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January/February 2026

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FROM THE EDITOR

By Tim Kidwell

Treat modeling like dessert

While picking up a review model from contributor Chuck Davis, we got to talking about our projects — both of us have too many we're building simultaneously. Regardless, the discussion turned to staying motivated. For some modelers, the question never really arises. They just do. For others, probably the majority of us, from time to time, we struggle to get to the workbench.

The reasons are many, but what it boils down to is probably aversion for a task at hand in the building process or repudiation that the end product won't be what we had hoped or expected. Both are completely valid.

But it occurred to me, as Chuck and I were talking, that we do this to ourselves. We sometimes treat our time at the workbench as taking medicine that needs to be choked down rather than what it's supposed to be: dessert.

We engage in hobbies because they are something we enjoy, like pie or cake. Maybe brownies with walnuts aren't your favorite, but neither is painting horse hooves. Still, no matter the dilemma you're facing in your current model (or five!), think of it as the delight it is, and take pleasure in the doing.

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Aspirations and expectations

I once had a *brush* with analysis paralysis (see “From the Editor” in September/October 2025 *FSM*) quite similar to yours — see what I did there? I was building a Condor Legion Henschel Hs 126, and the RLM 63 hellgrau (light gray) that I got from Vallejo was way too green, in my opinion. So, I went back to my local hobby store and bought AK Interactive RLM 63 — and it was exactly the same color. (Facepalm.) I got over it and resigned myself to the fact that RLM 63 is a very green gray.

However, that’s not the point of my letter. That period of analysis paralysis was quite brief, all told. What I do suffer from, though, is “fear of f—g up” paralysis, and it’s getting worse and worse.

We just invest so much time in our modeling as adults that the fear of screwing up with every additional step becomes very real and can be paralyzing. We nip the parts off the sprues, sand back the nubs, test-fit, glue, fill and sand seams, primer, fill and sand seams again as needed, airbrush the paint job (sometimes with six or more colors requiring elaborate masking), clear-coat, apply decals, washes, top clear coat. Every step represents hours and hours.

I was recently building a Spitfire prototype, and after I laid down the best base coat of paint I’ve ever done, I ruined it with a clear coat that ended up spattered (thinking back, I must’ve been moving the can across the model too quickly). I decided to press on and decal, but some ended up permanently wrinkled because I used too much Micro Sol. Okay, strike two.

Now, it’s top coat time, and I am frozen, paralyzed by the fear of compounding yet another error onto my previous ones. All I need to do is put on another clear coat and I’m done. But the model’s been sitting on my workbench for two months now, and I can’t bring myself to do it.

There is something to be said for when we were young and used to bang out a model in an afternoon. Yes, the results were usually pretty terrible, but our less-critical selves got instant gratification out of it. With fear, trepidation, and avoidance being the overriding feelings when approaching modeling tasks, the fun — for me at least — is sadly starting to drain from the hobby.

If you or your readers have any tips regarding coping [with] this, I am all ears.

— Jeffrey de Wit
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Ed.: I feel your pain! And “not effing up” paralysis is definitely related to analysis paralysis, and I’ll be in line right behind you to admit I do get it. It causes the “avoidance blues.” What helps me is to remind myself that scale modeling is an artistic endeavor, and even the greatest artists who have ever existed had bad days. Not everything is a masterpiece, nor is everything our best work ever, although we’d like to think that each model should be an improvement over the last. That’s the goal, but, to paraphrase Robert Browning, one’s reach should exceed one’s grasp.

There’s a YouTuber named Moriah Elizabeth whose videos I have watched with my daughter for years. It’s a Saturday morning tradition, for us. Moriah’s quirky and does all sorts of art, but she allows herself to completely hate a project once it’s finished. She’ll point out the mistakes she’s made or how a decision completely ruined a project for her or how her attempts to correct a mistake didn’t pan out as well as she had hoped. And then she moves on. Her love and enjoyment of her art and crafts doesn’t diminish.

We should all have that flexibility with ourselves and our model making. Do your best and enjoy the project for what it is. And don’t hold yourself too tightly to a standard. It’s fun, and most everyone is going to look at your model and think it is damn cool.

Note: Since our initial email exchange, Jeffrey has informed me he “made peace” with his Spitfire and finished it. What’s more, he summarized our conversation as “Every model can’t be better than the last. It’s an aspiration, but can’t be an expectation.” Jeffrey, thank you for saying it better in 16 words than I did in the whole of my response. Congratulations, on finishing the Spitfire, and good luck with your next project!



Readers appreciate *FSM*

I just read David Sampson’s letter in the November/December 2025 issue (“Scale Talk,” Page 5). I am sorry he feels the way he feels about *FSM*. Like him, I primarily build 1/48 military aircraft, which I’ve done since I was 8 years old. But I also dabble in ships, armor, sci-fi (*Star Trek*), cars, and spacecraft.

In my 30-plus years of subscribing (off and on from time to time), I have loved every issue.

I’m like an 8-year-old who likes books with pictures. Regardless of the modeling genre under focus, I pore over every picture, read every caption, and am inspired by the work being shown.

My favorite part of each issue has always been the Reader Gallery. It does not matter to me whether it’s a model built from the box, built from scratch, a diorama, a bust, an anime figure. I marvel over the skill, the creativity, and the beauty of the work being shown by modelers around the globe. If I had any suggestion for *FSM*, it would be to give us more in the gallery. Keep up the good work. This 63-year-old fella ain’t going anywhere. I will continue to support your great magazine.

— Barry Graff
Orem, UT



After reading the letter by Alex Lam (September/October 2025 *FSM*, Page 5), I only have one thing to say: Models are models. It doesn’t matter if it’s armor, aircraft, or science fiction, models are built using techniques that cross over from one genre to another.

You may not like the subject matter, but the articles about these models may contain information about techniques that can be utilized when building models in other subject areas. For most people, while the subject matter is important, the techniques used to accurately complete the model are just as important. Weathering the engine bell of an Eagle transporter is no different than weathering the afterburner cans of an F-4 Phantom II.

Turning your back on other types of models just because you don’t like them deprives you of skills that you might pick up by reading these articles. I don’t care for

automobile models that much, but I know that there are often techniques that are used for adding details to engines or getting chrome parts to shine that I can translate to other types of models. Modeling is, or should be, an activity that is fun, and it doesn't matter what your interest is or what you want to make models of.

If you don't want to read those articles, don't. But don't deprive other people who might enjoy them.

– Bruce Hamilton
Delano, CA

I've subscribed to *FSM* for so long I don't even remember when I started, and this is the first time I've written to *any* magazine.

In reference to David Sampson's letter, first and foremost, I want to applaud *FSM* for its tact when responding to his complaints. Now, for the opinion of a 67-year-old man who has been building models for close to 60 years. I understand where David is coming from. However, change is inevitable, and helps to keep things fresh. Like

most builders, I have my favorite subject: fire trucks. I know that I will rarely see an article of this subject, but that's OK. I also build Vietnam armor.

I subscribe to *FSM* to be inspired and learn new techniques. Do I build (or even care about) Gundam models? Absolutely not. However, there have been many times that I've read about a technique that gave me an idea that I could use on my models. I might read where someone built a Transformer robot and mixed Brand A paint with Brand B and a touch of Brand C to make a beautiful burnt-metal finish. Wow! That would look nice on my [next model].

Lastly, to anyone reading this and feeling *FSM* is too broad, you might want to attend your local IPMS chapter meeting. When we have our show-n-tell, there're always airplanes out the wazoo, a few armor builds, maybe a figure or two, and, of course, a fire truck. Don't get discouraged by change and the subject matter covered in this magazine. Embrace it, read about new

kits, ideas from fellow builders, and the show galleries. I'd drool over a great Gundam kit before I would a snap-together, unpainted fire truck.

To the people of *FSM*, thank you for your hard work trying to represent such a vast interest of builders. My subscription will always be renewed.

– Wes Parker
Tacoma, WA

I am 65 years old and have been getting your magazine on and off for years. I write on top of the magazine if an article is interesting to me. That said, I always thought *FSM* had all different interest represented in its pages. At points in my life, I've wanted to try different things like weathering, building a diorama, how to make water, etc. Your readers are getting younger and *FSM* has to represent them as well. Younger readers are not all building military models. I love your magazine and know how hard it is to still make a printed version, which I prefer. I own my own

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– Eric Mathes
Zanesville, Ohio

I just received the November/December 2025 issue of *FineScale Modeler*, and what do I see on Page 5? Another rant about your magazine covering anything but what David Sampson wants: military models. Airplanes, tanks, jeeps — all military. He needs to take a closer look at the cover of the magazine. It says *FineScale Modeler*. Not “fine scale military modeler.”

I have been a subscriber for many years and will continue to do so because of the varied stories, tips, and Reader Gallery. If he wants to go elsewhere, more power to him. I will remain a loyal subscriber and reader for many years to come!

– Pierre Lagisquet
Brandon, FL

Ed.: Many thanks to everyone who has written in support of FSM and who subscribes to the magazine or buys issues off the newsstand. We can't do it without you and appreciate your votes of confidence. More, we will continue to do what we do to support the hobby and publish articles on a wide range of scale-modeling topics. We want those stories to entertain, but they also should present you with ideas to help you with the model you're currently working on or one you're planning to tackle. And we'll make sure to keep featuring model galleries in the magazine. All of you, don't forget to turn to the huge IPMS/USA National Convention gallery in this expanded issue on Page 30!



Replacing Future

Please let me know what the replacement is for Pledge Revive It.

– Donald Lichay
Gurley, AL

Ed.: There is no 1:1 replacement for Pledge Floor Gloss (known variously as Future, Pledge with Future Floor Shine, Pledge Floor Care, etc.). We've run a number of tests with

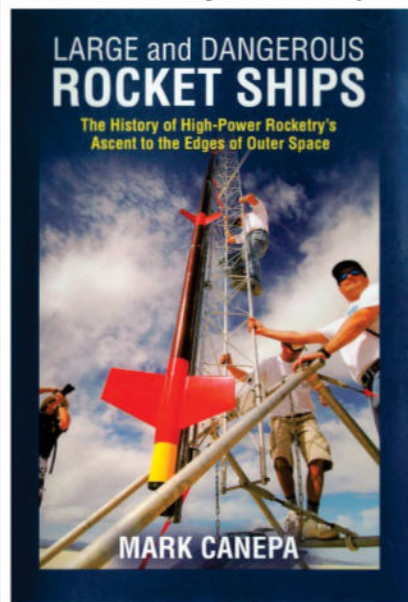
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Nicole McGuire, Chief Operations Officer, 10/1/2025		

other acrylic products meant for floors and have found Holloway House Quick Shine Multisurface Floor Finish works well. If you'd rather use a hobby-specific alternative, you can turn to AK Interactive Gauzy Agent. You can go to FineScale.com/Videos and look for "The Quick Shine Tests" and "Your Future Replacement" to see our videos about both of these products.

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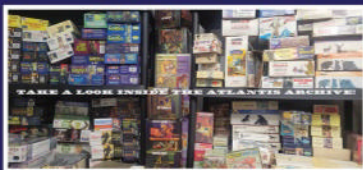
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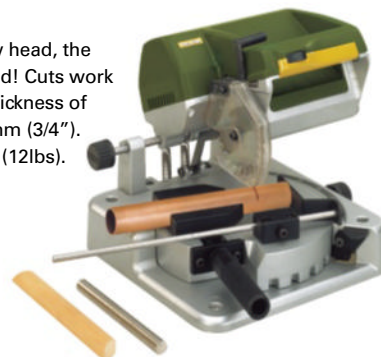
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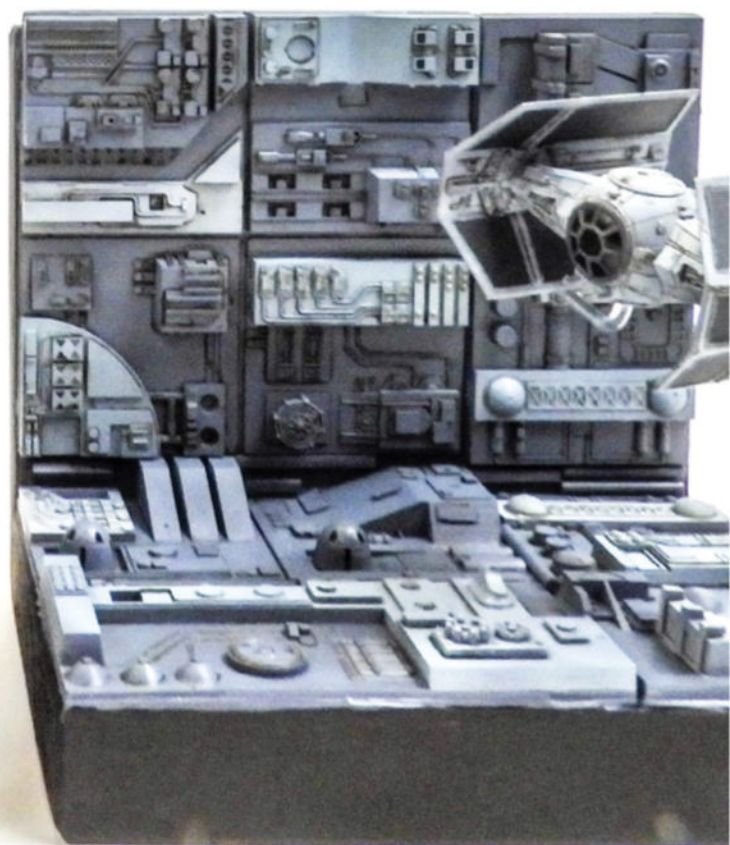
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Make vignettes with Bandai 1/144
scale TIE fighters

BY GRANT DALZELL

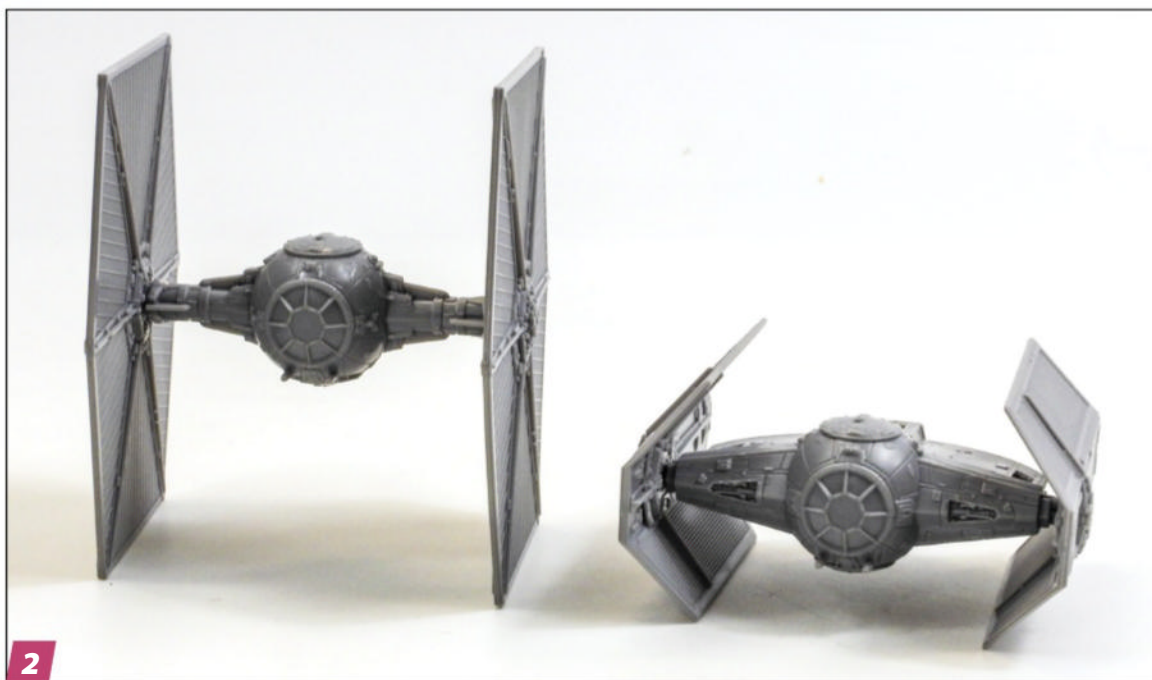


UNCH

If you have ever built a Bandai *Star Wars* kit, you would know that they are perhaps some of the best-engineered kits out there. The 1/144 TIE Advanced x1 and Fighter (No. 2322883) dual boxing is no exception, with all the parts coming together at natural panel lines and joins. No sanding or filling is required! Out of the box, they look good, and even come with a base. But small, easy models can benefit from better displays, so that's what I did.



1 Inside the box, you get two kits. Notice the instructions inside the lid.



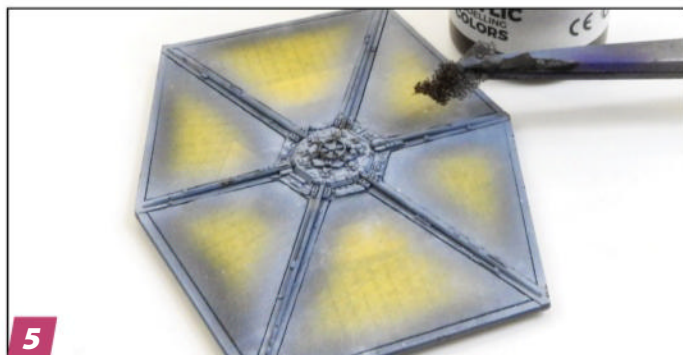
2 In no time at all, the two models are complete by just pressing them together. No glue required! The wings can be removed to simplify painting and weathering.



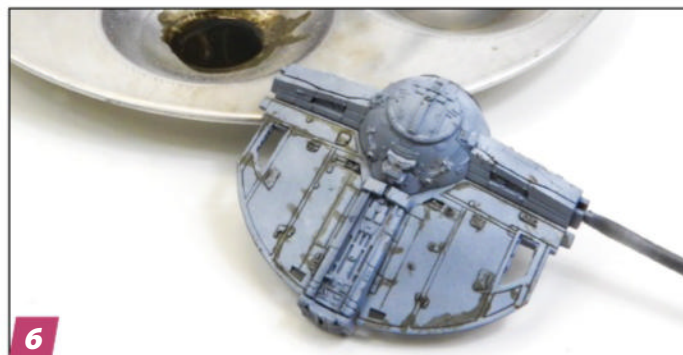
3 I painted the solar panels on the wings with a mix of Tamiya Rubber Black (No. XF-85) and Vallejo Model Air Metallic Black (No. 71.073). This gave them a nice visual appearance and a bit of a metallic sheen. Then I masked the solar panels with Tamiya tape.



