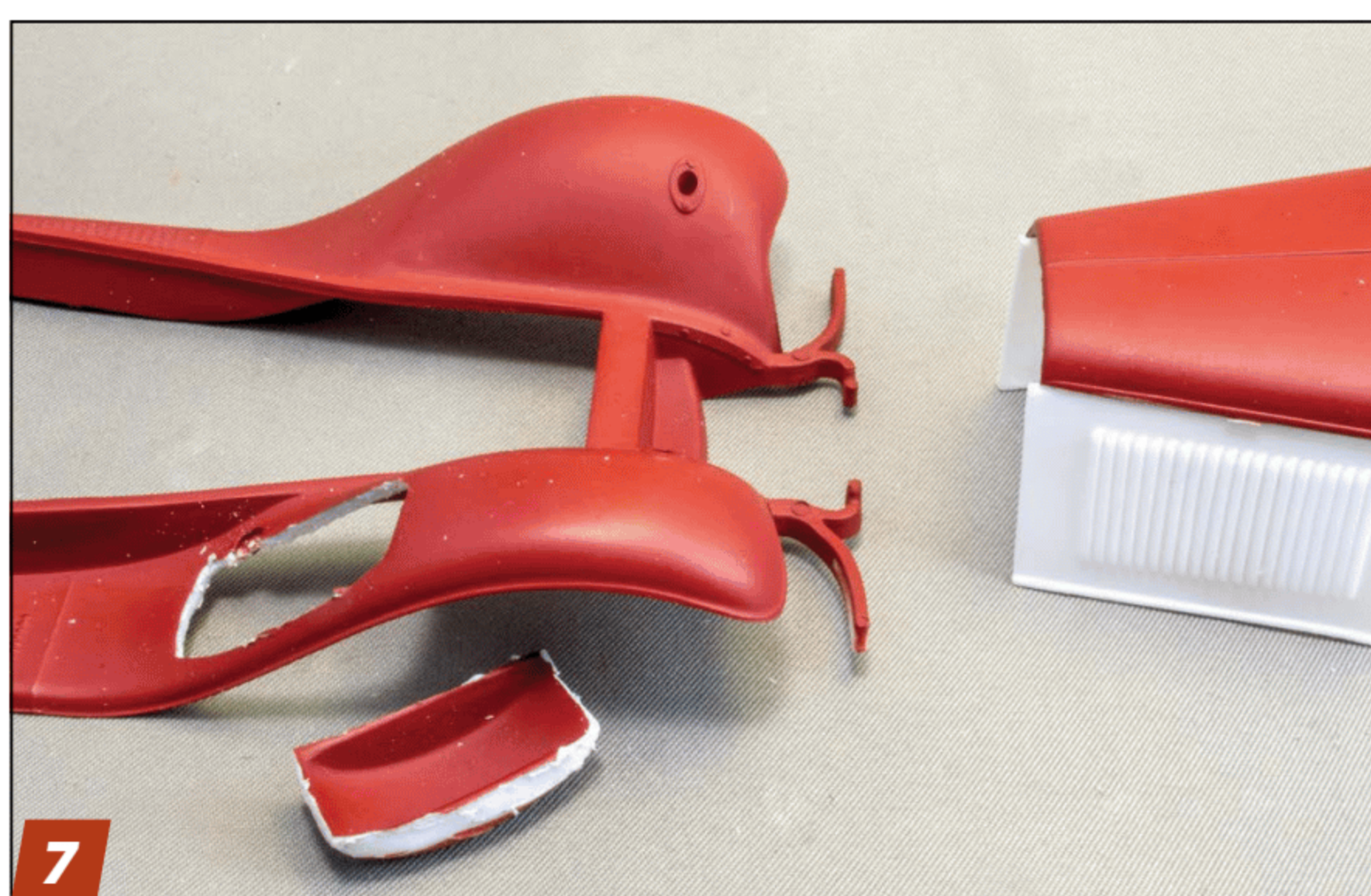
4 Asking online friends about wheels that would match the real truck, several people pointed me to now-out-of-business Ma's Resin that had a set of Ford AA truck tires and wheels. So, I quickly ordered a set. I cleaned up the castings on the wheels and drilled out the lug holes.

A hole in each rim would receive a simple valve stem made from black wire and epoxy, and I detailed the rims with 3D-printed lug nuts. I scavenged a photo-etched metal disc and hex nut from my spares to simulate dust caps on the centers of the front wheels. They would be primed red, given a black wash and await Rustall (No. RST-001).





The cab itself was built box stock except for using brass wire for the side-view mirrors. Inside, I painted the seat a leather color and thin strips of Bare-Metal Foil did a good job replicating duct tape. The seat was heavily weathered, and a small hole was drilled and filled with a tuft of cotton to model a rip in the cushion.



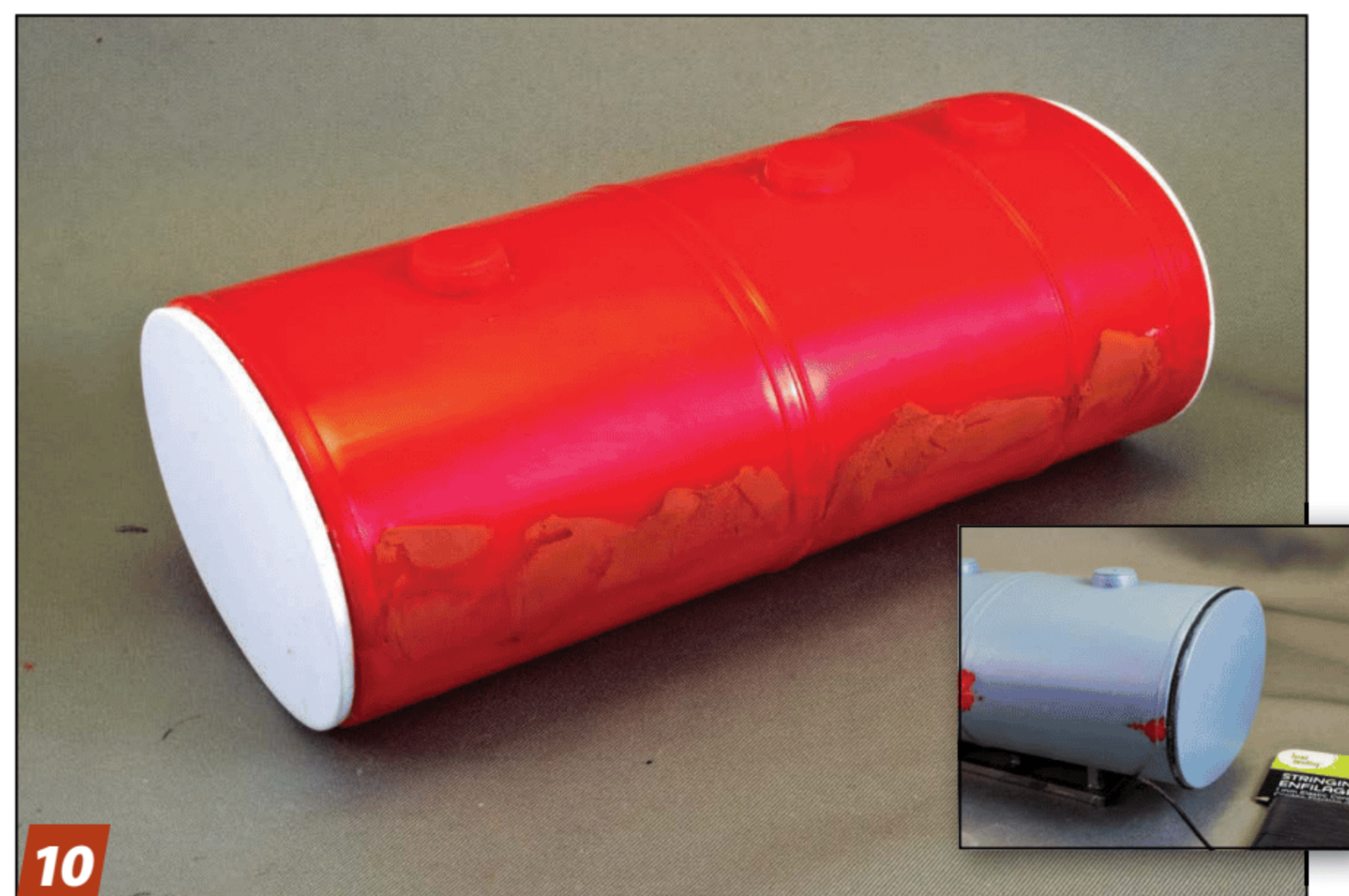
The pickup's hood side panels were wrong, and I replaced them with louvered panels from a Revell '32 Ford coupe. However, the panels were a bit long and needed trimming to fit. At the same time, I removed the mount for the spare tire from the Ford pickup fender.



To patch the hole, I cut a section out of the Revell '32 Ford coupe's front fender, traced an outline of the hole onto it, cut it out, and superglued the new panel in place. Then I cleaned it up with sanding pads and putty, just like you would with any other seams.



I replaced the Lindberg carburetor and fuel pump on the flathead with 3D-printed parts, added a throttle linkage and return spring, and ran wires and a fuel line. The radiator support rods were made from brass wire with brass nuts on each end.



To simplify the tank, I traced the perimeter of the tank's front onto thick styrene sheet and cut out two ovals with a jeweler's saw. After sanding the edges, I capped both ends of the tank with the ovals and filled gaps with putty. Elastic thread glued around the seams replicated welds.



11

To re-create the pop rivets, first I marked the rivet locations on a length of masking tape with a fine-tipped pen. Then I transferred the tape to the tank and drilled holes with a pin vise.



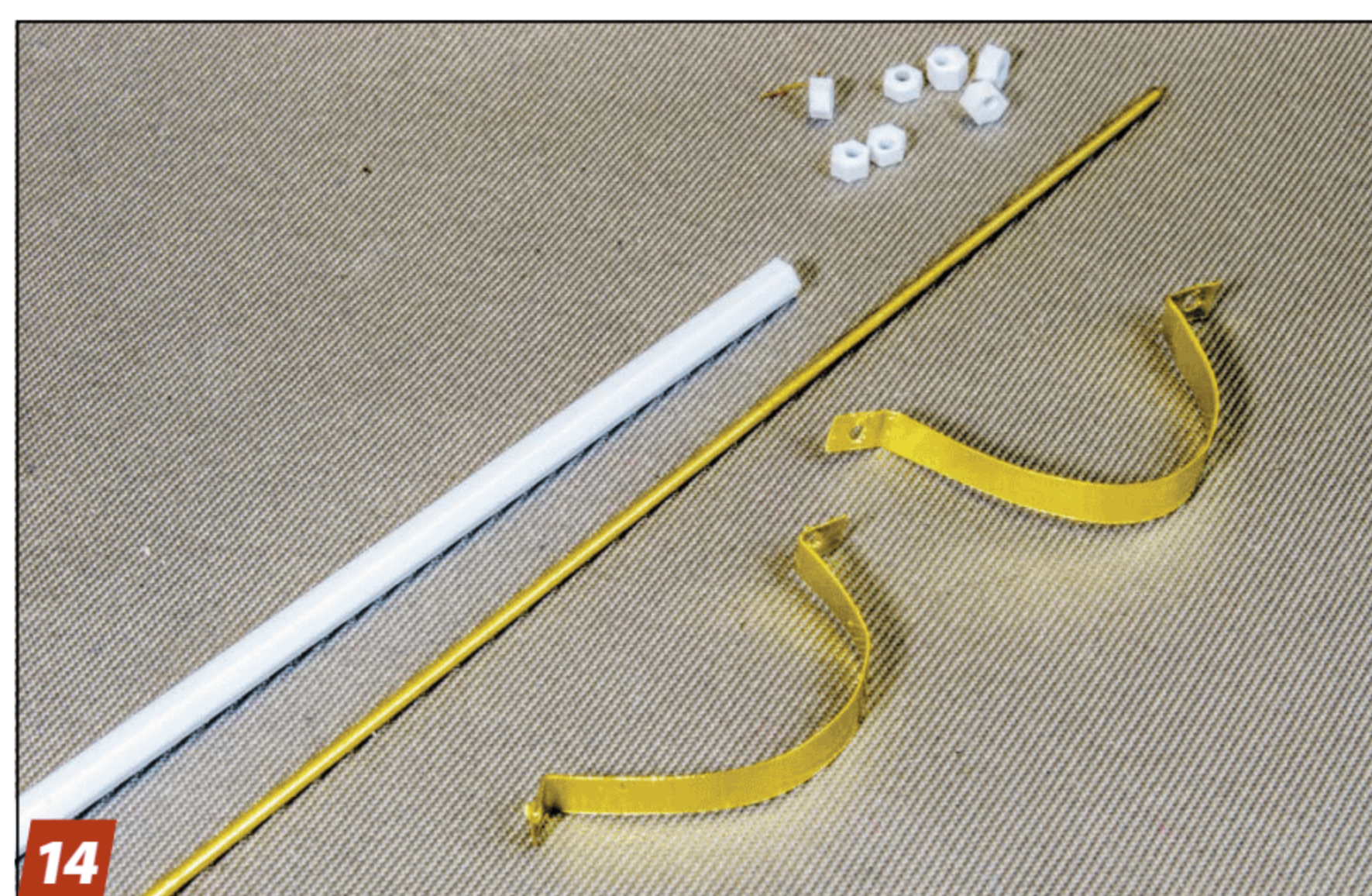
12

Ninety minutes later, I superglued No. 8 sequin pins into the holes for the rivets. It's not a quick process, and I won blisters on my hand for the effort, but I didn't have to worry about my weathering accidentally lifting an Archer Fine Transfer decal.



13

For the filler caps, I machined a styrene ring on a lathe to fit the opening and added model-railroading bolt details, made a rubber mold, and poured three resin parts. The cap is a peel-and-stick chrome button. Wire insulation on plastic rod makes the vent, capped with a piece of PE from my spares. Thin plastic strip made the handle.



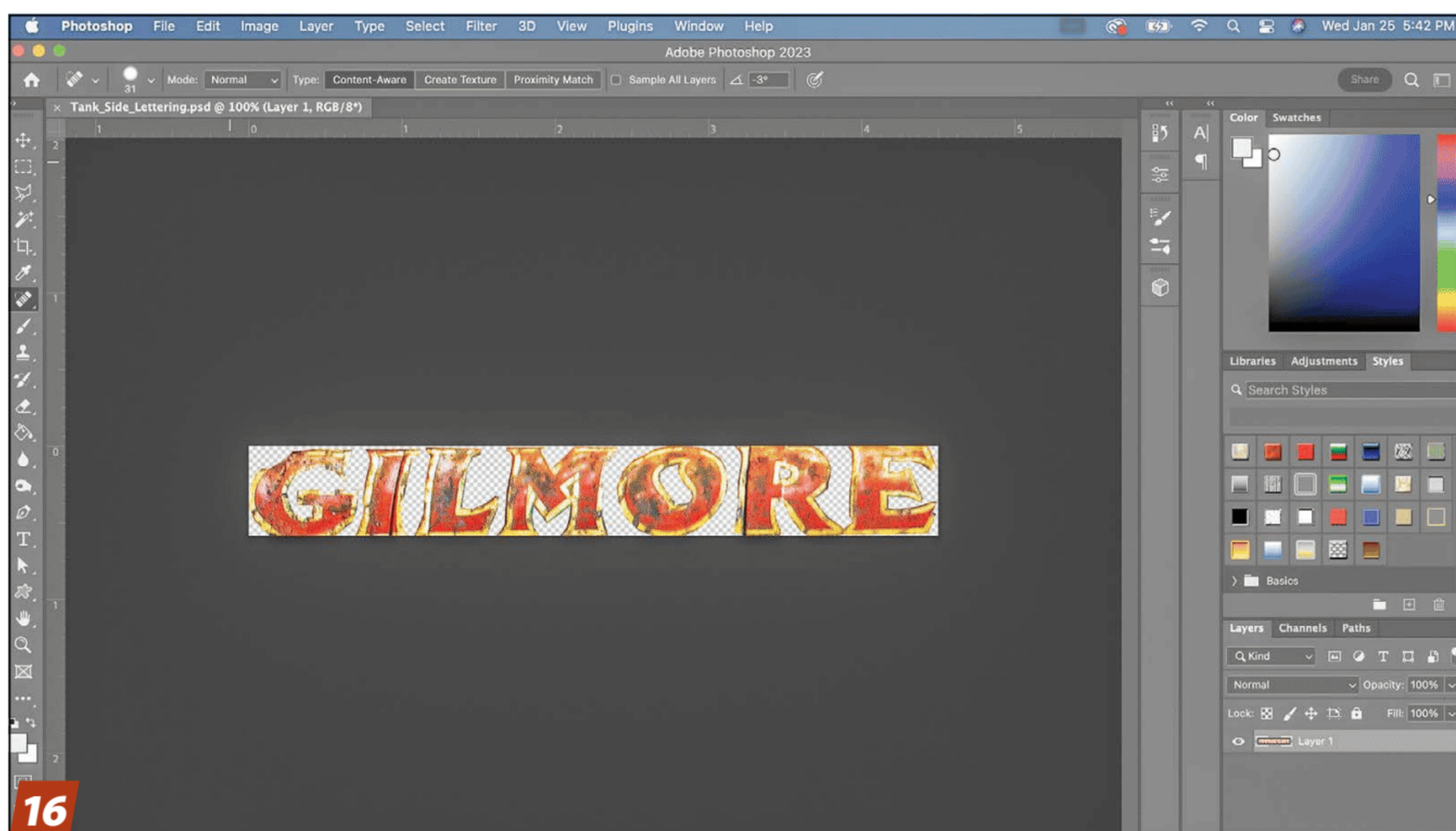
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The safety rails running along the top of the tank were held in place by two U-shaped brackets on the front and rear filler caps. I cut thin brass for the mounts and drilled the ears to accept brass rod. I drilled hex rod and cut it to the appropriate length to make nuts for the rod ends.

I'd seen other modelers use the salt technique, and it wasn't anything I'd tried before. I base-coated the tank, crushed some rock salt in a resealable bag, spritzed the tank with water after the paint was dry, and applied the salt. After several light coats of gray primer and 24 hours to dry, I knocked off the salt, and the tank had a great patina!



15



16

The markings for the tank were made from the photos I'd taken of the original truck. I dropped them into a photo-editing program, resized them, and printed them on decal paper with my home printer. Solvaset helped them lay down on the rough surface, and a coat of flat clear sealed them.



17

For the markings on the doors, I hired STS Decals to make water-slide decals for me. Unfortunately, the measurements I supplied them were incorrect, so they didn't fit quite how I would have liked. However, I figured they still looked good, so I used them anyway. Clear flat sealed everything down.



18

Before the truck could go together, I needed to build the frame that went between the tank and chassis, along with the platforms on both sides. I cut and shaped all of the wooden components from balsa wood and stained them with Weather All (No. RST-0005).



19

After attaching the wooden tank frame, tank, and side platforms, I 3D-printed gas tanks of various shapes and sizes, painted, and weathered them using the salt technique. I made racks for the gas tanks from brass rod and angle soldered together. After making the front and rear bumper, detailing them with bolts, and attaching them, I hit everything with a black wash, dry-brushing, and lots of Rustall Dust (RST-0004).