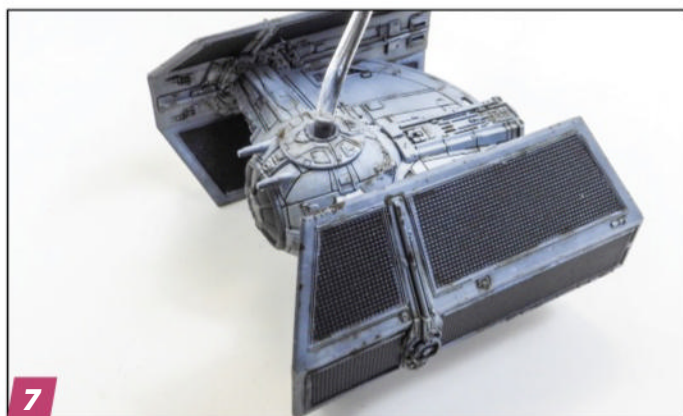
4 For both the wings and bodies, I primed with AK Interactive (AK) Black Primer and Microfiller (No. AK757). For a splatter pre-shading effect, I airbrushed AK White Primer and Microfiller (No. AK759) through a chunk of scouring pad to break up the top coat.



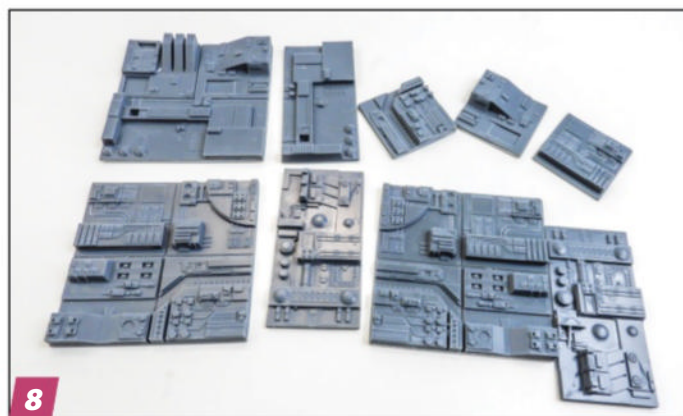
5 I chose to paint both models light ghost gray, but this is sci-fi, so use whatever you would like! A piece of sponge dipped in AK 3Gen Chocolate (Chipping; No. AK11113) creates some light weathering.



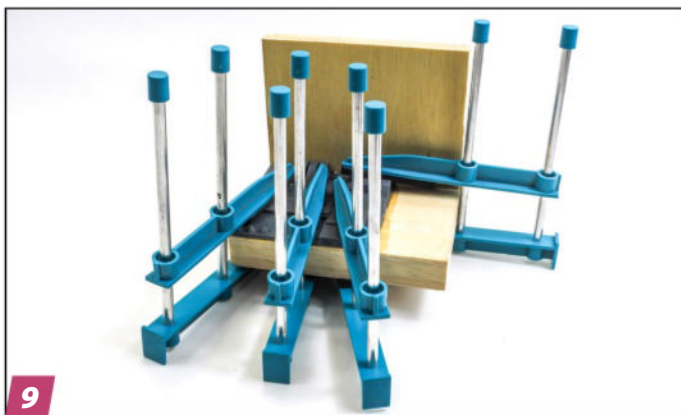
6 After chipping, I gave the models a gloss clear coat. For the pinwash, I applied Ammo Starship Wash (No. A.MIG-1009), not just because of the name, but because it is a nice, grimy brown color.



7 After the wash was dry, I added a flat clear coat, removed the masking (including the windows that were painted black), put on the wings, and used a heat gun to bend clear acrylic rod to shape to hold up the TIEs for my vignettes.

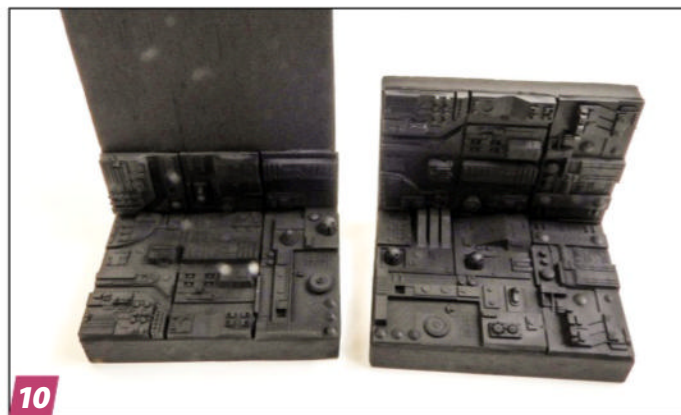


8 I downloaded Death Star tiles STL files from Cults3D and repurposed them for my vignettes. I 3D-printed them on my Elegoo Saturn 3 Ultra.



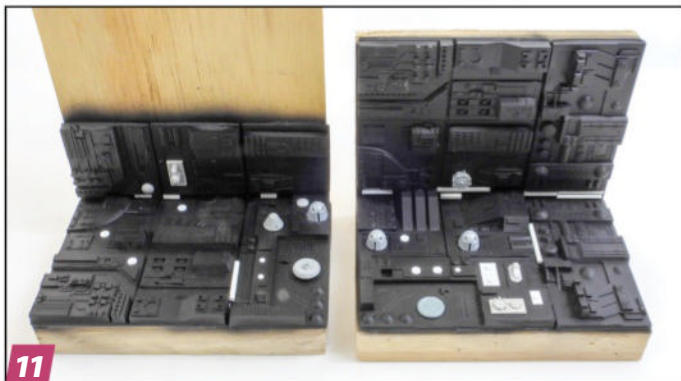
9

I glued the resin tiles to wooden bases with two-part epoxy.



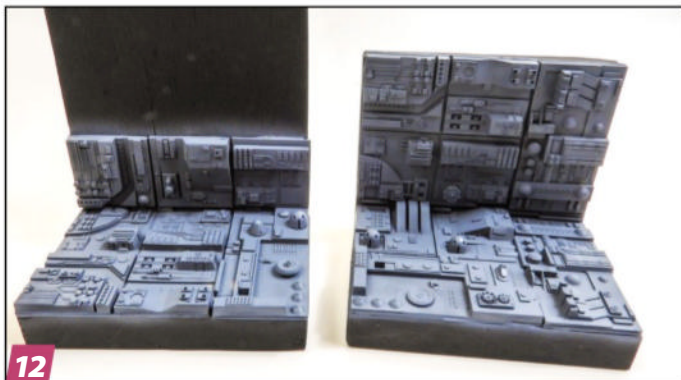
10

I used the AK Black Primer and Microfiller again to prepare for painting.



11

Using pieces from spare kit sprues, I added more details to the tiles.



12

I started with a medium gray for the base color.



13

Using several shades of gray, I masked off panels on the tiles. As the TIE fighters and bases are gray, it helps break up the scenes. The bases received the same wash as the TIEs.



14

For one base, I searched online for an image I thought would look good and glued it to the tall back. For the TIE Advanced, I left the back short, showing the Death Star trench. Each base gives the models a distinctive feel and they were super easy to make and finish. **FSM**

FRANKEN

A 1/72 scale Bf 109 gets a late-war piecemeal treatment

BY JOHN MAHER

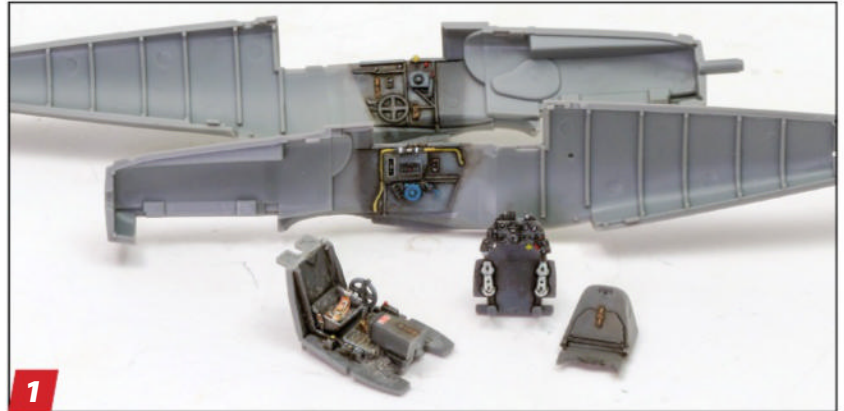
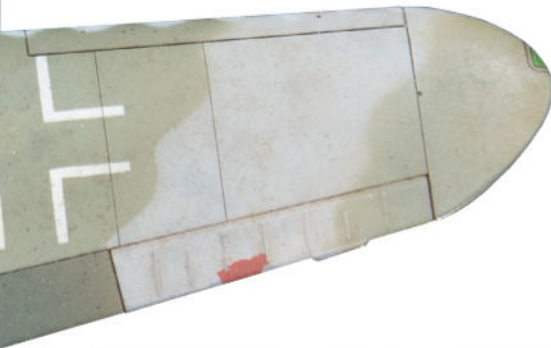
As the Luftwaffe's mainstay fighter during World War II, some 33,000 Messerschmitt Bf 109s were built by an extensive network of main factories and component subcontractors. Like today's airliners, a finished 109 was made up of fuselages, wings, and tail planes all built by different companies. This also facilitated the rebuilding of airframes that were damaged, often resulting in the combination of old components with new ones.

With this part interchangeability came interesting combinations of camouflage schemes, as subcontractors often finished their subassemblies with the application of final camouflage colors. On a regular production aircraft, any color discrepancies (for example, between the tail and the fuselage) were harmonized with mottles and paint touch-ups as part of their final delivery. But remanufactured aircraft parts were often left in whatever colors they arrived in. Add in the variety in Luftwaffe colors, particularly after 1944, and you could have a Frankenstein-looking 109 with few matching parts.

I always thought such an aircraft would make a great modeling subject. For this project, I chose a Tamiya 1/72 scale Bf 109G-6 (No. 60790). Working in this scale is a great way to experiment with techniques, because if you can pull them off in a small scale, you can easily transfer them to larger ones. As I always do, I didn't model a specific subject to give me some flexibility in what the final model looked like. Unless otherwise noted, I used Tamiya paints and Extra Thin Cement.

With its different wings and tail assembly, engine cowlings that don't match the fuselage, and unpainted replacement parts, John Maher's Bf 109G-6 is typical of late-war German aircraft rebuilt as part of an industrial-scale program. Note the repair to the starboard aileron.

SCHMITT



1 The Tamiya kit provides great detail out of the box, so I only added an Eduard photo-etched (PE) metal seat harness to the cockpit. I mixed German gray (No. XF-63) 2:1 with flat white (No. XF-2) to represent the RLM 66 interior. After applying a wash with Abteilung 502 oil paints, I picked out details with Vallejo and AK 3Gen colors.



2 Tamiya molded the rear section of the cockpit as a separate piece along natural panel lines. A Berna clamp held this part in place to ensure it seamlessly integrated with the assembled fuselage. I applied extra thin cement from the underside to avoid risking glue flowing onto the exposed surface detail.



3 I also used Berna clamps to hold the wing tops and bottom in place while I ran extra thin cement around the joins bordering the ailerons and flaps. I used gap filling superglue for the leading edges, as it also filled those seams.



4 Tamiya molds the tail plane as a single part, and I first tacked it into place with 5-minute epoxy. While it set up, I used dimes to make sure the tail plane was even on both sides. Satisfied the tail plane was square to the fuselage, I carefully flowed in extra thin cement. Doing so ensures that panel lines are not distorted by glue oozing out while you try to make sure the alignment is correct.



5 The 109 would have some natural metal areas, so I primed the completed airframe silver (No. LP-11). Because it shows every little scratch and flaw and can be sanded to a feathered edge, it makes a great primer.



In 1944, to conserve labor, Germany decided paint was no longer needed on the underside of 109 wings. To show this, I masked off access panels with discs of Tamiya tape made with a punch-and-die set. I then used a combination of Gunze Sangyo and Tamiya lacquers to represent the darker shades of natural metal. Next, I masked the darkened panels and went back over the wing with lighter tones using Mr. Metal Color Aluminum (No. 218) and Tamiya Silver. After removing the masks, I buffed some the panels with 4000-grit Micro-Mesh.



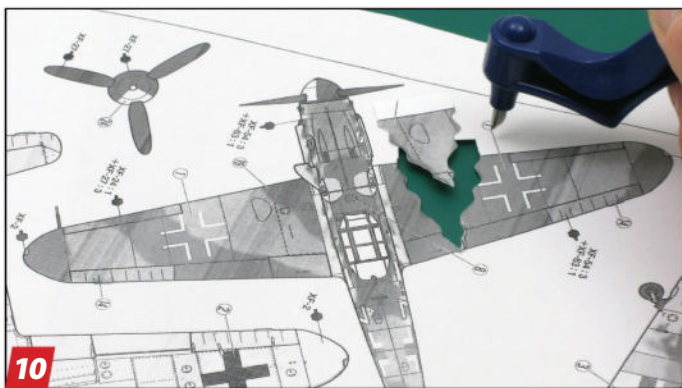
I decided the engine cowlings came from a different airframe than the rest of the fuselage. I prepped Mr. Hobby acrylic RLM 76 (No. H417), RLM 75 (No. H69), and RLM 83 (No. H423) each mixed 2:1 with Tamiya Flat White and thinned 1:4 paint to Mr. Leveling Thinner and airbrushed mottle with an Iwata Custom Micron.



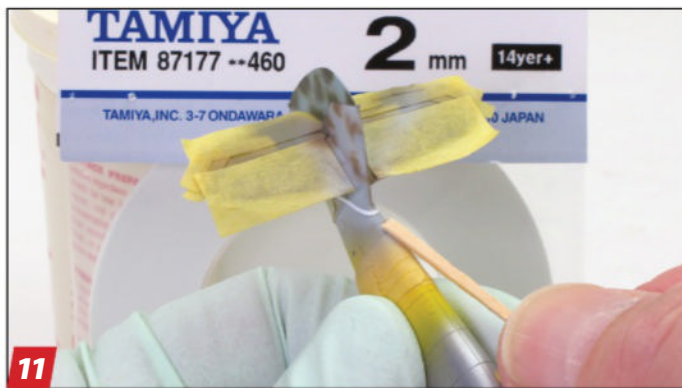
After masking the cowl, I marbled the wings and tail plane with a splatter template in preparation for the main camouflage. This step acts as a pre-shade that is more random than pre-shading along panel lines.



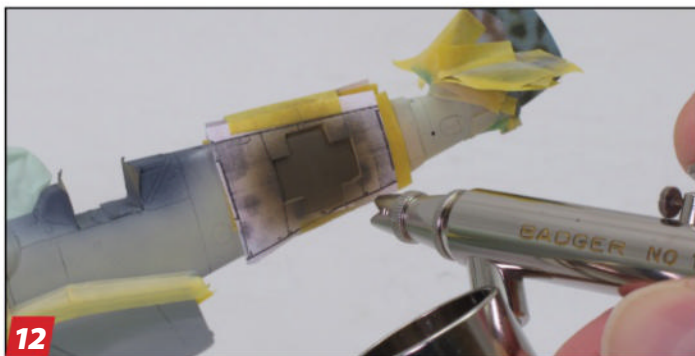
I made the port wing an older assembly with a mid-war scheme with light blue RLM 76 for the lower surface (the same as the cowl) and RLM 74 (No. H68) and RLM 75 topside, again mixing the colors 2:1 with flat white. I cut paper masks following Tamiya's painting guide and positioned them above the surface of the wing with rolled up masking tape for a soft edge.



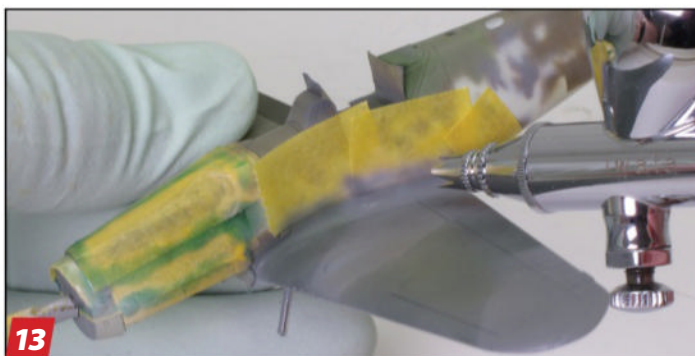
The starboard wing would be newer with a late-war scheme of RLM 83 and Tamiya Sky Grey (No. XF-19) and a natural metal underside. Again, I cut paper masks, this time with a Craft Products Gyro-Cut Cutting Tool to make a curvy edge that I sketched on the Tamiya painting guide.



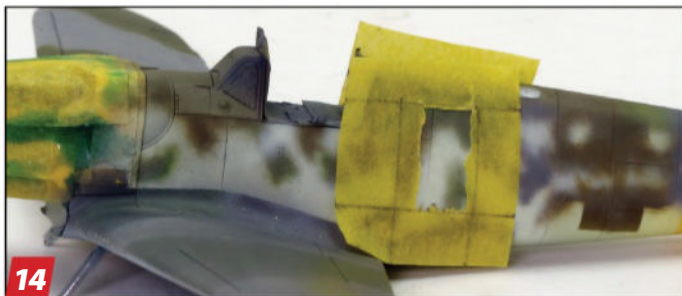
To model the rudder and vertical and horizontal stabilizers as coming from different sources, I painted them separately. The tricky curved fairing at the base of the horizontal stabilizer was masked with Tamiya 2mm Masking Tape for curves that I cut into a fine strip and positioned with a flat toothpick beveled to a sharp edge.



I airbrushed the rear fuselage between the firewall and tail with the light green version of RLM 76, Mr. Hobby Duck Egg Green (No. H74), positioned a paper mask of the *balkenkreuz* — again on rolled Tamiya tape — and sprayed it Mr. Hobby RLM 81 (No. H421; left). When that dried, I applied late-war fuselage mottling consisting of Mr. Hobby RLM 75, 81, and 82 (No. H422).



Time to blend in the wings. The port wing, an old production, is a replacement, so I gave it a hard edge along the fuselage fairing (top). The new-production starboard wing is part of the original airframe, so I harmonized it with the mottling on the fuselage.



To show the aircraft had transferred between squadrons and had its original identification number overpainted with a brush, I made a mask with a Gyro-Cut Cutting Tool for both sides and airbrushed the areas Mr. Hobby RLM 02 Gray (No. H70).



The wavy camouflage effect on the wings' leading edges was accomplished by positioning a rolled Uhu Patafix glue pad (like poster putty) and using a paintbrush handle to press it into position.



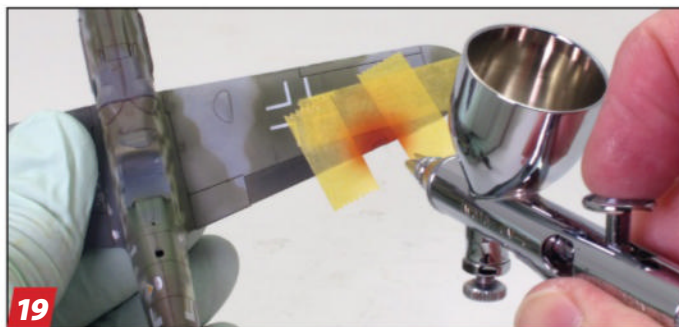
A detail often overlooked on Bf 109s is the rubber gasket seal at the cowl's rear. I used 1mm Tamiya to mask along the engraved line molded on the kit. I then sprayed it with Tamiya German Grey (No. XF-63) — I always avoid using pure black as it looks out of scale.



I prefer to airbrush markings rather than use decals. In this case, I used a combination of Miracle Masks and masks cut by a friend. Modeling an aircraft to show it is made up of a series of subassemblies takes a lot of masking — even I was surprised by how much there was when I placed the model next to all the pieces I peeled off.



One more thing to mask! I originally painted the replacement oil tank cover silver, but I've found that a light misting of smoke (No. X-19) over natural metal areas gives it extra depth, enhancing the overall effect.



But I wasn't done yet. A drop of paint had left a blemish on the starboard aileron. Rather than trying to blend it in by remixing the shade of RLM 83 I had originally used, I opted to make it look like a field repair by cutting a jagged-edged mask with a Gyro-Cut and airbrushing the area primer red.



I began the weathering process by airbrushing a 1:4 mix of flat black (No. XF-1) and NATO brown (No. XF-68) aft of the engine and the exhaust stacks. Masking at the source of this staining gives hard edges.



After applying a pinwash with Abteilung 502 oil paints, I used a dot filter (a technique popular with armor modelers). You begin by applying a series of dots of artist oil to the model's surface.

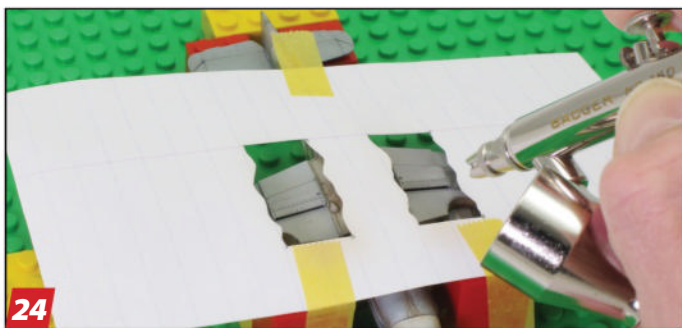


You then take a flat brush moistened with odorless mineral spirits and draw the colors down the fuselage, blending the colors together. On the wings, you draw the colors across in the direction of airflow.

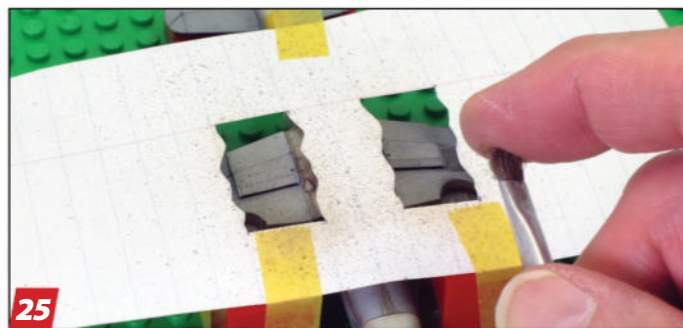


PRO TIP

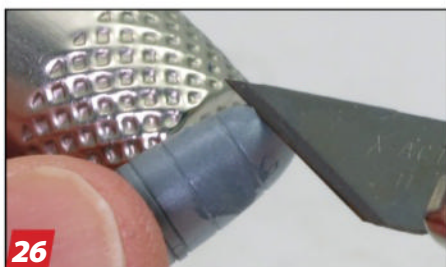
This technique effectively fades the camouflage colors, making them less stark. Note the subtle difference between the treated front half of the *balkenkreuz* and the untreated rear half. Avoid the getting the oil dot filter in the panel lines on aircraft. If you do, go over the affected areas with a pinwash to restore panel-line consistency.



24 Another technique popular with armor modelers is showing mud effects. Aircraft also operate in muddy conditions, but you must be more restrained than on a ground vehicle. For the mud splatters thrown up by the 109's wheels, I cut a paper masks to control where the mud went and airbrushed a 19:1 mix of thinner and buff (No. XF-57).



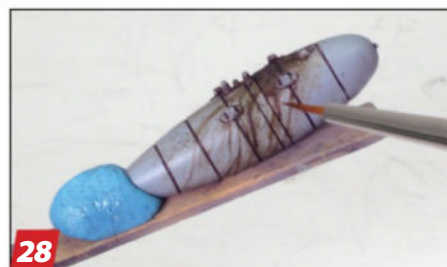
25 I then flicked onto the areas light and dark mud artist oils thinned with odorless mineral spirits from a stiff-bristled brush. This provided a random pattern, but I had to be careful not to apply too much.



26 I added a drop tank to my model. Made of thin sheet metal, these tanks were easily dented. To replicate this damage, I first carved out small pieces of the plastic with a sharp No. 11 hobby blade. I wore a thimble to protect my finger.



27 I also used my rotary tool with a fine burr to make more shallow indentations. These were then all smoothed out with 600- and then 1000-grit sandpaper.



28 These tanks were subject to a lot of fluid spills, from oil dripping down from the engine to fuel overflowing. I used artist oils and a fine-tipped brush to create these effects.



29 I attached the drop tank and finished the underside with more artist-oil streaks. Note the difference in the wings is reinforced by the different balkenkreuz styles.

FINAL THOUGHTS

ONE OF THE REASONS I like 1/72 scale is if you can accomplish realistic effects in this scale, you can easily scale up. I used this project to practice my mottling skills and to hone my weathering by creating subtle oil leaks along the side of the oil cooler that then drip down onto the drop tank.

Weathering a model is where the art in model-building comes in — an overly weathered model can ruin an otherwise well-built and well-painted subject. As a sometime armor modeler, I've previously used dot filters and mud effects on 1/35 scale tanks, and I've wanted to experiment with them on aircraft. In this scale, I had to use restraint so as to not overpower the finished model. I can't wait to use this technique on larger scale aircraft! **FSM**



A howitzer



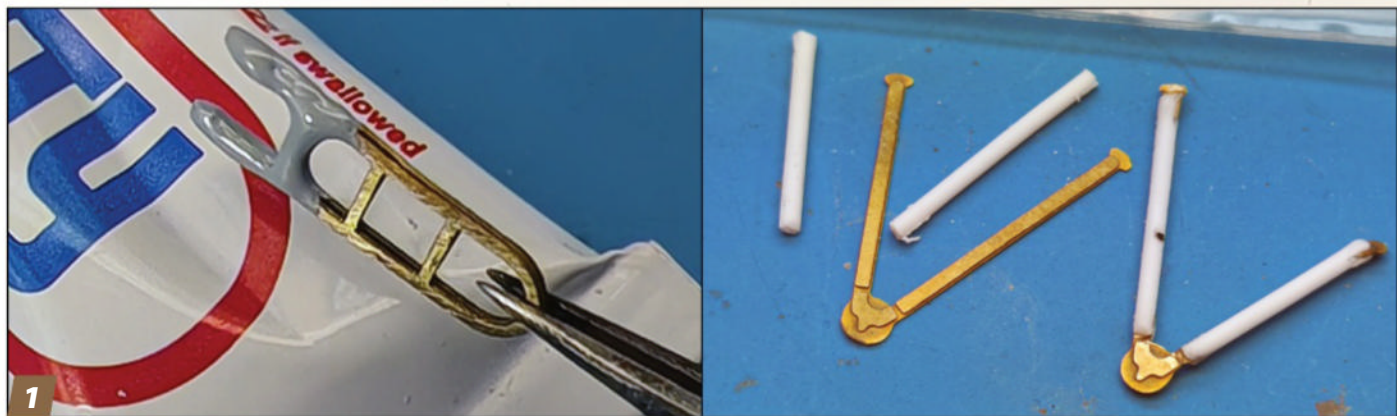
Turn an unusual 1/35 scale resin model into a showpiece

BY KAREL SUTT

After World War I, Germany had many 10.5cm *leichte Felhaubitze* (light field howitzer) leFH 16s, but opted to replace them. Its successor, the leFH 18, had a 294.1cm-long barrel resulting in a 450m/second muzzle velocity and a nearly 11-kilometer range. A total of 23,966 guns in the leFH 18 family were produced, many mounted on Wespe, Heuschrecke, and StuH 42 self-propelled vehicles, and exported to more than 10 countries.

Now, when I build artillery, I typically focus on 20cm and larger shells. However, an Aires 1/35 scale leFH 18 (No. 3007) resin kit caught my eye. Offered by a vendor at a model show, the kit was heavily discounted, probably due to its age.

Despite its venerable status, the leFH 18 would fit a Pavesi P4 tractor I had built some time ago. Germany and Italy cooperated tightly throughout the Africa campaign during World War II, so an Italian tractor pulling a German howitzer wouldn't be unusual. Of course, I bought the kit, but it was going to need some help.



Some of the kit's photo-etched (PE) metal parts were steam-roller flat when they should have had dimensionality. I bulked up the handrail with Tamiya Putty (left) and rounded out the gun-shield struts with .040-inch styrene rod.

in North Africa



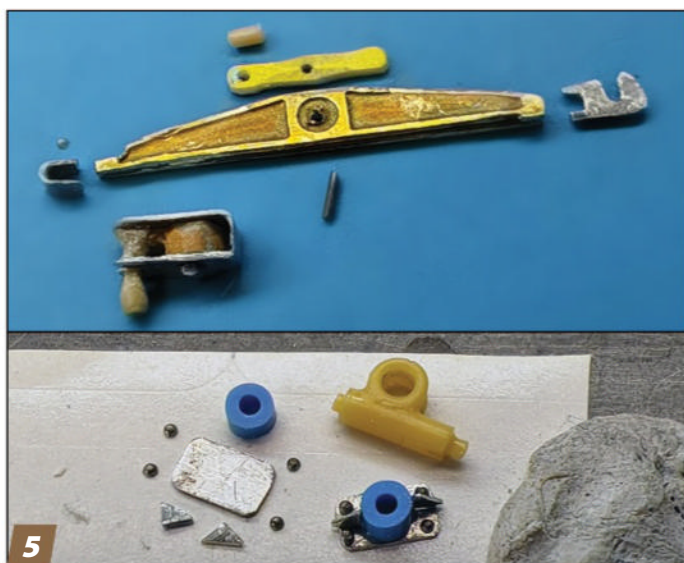
Before cutting resin parts off their pour stubs, I soak them in hot water. This lends them a bit of flexibility and makes the parts less fragile. I cut the parts from the stubs with coping and razor saws.



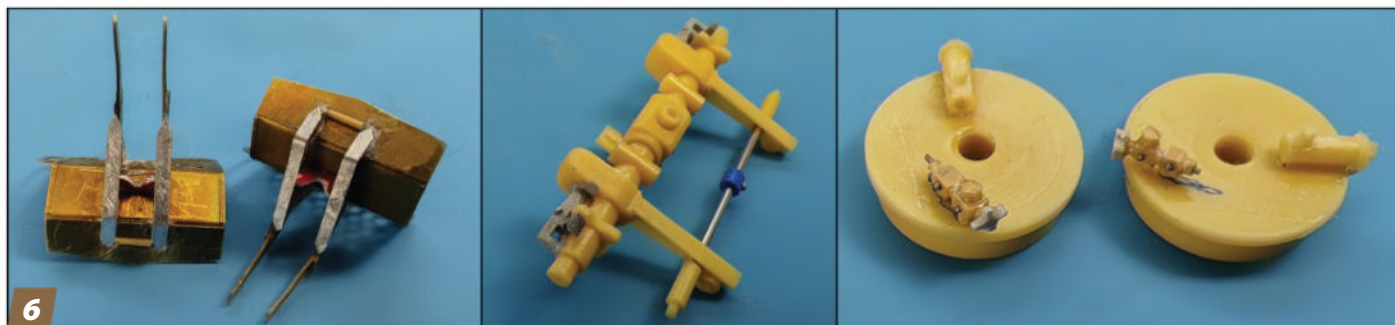
After cleaning up the parts with files and sandpaper, I focused on rivets, which were mere hints on the parts. I punched new ones from a lead sheet with the shank end of a .4mm drill bit and superglued them on.



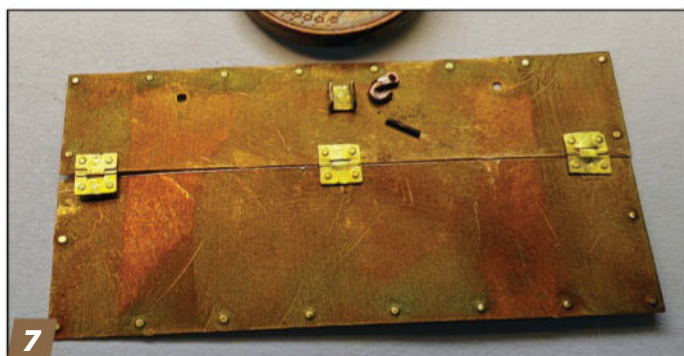
4 With the flattened end of a hypodermic needle, I made two round marks to indicate where dowels were used to secure the spokes to wheel felloes. To represent the rudimentary rubber tire that would have been compressed around the wheel, I glued a strip of old bike tube.



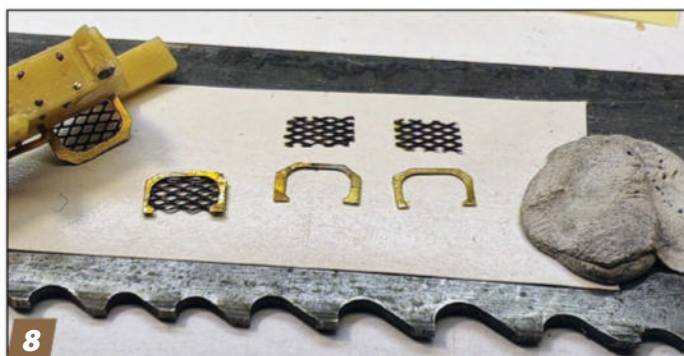
5 The dual travel-lock system for the trails needed better details. On the front lock, I improved the hinge, catch, lock lever (top). The kit's locking lunette in the rear barely resembled the real thing. I made a new latch and socket for the lunette pin from aluminum sheet and styrene tubing.



6 The kit also lacked details for the trail spades, the carriage axle, and drum brakes, which I made with a combination of aluminum, wire, and styrene. When making these sorts of additions, good references are key. How much detail you add is entirely up to your personal tastes.



7 I split the lower gun shield into two pieces for a better sense of separation and added rivets, hinges, and a transport latch to lock the raised plate during long transfers.



8 Luckily, I keep a lot of PE spares, and I was able to retrieve leftovers to make steps for the trails. The wire mesh came from another kit, and I cut the frames and mesh to the desired shape with sharp scissors.



9 On the real howitzer, the hood (right) connects to the shield via rivets. However, on the model shield's reverse side, there were no countersunk rivet details as shown in my references. I made the detail from narrow lead strip indented with a center punch.



10 The front half of the cradle containing a buffer was covered, in contrast with the back part. I used PE tread plate to emphasize this detail and suppressed the distinctive pattern with a layer of Tamiya Putty to make it less obvious.



11 To make the *Rundblickfernrohr* 32 optical sight, I pushed a hollow punch through a piece of silicon rubber to get an elongated shape. Then I pricked the end out with a shortened hypodermic needle to make the eye piece. When painting was finished, I filled this depression with clear gloss to imitate glass.



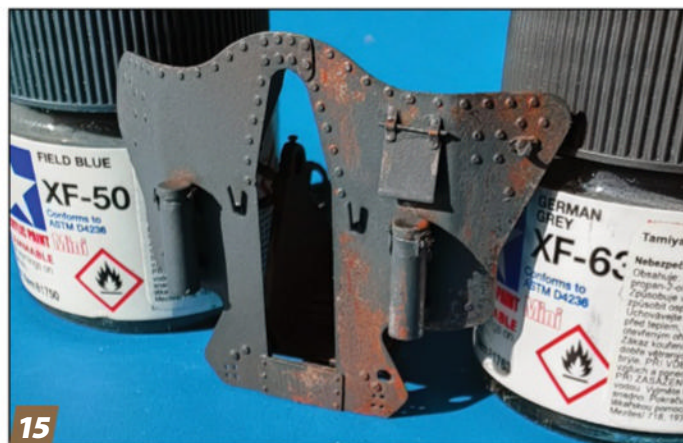
12 I cleaned the subassemblies and remaining parts with soapy water. After everything was dry, I sprayed all the parts with Ammo Black One Shot Primer (No. A.MIG-2023) and followed up with a Vallejo Metal Colors Steel (No. 77.712) base coat. I lightened the steel with Silver (No. 77.724) and applied it on upper areas.



13 I let the metallic acrylics dry completely and then flecked the surface with various artist oils: ochre gold, burnt sienna, caput mortum, and red vermilion. I mixed ivory black oil paint with AK Interactive True Metal Steel (No. AK457); 502 Abteilung Intense Blue (No. ABT-235), True Metal Steel, and ivory black; and 502 Abteilung Light Flesh Tone (No. ABT-135), Cream Brown (No. ABT-240), and Ammo Oilbrusher Rust (No. A.MIG-3510) and freckled the surface with these colors. Then I brushed on odorless thinner to blend the chaotic tangle together.