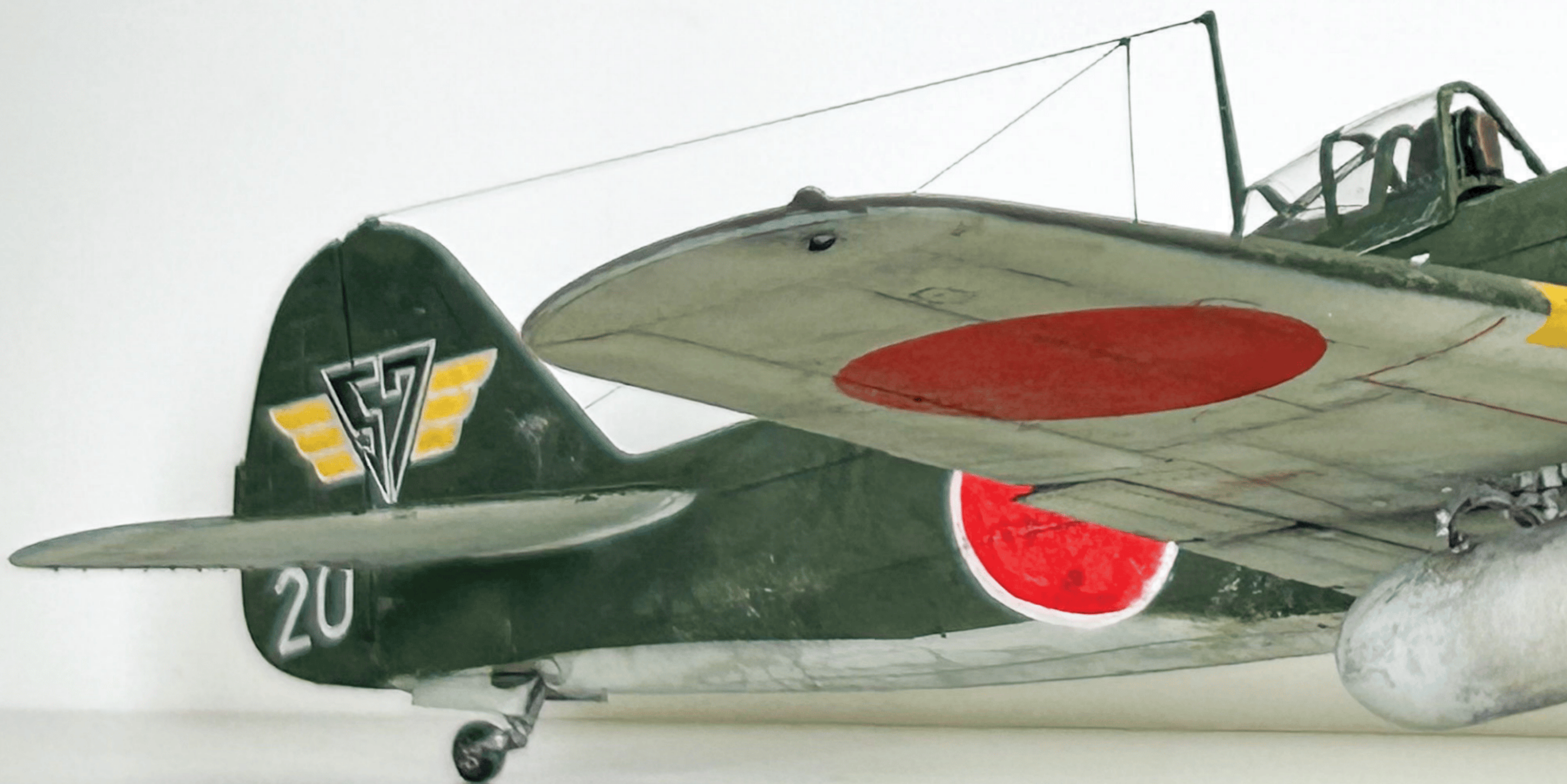
FINAL THOUGHTS

THIS PROJECT CHALLENGED me in a couple of major ways. It's only the third time I've weathered any of my projects — that's a big deal for a car guy who typically builds factory or high-gloss custom. Second, I tried to get the replica as close as I could the real tanker I'd photographed. It was a fun project and the model gets a lot of attention wherever it goes! **FSM**

Whipping up a **'GALE'**

Build a 1/32 scale Nakajima Ki-84 *Hayate*

BY RAUL CORRAL



After years of building World War II aircraft — Bf 109s, P-51s, Spitfires, Focke-Wulfs — I realized my shelves lacked a single Japanese fighter. As I turned 50, it was time to change that. However, I wanted to make it a notable model, which meant large scale and not a Zero.

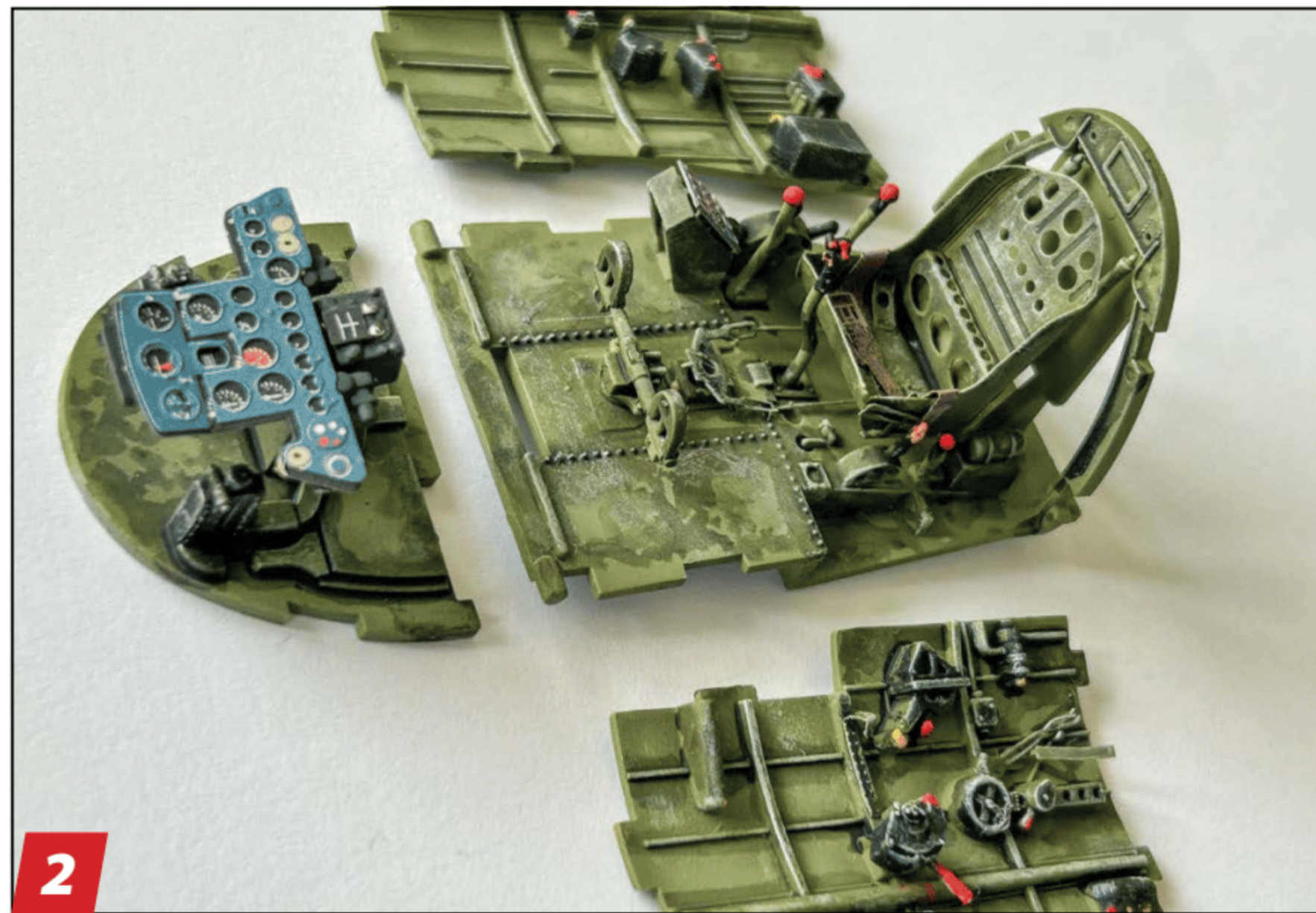
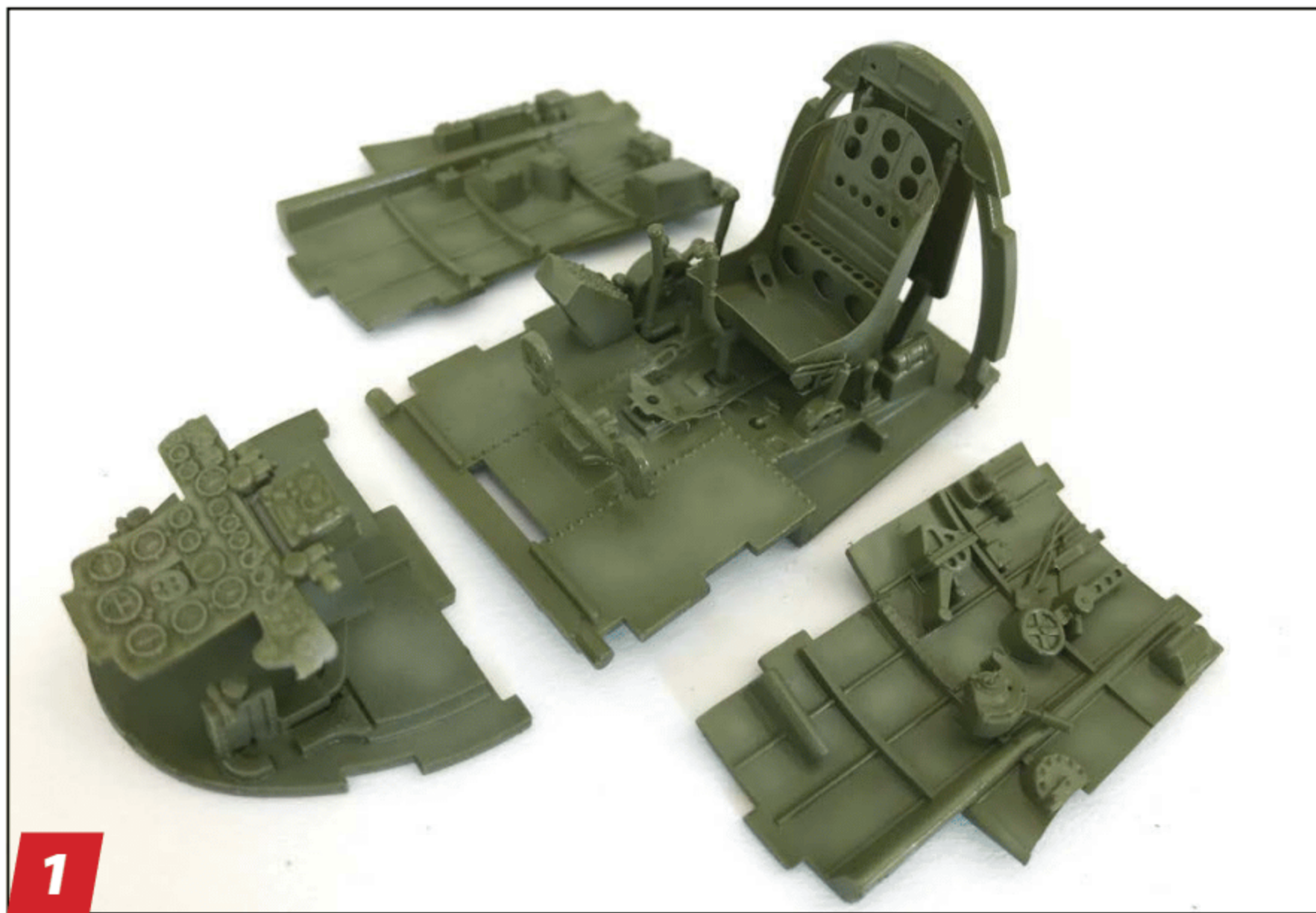
Hasegawa offers several great kits in 1/32 scale, and I chose its Nakajima Ki-84 Type 4 *Hayate* (“gale” in English). Known as “Frank” among Allies, the Ki-84 was widely recognized as Japan’s best mass-produced fighter, armed with 30mm and 20mm cannons and powered by a rugged radial engine.

While researching possible markings, looking for something that would include Japanese characters on the fuselage, I came across the aircraft of 2nd Lt. Tetsujirō Karasawa, who flew a

kamikaze mission over Okinawa in May 1945 as part of the 57th *Shinbu-tai*. His plane featured the bold motto *Hissatsu* — “sure to kill” — painted on both sides of the fuselage. Certainly eye-catching! As luck would have it, Montex produced a Supermask set (No. K32265) that included not only masks, but decals for that very fighter.

Now, I was officially building my first Japanese fighter, and I had a feeling it was going to be a special birthday for me.





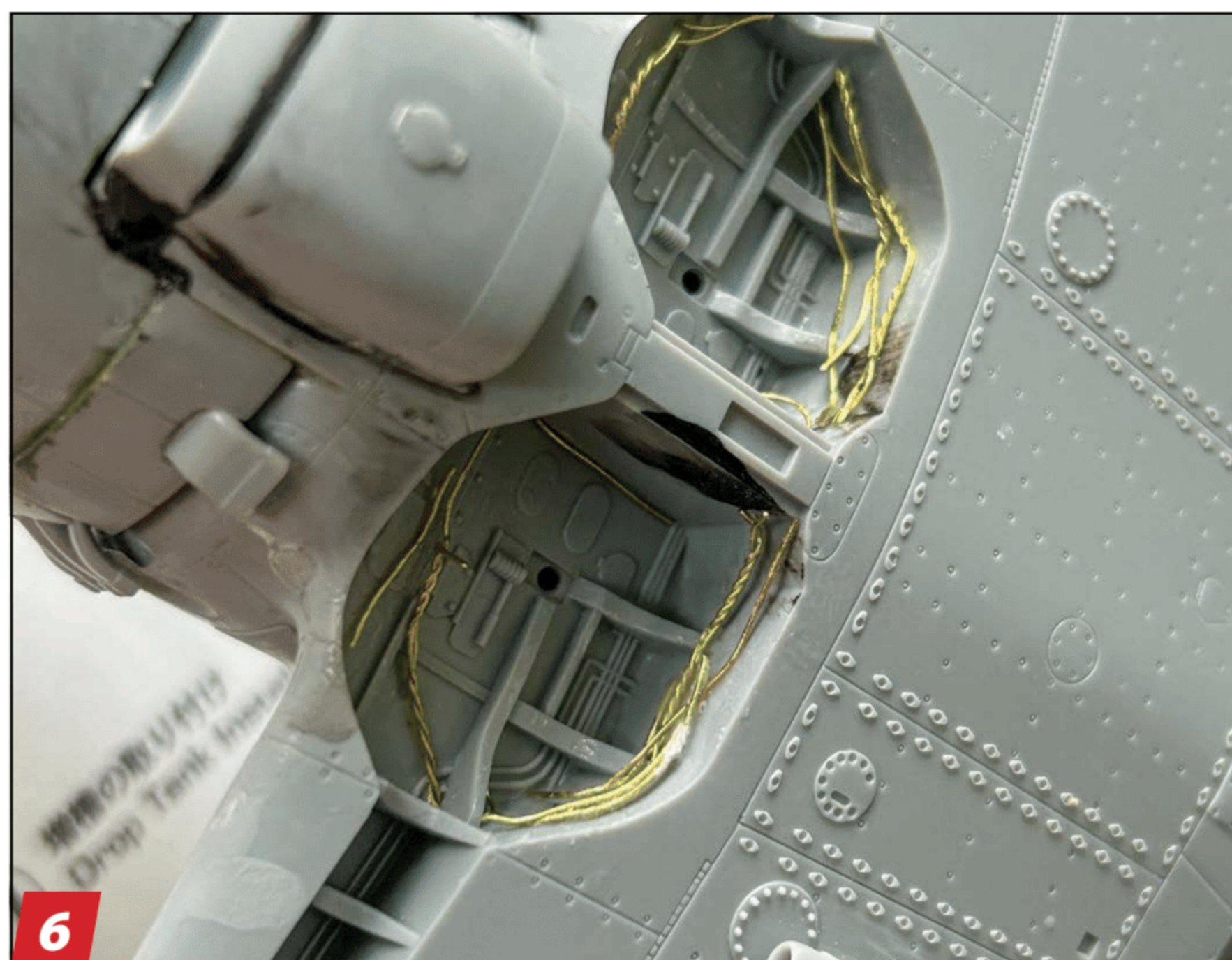
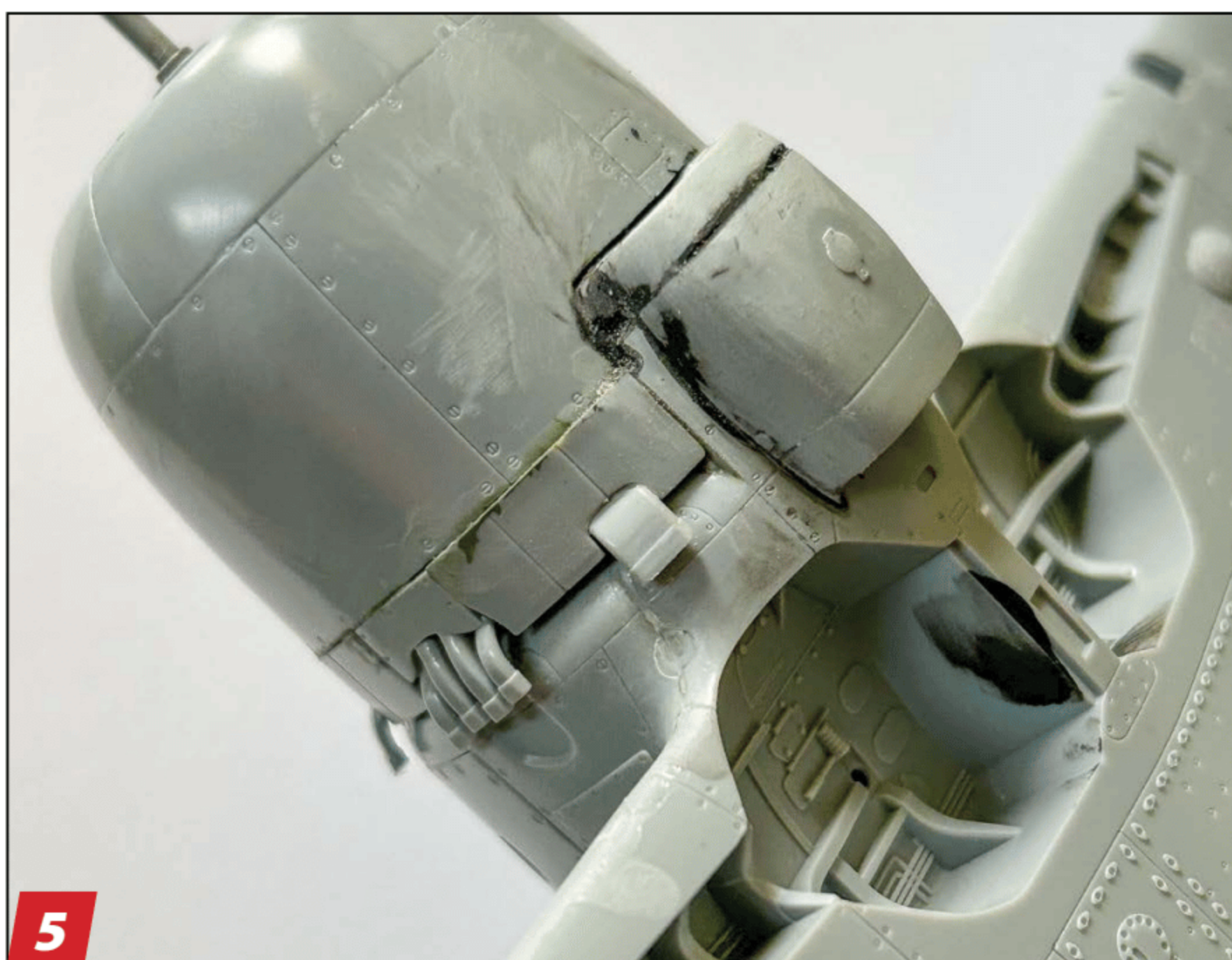
1 I replaced the kit's pilot seat with an Eduard detail set (No. EDU32542), painted the cockpit Real Color Nakajima Interior Green (No. RC307), and highlighted areas by adding Mr. Hobby Flat White (No. H-11) to the original color.