14 After giving the oil paints ample time to dry, I coated all the various parts with hairspray, let it dry, and then airbrushed everything Vallejo Panzer Aces Light Rust (No. 70.301) thinned with Vallejo Thinner (No. 71.161).



15 I mixed a blue-gray shade of 7:3 Tamiya German Grey (No. XF-63) to Field Blue (No. XF-50) and airbrushed it on. When it was dry, I used a stiff-bristled brush and water to rub away some of the gray and rust to expose the primer and metal underneath.



16

Allowing the gray to dry for 24 hours, I masked the crisscross camouflage with Tamiya tape and added another layer of hairspray. Then I airbrushed a mix of Tamiya Light Brown (No. XF-93), a drop of Flat Earth (No. XF-52), and a touch of Flat White (No. XF-2), pulled up the masks, and rubbed away more paint to reveal the layers beneath.



17

No decals came with the Aires kit. I scrounged through my Afrika Korps spares and settled on the 21st Panzer Division insignia, placards, and couple of other markings for the front and back of the shield. Oh! And a decal for the gun close to the breech naming it "Hella," in memory of an old girlfriend. They settled well with Mr. Mark Setter and Mark Softer.



18

I made a number of filters from artist oils to help break up the monotonous finish and add visual interest. Filters are akin to washes, except much thinner. I brushed on ochre gold and yellow filters in lighter areas and a mix of blue with small drops of True Metal Steel and ivory black in darker areas. Then I sealed everything under flat varnish and left it to dry for 48 hours.



19

I misted Tamiya Light Brown (No. XF-93) with an airbrush over the crisscross camo to soften the sharp transitions between the gray and yellow.



20

Washes accentuated rivets, bolt heads, and recesses. I made a wash from burnt sienna, ivory black, and light vermillion oil paint thinned with odorless mineral spirits for sandy areas (left). For darker areas, like the gun breech, I made a wash from 502 Abteilung Engine Grease (No. ABT-160) and Cream Brown (No. ABT-240) with a smidge of yellow artist oil. I cleaned up dried excess with a damp cotton swab.



21

As one of the camouflage elements, the barrel was wrapped with a dirty tarp attached with a wire. I cut open a white latex glove, laid it flat, primed it gray, and airbrushed Tamiya Red Brown (No. XF-64), Black (No. XF-1), and Olive Green (No. XF-58) over it. I let the paint dry and then cut a section for the barrel, wrapped it, and tied it on with a length of wire.



22

I picked out metallic highlights with Koh-I-Noor Silver (No. 3680/39) and FaberCastell Albrecht Dürer Silver (No. 8200-251) pencils to highlight the edges, details, and add wear in appropriate places.

REFERENCES

Germany's Guns 1939-45, Terry Gander, Crowood Press, ISBN 978-1-861-26110-6

Tank Power Vol. CCXXXV 10,5cm leFh 18, Janusz Ledwoch, Wydawnictwo Militaria, ISBN 978-8-372-19501-2

German Artillery at War 1939-45 Vol. 1 (ISBN 978-9-623-61143-5) and *Vol. 2* (ISBN 978-9-623-61144-2), Frank de Sisto, Concord

FINAL THOUGHTS

TO FINISH UP, I painted the wheel spokes and wooden tool handles Tamiya Deck Tan (No. XF-78), the breech block and optical sight a mix of gloss black and gun metal, and picked out some rivets with steel just to make them pop. A flat coat unified three months of work.

But how to display the leFH 18? Obviously, it would be with my Pavesi P4 tractor, but what else? I settled on a sandy desert road. I vacationed in Tunisia once and, instead of gold jewelry, I left with two bottles full of sand. I sifted and spread the sand over a plaster base sticky with hairspray. I nestled a barrel with a road sign in one corner. I found the decal for the sign in my spares. It's meaning is an enigma to me, but I thought it looked believable enough in this context. **FSM**





Arming an **AUSTRALIAN AMBULANCE**

Finishing a Trumpeter ASLAV-PC as an ambulance

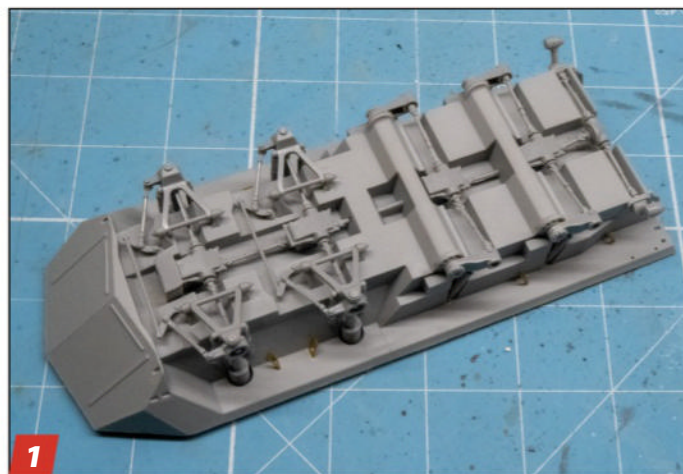
BY ANDY COOPER

Australian Light Armoured Vehicles, or ASLAV for short, were produced by General Dynamics Land Systems Canada and developed from the U.S. Marine Corps LAV-25 and the Canadian Army's Bison armored fighting vehicles after extensive testing and use in Australia.

For something a little different, I wanted an ASLAV-A, or ambulance version. To get there, I started with a

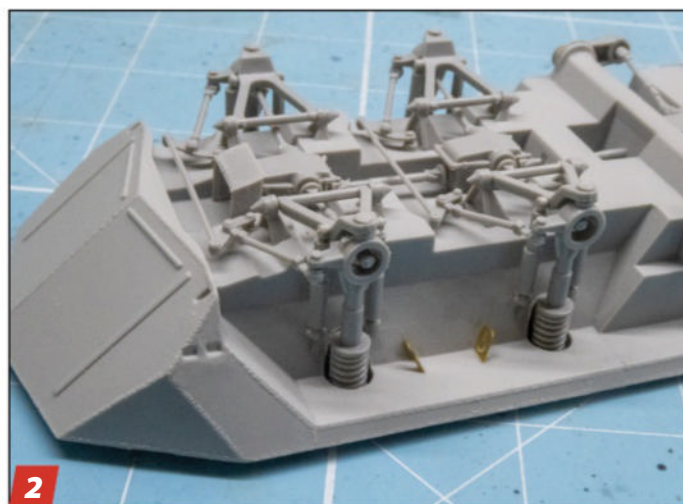
Trumpeter 1/35 scale ASLAV-PC Phase 3 (No. 05535) — the personnel carrier.

Really, there's no visible difference externally between the troop carrier and ambulance versions, aside from the red cross markings, and that the ambulances were not fitted with the RWS (Remote Weapons System) that was eventually added to the other versions. The ambulances, however, did retain a .50-caliber machine gun for protection.



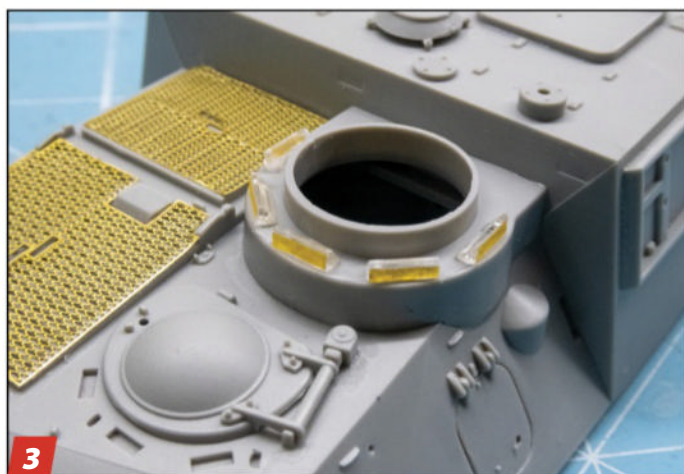
1

This time, I followed the instructions and started at the beginning. Assembling the drivetrain and suspension on the lower half of the hull is fairly straightforward. I left off the propeller drives, the wheels, and the tires to ease painting later and to avoid breaking them.



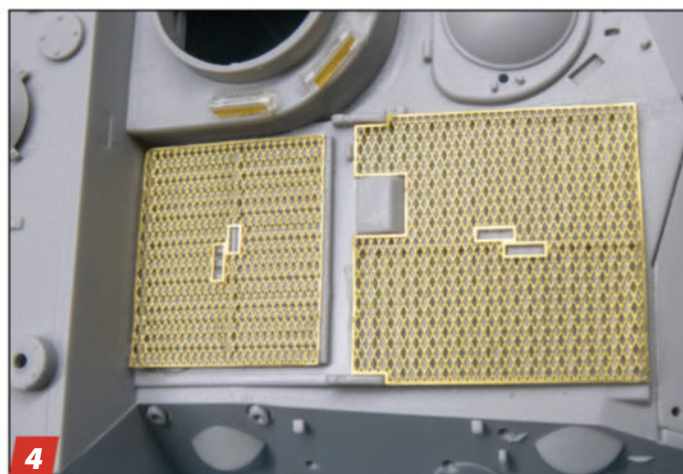
2

I added the kit's small photo-etched (PE) metal eyelets, supergluing them to the unpainted surface. On the real vehicle, these points are used to lift and hold damaged wheels off the ground with a system of shackles and chains.



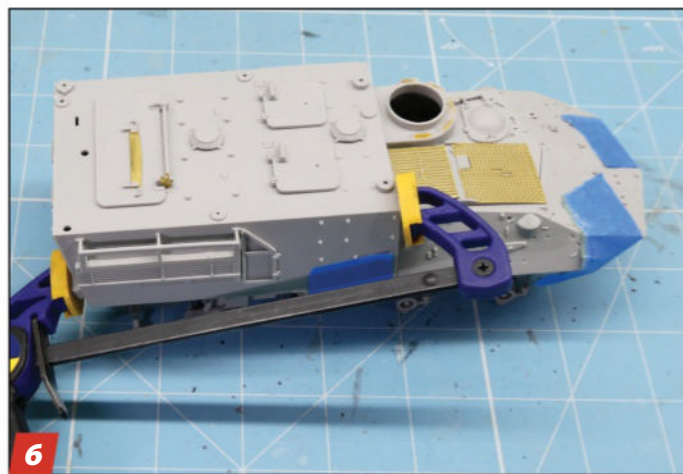
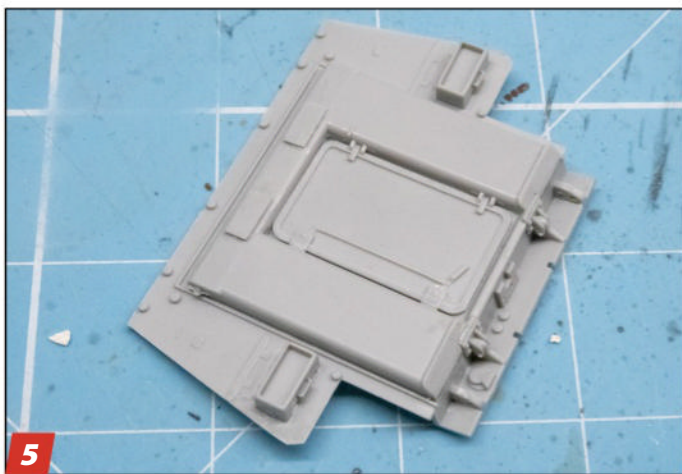
3

The instructions would have you complete the upper hull before joining the upper and lower halves. In my opinion, this is not a viable way to proceed because the hull top has many delicate and detailed parts on it. I made an exception for the PE engine grilles, as it was easier to place them with the hull top separate.



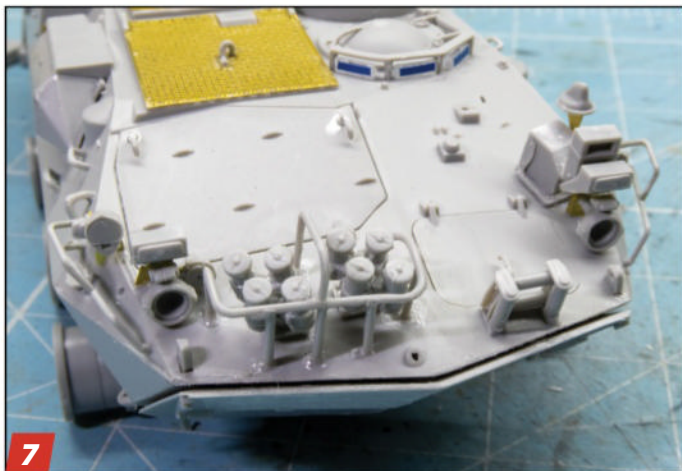
4

The grilles feature a diamond pattern, which is incorrect; the pattern should be square. I had no alternatives, and figured that under paint and weathering, it would not be too noticeable.



While the superglue cured on the engine grilles, I assembled the rear door and ramp in preparation to complete the hull. The two blanks on the top of the ramp are blocked out vision blocks, indicating the vehicle had been retrofitted with a spall lining that helps prevent fragments resulting from a hit that ricochets around the vehicle interior.

Putting the hull together, I found it needed a bit of persuasion. I used a bar clamp to hold things in place while the glue set. Good thing that all those delicate detail parts are still in the box and have yet to be fitted!



For the next few sessions, I set about adding the details to the hull. I forgot the parts to group the four smoke dischargers around. This meant my units didn't align quite perfectly. However, I feared causing damage by trying to correct them, so I left well enough alone.

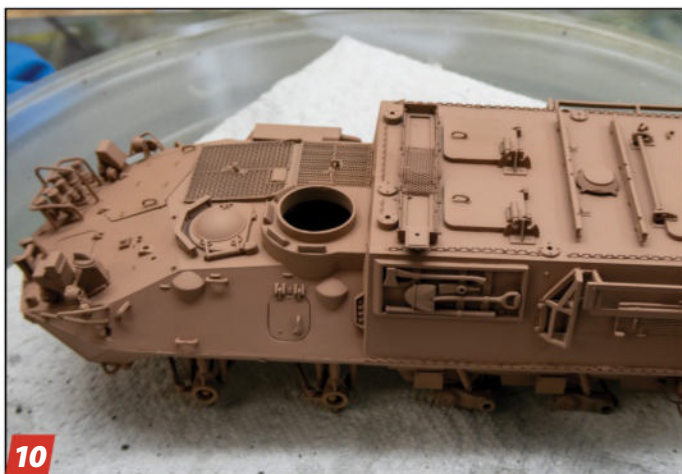
I built the kit's remote-control weapons station (RWS). It looks good when finished, but my ambulance version was not fitted with this. So, I extended the cupola to mount the RWS, cut off the extension, cleaned it up and reverted it back to a cupola that could mount a .50-cal.

REFERENCES

Military Briefs book No. 4 — ASLAV: Australian Light Armoured Vehicle, John Myszka, Mouse House Enterprises, ISBN 978-0-957-75863-6

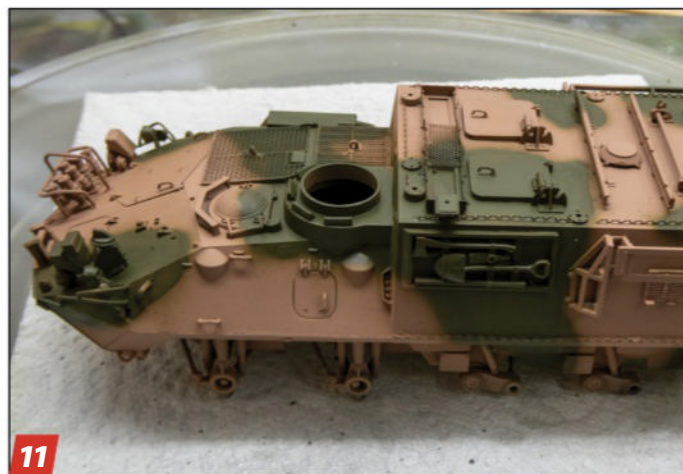


A search of my spares box turned up a .50-cal machine gun, mount, and ammunition box. With a little modification, this was fixed to the modified cupola.



10

I airbrushed the ASLAV SMS Surfacar Black Primer (No. PLP02) and then moved to SMS Premium Camo Brown (No. PL32). I applied light coats, allowing some of the black primer to show through on the undersides and the recesses.



11

SMS Premium Camo Green (No. PL31) came next. With the air pressure set fairly low, I sprayed the green freehand while moving the model around to accommodate where I was aiming the paint. To my eye, I think the results were successful.



12

Finally, I added the last color, SMS Premium Camo Black (No. PL33). I applied this in the same manner as the green, and again, I was pleased with the result.



13

At this point, I added the wheels and tires and carried out the detail painting using a brush and acrylic paints. I sealed the model with Alclad II Aqua Gloss Clear (No. ALC-600) in preparation for the decals.



14

After applying and then sealing the decals, I used artist-oil washes to bring out the details and blend the finish to a more subdued level. I added straps made with the foil from a wine bottle for the spare wheel. I made a rolled camouflage net from painted medical gauze and added it to the storage rack before the modified commander's cupola and antennas were glued in place.