2 Ammo Black Wash (No. A.MIG-0711) helped add shadows to details, which I then popped by dry-brushing with Revell Flat Light Grey USAF (No. 32176) enamel. Revell Metallic Aluminum (No. 32199) made easy work of chipping, and Fiery Red (No. 32330) picked out various handles.



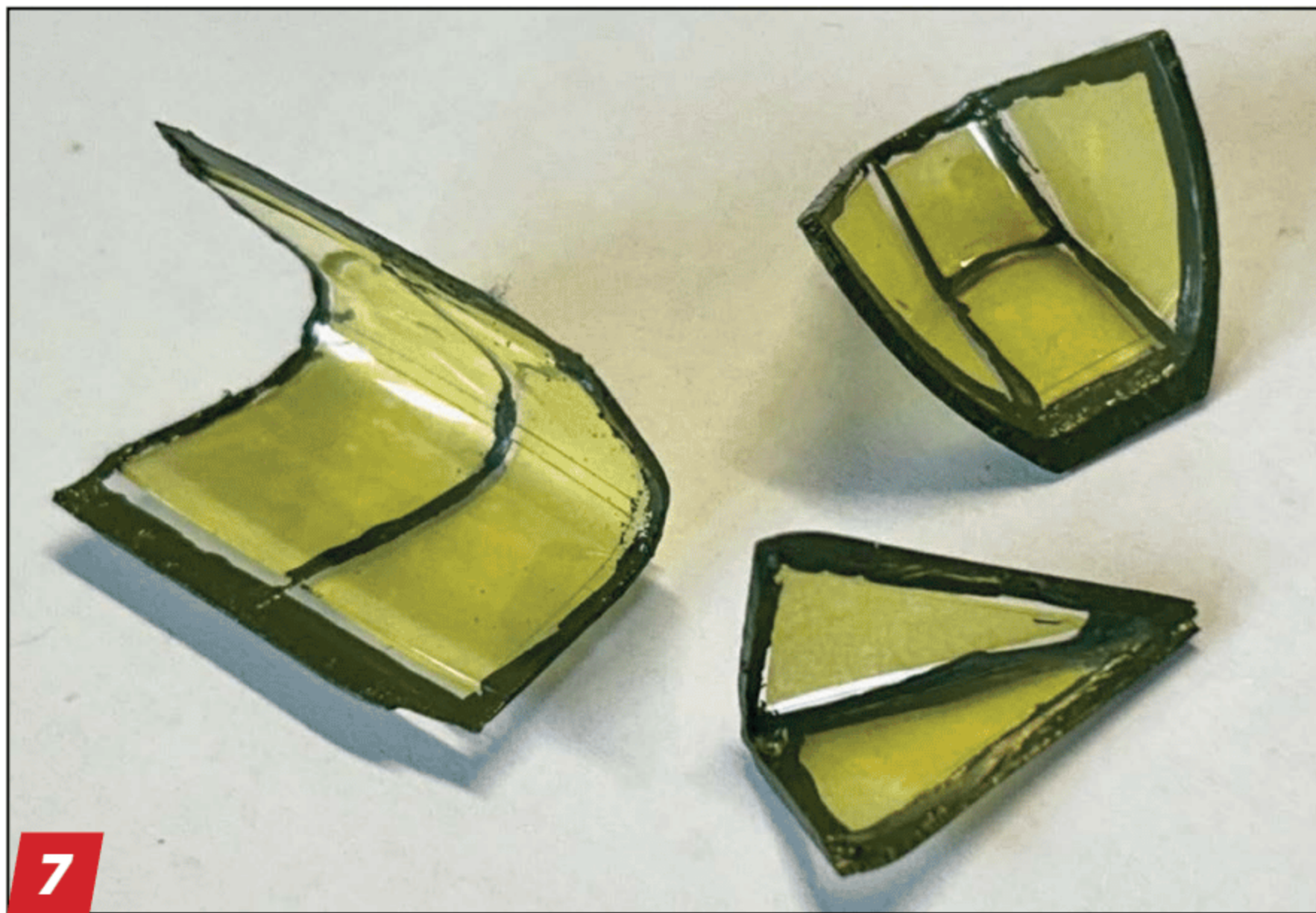
3 After airbrushing a light coat of VMS Varnish Flat HD Top Coats (No. AX05M) on the cockpit parts, I fit them into the fuselage and then buttoned up the airframe. Everything fit perfectly and needed no coaxing, completing the cockpit portion of the build.

4 Only partially visible up front, I didn't add wiring or extra details to the radial engine. It was painted Tamiya Flat Aluminum (No. XF-16) and a 1:1 mix of Flat Aluminum and Flat Black (No. XF-1). A black enamel wash and dry-brushed Revell Metallic Silver (No. 32190) popped details.



5 The radiator fairing needed extra attention, likely my fault. I put a small amount of Revell Black Green enamel (No. 32140) on a plate, let it thicken to a paste-like consistency, and applied it like filler. After 24 hours, I sanded away the excess with fine-grit sandpaper.

6 For added realism, I ran extra lines in the main gear bay made from the decorative wire retrieved from a bottle of red wine.



7

An Eduard Ki-84 Paint Mask set (No. JX034) made painting the canopy easier. I hand-painted the interior canopy frames Nakajima interior green with a sewing needle. Perfection was not the goal, because they aren't going to be particularly visible when mounted on the airplane.



8

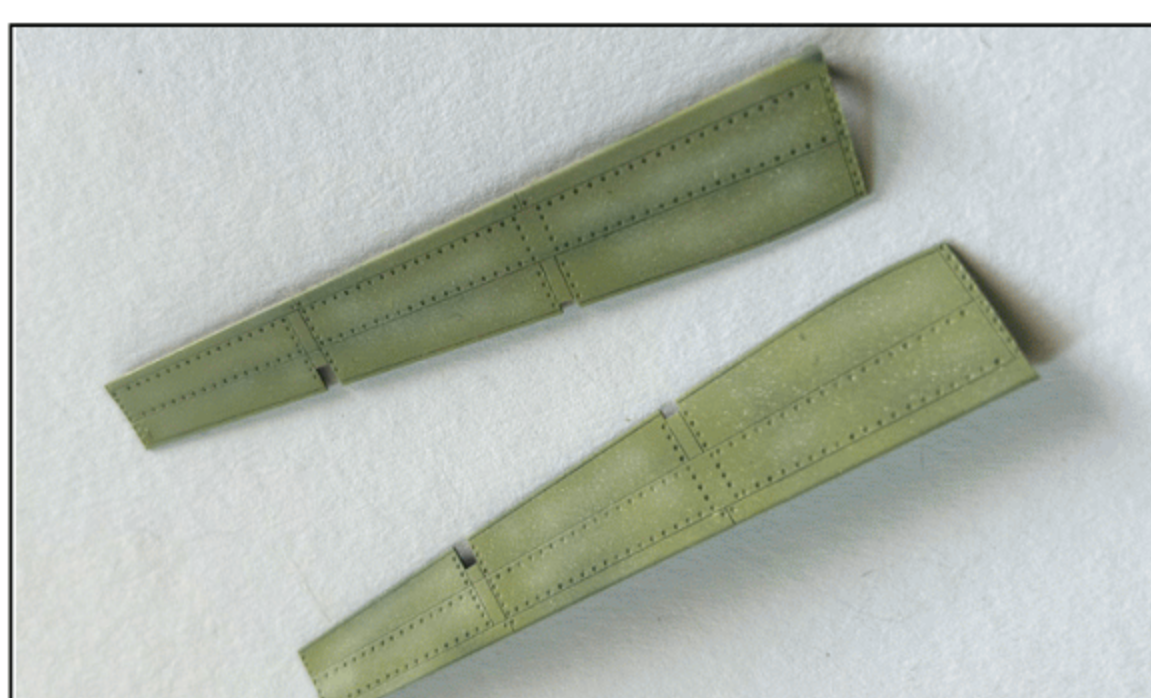
I hand-painted the turtledeck flat black, and the cockpit lip Nakajima interior green before dry-brushing with flat light gray. The headrest was painted Revell Semigloss Wood Brown (No. 32382) and dry-brushed Flat Leather Brown (No. 32184) for a worn effect.



9



In preparation for paint, I glued the front and rear cockpit glass in place and protected the interior and radial engine with paper towel and Tamiya masking tape. I pre-shaded the lower surfaces first, following all major panel lines with a pass of Vallejo Model Air Black Green (No. 71.018). I followed up with light coats of Tamiya J.A. Grey (No. XF-14), allowing the black green to show through. A few drops of Tamiya Flat White (No. XF-2) lightens the J.A. grey for a bit of post-shading focused on panel centers.



10

I painted the flaps and drop tanks with the method in Step 9. Although photos showed Ki-84s with flaps retracted when parked, I built mine extended, as per the instructions.



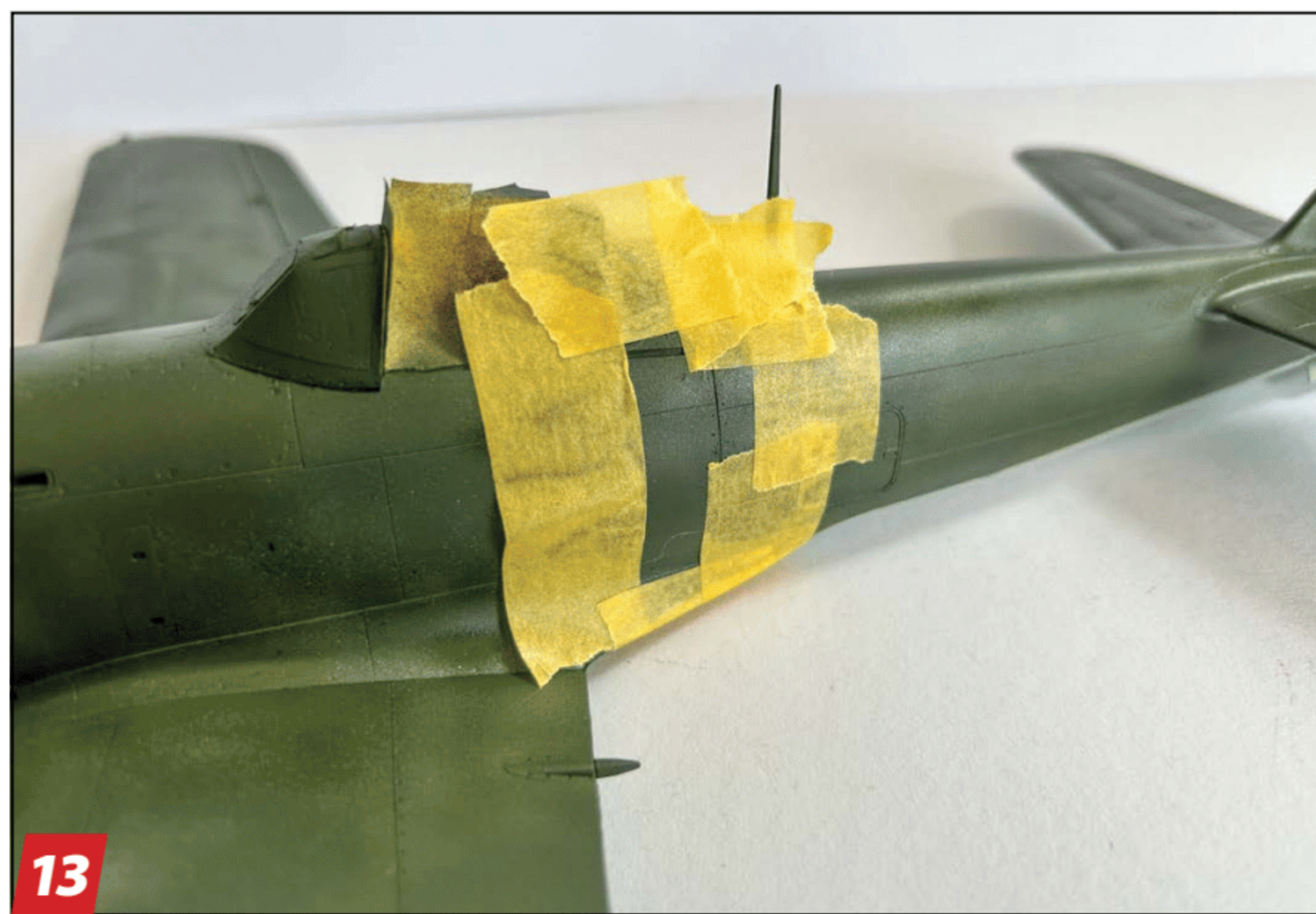
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After masking the belly with Tamiya tape, I base-coated the upper surfaces with Vallejo Model Air Black Green. Tamiya J.A. Green (No. XF-13) was misted over select panels, especially on the nose and at the wing root. Hobby Color Green (No. H303) was sprayed in small, random patches to suggest areas where the paint was wearing thin and could start chipping.



12

I misted a 1:1 mix of Tamiya J.A. Green and Tamiya Thinner (No. X-20A) over the upper surfaces to tone down the highlights. Tamiya NATO Green (No. XF-67) was selectively applied near spots painted Hobby Color Green to create a layered mix of green tones to suggest wear.



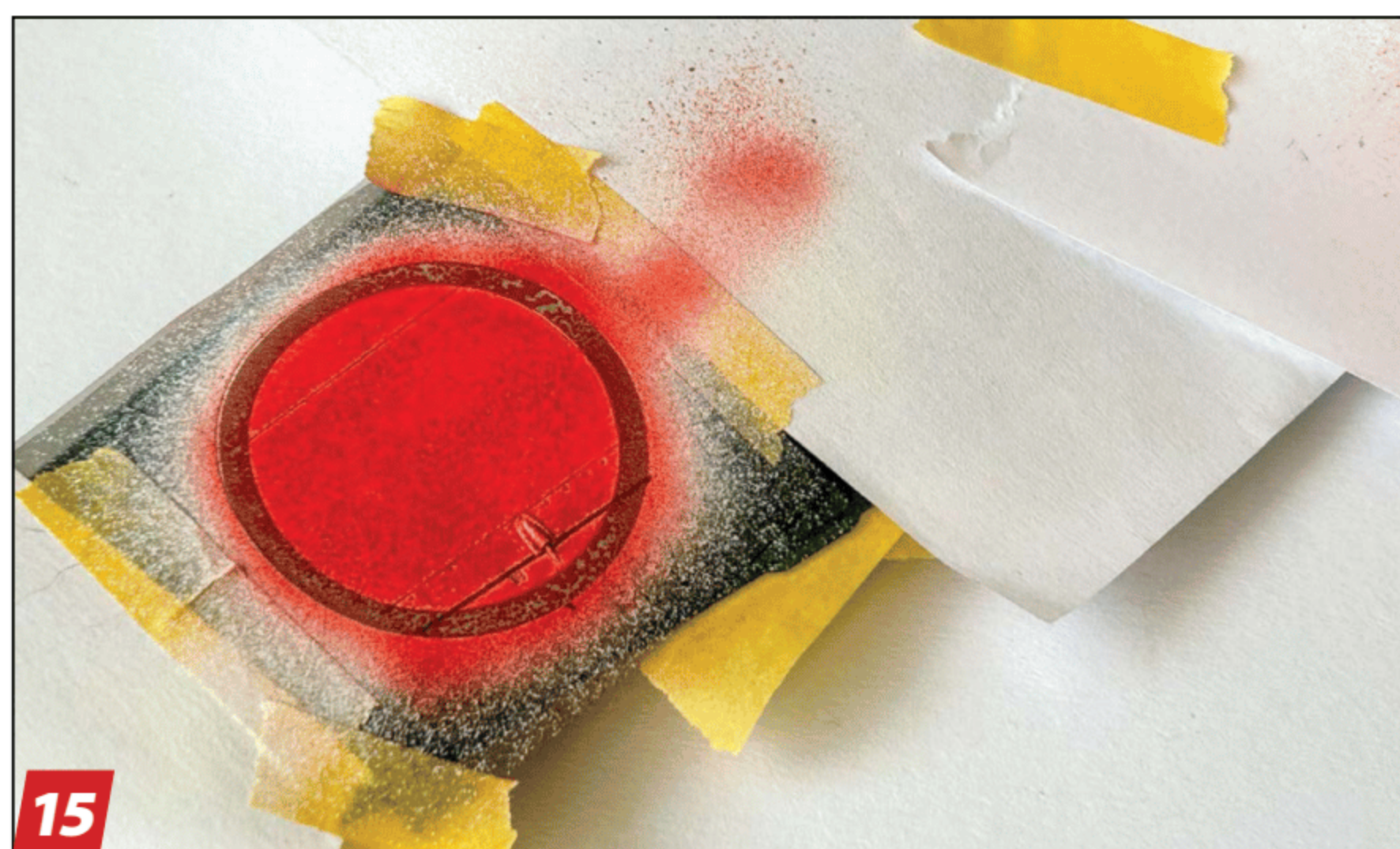
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Karasawa's Ki-84 bore the hand-painted motto "*Hissatsu*" in white, set against what appears to be a darker over-painted section, possibly covering an earlier marking. To replicate this, I masked around the area for a clean, hard line and airbrushed it black green.