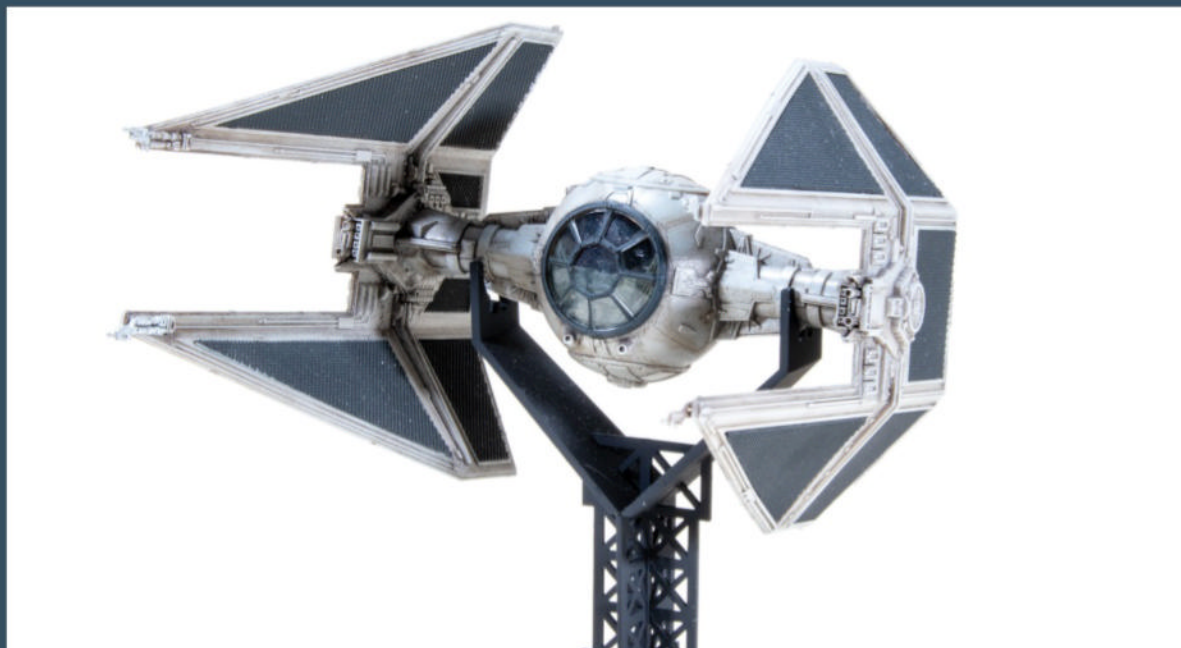


15

I misted mud colored paint over the lower regions, lightening the application as I moved up to represent built-up road grime, which I have plenty of experience with. To add thicker mud, I mixed white glue and artist pastels and applied that with an old brush. The glue dried with a gloss finish, giving the appearance of fresher mud. The final touch was a large antenna on the rear left quarter, which I devised from an old guitar string fitted into the drilled-out kit mount. **FSM**

IPMS/USA National Convention

Hampton, Virginia • August 6-9, 2025 • By Tim Kidwell



▲ **SARAH DORNSEIF**
SANFORD, FLORIDA

This FineMolds 1/72 scale *Star Wars* TIE Interceptor was 17-year-old Sarah's first sci-fi model. She built it out of the box and airbrushed it using Tamiya acrylic paints and a Paasche H4. Sarah masked the windows with Tamiya tape and weathered with a homemade wash.

► **LUIS PEREZ**
PONTE VERDA BEACH,
FLORIDA

Starting as a Revell 1/12 scale RM Kustom chopper, Luis modified the front fork and added a jerry can as a gas tank for a U.S. Army-themed ride. He primed and base-coated with Army green and used gloss and flat finishes to help break up the monochromatic finish.





▲ **ERIC XU**
SHREWSBURY,
MASSACHUSETTS

Eric, 16, built this Very Fire 1/700 scale USS *Des Moines* (CA-134) heavy cruiser as it appeared in 1946. He improved the basic kit with aftermarket decks and anchor chains, and employed the photo-etched metal and resin parts supplied in the kit. He painted the ship in stages, starting with hull red, flat black for the waterline, and then neutral gray for the remainder. He picked out details with Tamiya Panel Line Accent Color and dry-brushed salt streaking.



◀ **DOUG CORP**
CHARLESTOWN,
WEST VIRGINIA

Doug scratchbuilt his 1/25 scale antigravity recon vehicle from Evergreen styrene and parts from his spares box. He airbrushed most of the model and scene with Vallejo acrylics, and then turned to brushes for details. Tamiya weathering powders placed the recon unit in situ, and the base is a shadow box bought from a craft store and converted for Doug's purposes.



▲ **RICHARD CLAIROUX**
MONTREAL, QUEBEC,
CANADA

"This Viggen is special with comic strip character 'Hägar the Horrible' on the tail, painted for the Viggen's retirement from the Swedish air force," Richard said. He modified a Special Hobby 1/48 scale Saab JA 37 with a CMK resin seat, wheels, and canards, a Maestro ram-air turbine, and detailed the cockpit and gear bays with Squadron products. Richard mixed Tamiya paints to match Swedish standard colors and painted the Viggen's typical splinter camo, masking for each individual color.

► **CHRIS DERKS**
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
A full suite of Reskit aftermarket parts enhanced Chris' Hasegawa 1/48 scale A-7E Corsair II. He masked and painted most of the markings for an aircraft serving in the Persian Gulf, 1988, during Operation Praying Mantis. Chris used Gunze Sangyo lacquers and weathered with Tamiya Panel Line Accent Color and artist oils.



SCOTT PURSELL
DOYLESTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Inspired by Delta Airline's Breast Cancer Awareness livery, Scott decided to put his own twist on it. He built a Revell Germany 1/144 scale Boeing 767-300ER and airbrushed it a sparkling Tropical Glitz Pinkalicious over Ammo One Shot Primer. After four coats of paint, Scott finished with aftermarket decals.



► **ROB BRACCI**
STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT
Sikorsky is a name synonymous with helicopters, and Rob's 1/72 scale diorama shows Igor Sikorsky's first practical heli, the VS-300, at his factory in Stratford in 1942. He built and finished the Bren Gun kit out of the box. For the base, he scribed wood grain on plastic planks and utilized foliage from Woodland Scenics.



◀ **STUART MALONE**
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
Stuart modeled the first all-metal fighter airplane from a Wingnut Wings 1/32 scale kit. He upped the already highly detailed Junkers D.I with a 3D-printed floor compass, lead wire throttle and trigger controls, and hand-carved wood veneer laminate prop. Piano wire and brass tubing serve as spark plugs wired to 3D-printed magnetos. Stuart scaled a photo of his subject, cut out the camo pattern for a mask, and attached it with poster putty before airbrushing. He said the kit decals took about a week of applying Solvaset to conform to the corrugated surfaces.



▲ **BILL MOORE**
MURFREESBORO,
TENNESSEE

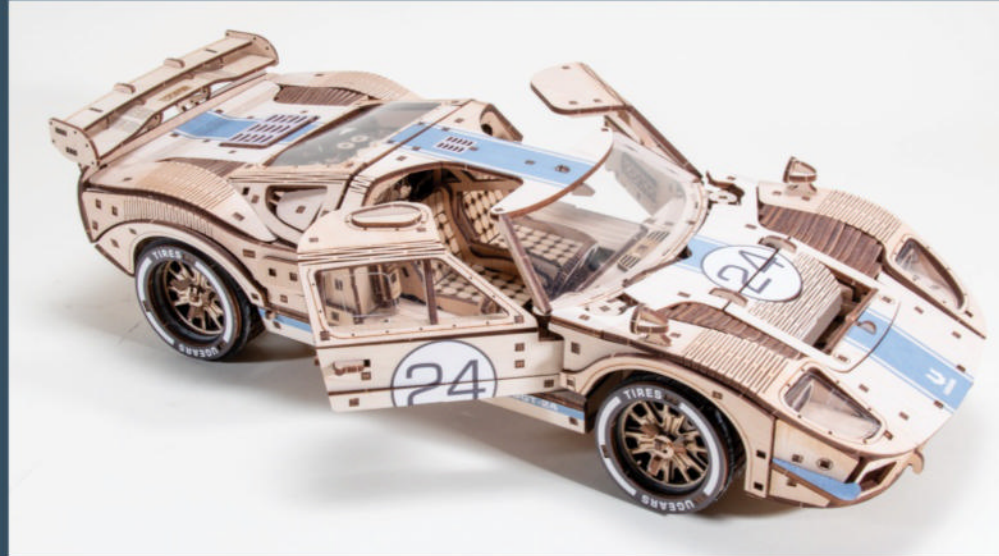
Final Inspection features Bill's box-stock Tamiya 1/48 scale Jagdpanzer primed with Tamiya acrylic paint and detailed with AK Interactive pigments and Abteilung 502 oils. The foam base has corkboard glued to it and is covered with acrylic paste. The stands on the factory floor are 3D-printed.

► **MAX WHITAKER**
RALSTON, NEBRASKA
Junior modeler Max built a Lee-Brooke railway gun from Vargas Scale Models. To complete the 1/35 scale model, he scratchbuilt an ammo box and made a base from foam, modeling mud, and model railroad grass. Max painted the railway gun with Ammo and Tamiya acrylics and a paintbrush, only turning to an airbrush when he needed to spray gloss or flat varnish.



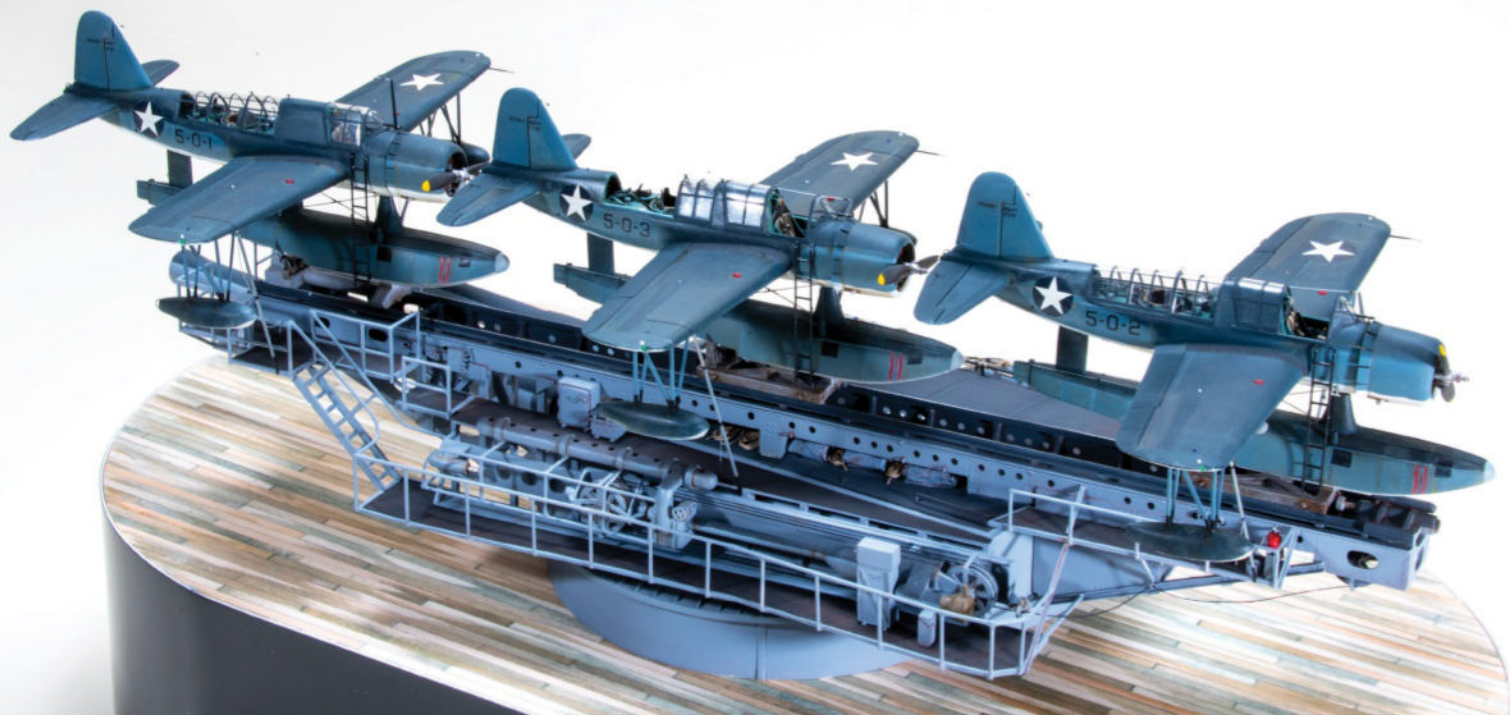
▼ DONALD WORLEY
COLONIAL HEIGHTS, VIRGINIA

A variety of unusual models showed up at the convention this year, including book nooks and even UGears wooden mechanical puzzles. This one, called the UGT-24 Endurance Racer, included plastic windows and nearly 1,000 parts. Donald clear-coated the wooden body with white glue.



▲ ANDERSON SEO
WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

These Games Workshop *Warhammer 40K* Necron Canoptek Spyder and scarabs are creepy! Anderson removed and replaced the molded-on scarab bases. Vallejo acrylic paints handled most of the work for these crawlies, but Anderson also used Scale 75 Gold for select areas and craft paints for the bases. Bark stands in for big rocks, pebbles for small rocks, and crackle paint, Vallejo grass tufts, and cut sprues for crystals round out the ground cover.



▲ KENDALL BROWN
PLANO, TEXAS

This amazing 1/72 scale model of Vought Kingfishers on a P-6 catapult was based on a photo of USS *New York* (BB-34) from June 16, 1943. Kendall scratchbuilt the turret and catapult, and he used the

shells of vintage 1960s Airfix kits for the airplanes, adding Gaspach .30-caliber machine guns and scratchbuilding all the other details, including the engines, canopies, and struts. After airbrushing on True North and Model Master enamels, he weathered each panel with artist oils and watercolor pencils applied with a wet paintbrush.



▲ MATTHEW LAMANILAO
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

"No mods!" Matthew assured us of his Bandai 1/144 scale RG God Gundam. He competed in the unpainted Gundam category, so the only additions he could make were to use Tamiya Panel Line Accent Color. The rings came in the kit and are part of the Gundam's "super form."



▲ DALE STILL
THOMASVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Dale built an original Pyro 1/500 scale *Flying Cloud* on a lark, a bit of whimsy. Why not? He brush-painted the whole model and added foil to the nameplate. Then he thought to take it to contests just to show it and tell the tale. Lo and behold, he's won 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place with it! How's that for reviving an old kit?!



▲ **IRENE ROGAL**
MADISON, WISCONSIN

Irene, 14, made a Hawk Classics *Beach Bunny Catchin' Waves*. Her custom base has sand and water made from Mod Podge and plaster. The hair was partly resculpted and Irene said she had to completely reconstruct the model's sides. She hand-painted with Scale Colors and AK Interactive acrylics.



▲ **DIDIER HACHEM**
BROSSARD, QUEBEC, CANADA

This brightly colored figure represents a samurai of the Akechi family. Didier made minor modifications to the Pegaso 90mm miniature and hand-painted it with acrylics. The groundwork was made with natural wood and grasses and finished with artist oils.



◀ **BILL ROBERTS**
NICEVILLE,
FLORIDA

Bill's Tamiya 1/48 scale Beaufighter Mk.VI wears RAF markings for the 272nd Squadron in Malta, 1942. How? MRP, Tamiya, and Vallejo paints airbrushed in a freehand desert camo scheme. Bill picked out panel lines with Flory Models Dark Dirt wash.



JAMES BOULUKOS
WADING RIVER, NEW YORK

This Tamiya 1/24 scale Fiat Abarth 695 SS rolls on Ukrainian Scale Car Production resin wheels and benefits from rear window louvers and aftermarket interior details. James painted his Abarth with Vallejo Game Color Sunrise Blue and sealed it under Mr. Super Clear Gloss.

► **ERIC YAKUBOV**
MORGAN HILL, CALIFORNIA

Eric, 8, kitbashed his vision for what he called a *Cyber Tank*. He airbrushed it with Vallejo acrylic paints, applied Tamiya washes, and used a base bought at the IPMS/USA National Convention in Madison, Wisconsin, in 2024.





◀ RICKY HOSKIN

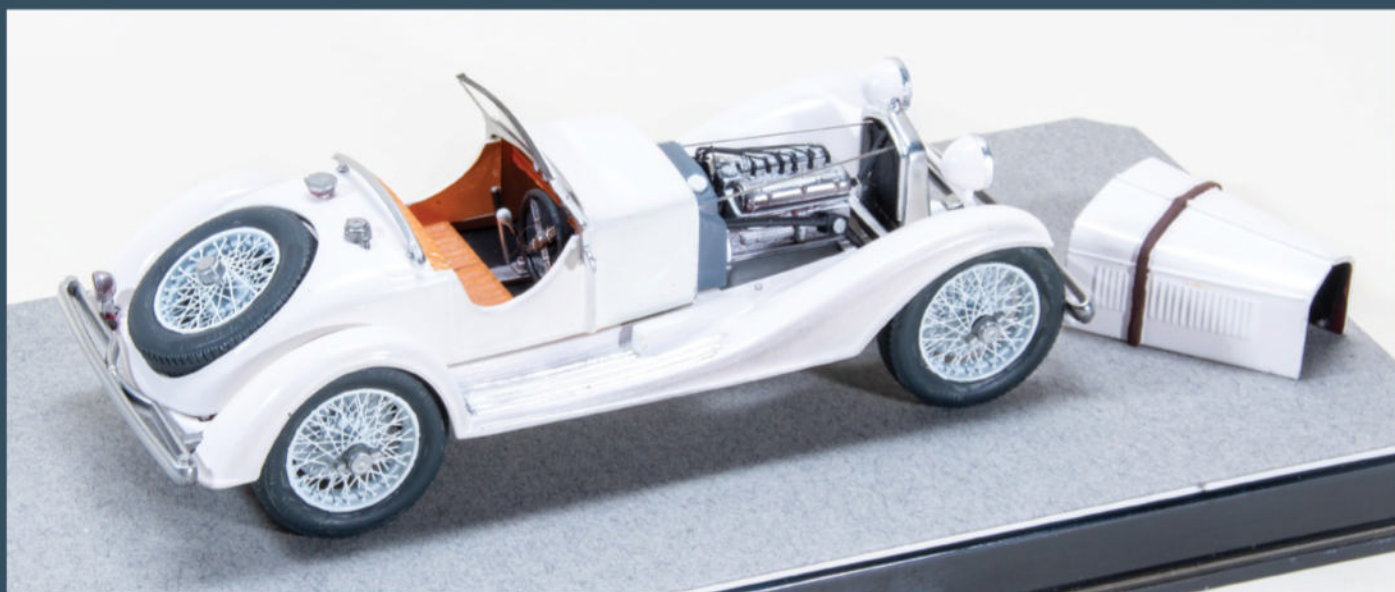
NORTH CHESTERFIELD, VIRGINIA

Calling his version of the RX-78-3 Gundam mobile suit a low-visibility variant, Ricky took his cues from RAF fighters in desert camo during World War II. After airbrushing the mech Mr. Surfacer Mahogany Primer, he pre-shaded, painted the base colors, post-shaded, and then added highlights. The desaturated colors are all Real Colors lacquers, and Ricky weathered with AK Interactive enamel pinwashes. For the base, he cut MDF to size, routed the half-round detail stripes, and made the placard and custom decals. Then he painted it to match the Gundam.