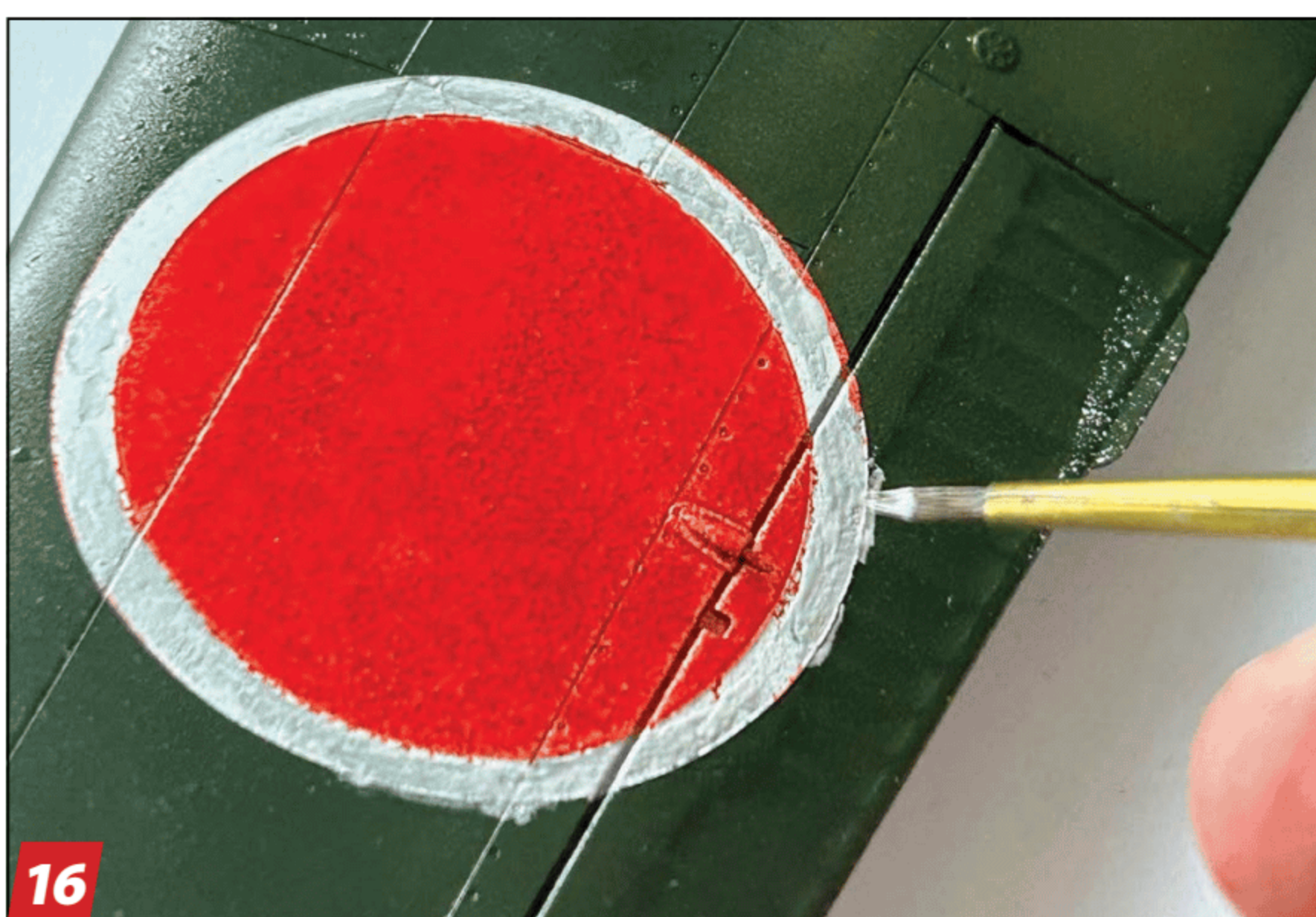
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I masked the wings' leading-edges and slowly built up several coats of Mr. Hobby Yellow (No. H413) for a clean, even finish. Similarly, I masked and painted the flap interiors Tamiya Chrome Silver (No. X-11).



15

Using the masks from the Montex set, I painted the *hinomaru*. I sprayed a base coat of flat white and then added the mask for the white ring around the outside. However, I used too much air pressure with Revell Aqua Color Fiery Red Silk (No. 36330), and it bled under the mask.



16

Cleaning up the subsequent mess took patience and a steady hand. I had to touch up the red, white, and the surrounding green. Lesson learned: always test masks — or consider decals. Then again, many wartime *hinomaru* were hand-painted and far from perfect, and that helped ease my mind.



17

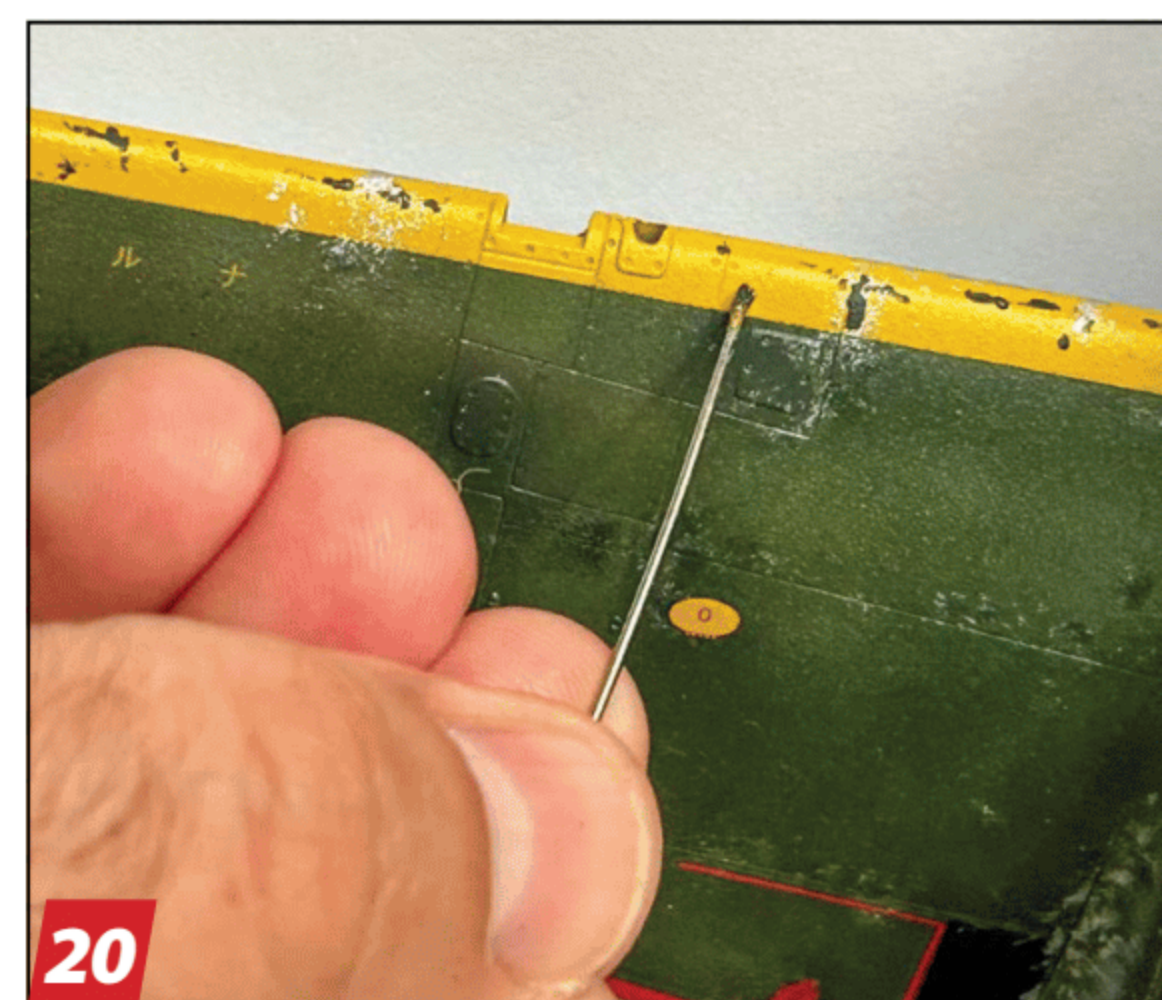
The Montex decals for the Japanese character on the fuselage went on flawlessly and settled nicely with Micro Set and Micro Sol setting solution. While the kit decals were thick, they were usable. I chose the red wing-edge lines for visual interest and touched them up with Revell Fiery Red enamel.



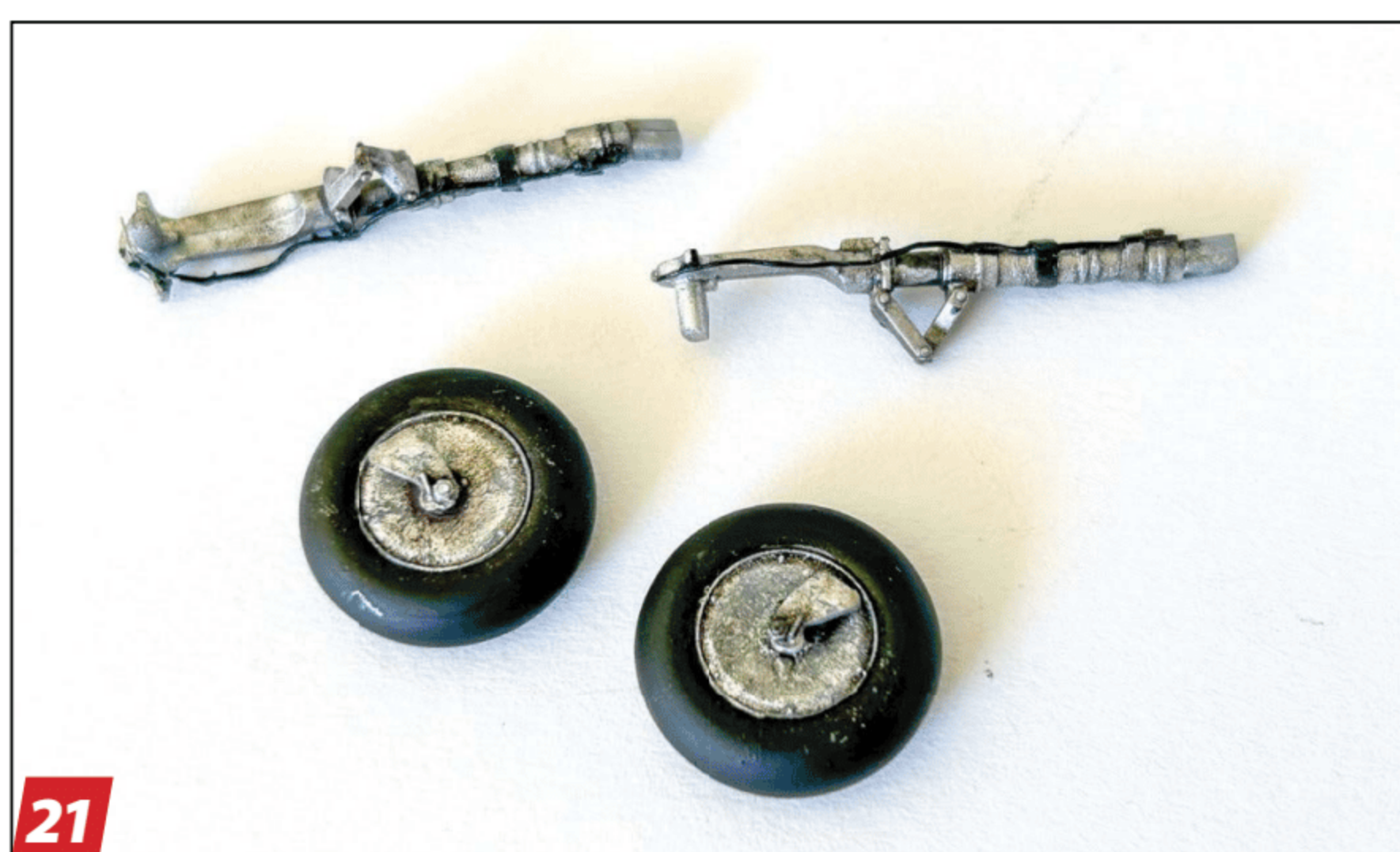
Time to go a bit mad with chipping! Using a worn brush and Tamiya Flat Aluminum, I hand-painted chips all over the plane — especially along panel lines and around the *hinomaru*. It may look a little much now, but this is just the first phase; it'll all be refined in later steps.



I made thin washes with the four greens I used earlier to paint the fuselage and wings. I applied them with a fine brush in multiple layers, letting each one dry fully before adding the next. The result was overlapping shades of green that built a worn, used surface.



On the yellow leading edges, I simulated chipping by carefully applying flat black with the tip of a sewing needle. The weathering is subtle and ties in with the rest of the fighter's appearance.



The landing gear and the interior of the gear doors were hand-painted Tamiya Chrome Silver, while the tires were finished with Mr. Hobby Flat Tire Black (No. H077). I flowed a wash made from Revell Flat Black enamel over the landing-gear and door details to add depth.



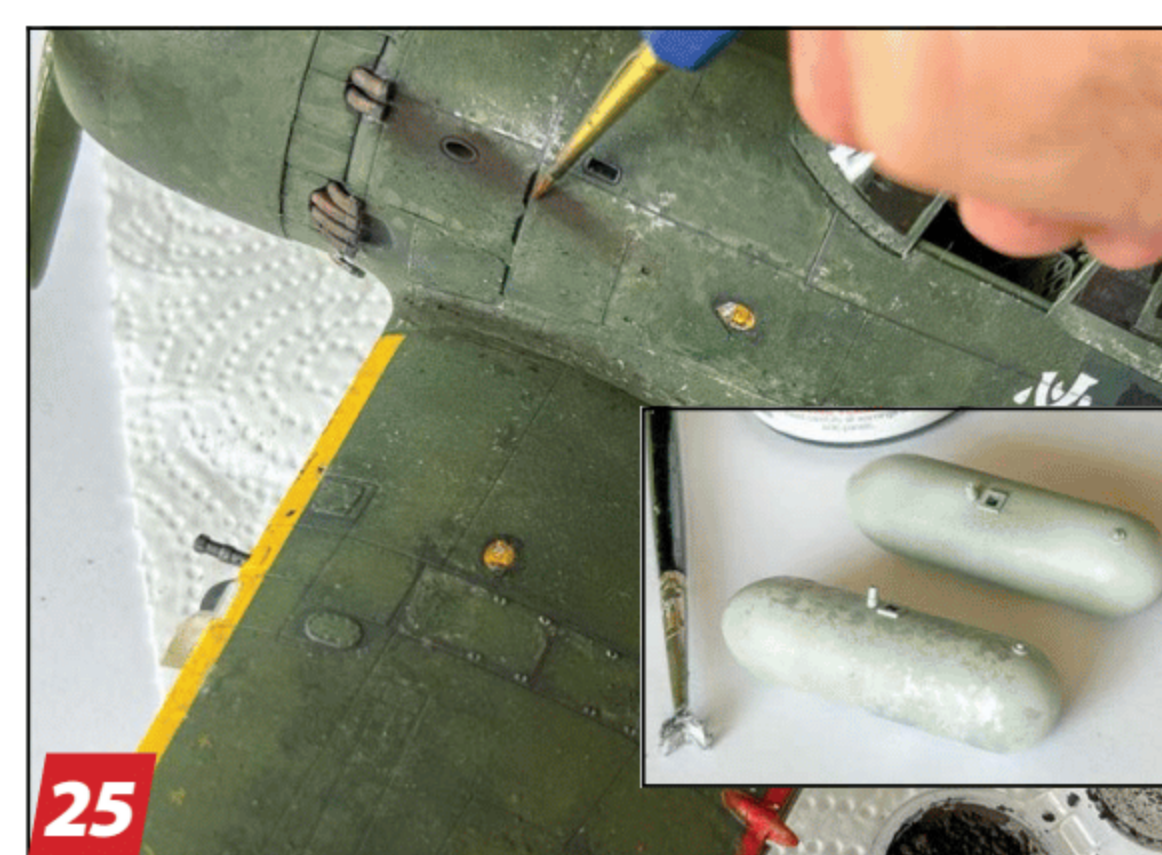
Happy with how everything looked so far, I sprayed the whole model with Tamiya Clear (No. X-22) to unify and protect all my work and provide a smooth surface for the final the stages.



At first, I used Ammo Acrylic Black Wash (No. A.MIG-0711) to pop the panel lines, but I was disappointed with the effect. So I turned to a tried-and-true technique: accenting select panel lines with a sharp, graphite pencil.



I let the pinwashes dry 24 hours and followed this by selectively dry-brushing salient areas with Revell Light Grey. Then I stretched sprue for antennas, glued them in place, and painted them Mr. Hobby Flat Tire Black.



The drop tanks looked too clean, so I simulated heavy chipping with an old brush and Tamiya Flat Aluminum. I pulled black pigment with a paintbrush in the direction of airflow along the fuselage aft of the cowl for exhaust stains.

FINAL THOUGHTS

AFTER A GLOSS COAT and two light coats of VMS Varnish Flat HD Top Coats, my Ki-84 *Hayate* "Frank" was finished. Even though the weathering may have looked a bit stark early on, I've learned to trust my process and keep going. When the final flat coat goes on, everything comes together. I'm happy I undertook this birthday project, and I'll proudly display my first WWII Japanese fighter. **FSM**

Strike **GUNDAM**

Improve a simple
mobile suit kit
to contest levels

BY NICO SURATOS





1 The Big Scale Strike Gundam kit was super simple and assembled like a huge HG kit. It had no inner frame, few points of articulation, and the parts were big and chunky.



2 PG Gundam kits are usually 1/60 scale and include a ton of detailed parts. Not this Big Scale kit. It's such a straightforward build that it only took me around 30 minutes to assemble the whole thing.



3 Assessing the shape of the model, it looked a bit awkward out of the box, with arms that were too long, a torso that was too short, and a waist wider than its chest. These would need to be fixed.

The Bandai Big Scale (1/60 scale) Strike Gundam came out in 2002 when *Gundam SEED* was the fresh, new mobile suit series. Out of the box, it's a pretty simple build. There are large molded parts, almost no articulation, and hardly any surface detail. Really, the whole thing kind of feels like a giant toy.

But that's exactly why I love it.

Kits like this are basically blank canvases. There's so much room to add your own details, panel lines, and custom parts without having to remove any existing details. How could I push this basic, almost toy-like kit and turn it into an attractive, feature heavy model that Bandai could have released?

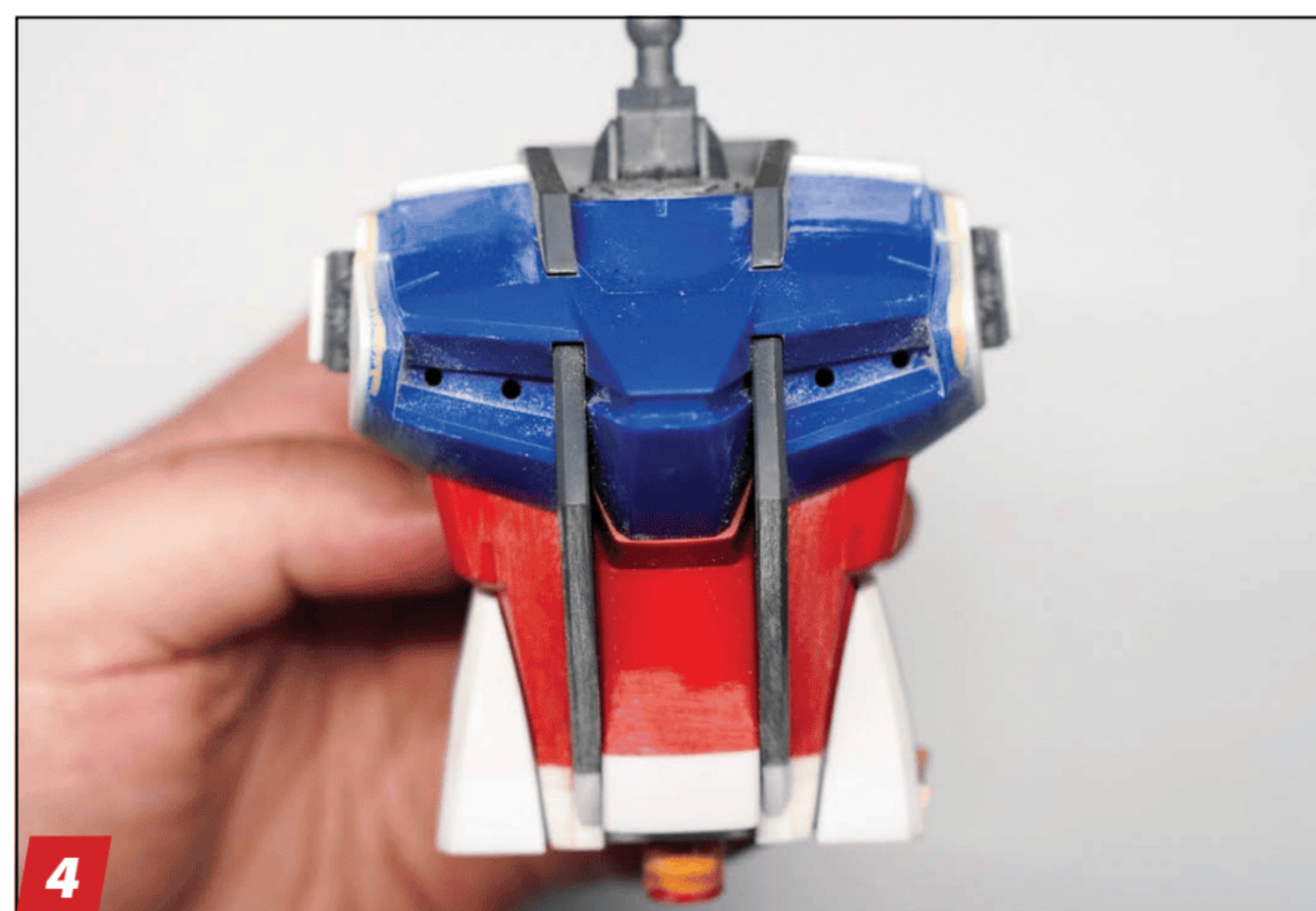
Off the top of my head, I'd need to adjust proportions, add panels and armor plates, reshape existing armor, and give it a custom paint job. A scratchbuilt base would definitely make this a model to remember. With my to-do list written and tools arranged, I got started.