▼ LARRY LITOBORSKI

GARLAND, TEXAS

Pyro produced a 1/32 scale kit of a beautiful classic car, the Alfa Romeo 6C, and Larry had to build it. He replaced the kit's solid plastic wheels with 3D-printed wire wheels and detailed the engine and dash. The color is Tamiya Pure White mixed with Racing White, thinned with Mr. Leveling Thinner, and airbrushed over Alclad II White Primer. As a barrier to keep the kit's bright red plastic from infecting the overall color, he prepped with Alclad II Aluminum and Pledge Floor Gloss before priming.





▲ **WES SHULL**

ASHBURN, VIRGINIA

This Zoukei-Mura 1/32 scale He 214 "Uhu" bomber received a Quinta 3D-decal set for the cockpit, and Wes brought in 1ManArmy stencil masks for the markings. He painted the mottle camouflage freehand with an Iwata airbrush and Tamiya and Mr. Color lacquers. Flory and Tamiya washes provide just a touch of weathering.

► **JOHN BADGLEY**

DEATSVILLE, ALABAMA

John modeled an EA-18G Growler from the VAQ-137 electronic attack squadron on a flight deck. The fighter came from a 1/48 scale Meng kit, and John added aftermarket ejection seats, instrument panel, afterburner cans, and decals. He sprayed the Growler with black primer, pre-shaded each panel line, and then airbrushed the final color mix. John did minor chipping to the cockpit ledge and floor. The base was completely custom-made.





◀ RICK TAYLOR
EVERETT, WASHINGTON

Acrylic paints make up the MASSTER camo scheme on Rick's Dragon 1/35 scale M752 self-propelled launcher and the green on the Lance missile. He converted the missile from conventional to nuclear, scratchbuilt the exhausts under the grates, replaced the seats with ones he made from Apoxie Sculpt, added seat belts and control boxes, and ran cabling. Rick weathered with enamels and artist oils.



▲ MICHEL LAPERRIERE
L'ASSUMPTION, QUEBEC, CANADA

The MiG-23 "Flogger" is one of Michel's favorite Cold War fighters. He built Trumpeter's 1/32 scale kit, adding aftermarket detail parts, correcting the canopy, and accurizing the intake shape. He used Gunze lacquers for the camouflage, masking as needed. Washes and pastels lend to its candid appearance.



◀ TIM BURKE
SCOTIA, NEW YORK

Tim built Edu-Toys 1/20 scale da Vinci submarine out of the box. He used acrylic paints for the base color, washes, and filters, and even cracked out an old Aztek airbrush to do the job!



▲ **ROBERT RULE**
MANASSAS, VIRGINIA

In this scene, called *A Bloom Among the Ruins*, a Russian tanker meets a Russian soldier, and has only issued vodka to offer her. In turn, she only has flowers taken from the top of the wall to give. Robert made extensive use of aftermarket details on the Tamiya 1/35 scale T-34 and scratchbuilt the walls and garden gate, carving each individual brick from spackle.

► **JAMES GREEN**
RURAL HALL, NORTH CAROLINA

James took the barrel from a Mantua 1/17 scale French naval cannon kit and scratchbuilt everything else, from the deck and ship side to the gun carriage and wooden barrel. He left most of the wood natural, colored with a light stain, and painted the rail, stanchions, and parts of the base black. More than 27 feet of wood strip and 530 tree nails grace James' model.



SHIBLEE HASAN
SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA

One of the more unique bases at this year's IPMS/USA National Convention, Shiblee's Orange Hobby 1/350 scale USS *Hercules* (PHM-2) didn't disappoint. He pre- and post-shaded and used Mr. Color and Tamiya lacquers to achieve a detailed finish. He laser-cut clear acrylic for the base, 3D-printed the sides, and made water from epoxy.



▲ **DANIEL MATTEI**
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Games Workshop *Warhammer* 40K Eldar are some of the most unique models in the universe, like the Skathach Wraithknight. Daniel's only modification to the figure was to add magnets to the arms to make them interchangeable (a great idea if you're looking to change a loadout). He primed his Wraithknight black, then built up the colors from brown to off-white. Daniel used a stencil to airbrush the hex pattern on the cockpit, and brush-painted everything else. He 3D-printed the base and added grass and moss ground cover.



▲ **BOB WALTMAN**
NAVARRE, FLORIDA

Bob sculpted his 80mm *Lady Knight* from Apoxie Sculpt and painted her with Scale 75 and Vallejo acrylics. He used Silflor products to create the groundwork, setting the scene for a warrior who has felled a dread beast.

MITCHELL SLAUGHTER ROXBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

It's not a model contest without a Phantom II, and Mitchell brought his Zoukei-Mura 1/48 scale F-4EJ Kai in the "Farewell to Phantoms" livery for the JASDF 301st Tactical Fighter Squadron 2020 tour of Japan. He upgraded the cockpit with a Quinta seat detail set and painted with Mr. Hobby Metallic Blue before placing decals.



► DAVID RUSSOW JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

An M4A1 Sherman crosses a treadway bridge somewhere in Germany, 1945. David added photo-etched metal details and a hedgerow cutter to the Dragon 1/72 scale tank, and he scratchbuilt Sommerfeld matting on the turret and side. Foam blocks form the base's basic shape with balsa covering the sides. The building comes from HQ72.



PHIL DANIELS

SOUTHERN SHORES, NORTH CAROLINA

Phil took several photos of a real M1 ABV (Assault Breacher Vehicle) that he utilized when building a Rye Field Models 1/35 scale kit. He rounded out details with styrene and copper wire before painting the ABV with enamels and lacquers from various brands. Artist oils handled the weathering while pigments simulated desert use. A walnut base supports the ABV with ¼-inch styrene sheet finished as a highly trafficked work area.



◀ **JARED NUSS**
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

Cassian Andor's U-wing looks stellar here with Jared's custom 3D-printed base and LED-lighted engines. A Bandai 1/144 scale kit served as the canvas for Real Colors lacquers and markers. Jared masked the markings and used a Silhouette Cameo cutting machine for the wing bands.



EARL THOMAS HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

This spectacularly detailed Kitty Hawk 1/35 scale AH-6J Little Bird has Red Fox instrument panels; rocket pods, antennas, and cockpit details from Werner's Wings; a FLIR ball from Cobra Company; and rockets from Black Ops Modeling. Earl's model wears Tamiya NATO Black faded with a mix of the primary color and gray.



◀ MARK HAMRICK BUCKHANNON, WEST VIRGINIA

Mark's Mirage 1/48 scale Halberstadt Cl.II wears custom decals and a replacement resin engine. He finished the biplane based on a Ronnie Bar profile on the back of Windsock Datafile 157 *Halberstadt Cl.II at War*. The fuselage mottle was provided as a decal in the kit, and he simulated wood-grain finishes with artist oils.



▶ ANDREW WHITE HOLLYWOOD, MARYLAND

Andrew used Star decals on his Tamiya 1/48 scale Challenger 2 MBT to depict the Queen's Royal Hussars in Al-Amarah, Iraq, 2004. The tarp up front is from Red Zebra Models. Andrew used the hairspray method to chip the tank's paint and made a base from scratch.





◀ **KEITH SCRUTON**
MARIETTA, GEORGIA

Inspired by photos he took of a tugboat in Chesapeake, Virginia, Keith went to work on a Revell Germany 1/108 scale harbor tugboat kit. He filled the windows with Micro Krystal Klear and painted with Model Master enamels. The finish was achieved with an airbrush, spray paints, dry-brushing, washes, and real rust from a metal scouring pad.

▶ **JAMES KELLEY**
GIBSONIA, PENNSYLVANIA

This Messerschmitt Bf 109G-6 built from an Eduard 1/72 scale kit features Eduard aftermarket cockpit, landing gear, and wheels. James airbrushed the camouflage with MRP paints and marked the fighter for service with the Republic of Slovakia.



◀ **JAMES BRANNAN**
MECHANICSVILLE, VIRGINIA

You may recognize the Revell 1/24 scale ZZ Top Eliminator coupe under all that faded paint and rust. Beyond the heavily weathered appearance, James also cut open and hinged the doors and trunk, and hinged the hood to open.





▲ **CHRIS DERKS**
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Chris' 12-year-old son picked an Academy 1/48 scale A-10C Warthog for his dad to build and chose the Osan Air Base markings for it, too. A Quinta cockpit, Mini Craft Collection seat and fans, and a weapons loadout courtesy of Eduard and Reskit round out this monster build. Chris painted his A-10 with GSI Creos lacquers and used Uschi van der Rosten photo-etched metal stencils to create mottling to suggest wear and tear. (Cover model)



▲ **TIM NELSON**
KIRKLAND, WASHINGTON

Tim said he was going for a "Fly, you bugger!" vibe with this model of a World War I Type B pigeon loft. He paired Emhar figures with a 1/72 scale Roden kit and 3D-printed pigeons for a scene that might have happened on the Western Front. Tim employed Tamiya acrylics, artist oils, and pigments to paint and place this unique vehicle in Europe during the Great War. If you look closely, you can see the pigeon droppings for added realism.



◀ **MICHAEL POLIN**
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE
Tamiya, Vallejo Metal Color, and Citadel acrylic paints dress Michael's intimidating Games Workshop *Warhammer 40K* 28mm Imperial Knight. He primed the figure black, masked and airbrushed, brush-painted details, and weathered with Flory and artist-oil washes.

▼ **ERIC KALAMAJA**
PILOT, VIRGINIA
Talk about unusual! Clem Gibson's 1947 Ford Mustang comes to life in Eric's 1/24 scale model. He used an AMT chassis and an MPC P-51 Mustang to get things rolling and scratchbuilt the radiator and many of the engine details. Eric brush-painted his Mustang with Vallejo acrylics and weathered it using Tamiya pigments.

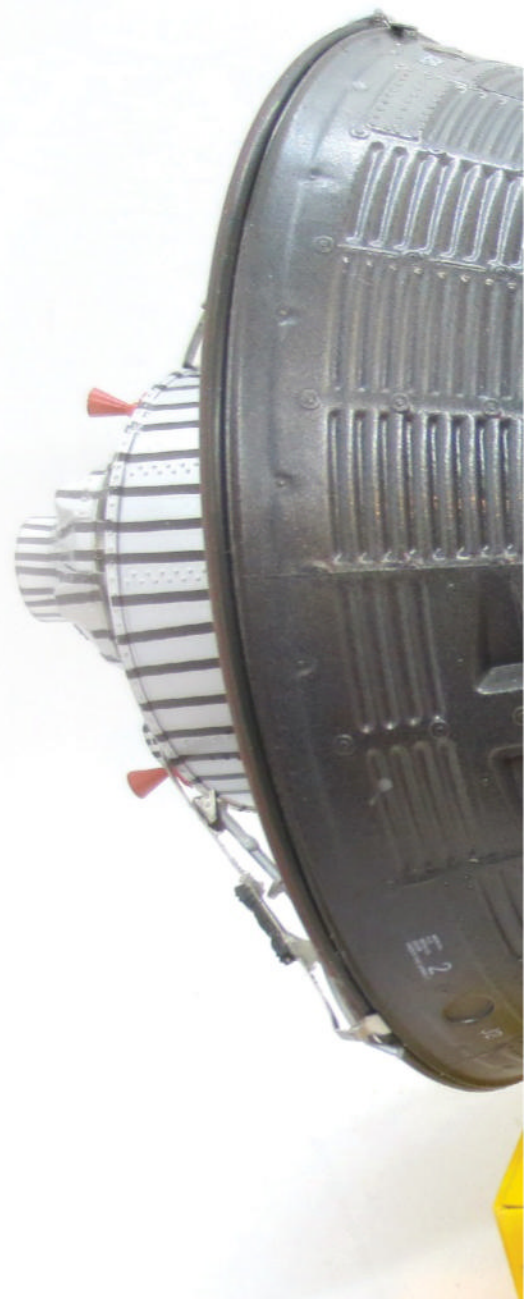


A large-scale Mercury capsule lends itself to detailing

BY ROBERT LAPORTA

Between 1961 and 1963, six Mercury missions propelled the first American astronauts into space. Alan Shepard and Gus Grissom took their first suborbital flights in May and July 1961. The first crewed orbital flight for Project Mercury was flown by John Glenn in *Friendship 7* on February 20, 1962. Mercury capsules were small vehicles, measuring only 10 feet 9½ inches long and 6 feet wide and weighing less than 3,000 pounds.

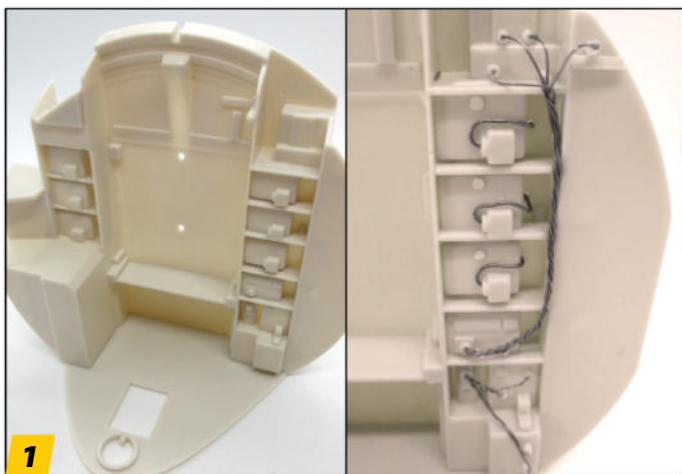
Atomic City produced a 1/12 scale kit (No. 0062001) of this first American spaceship. The outside is a highly accurate rendition of the craft. The rudimentary interior has a fairly accurate control panel and includes a vinyl astronaut. The kit's excellent decals by Space Model Systems come on two sheets, one sheet with black markings and the other with color. My goal was to enhance the interior and model the complexity of the real spacecraft.



Honoring FRIENDSHIP



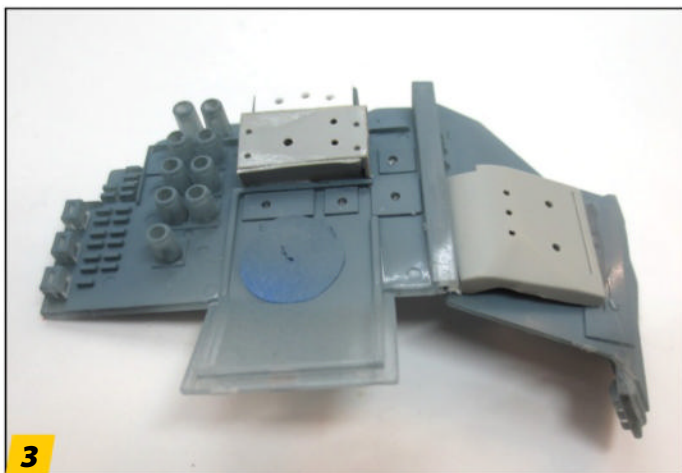
DSHIP 7



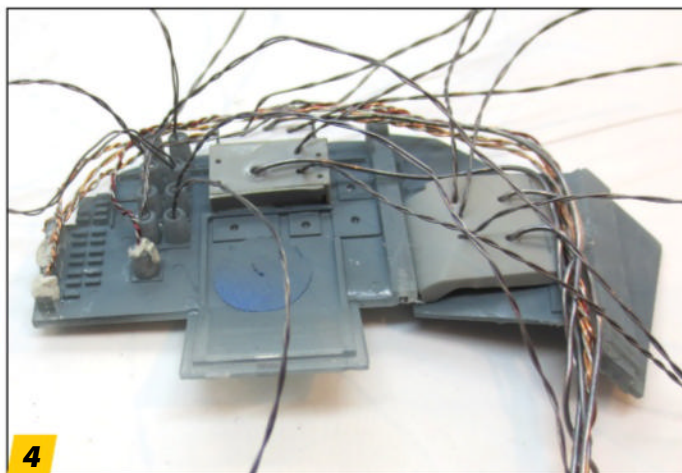
1 Starting with the plain rear bulkhead, I sliced thin discs of styrene rod for sockets and drilled holes for wires with a pin vise. I ran lead wire of different diameters for fly fishing.



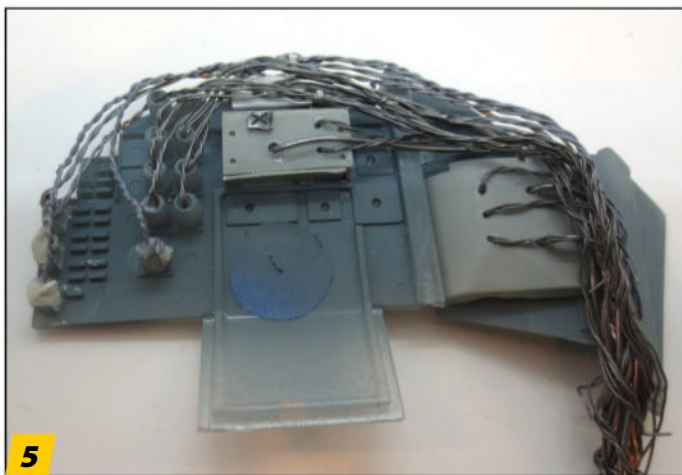
2 I made the first-aid kit and life raft cases from Apoxie Sculpt and painted them silver. I cut slots in the seat for the safety harness and made the harnesses from Tamiya tape with copper wire shaped into buckles. The seat pads were made with medical tape painted flat tan.



3 The kit control board consisted of three clear plastic parts. After gluing them together, I masked a circle on both sides of the periscope and airbrushed it light gray. For dimensionality, I built a few boxes and repurposed a tank fender to beef up the panel's back side.



4 Using different gauges of copper and lead wire, I twisted wire pairs together and inserted them into the sockets already molded into the console and the spots where I drilled holes with a pin vise and micro bits, securing them with two-part epoxy.



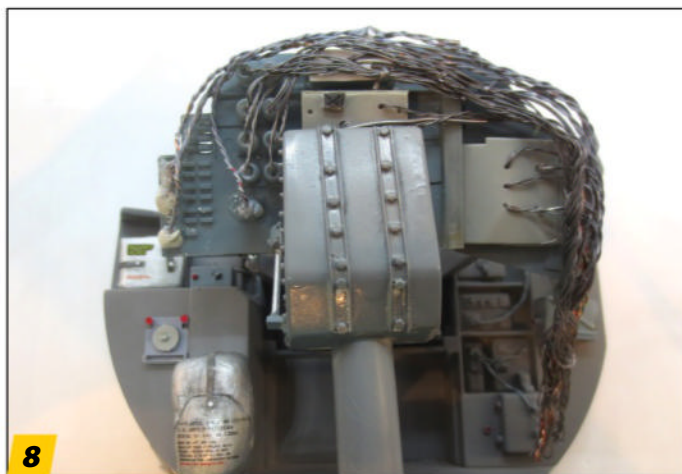
5 Cable management is a thing! I wound nearby cables together and secured them with lead foil strips. The resulting bundles were routed to the port side of the panel and painted dark gray.



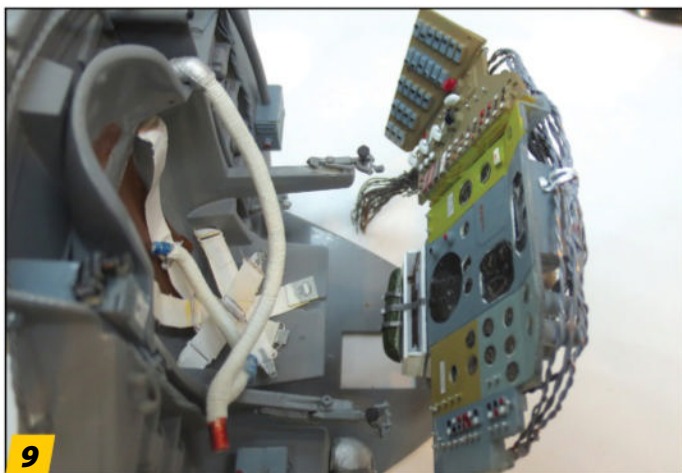
6 Each Mercury capsule had a slightly different console. I masked and painted the panels with appropriately colored acrylic paints. I sprayed the backside of the periscope Tamiya Smoke (No. XF-19). Gauge decals each received a drop of Pledge Floor Gloss (PFG) for lenses.



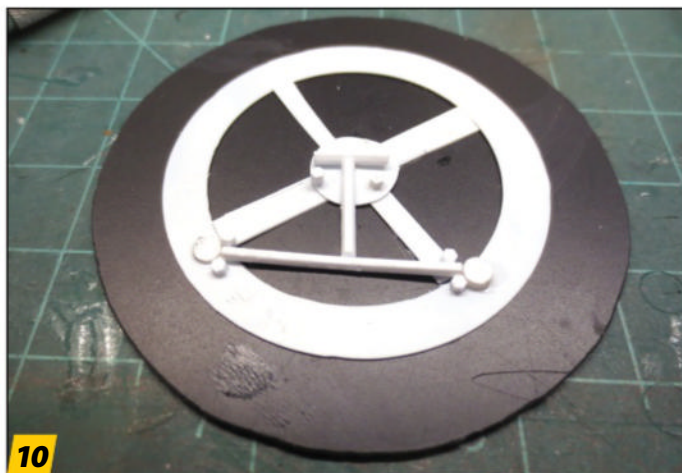
7 I added a small box built from styrene sheet to rest beneath the periscope. A canvas bag made of Apoxie Sculpt with lead foil straps was glued to the front of the box, and then the whole assembly was attached to the console.



8 To enhance the control panel pedestal, I cut styrene I-beam to length and shaved off one side to create U-channel. I clamped and cemented these to the back of the pedestal and sliced styrene hex rod to make bolt heads.



9 Attaching the control panel to the rear bulkhead resulted in a compact, busy-looking cockpit. While it may seem crude by today's standards, it was state of the art for the early 1960s.



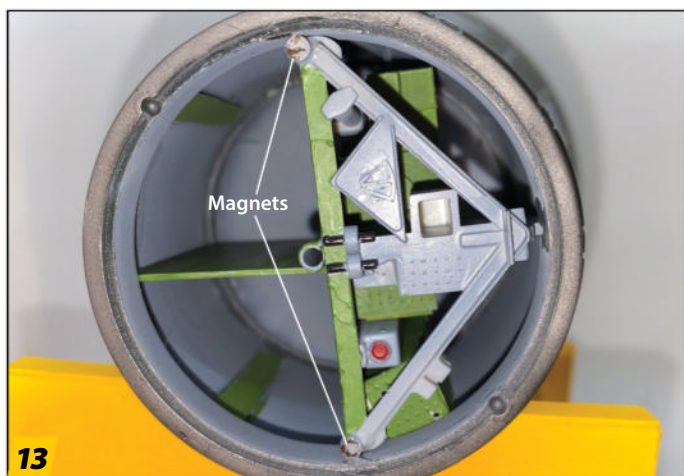
10 No forward bulkhead with a hatch between the parachute compartment and the capsule was included in the kit. I scratchbuilt one using styrene sheet and rod and cemented it in place.



11 Adding more detail to the interior of the capsule, I constructed a simplified helium pressurization module, which was used with the reaction control system, with parts from my spares box and lead wiring. I painted it gray and placed it near the escape hatch inside the capsule.



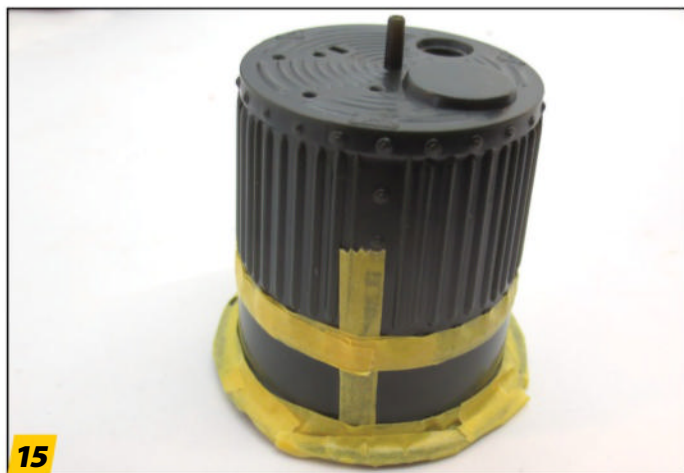
12 The electronics/parachute compartment above the main capsule was fairly simple in the kit (right). I built boxes from styrene sheet, decorated each with styrene discs, and painted them chromate green.



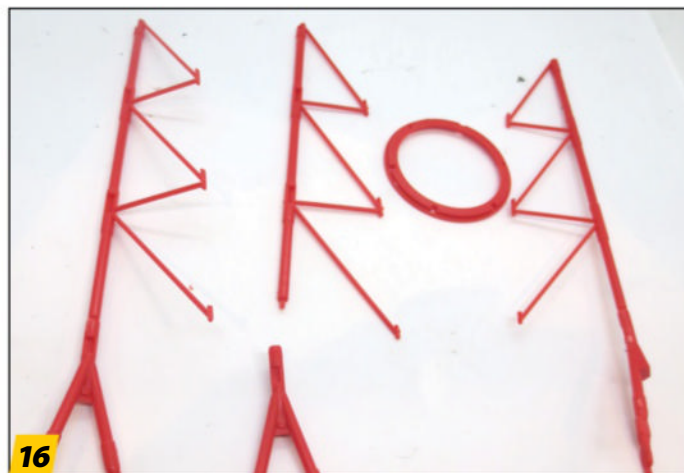
13 These boxes were glued into the electronics area of the compartment for more realism. I attached small magnets with two-part epoxy to the ends of the main support beams. These magnets mated with others glued to the antenna fairing so it could be removed to look inside.



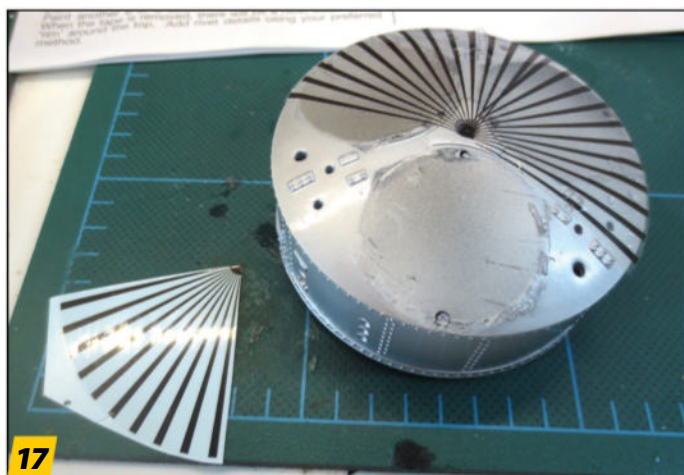
14 Turning to the exterior, the heat shield has been described as being a phenolic brown color (like old circuit boards). My research showed it closely matched Rust-Oleum Rusty Metal Primer. I applied several coats of this color to the heat shield directly from the spray can.



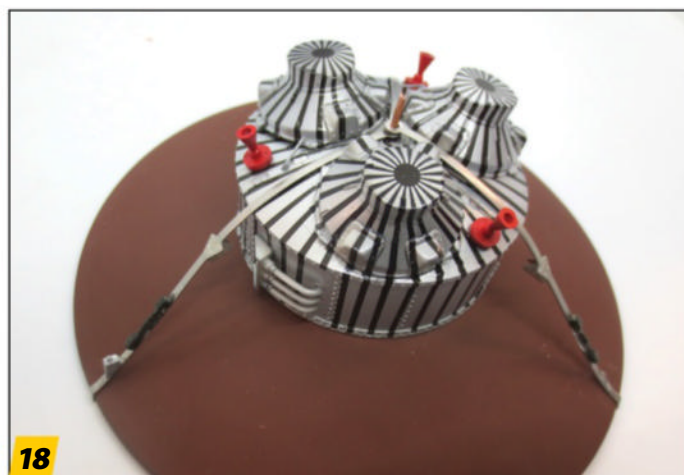
15 The hatch was the only exterior part of the capsule that did not come molded in black. I sprayed both sides the same neutral gray enamel that I airbrushed the interior of the capsule, let it dry a few days, and then followed up with flat black enamel.



16 The launch escape tower was molded in red. It was a bit tricky to assemble, and I had to pay close attention to the instructions, but it fit well to the capsule. When it was together, I airbrushed it Model Master Insignia Red.



17 The retro pack was strapped to the heat shield and provided the retro rockets to slow the capsule's descent. I glued the rockets to the pack before the decals. Wrong. I removed them, painted them and the pack Model Master Chrome Silver, decaled, and then reattached the rockets.

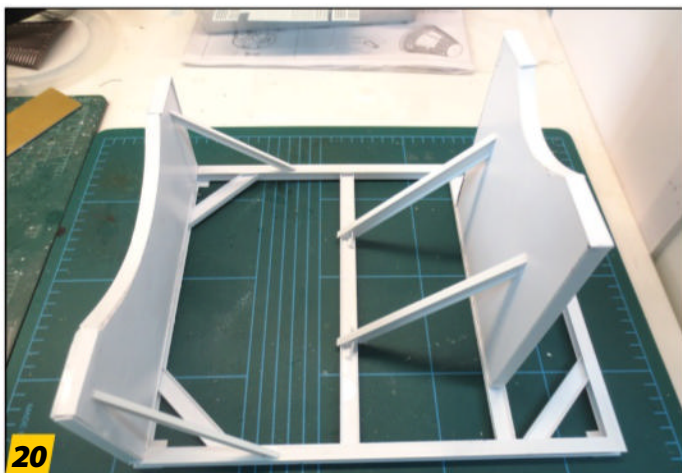


18 Applying decals to *Friendship 7* was the most difficult part of construction due to the complex shapes. The stripes for the main retro pack were achieved with multiple decals that needed to be aligned. I attached the rockets to the pack with Aleene's Tacky Glue.



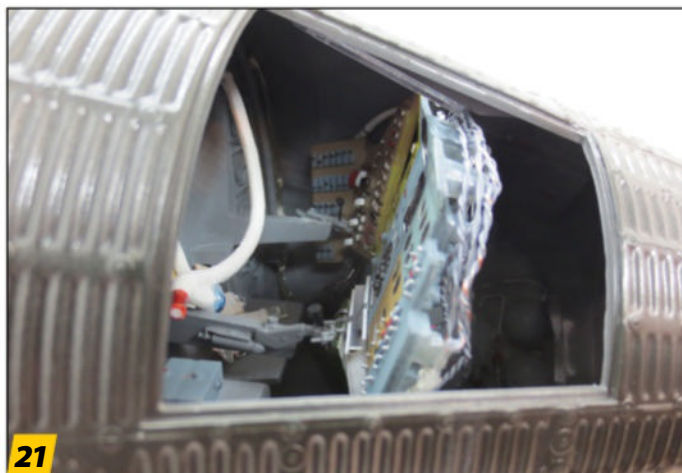
19

I airbrushed the exterior of the capsule with several thin coats of Model Master Metallizer Burnt Metal enamel for the high-temperature alloy called Rene 41. The only part of the exterior to receive different treatment was the antenna fairings, which were painted light gull gray for the radiolucent panels. After waiting several days to ensure the paints were completely dry, I airbrushed several thin coats of PFG to ready the surface for decals. I applied the decals to the capsule and used plenty of Micro Set and Micro Sol to get them to settle over the complex “shingle” exterior. I carefully brushed bubbles out from under the decals or made slits with a sharp No. 11 hobby blade to allow decals to settle and prevent silvering. After the decals were set, I sealed them all with another coat of PFG. I set the window in place with Aleene’s Tacky Glue, fit the interior, and closed everything up with the heat shield.



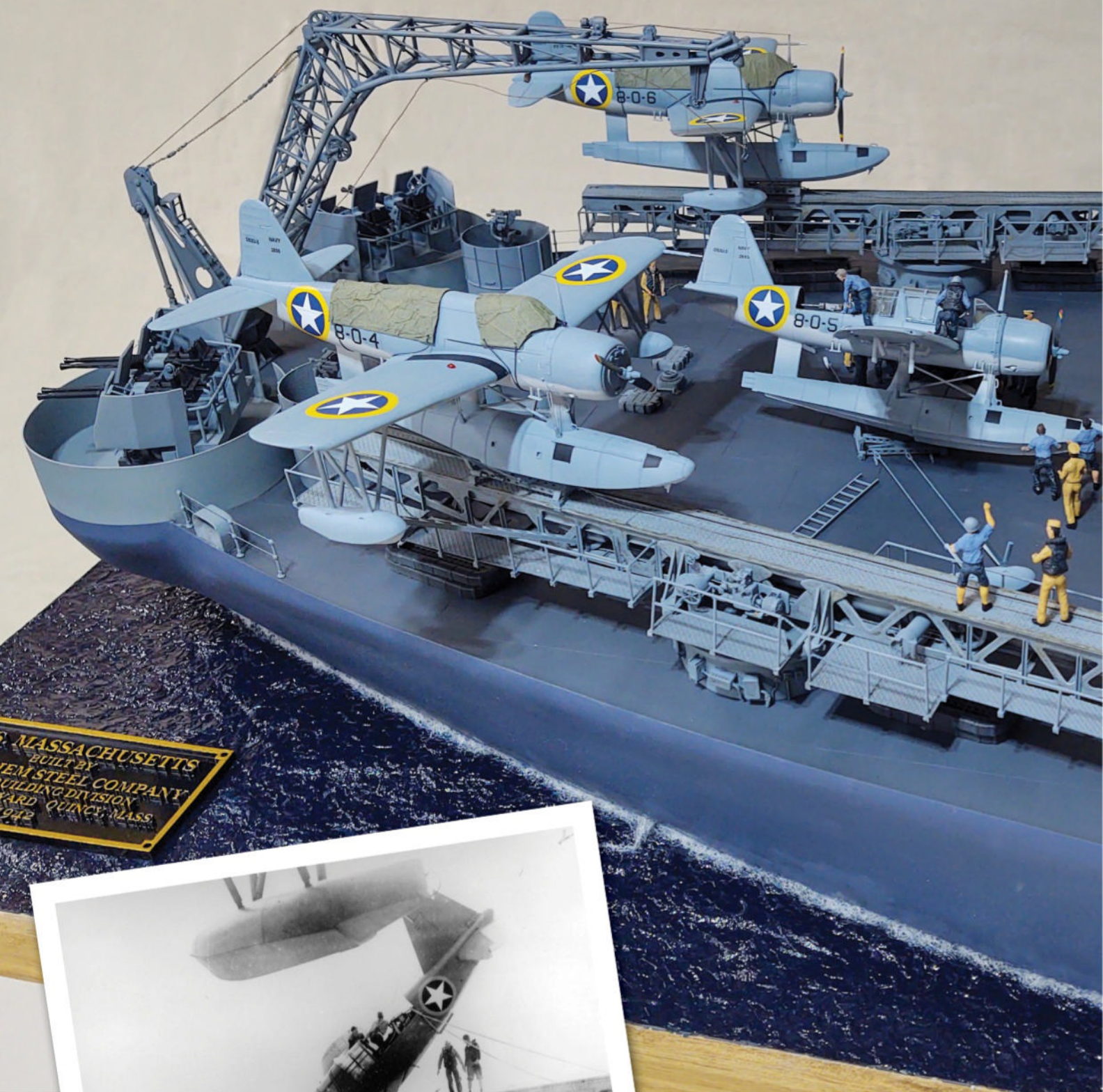
20

For the display, I built a construction stand from ¼-inch styrene I-beams. Using a contour gauge, I transferred the curves from the front and rear portions of the capsule to foam board I’d laminated between two sheets of thin styrene with Aleene’s Tacky Glue. I airbrushed it yellow.



21

That’s one tight fit for an astronaut! The extra wires and details not only provided me with plenty of enjoyment while building *Friendship 7*, it hits home the cramped quarters the pioneering Mercury crews had to contend with. **FSM**



ABOVE: Kent Waterson wanted to do more than model OS2U-3 Kingfishers on a catapult, opting to build a massive, 1/48 scale quarterdeck with three aircraft, one damaged by a wave during a storm over the Atlantic Ocean.