Fixing proportions

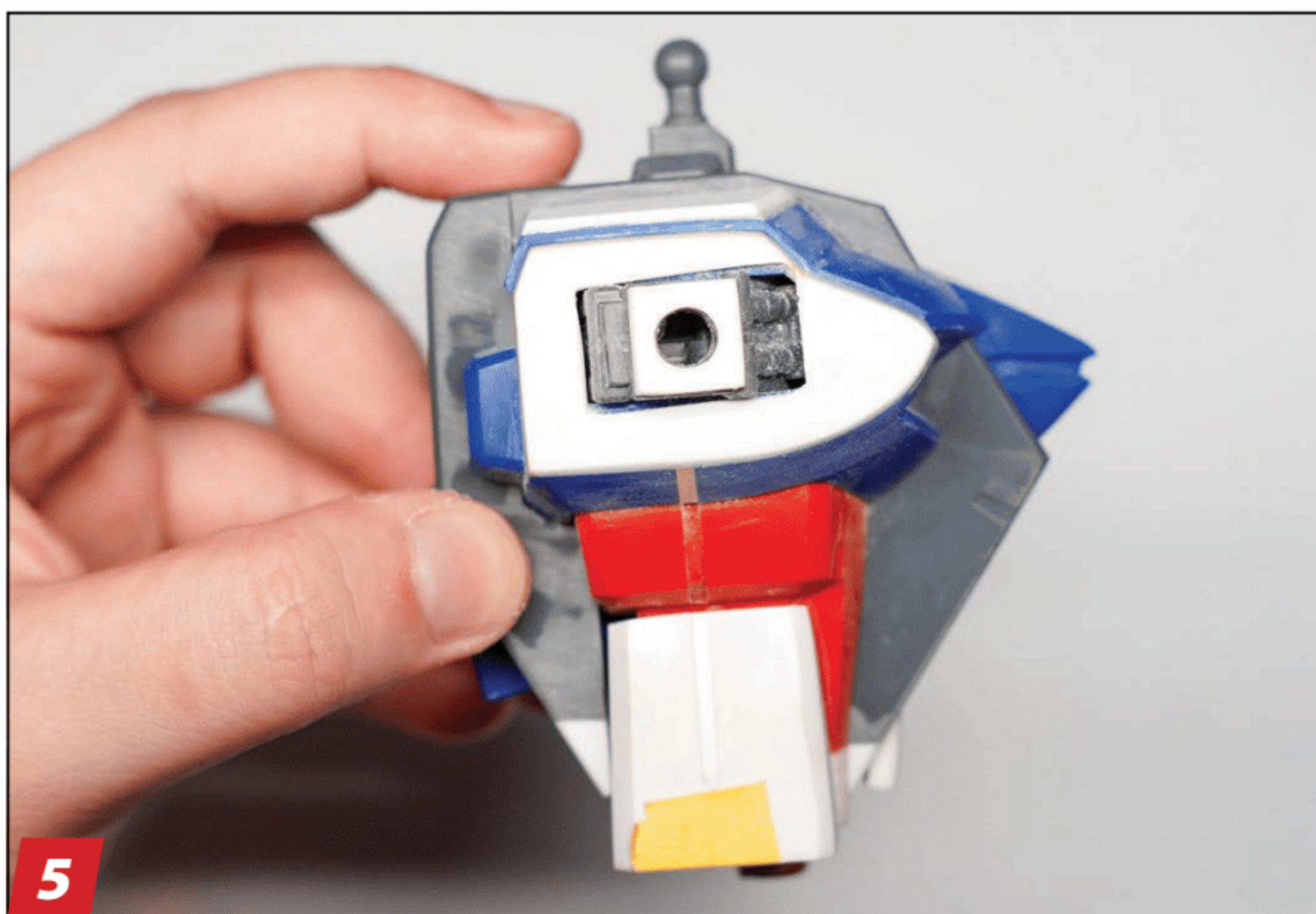
It may seem backward from most model building, but before you begin customizing a Gundam kit, you should put it together to see what you're working with, **1**. There are levels of difficulty for Gundam kits, and this is typically paired with scale — High Grade (HG) kits, the easiest to build, are usually 1/144 scale; Master Grade

(MG) are often 1/100 scale and have better detail and working parts; Perfect Grade (PG) are top-end and roll in at 1/60 scale. This "Big Scale" kit from 2002 is not a PG kit, so lacks detail and articulation. It's also pretty easy to build.

How easy? A PG kit should usually break down into at least four separate parts. On this Big Scale kit, it's just



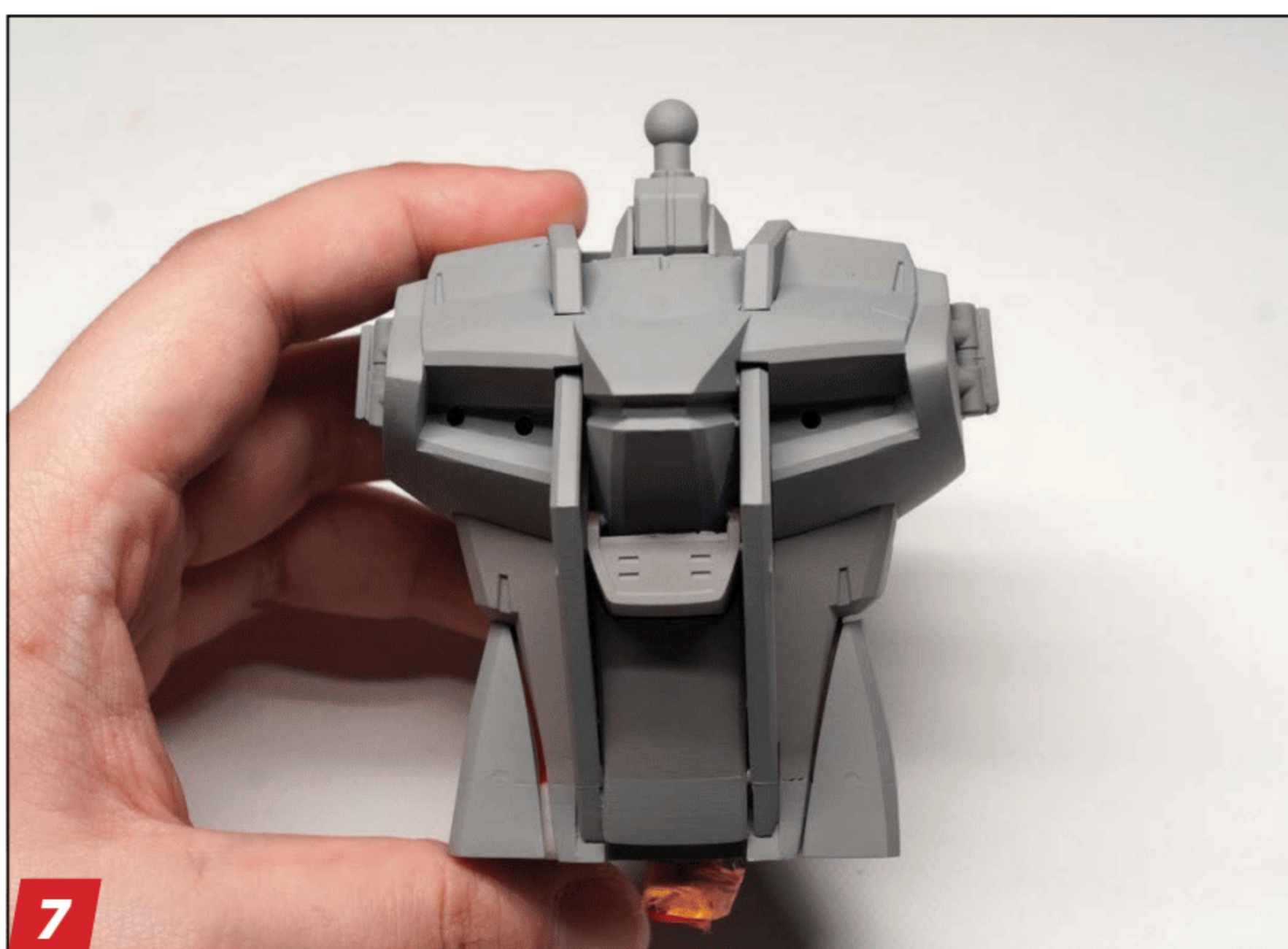
4 I added 8mm to the height of the upper body with stacked styrene sheet sanded to shape. This small change was enough to make the chest appear more proportionate to the rest of the body.



5 After widening the upper chest with 1mm styrene sheet on both sides, I also added a 1mm extension to the inner frame for the shoulder to maintain the same distance from the side of the chest as before.



6 The top of the torso needed bulking up to help the head look nestled into its position and lower the shoulders a bit. I glued sections of 1mm styrene sheet there and shaped them to blend into the rest of the work. This gave the Strike a cooler, more muscular appearance.



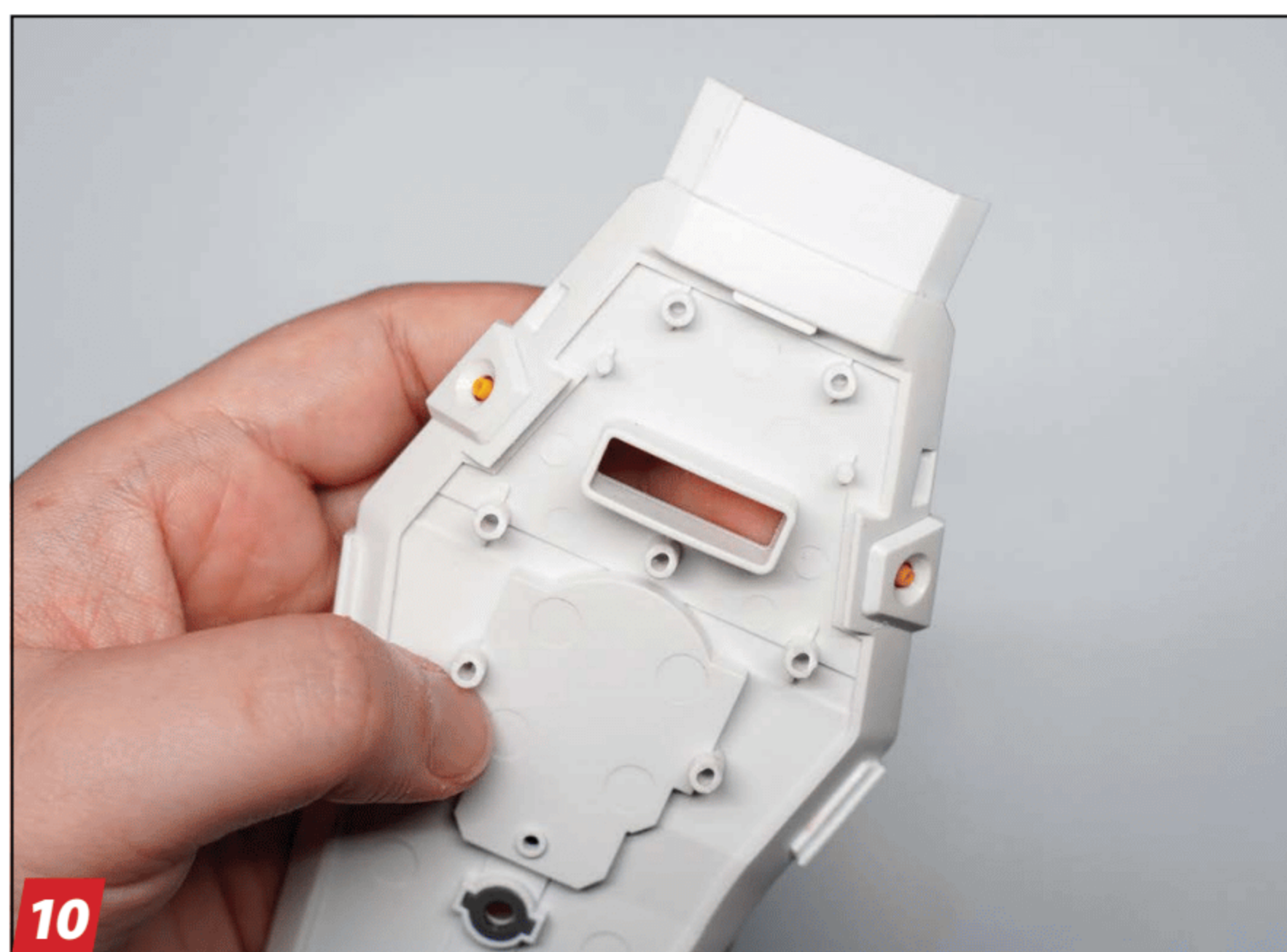
7 With everything primed gray, it's easier to spot issues than when looking at bare plastic of different colors and textures. After the primer dried, I went over the Strike's surface under a bright light and marked a few spots that required attention and filed or sanded as needed.



8 I accentuated panel lines on the Strike's head. Instead of removing the seam that ran down the middle of the head, I turned it into a panel line, which not only saved time but also fit the mobile suit's overall aesthetic.



9 Scribing new panel lines is one of my favorite techniques to detail a Gundam. Because this kit had such large surfaces, panel scribing was the perfect way to add visual interest and break up the monotony of big planes without needing to add a bunch of extra parts.



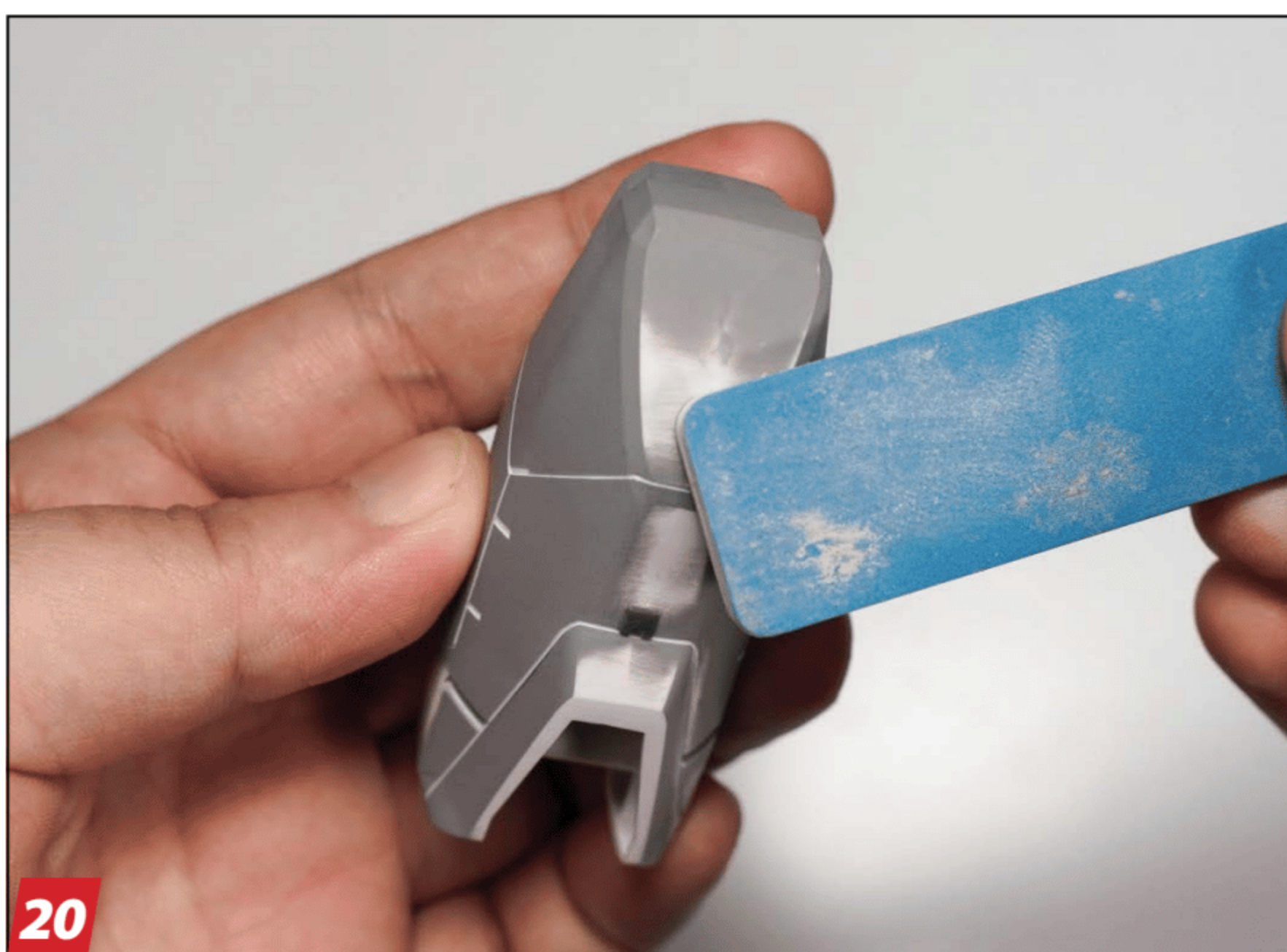
10 Making changes to size on one part of a model can throw off proportions with another. After extending the torso, the shield looked too short. So I added an inch in height by making an armor panel at the top from styrene sheet.



A couple dozen panels made from .5mm sheet styrene decorate the hangar walls. I puzzled them together, wanting them to look appropriately sci-fi. Just a touch of thin cement locked them in place.



Adding a second floor and catwalk to the scene made the base more complex and interesting. It's something you see in the anime series all the time and helps guide the viewer's eye across the scene and it's different levels. And again, it was easy to build because it's all styrene.



Primer highlights surface flaws. I sanded and cleaned up any imperfections I saw and then sprayed those parts with another coat of primer. Priming the model provides a single color to start from rather than painting directly over the multicolored kit parts.

them to painting clips. I arrange the parts on a cat scratcher board, keeping parts evenly spaced and organized, **15**.

Making the hangar

The Strike needed a base, and I wanted it built before I started painting, just to streamline the process. To display the mobile suit in a hangar, as seen in the anime series, I started with XPS foam for the basic structure and covered it with styrene sheet and plastic parts from my spares, **16**. Instead of the usual square or rectangular base, I went with an octagon. To me, the angles added a "techie" vibe.

Styrene sheet .5mm and 1mm thick provided an easy way to cover the floors and walls and add visual interest. I cut the sheet into shapes to promote a sci-fi, mechanical appearance. Using styrene sheet meant everything was the same material, and all I had to do was turn to plastic cement as my glue of choice, **17**.

To detail and layer the hangar walls, cut 0.5mm styrene sheet into the sorts of shapes you often see in the anime hangar backgrounds and fit them together like puzzle pieces. You can cut .5mm easily with a hobby knife (or even scissors), so it's perfect for making lots of tiny panels and interesting shapes without much effort, **18**.

A second floor complete with catwalk adds dimension and visual interest to the hangar. One of the things I love about hangar dioramas is the more you build onto it, the more interesting and realistic it becomes, **19**.

I 3D-printed 1/72 scale crates, acetylene tanks, and maintenance crew and personnel. I could have scaled them to 1/60, but they were close enough to help sell the scale and dress the hangar.

Painting the Strike Gundam

With the hangar built, I primed everything gray. Like I said, it's a perfect color for finding flaws before painting. For the

smoothest finish possible, I spent time after priming to inspect each part or subassembly for scratches, seams, mold lines, and other surface imperfections. When I spotted something, I cleaned it up with a sanding pad before a second coat of primer, **20**.

I wanted to keep the original Strike color scheme and chose lacquer colors that closely matched. While airbrushing, I focused on applying flat, uniform paint layers to keep the finish crisp and polished and avoid obscuring panel lines, **21**.

Normally, I skip masking and do color separations by hand. However, for this build, I wanted to avoid any brush strokes or imperfections. I masked with Tamiya tape to keep edges between colors crisp and clean, **22**.

After finishing painting, I let everything cure for 24 hours and then assembled the model, careful not to damage the paint. There are no decals made specifically for the Big Scale Strike Gundam, so I took the water-slide decals from a PG Strike Gundam and used those. The parts didn't match exactly, but I didn't let that stop me. I looked at the shape of the decals and let my eye tell me where the markings would look best on the model, **23**.

With the decals down, I clear coated the Strike with Vallejo Polyurethane Matt Varnish (No. 27.651). It toned down the gloss lacquers, unified the markings and pinwash, and protected all my work to this point, **24**.

Painting the hangar

I primed the hangar black to create natural shadows and depth. For an industrial, worn look, I airbrushed Hiro PLAS Aluminum (No. 9202) on the panels, concentrating on the centers and letting the black just show through the paint near the edges, **25**.

To build up the color on the hangar floor and walls, I mixed a custom dark gray from ChromaAir Transparent Black (No. CA003-02) and Cool



21 Focusing on applying uniform coats helps highlight panel lines, scribed details, and armor separations without any distractions from gradients, pre-shading, and post-shading. Using lacquers with an airbrush also gave me fast drying times and durable coverage, perfect for a build that I wanted to look sharp and clean.



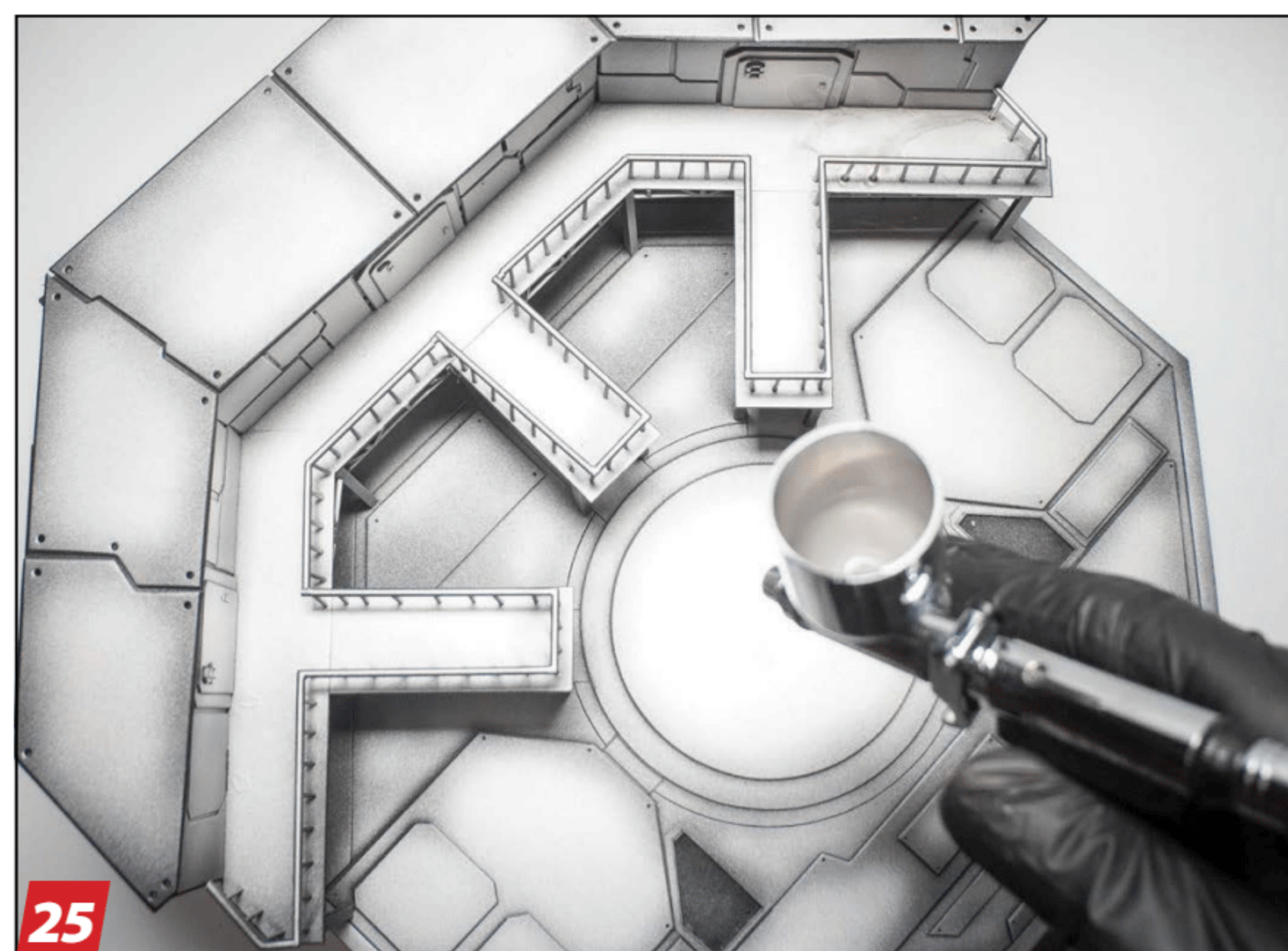
22 Gundam mobile suits are colorful and often have a lot of bright colors right next to each other. Tamiya masking tape carefully placed over areas you don't want to paint can provide clean color separation. When you have masked the appropriate areas, airbrush your next color.



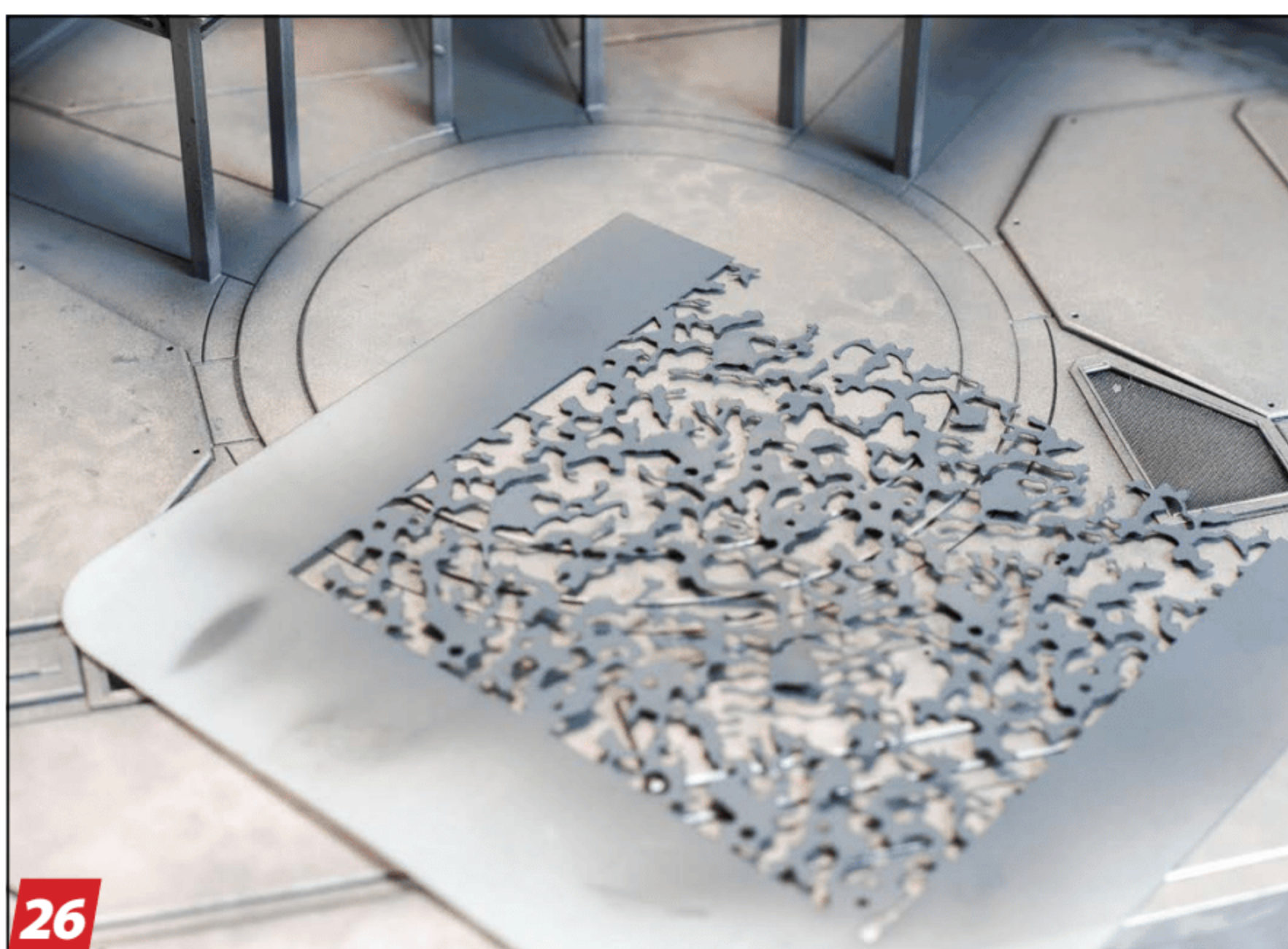
23 I applied water-slide decals to the mobile suit, and this is when it really starts to come alive. Some modelers will put a coat of gloss varnish to seal their decals before running panel lines. In this case, I flowed Tamiya Panel Line Accent Color Black (No. 87131) right over the decals, let it dry, and cleaned up with lighter fluid.



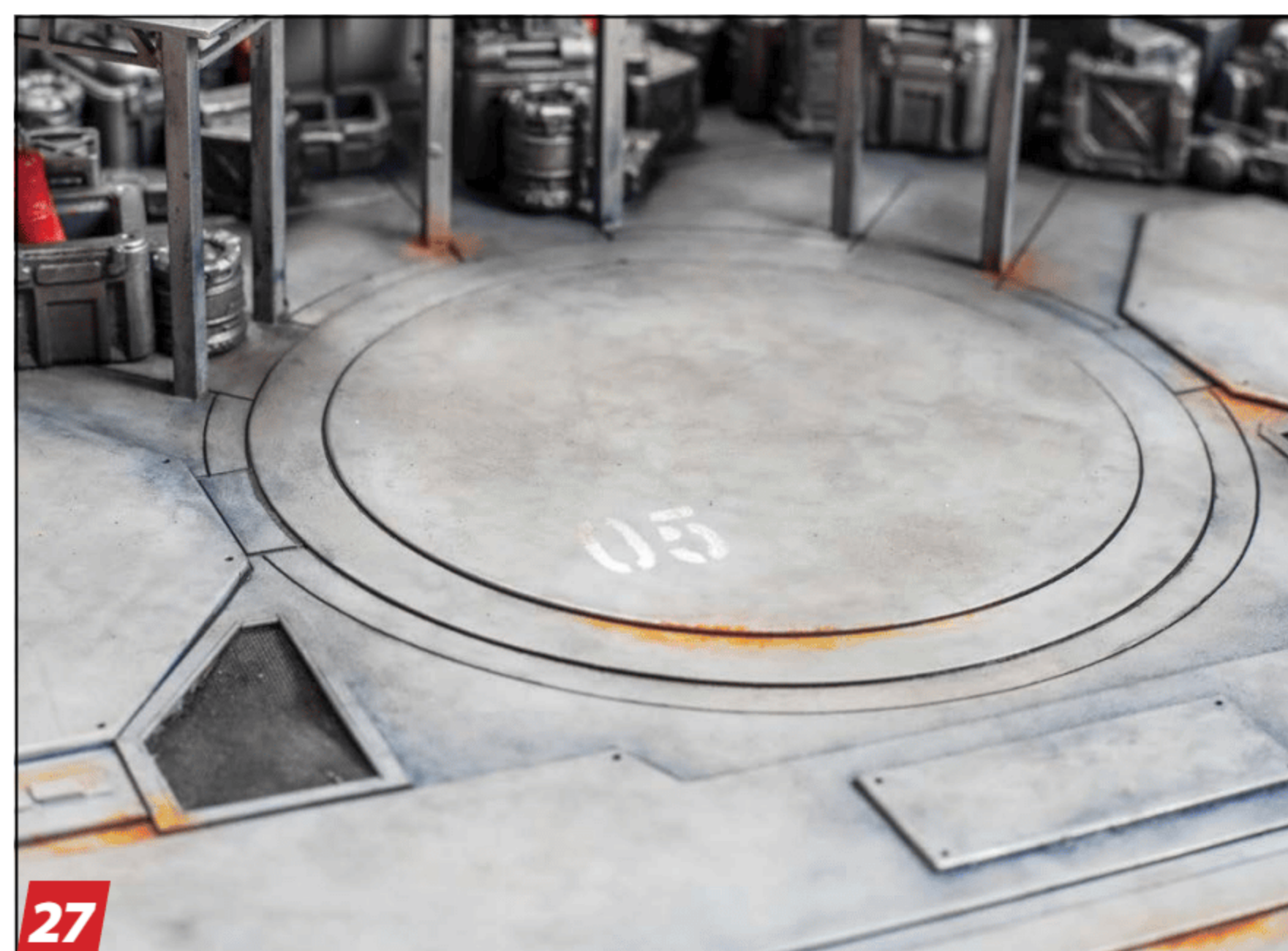
24 A top layer of flat clear varnish provided a smooth, protective coat that unified the model and completely eliminated the toy-like feel that it had at the beginning.



25 After priming the base black, I airbrushed it with aluminum lacquer, concentrating on panel centers. This approach added interest to the panels that looks stark and a bit clinical, now, but will be toned down with additional paint layers.



26 I airbrushed a custom gray through a 1/48 scale Vallejo Weathered Paint stencil creating a random effect, letting the metallic paint below peek through, showing wear without needing other weathering techniques.



27 To finish off the diorama, I applied oil washes all over the base. This emphasized panel lines, deepened shadows, and added subtle color variation to the mostly gray surface. I also added rust washes in select areas to make the hangar feel older and more used.

White (No. CA001-02) and airbrushed random patterns on the floor using a Vallejo Stencil (No. ST-AIR001). I let enough of the aluminum color beneath peek through to show wear and exposed metal, **26**.

Now that the base had a more naturally layered look, without having to resort to

chipping or sponge weathering, I applied artist-oil washes to emphasize panels lines, deepen shadows, and add subtle variations to the gray surfaces, **27**.

The crew figures received an orange base coat — the color of their uniforms — and I finished them by hand with an

assortment of colors. The hangar dressing was base-coated dark gray. I dry-brushed them The Army Painter Warpaints Fanatic Metallic Gun Metal (WP3193P) to highlight the edges and raised surfaces. Then I went over the work with a black wash for shadows and contrast.

Lastly, I glued the crates, boxes, tanks, and crew to the hangar base. The figures added so much life to the diorama, and I recommend adding them to any sort of scene like this. Finally, I airbrushed the entire base with flat clear varnish, **28**, and added the Strike Gundam to complete the scene.

Paint and Airbrush

Nazca Flame Red

(No. NC-003)

Nazca Joint Gray

(No. NC-007)

Gaia Notes Ultra Blue

(No. 004)

Hiro PLAS Infinity White

(No. 9101)

Hiro Plas Bumblebee

(No. 9122)

Hiro Plas Urban Gray

(No. 9103)

Hiro Plas Blue Gray

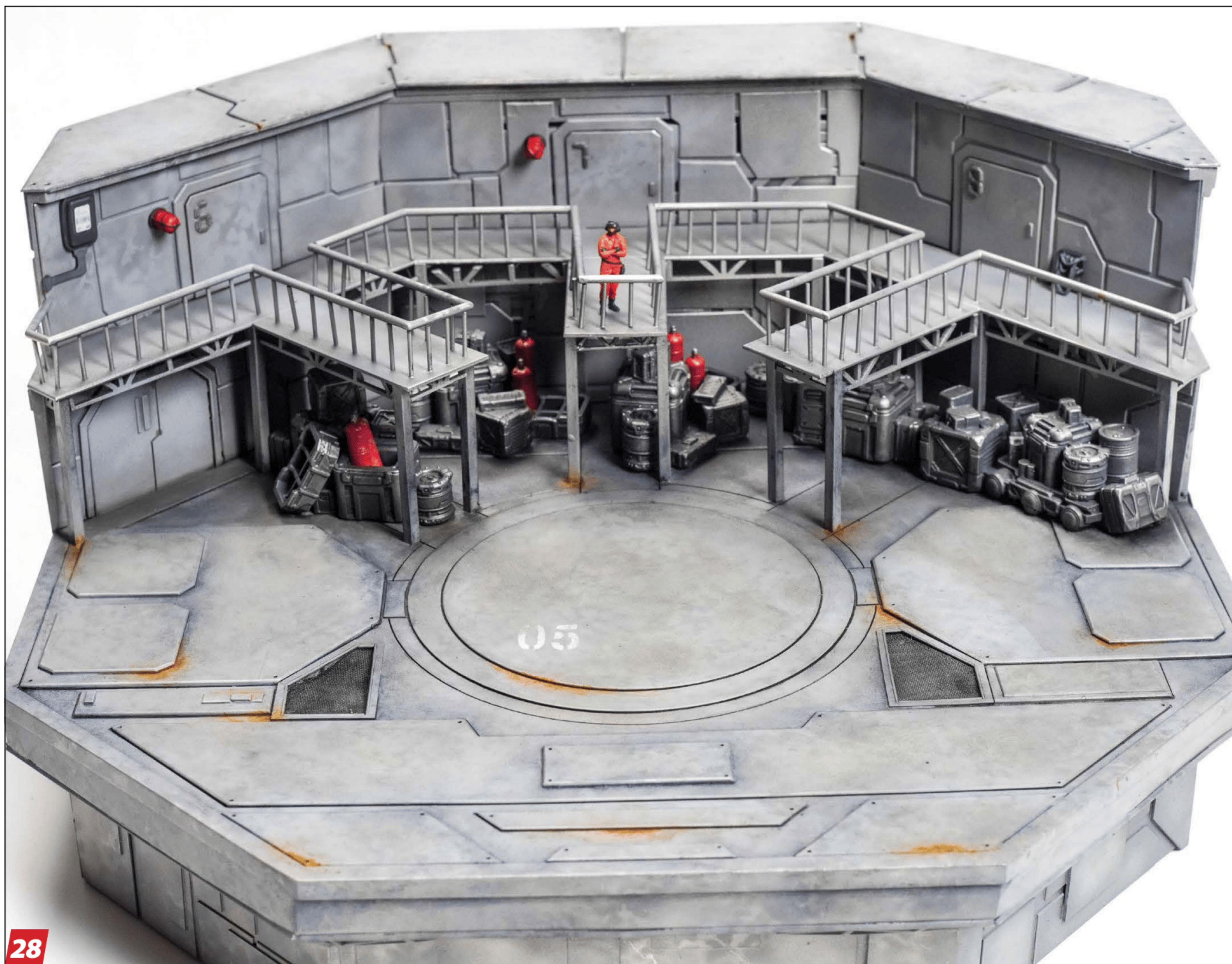
(No. 9146)

GSI Creos Procon Boy (No.

PS-289)

FINAL THOUGHTS

AND THAT'S IT! This project started as a simple, Big Scale kit that looked too much like a toy, but with the right tools, techniques, and a bit of imagination, it became something far more detailed and dynamic. It's always fun taking a basic kit and pushing it further, and this Strike Gundam was the perfect canvas for that. Often, all it takes is a little extra effort to turn a simple model into something seriously cool.



28

The last step was to glue all the finished crew and hangar dressing to the base. When I had them placed where I wanted them, I flat-coated the whole base and called it done. **FSM**

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Arma Hobby P-39 Airacobra Recon

The new Arma Hobby 1/48 scale P-39 Airacobra Recon plastic model kit includes three gray and one clear plastic sprue, die-cut Kabuki tape canopy masks, nose weights, and 3D-printed nose vents, camera lenses, and scribing template. Arma provides a QR code in the instructions that links to STL files for you to print a pilot's seat with harness, cockpit levers, gun barrels, and exhaust pipes if you have a 3D printer. Surface detail was excellent, however flash, soft cockpit detail, and larger than average sprue gates reveal the kit's short-run nature.

I pre-painted most of the interior parts before starting assembly. First, you have to twist the nose-gun receivers into place. I snapped one off in the process. I then lost Part A7 to "the Carpet Monster" when adding it to the rudder pedals. The remainder of the cockpit went together without issue, although I found test-fitting and sanding most of the parts imperative.

I separated the instrument decals into smaller sections and used Solvaset to get them to conform. I also had to paint the backs of the seat-belt decals with Pledge Floor Gloss (PFG), as they did not want to adhere to the seat. Enlarge the four small holes in the forward face of Part A12. Not weight reduction holes, they'll receive part of the nose gear strut later in the build. A floor-mounted camera control switch box is not provided in the kit.

The nose weights would not allow the fuselage to close. Surgery to shift the

weight lower and slightly aft fixed the issue. I used the tip of a punch to scribe the camera bay opening and drilled it out with a No. 15 bit. The provided template makes this a simple process, and the 3D-printed camera looks great. The instructions have notes that indicate panel lines and scoops to remove and fill in several areas, including two on the nose that get replaced by extremely delicate 3D-printed vents.

When you clip the upper wing from the sprue, *do not* remove what look like pour stubs along the leading edge of the wing root. They're the upper lips of the inboard air intakes. Also, wait to install the rudder to the vertical stabilizer, as shown in the instructions, until the stabilizer has been glued to the fuselage. While the trailing edge of the fuselage-to-wing joint fit nicely, the fuselage was too wide along the forward third of the wing root. Multiple rounds of fitting and sanding removed much of the structure under the cockpit and portions of Part B40 to achieve an acceptable fit.

Step 20 has you bend the nose gear retraction structure (Part A13). I broke this part three times trying to install the completed strut. Reinforce the bend now. I used a grinding bit in a rotary tool to thin the spinner (Part B53) from the inside until it fit over the prop.

I left off the cockpit doors for final assembly and used upholsterer's padding to mask the intakes, gear wells, and cockpit. Going the unconventional route, I chose a bare-metal and olive drab scheme. The kit

decals went down nicely over gloss clear with help from Micro Set and Micro Sol.

After the decals, I added the landing gear, cockpit doors, and exhausts. Both sets of exhaust pipes have the same part number, but they are not interchangeable. The location lugs are off-center to match the location slots buried in the fuselage sides.

The finished Arma Hobby 1/48 scale P-39 Airacobra Recon kit looks great, but scales out slightly undersized by a few millimeters. While you'll need to do some extra work along the way, Arma's innovative approach results in a nice P-39.

- Andy Keyes



Kit No.: 40013 **Scale:** 1/48 **Mfr.:** Arma Hobby (Sample courtesy of manufacturer) **Price:** \$64 **Comments:** Injection-molded plastic (light gray, clear); 163 parts (5 3D-printed resin; 3 ball bearings); die-cut masks; decals **Pros:** Includes nose weights **Cons:** Flatly molded parts needed reshaping and they all broke; troublesome parts fit



Revell *Stranger Things* Jim Hopper's Chevy Blazer

Revell's entirely new mold of an American icon, the Chevy K5 Blazer, makes its debut as the 1/25 scale *Stranger Things* Jim Hopper's '85 Chevy K5 Blazer plastic model kit. Licensed for the hit horror/sci-fi streaming franchise, it could also serve as an excellent base for the police Blazer from the first two *Jaws* movies. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

As with most automotive kits, you start by building the K5's small-block Chevy V8 engine, followed by the frame and drivetrain. The engine details are great. The crisply molded parts and smart engineering

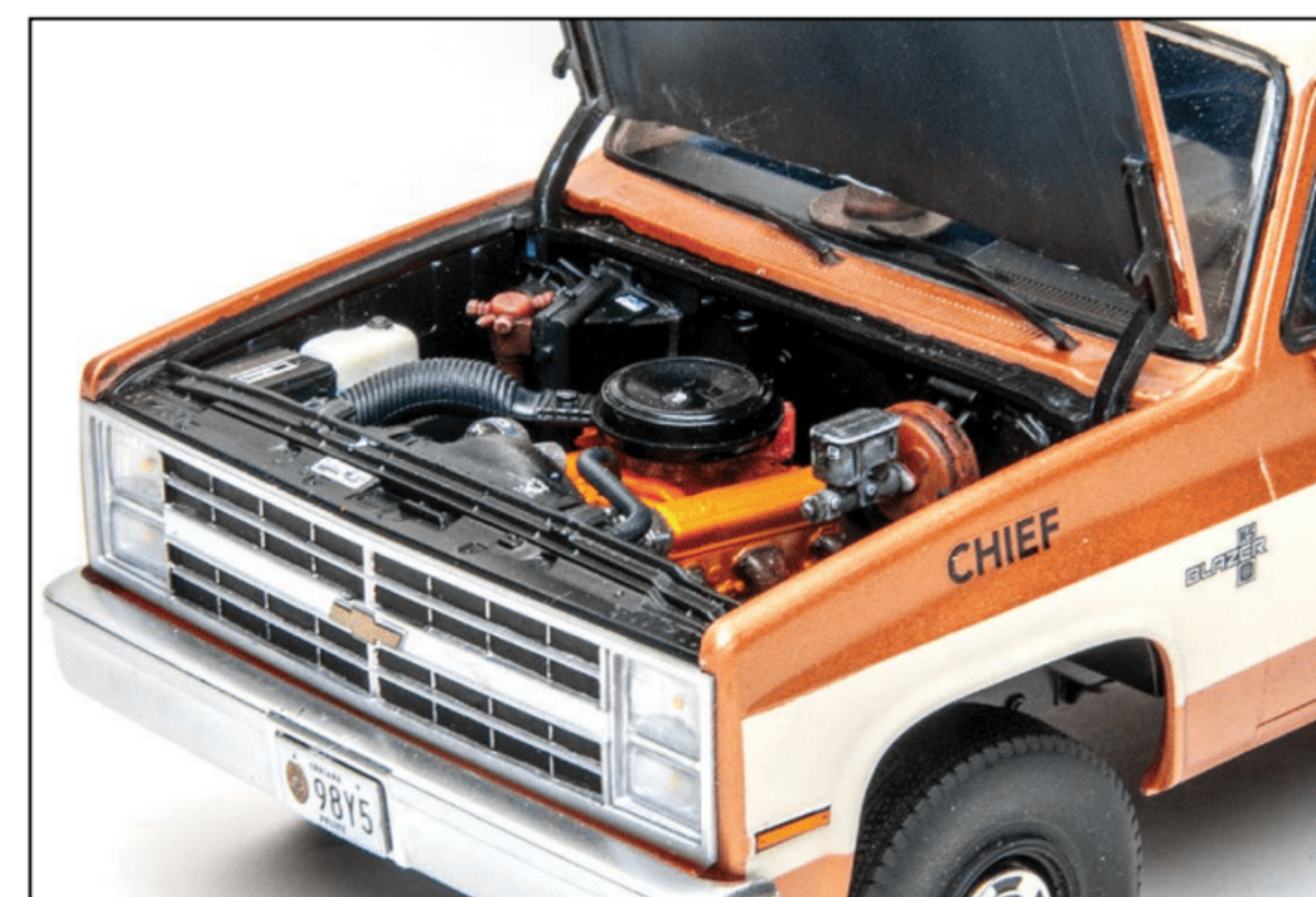
retain the engine's features and keep the assembly easy. Built as designed, you can't position the front wheels. But it wouldn't take much modification to make them turn.

The frame and drivetrain build up quickly. I kept the frame and axles as a single assembly and the engine and differential as a separate assembly for easy painting.

The interior continues to delight with ease of assembly. Each seat consists of two parts: the main seat and the seat back. These are the only parts I used any filler on for this model. It may not have been necessary, but the seam was a little more noticeable than I liked. The remaining parts, including the body, required minimal cleanup in preparation for paint.

When it came to paint, I stuck with my airbrushing favorites, Tamiya and Mr. Hobby. For the seats and interior, I found the closest match for that '80s vinyl blue was Mr. Color Gundam Color Titans Blue 2 (No. UG-17). It is the perfect blue, in my opinion, for the real seat color.

The next color I struggled to find a suitable match for was the primary body color. The kit calls for a light beige, which might be the closest color. But I found this to be too light and not metallic. Although iconic to the show, there aren't many great scenes to use as a reference for color. The best episodes for this are the first episode of season two and the second episode of season three. I experimented with a few different colors and mixes, but ultimately settled on Tamiya Dark Copper (No. XF-28) for the main



body and Tamiya Racing White (No. LP-39) with a few drops of Dark Yellow (No. XF-60) for a slightly darker tone.

After applying the Chevrolet decal to the back hatch, I noticed the show's car has no badging. Therefore, to be more accurate, leave off Decal 44. In the color call-outs, the bottom of the light bar is shown painted red and blue to match the top. To replicate Hopper's Blazer, leave it clear.

I used building and painting the Revell 1/25 scale *Stranger Things* Jim Hopper's 1985 Chevy K5 Blazer plastic model kit as an excuse to rewatch the Netflix show before the final season dropped. Building the model took the first season, and painting and final assembly took me into season three. I spent 30 enjoyable hours on this build. If you are a fan of *Stranger Things* or the Chevy K5 Blazer, this kit is a true winner, and I'd recommend it to any modeler.

— Chris Cortez



Kit No.: 14558 **Scale:** 1/25 **Mfr.:** Revell (Sample courtesy of Carrera Revell of Americas) **Price:** \$29.99 **Comments:** Injection-molded plastic (white, chrome, clear); 168 parts (4 vinyl rubber tires); decals **Pros:** Crisp detail; call-backs to the show **Cons:** Shallow panel lines around the doors and rear end

ICM SdKfz 251/1 Ausf B



ICM has added another variation to its German halftracks, which began in 2018. This version, the ICM 1/35 scale SdKfz 251/1 Ausf B plastic model kit, is a troop carrier. The only difference between the Ausf A and B variants was that the rear vision slits in the troop compartment were eliminated for the latter. This required ICM to mold a new top half for this kit, but it includes the original Ausf A version, too.

The kit's 24-page instructions cover 103 steps. The bottom half of the kit builds from four flat pieces with positive locators that ensure a square and level base for the rest of the halftrack. Construction continues with adding the angular sides of the body, and once again, ICM provides good positive locators.

While the engine looks great and displays plenty of detail, unfortunately, it got

covered up as soon as the engine doors were added. If I were to build this kit again, I would scratchbuild the doors so they are scale thin and leave them open — the engine is worth seeing.

The firewall between the engine and crew compartment houses plenty of detail, too. Construction continues from front to back, adding bench seats and other equipment along the walls of the bottom half of the crew compartment. Given that most of this will be difficult to paint with the top on, I painted the interior and details as I built them.

The exterior and interior details of the top half of the vehicle were added, starting with the vision slits and engine compartment doors. The kit provided five rifles and two light machine guns to attach to the top half, so once again, I painted these as I added them.

The most challenging part of the build came next: mating the top half with the bottom. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get them to seat neatly together. Eventually, I superglued and clamped the parts to keep them from springing apart. Carefully add the rear doors so they swing freely.

Finally, I added the running gear and road wheels for the tracked portion of the vehicle. Both the tires and the tracks are molded in soft plastic. The tracks are beautifully molded without seams, and I glued them to the top of the road wheels to simulate the distinctive sag you see with these halftracks. The front tires have a slight seam down the middle, but it was easily sanded off. However, there are no sidewall details on the tires.

The instructions provide four unique finishing options: three are from the

Eastern Front 1941, including a plain gray version, a gray variant with brown camouflage, and a gray version with whitewash camouflage. Finally, there's a version from North Africa that is gray with middle stone mud camo from 1942. I chose the basic gray variant. As I mentioned before, I had to paint this as I built it due to the open top and the difficulty reaching most of the details after the top is attached.

I really enjoyed the ICM 1/35 scale SdKfz 251/1 Ausf B, right up to the point where I had to join the top and bottom halves. I'm sure I needed to remove some of the vertical panels between the two parts, but I couldn't find the offending part(s) and eventually just muscled it together with superglue. Nevertheless, it comes with a wealth of detail and looks good when finished. However, a lot of that detail includes small, delicate parts, which leads me to suggest this kit should only be tackled if you've got several finished models under your belt.

— David Nelson



Kit: 35106 **Scale:** 1/35 **Price:** \$75.99
Mfr.: ICM (Sample courtesy of manufacturer) **Comments:** Injection-molded plastic (light gray, clear); 231 parts (vinyl tires and tracks); decals **Pros:** Minimal cleanup; good fit and engineering; great decals **Cons:** Somewhat vague instructions; tough final assembly



HobbyBoss TBM-3 Avenger

Nicknamed the “Turkey” because of its ungainly appearance, the TBM Avenger was more of an able bird of prey when on the attack, serving as a torpedo bomber during World War II.

The new HobbyBoss 1/72 scale TBM-3 Avenger plastic model kit offers a highly detailed model of the most common Avenger. The crisp and beautifully detailed parts present numerous options, like multiple armament loadouts and folding wings. The kit also includes a handful of photo-etched metal (PE) and a set of pre-cut adhesive masks, although most are slightly oversized. Only a closed canopy is supplied.

A fully detailed turret that requires careful assembly and painting rounds out the complicated interior. Be aware that you need to paint the turret prior to fuselage assembly because it can't be added after you've closed up the fuselage — it should be put in place before the aft shelf (Part A15).

You get to choose a torpedo, bombs, or an extra fuel tank for the remarkably detailed weapons bay. In hindsight, I would leave off the numerous side support girders until the bay was in the fuselage and then add them — I broke many during assembly and painting. I painted the entire interior with Real Color U.S. Interior Yellow Green (No. RC262) — the instructions incorrectly call out the dull, dark green used in earlier Avengers. Note that the radio operator's bench seat in the lower fuselage (Part B15) is incorrectly placed. It should be even with the door. I cut mine in half and stowed it along the left fuselage half.

Before assembling the fuselage, take some time to trim the extremely tight-fitting slots for the wing spars. Also, I found all the clear parts required significant trim-

ming — this is especially true for the tunnel gun side windows. The kit includes an etched antenna mast shown in an incorrect position, so check any photo of an Avenger to see where it should be mounted. And the kit includes, but the instructions do not mention, an injection-molded option (Part B8), if you'd prefer to use it instead.

I decided to model the folded wing option for which spars are provided, and HobbyBoss even included the small doors on the wingtip that open to allow the wings to be cabled to the horizontal stabilizer. They are incorrectly depicted as a one-piece door, but they split in half, so check your references. I think parts B11 and B12 are intended to be cables, but they appear more like Allen wrenches, so I left them off. I assembled, painted, and decaled the wings separately from the fuselage. I was not a big fan of the kit's somewhat clunky rockets. If I built this kit again, I would cut the rockets off and just use the stub mounts. HobbyBoss includes a pitot tube for each wingtip, but Avengers only had one on the port wing.

There are a few detail errors in the color marking instructions when compared to period photos: The yellow cowl ring is wider than depicted; there is no “148” on the nose; and the side number should be segmented, not solid.

The decals went on with no fuss and included numerous stencils. Even the landing gear legs are marked! Unfortunately, the arrow marking on the upper starboard wing is not included. I made a mask using a copy of the rudder arrow and airbrushed it.

The instructions wrap up with assem-



Kit No.: 87274 **Scale:** 1/72 **Mfr.:**

HobbyBoss (Sample courtesy of Model Rectifier Corp.) **Price:** \$55.99

Comments: Injection-molded plastic (gray, clear); 191 parts (11 photo-etched metal); die-cut masks; decals

Pros: Level of detail; good engineering and fit (except clear parts); masks **Cons:** Clear parts require trimming; clunky rockets; finicky turret assembly; oversized masks; weapons bay doors don't fit well using hinge detail

bling the wings, which went well, except I broke one of the wing spars in two. That side's wing angle is a little off, but you shouldn't have to worry about that if you don't break a spar.

It may sound like I'm critical of the HobbyBoss 1/72 scale TBM-3 Avenger, but while there are a handful of small issues, it builds up into a beautiful bird. I spent about 27 hours on mine, and with careful assembly and a bit of trimming of the clear parts, a modeler of decent experience can prepare a fine looking “Turkey” for their shelf, too.

— Chuck Davis



Atlantis Models P2V-7 Neptune

Upon opening the box of the Atlantis Models 1/104 scale Lockheed P2V-7 Neptune plastic model kit, I got

transported back 68 years to when I first built the then-Revell first issue of the Neptune. Now, thanks to Atlantis, “Neptune has arisen” in a version important to the aircraft, science, and history. This model represents the only Neptune to serve its entire life with Navy Expeditionary Squadron VX-6, through the squadron’s redesignation as VXE-6, and ending up in a private collection in Newbury, Ohio. The forward fuselage was later acquired by another private firm, hoping to restore it as a museum exhibit. A nifty addition to the Atlantis kit is a collector’s card featuring Jack Leynwood’s beautiful box art.

The kit is molded in bright blue plastic with a sprue of clear parts, including the factory-omitted dorsal gun turret, though no guns or a mount for them are supplied. Like the original issue, it has both raised and engraved panel lines and rivets and embossed patterns for placing markings and national insignia. A few sink marks and mold lines existed, as well as flash on a few parts, but the basic moldings and the nicely done skis are excellent. A short instruction sheet is a copy of the original Revell one, which suggests painting all parts before assembly and using clay for a nose weight.

Only a flight deck floor is provided, along with two seated crew figures that surprised me in their finesse. I filed down a lead model-railroad weight to fit forward of the cockpit to prevent tail-sitting. Just in case any interior might be visible through the fuselage clear parts, I painted the inside around them light gray.

Despite the kit’s age, it’s anything but clunky. The parts are sturdy, true, and feature positive locators. I found the fit outstanding after I removed the irritating flash.

The wing-to-fuselage and horizontal stabilizer-to-fuselage fits are precise, and the trailing edges are super sharp. The only wheel-well details are some embossed lightening holes in the landing-gear doors, which I installed for purposes of this review, though the real aircraft had ski fairings in place of doors. The box art is more correct.

The clear parts are nicely done, though a little thick. The framing for the canopy and the nose cone is etched on the insides of each part and posed a slight challenge to paint. A couple of the fuselage windows sat proud of the skin, but I disregarded that because I didn’t want to sand off the surrounding rivet detail. Where necessary, such as on the fuselage seams, I restored some of what was lost with a pounce wheel.

Color callouts are basic names: orange, blue, yellow, etc., and do not specify a paint line or FS numbers. Online photos of the aircraft show minor painting deviations over time. I used Hobby Color Navy Blue (No. H54) acrylic, my own mix of Tamiya acrylics for international orange, and Model Master Metalizer Non-buffing Aluminum (OOP; another metallic aluminum paint would work) for the landing gear and skis.

The decals performed well over the raised surface details with the help of decal solutions. And they were tough enough to survive moving around on the model while centering them over the embossed guides. The end result is satisfactory, if not perfect. The sheet doesn’t include warning triangles for the jet intakes, and the tail code should be XD, not XO, an easy fix with the tip of a pen to square off the O’s corners.

I only spent about 18 hours completing the Atlantis Models 1/104 scale Lockheed P2V-7 Neptune and enjoyed every minute of it. It’s a great kit for beginners or experienced modelers alike (particularly those who want a touch of nostalgia). While it’s not an easy-build sort of offering, it doesn’t require tweezers for assembly, either. It’s a beautifully representative kit, but not an exact replica, so it also lends itself to some detailing. Built out of the box, it registered high on my fun meter.

– Walt Fink



Kit No.: H170 **Scale:** 1/104

Mfr.: Atlantis Models (Sample courtesy of manufacturer) **Price:** \$24.99

Comments: Injection-molded plastic (blue and clear); 57 parts; decals; collectible trading card **Pros:** Easy to build; impressive decals; sturdy parts with good fits **Cons:** Raised embossing showing markings location; flash and mold marks; tip tanks should be larger; questionable exhaust configuration



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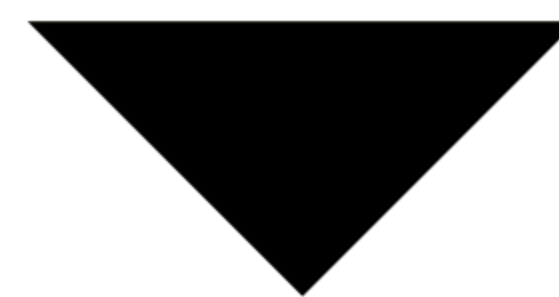
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COMING EVENTS

CA, VENTURA: MODELFEET '26. Sunday, February 22, 2026. 8:30am-3:00pm. Plastic model contest and swap meet to be held at the Seaside Park / Ventura County Fairgrounds. 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura, CA 93001. Admission: \$10 per person. State parking fee applies. For more information contact Vernon Morseman at 805-658-8138

IL, SCHAUMBURG: The Military Miniature Society of Illinois holds its 50th Chicago Show Saturday, October 18, 2025 at the Chicago Marriott Schaumburg, 50 N. Martingale Road, Schaumburg, IL 60173. 9AM to 4PM on Saturday 10/18. For more information contact Show Chairman Pat Vess (pat@livezey.net 630-730-2492) or visit our website: military-miniature-society-of-illinois.com

*All listed events were confirmed as active at the time of press.
Please contact event sponsor for current status of the event.*

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Closing Dates:

January 2026 closes October 10

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Local Hobby Shop Directory listings are available for the next six issues for \$165 (payable in advance) or at \$37 per issue (billed to established accounts for a minimum of six insertions). Ads will be set in standard listing typography. All insertions must be consecutive and may be invoiced if you have credit established with us. No mention of mail order business permitted. Closing dates listed in Classifieds section.

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By Tim Boyd

A royal letdown

Revell's 1/25 scale 1962 Imperial Crown four-door hardtop missed twice in one year

The early 1960s presented extreme challenges for the Chrysler Corporation, and its late-1950s automotive design leadership veered into rather unorthodox themes for the 1961 model year. Nevertheless, the company continued to promote its car lines, including an unusual arrangement with Revell that produced a set of nearly HO-scale Chrysler replicas. A follow-up effort for 1962 involved 1/25 scale assembly kits of the Plymouth Fury and Valiant, Dodge Dart and Lancer, Chrysler Newport, and the Imperial Crown four-door hardtop.

The 1962 Imperial continued an unusual design theme of free-standing headlights meant to evoke the glory days of the early 1930s Chrysler Imperial. The 1961 Imperial's eccentric rear fins were toned down for 1962 while retaining the "gunsight" taillights that had been an Imperial design theme since the 1950s. While all other Chrysler products moved to a unitized body design a couple of years earlier, the Imperial continued with body and frame construction that dated back to 1957, along with its out-of-date front windshield and cowl structure. Apart from these design embellishments, the 1962 Imperial held its own against Cadillac and Lincoln products in performance, luxury, and overall value.

Each year from 1958 through 1966, AMT (or the associated SMP) offered 1/25 scale kits of the Imperial convertible and Imperial two-door hardtop for 1959–1965. That may have been a factor in Revell choosing to produce its 1962 Imperial kit in the four-door hardtop configuration. (The pillarless four-door hardtop format was a 1/1 best-seller in the 1960s but was almost never chosen for 1/25 scale kits.)

As with all Revell 1962 Chrysler kits, a handsome full-color box top featured imagery sourced from the company's showroom brochures. This was an attractive departure from the somewhat generic AMT and JoHan annual kit box art themes that year.

In terms of kit construction, Revell adopted AMT's approach with a platform chassis plate and a separately molded engine residing under an opening hood. The body proportions and engraving were excellent, and Revell included clear headlight lenses, which was a feature seldom seen in 1960s annual kits.

Compared with the AMT/SMP 1962 Imperial, Revell added a rudimentary operating front torsion bar suspension, while foregoing AMT's well-developed advanced customizing options. Revell's interior door panels were engraved more accurately, and the engine had the correct four-barrel configuration, as opposed to AMT's non-stock ram induction design. However, the Revell chassis was an inaccurate, lengthened version of its Chrysler Newport kit's unibody design, while AMT rendered the chassis in its correct body-on-frame configuration.

Given the automotive market's rejection of Chrysler's 1962 design themes and a tepid response to 1/25 scale Chrysler products that year from established annual kitmakers AMT and JoHan, Revell's Chrysler

and associated brand kits were unsuccessful. A second production run later in the model year featuring translucent tinted plastic incorporating metallic flakes was even less successful.

From a business standpoint, AMT and JoHan benefitted from sharing the tooling expense for their annual kits with their pre-assembled promotional and friction toy offerings. Revell enjoyed no such comparable business arrangement. Not unexpectedly, when the 1963 annual kits were revealed a year later, the Revell brand was missing from hobby store shelves.

Much of the tooling for the 1962 Revell Chrysler annual kits still exists at one of the domestic kitmakers, although possibly in an incomplete form. In any case, the Revell 1/25 scale 1962 Imperial Crown hardtop remains yet another fascinating story for the model car kit collecting hobby. **FSM**

REVELL 1962 IMPERIAL CROWN FOUR-DOOR HARDTOP

Kit No.: H-1225-149

Introduced: 1962; reissued once in 1962, but not since

Current Value: \$190



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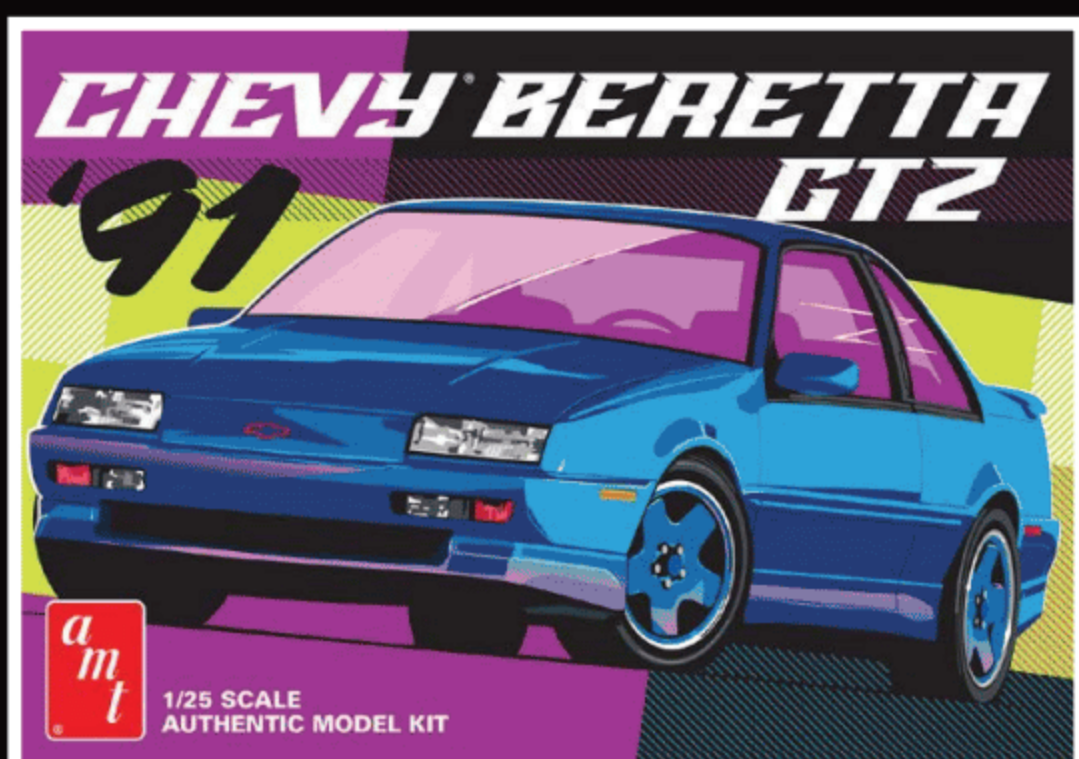
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For the very first time, the 1999 Chevy S10 Xtreme Pickup is tearing onto the AMT 1:25 scale scene! This little truck packs a big punch with all-new, ultra-accurate grille parts and lensed headlights that capture every radical detail. Whether you're a seasoned builder or just love mini trucks, this kit lets you take your modeling skills to XTREME lengths – build it, customize it, and show off some serious attitude!

Model Kit Features:

- ♦ 1:25 Scale, Skill level 2, paint & glue required.
- ♦ Newly-tooled front-end parts
- ♦ Molded in white, clear, and transparent red with chrome-plated parts.
- ♦ Pad-printed Goodyear Eagle tires
- ♦ Detailed 4.3L Vortec engine
- ♦ Ages 10+
- ♦ Expanded Decal Sheet

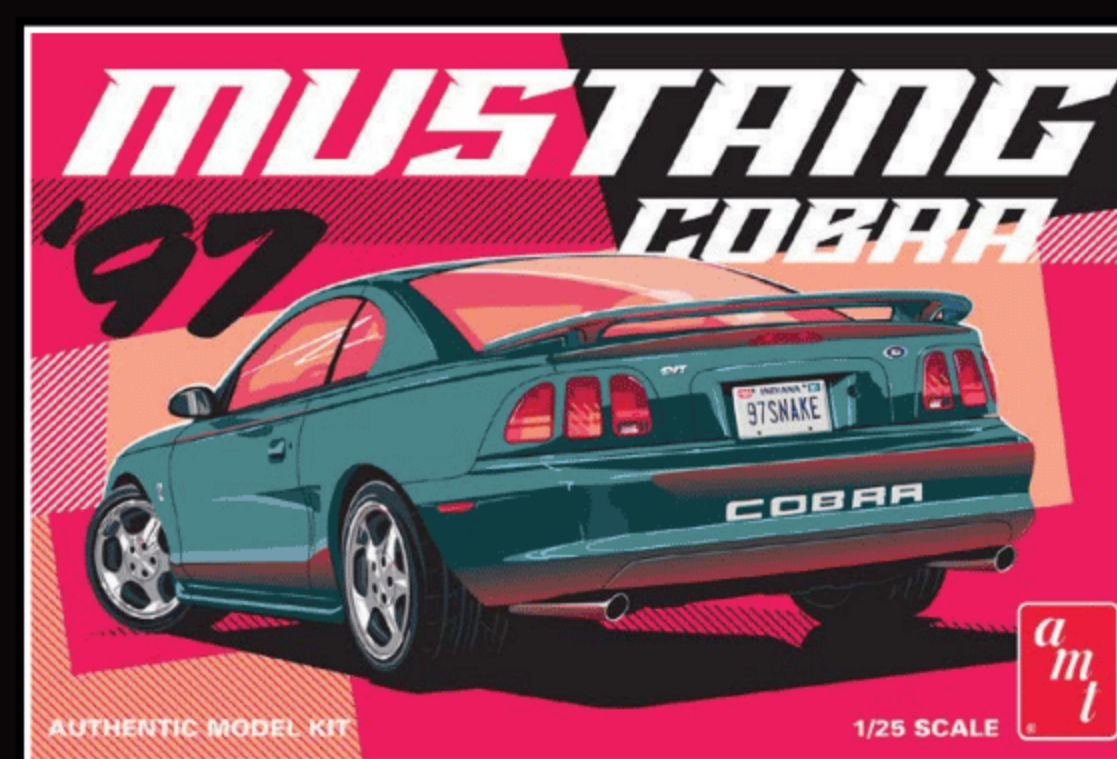
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#AMT1531 (1:25 SCALE)



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#AMT1494 (1:25 SCALE)



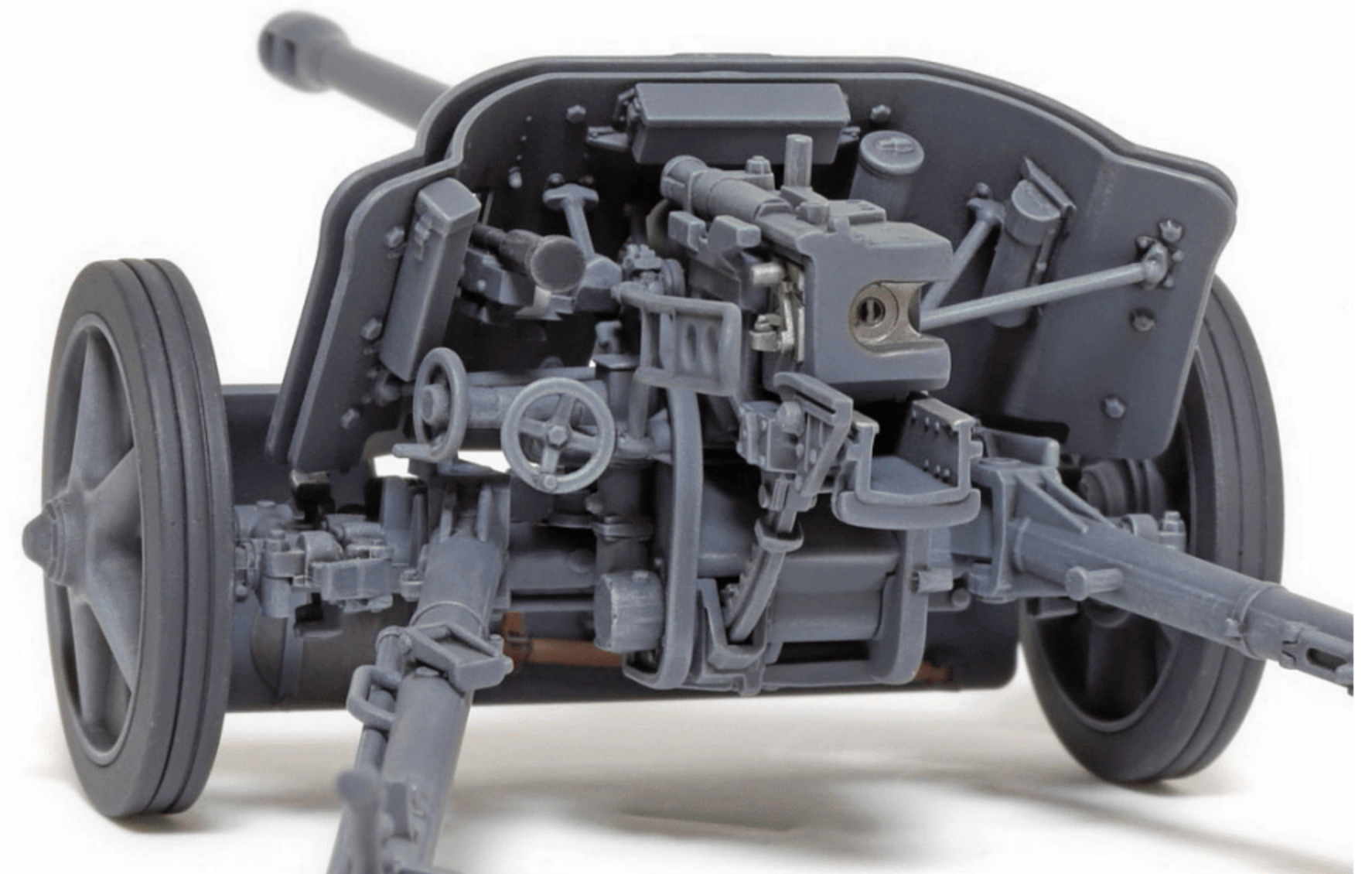
GERMAN 5cm ANTI-TANK GUN (Pak38)

ITEM NO 35392

Tamiya German Anti-Tank gun model kits include Item 35035 (1/35 German 3.7cm Anti-Tank Gun Pak35/36), Item 35047 (1/35 German 7.5cm Anti-Tank Gun Pak40/L46) and Item 35017 (1/35 German 88mm Gun Flak 36/37) This new model offering into the series depicts the German Anti-Tank Gun Pak38 in 1/35 scale.



At the start of WWII, German forces used 3.7cm Pak36 as their main anti-tank gun. The 5cm anti-tank gun Pak38 was developed as the Pak36's successor and the actual deployment started in July 1940. The Pak38 featured a gun barrel with muzzle brake, a gun mount with torsion bar suspension and aluminum-alloy trail legs, and its gun shield was composed of two 4mm thick armor plates at a 25mm interval. This anti-tank gun had the power to pierce 60-degree, 61 mm-thick armor from 500 meters using Panzergranate 39 shells. Pak38 saw its first action in the Balkan Theater and Operation Barbarossa in 1941. Although the Pak38 could not easily beat the Soviet T34 and KV-1, it helped the army through crisis several times and was essential at the North African Front. About 9,600 units were produced until 1943 and were employed in Infantry Regiments until the end of war.



- 1/35 scale plastic model assembly kit. Length: 142mm.
- Features realistic renderings of sighting device, breech, gun barrel with muzzle brake, double armor plate gun shield, suspension and solid tires.
- The model can be assembled in a firing or towed state.
- Use Item 35020 (1/35 German Hanomag Sd.Kfz. 251/1) together to recreate the towed state.
- Includes accessories such as armor piercing and howitzer rounds, ammunition cases and four figures to recreate a commander, gunner and two crew.

GERMAN 5cm ANTI-TANK GUN (Pak38)

1/35 MILITARY MINIATURE SERIES No.392 *DETAILED STATIC DISPLAY MODEL *5cm ANTI-TANK GUN Pak38 IS CAPTURED IN STYLE *REALISTIC RENDERINGS OF SIGHTING DEVICE, BREECH, GUN BARREL WITH MUZZLE BRAKE, DOUBLE ARMOR PLATE GUN SHIELD, SUSPENSION AND SOLID TIRES *CAN BE ASSEMBLED IN FIRING OR TOWED STATE *ACCESSORIES INCLUDED
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