LEFT: On Nov. 11, 1942, a massive wave hit USS *Massachusetts* knocking one of its three OS2U-3 Kingfishers off the catapult and onto the deck. This photo served as inspiration for Kent's diorama. Photo/U.S. Navy courtesy of Pieter Bakels

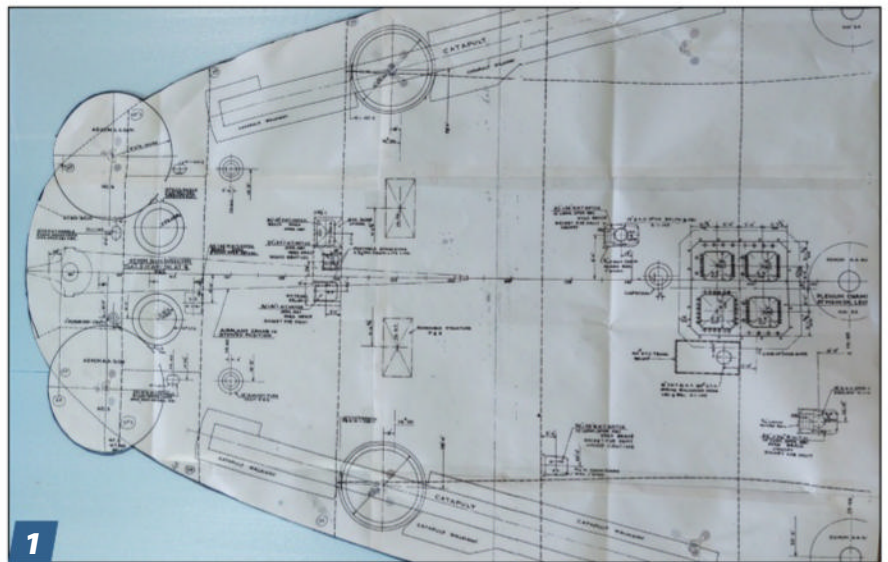
An ACCIDENT at SEA

Photos of a damaged aircraft inspires
a huge 1/48 scale undertaking

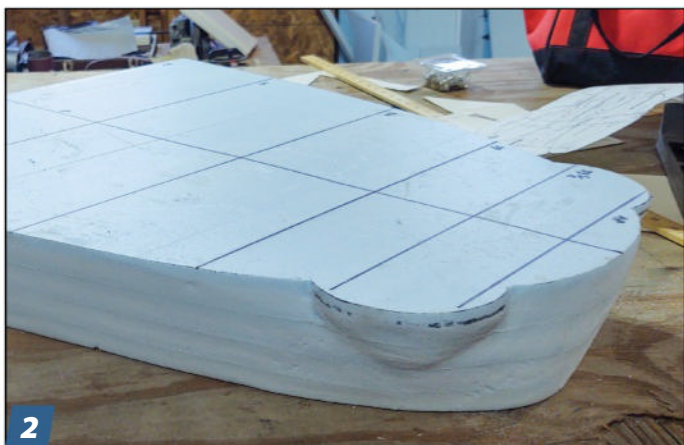
BY KENT WATERSON

As a kid, my family traveled to Fall River, Massachusetts, to visit the *South Dakota*-class fast battleship USS *Massachusetts* (BB-59). At the time, the quarterdeck had a Vought OS2U-3 Kingfisher on display. My brother shot a picture of the aircraft, and later, I built the Monogram kit of the airplane, and it always held a warm spot in my heart. Years passed, and I wanted to build a diorama around the Kingfisher, something involving the catapults, but not just a plane on the catapult — that had been done many times before.

While scouring the internet for ideas, I came across a couple of photographs of a damaged Kingfisher on the *Massachusetts*' deck after a storm. From there, the plan came together, except now there would be three Monogram 1/48 scale OS2U-3 Kingfishers, not one. The diorama would depict the scene from November 11, 1942, captured in the photos as the battleship transited the Atlantic on its way to participate in Operation Torch.



I found ship plans for *Massachusetts* on the internet, enlarged them to 1/48 scale and printed them on my laser printer. The hull would be built of 1-inch XPS foam insulation, and I traced the patterns on the layers, cut them out, and glued the sheets together with 3M Super 77 spray adhesive.



I also purchased a set of BB-59 plans from The Floating Drydock (floatingdrydock.com) which gave me the hull contours at different station numbers. I enlarged them to 1/48 scale, cut out paper templates, marked the station numbers on the top of my hull, and cut the ship contours with a hot knife.



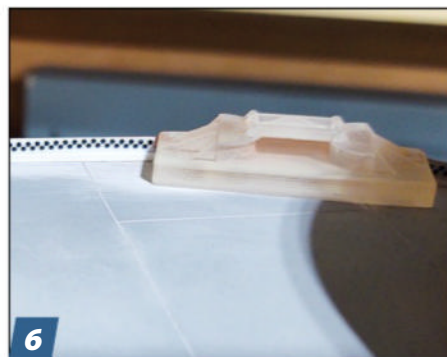
The hull was refined with a coarse file and covered with fiberglass cloth and TotalBoat epoxy resin. I sanded the resin, filled imperfections with Bondo, and sanded and primed repeatedly until I was satisfied with the shape. Finally, I covered the deck surface with sheets of 0.030-inch styrene and trimmed them flush with the hull sides.



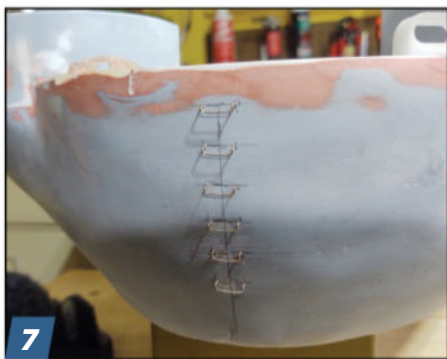
To make the 40mm Bofors gun tubs, I drew templates in CAD, printed them and transferred them to styrene sheet that I cut to shape. For the circular shape, I 3D-printed a form (drawn in Fusion360), wrapped styrene sheet around it, and submerged it in boiling water for a few minutes. When cool, the styrene held its shape.



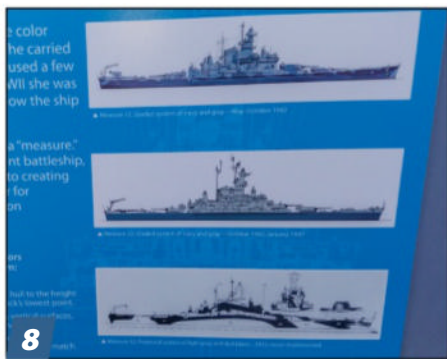
I also printed mounting rings and glued them to the deck. These gave a lip to attach the styrene tubs to and raised the floor of the gun tubs a bit. The tubs were then attached to the deck and faired in with Bondo.



I added strips of styrene angle around the edge of the deck and detailed them with Archer Transfers rivet decals. A 3D-printed rear towing chock from Distefan 3D was faired into the lip.



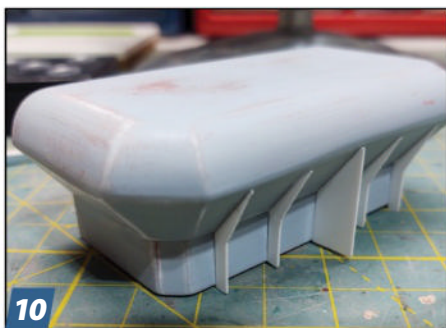
References showed the deck plates, but the exact dimensions proved difficult to determine. I scribed panels that measured 4-feet x 12-feet in scale. A set of O-scale railroad grab irons worked well for the rungs on the stern. I spaced them according to references. Then I sprayed more primer, filled defects, and sanded everything.



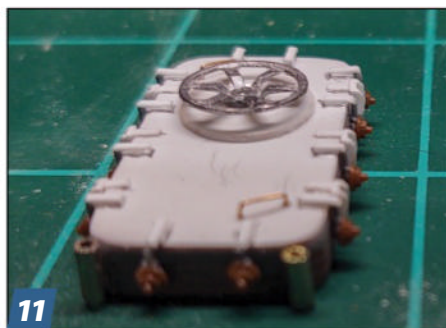
A trip back to the USS *Massachusetts* revealed the ship wore Measure 22 camouflage from October 1942 until January 1947. The colors were Navy Blue 5-N (Vallejo Luftwaffe Uniform WWII; No. 70.816), Haze Gray 5-H (Vallejo Blue Grey Pale; No. 70.905), and Deck Blue 20-B (Vallejo Dark Blue Grey; No. 70.867).



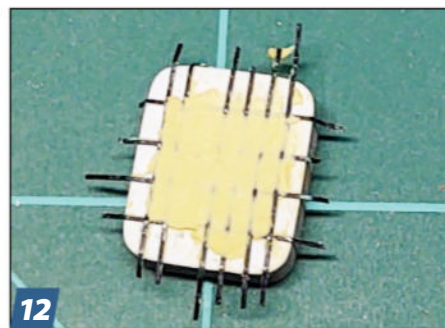
I painted the Bofors gun tubs haze gray first, masked the shear line, and sprayed the hull exterior navy blue. The severed end of the ship was sprayed hull red primer. Then I masked everything except the deck and airbrushed deck blue.



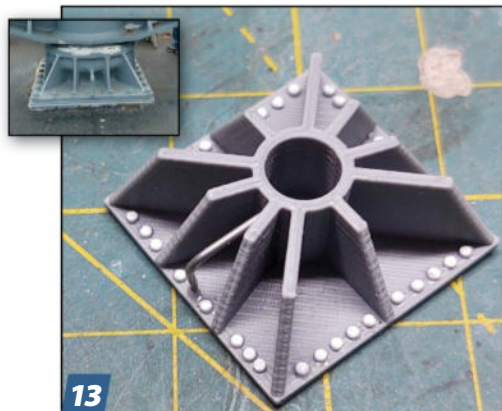
10
My ship plans and photo references didn't always agree regarding deck details, requiring detective work and some guessing. I built a large rear vent with 3D-printed parts, which I coated with Mr. Surfacer 500 to fill noticeable layer lines, puttied, and sanded smooth. Then I detailed the vent with components cut from styrene sheet.



11
For hatches, I designed and 3D-printed frames and added styrene sheet to the top. Then came details, like straps, eyebolts, and latches. O-scale railroad brake wheels made fine handwheels, and I used Grandt Line 2½-inch nut, 5-inch washer castings (No. GL5093). I designed and printed smaller hatches and mushroom vents, detailing them with wire.



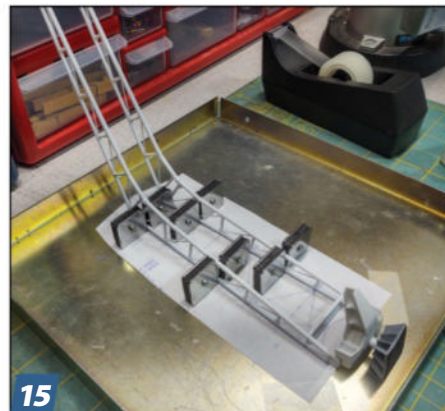
12
Some hatches had a "pillow" surface on them. I replicated this by applying a grid of thin tape and then filling the area with Milliput. When I removed the tape, it left behind the "pillow" surface. After light sanding cleaned up the rough edges, I primed them. Larger bucket vents, the anchor chain winch, and chocks came from online 3D-printer files.



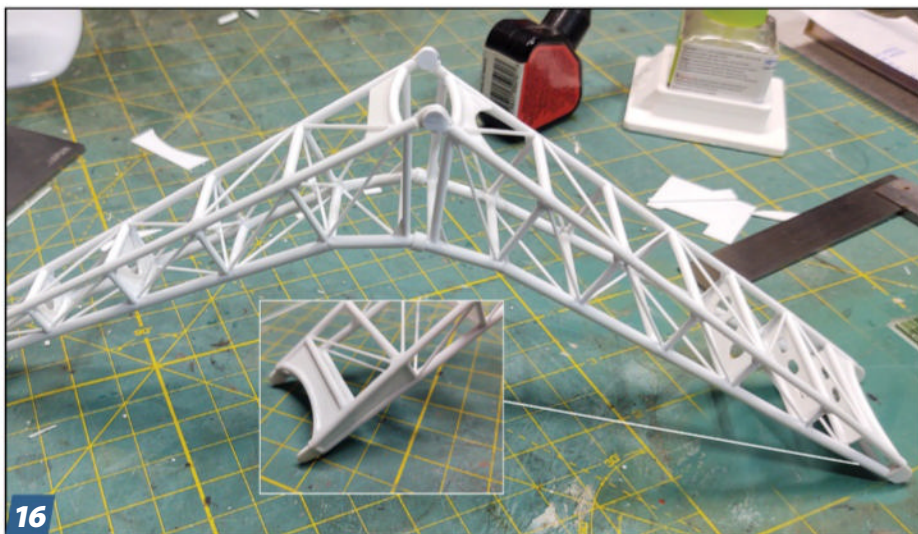
13
I combined a 3D-printed base with styrene tube and sheet for the bollards and fleshed out the base for the crane in Fusion360. After printing it, discs punched from styrene sheet made bolt heads and solder modeled a pipe fitting. (Top left: Crane base on BB-59.)



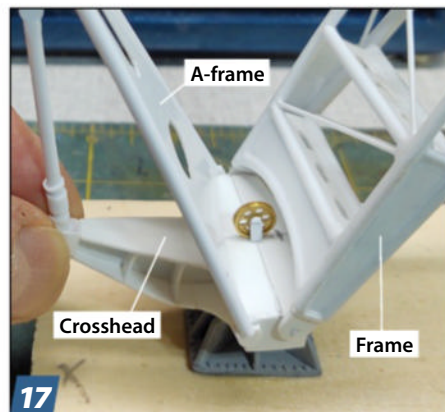
14
Using the deck plan as a guide, I placed the various deck furniture. A big step was finished, but there was plenty more to do!



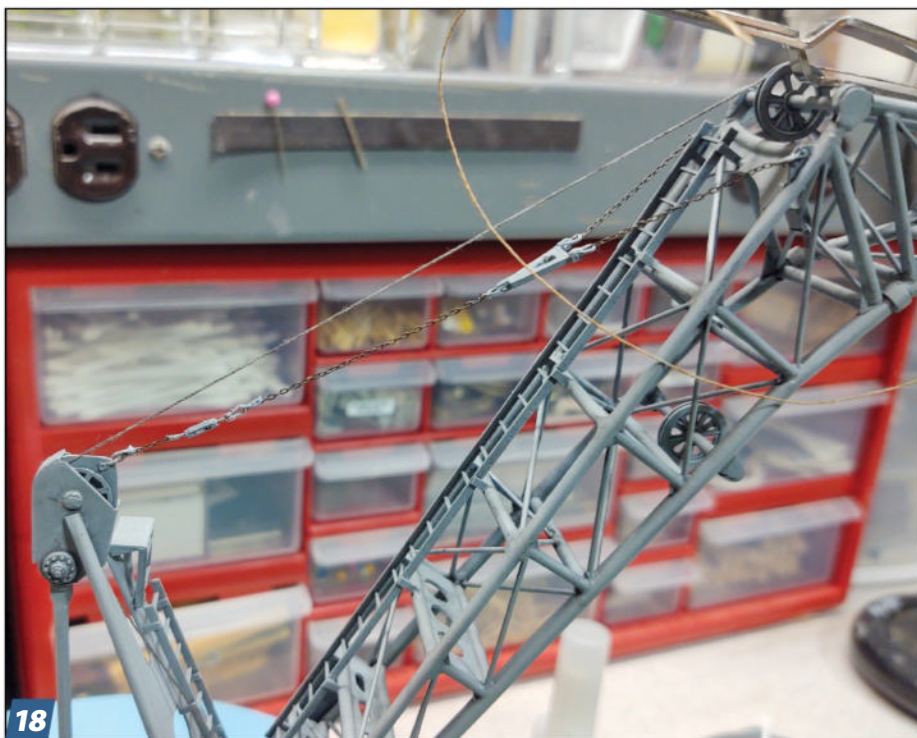
15
Next up was the ship's BB61-class aircraft crane. I referred to plans from Floating Drydock and a drawing on Navsource.net. Scaling the blueprints to 1/48 scale, I taped them to a Micro-Mark magnetic gluing jig and built the basic frame from styrene rod.



16
I heated lengths of styrene rod in boiling water and wrapped them around craft-paint bottles and taped them in place to let them cool. Then I cut sections of the rods to length and fitted them to the crane for the arced crossbraces. After gluing the internal braces and support plates according to the blueprints, the frame's structure was complete.



17
Referring to the blueprint and my photos from USS *Massachusetts*, I designed the components for the crane crosshead, printed the templates, and made the parts from .030-inch styrene sheet. Various pieces of styrene rod and sheet make up the A-frame. Detail parts were provided from by spares box.



18 Completing the crane could be a story in itself. Needless to say, I added numerous details, raiding my spares box, punching bolts from styrene sheet, and including pulleys and turnbuckles from model-railroading sources. The crane's backstay on the real ship changed over time, but I thought the chain offered the most visual appeal for a model.



19 Controls for the crane were made from more styrene rod, fine copper wire cabling, a set of 3D-printed handwheels, and nut-bolt-washer castings on top. Miscellaneous details were rounded out with parts from my spares box.



20 For the steel-framed catapults, I turned to The Floating Drydock blueprints, transferred them to CAD, and exported the drawings to a Cricut Air. The cutter scored .030-inch styrene sheet. I snapped out the parts and cleaned them up.



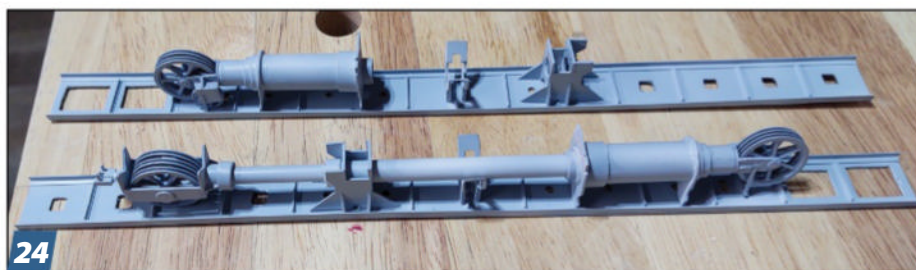
21 After sanding, I assembled the frames and then placed many, many Archer Transfers rivets. Let's just say it took a while. And patience.



23 The catapult rotated on top of the base via four mounting points with rollers. I drew and 3D-printed the rollers and then added them to support frames made from styrene with some Archer rivets.



22 I 3D-printed a simple cylinder and a toothed ring for the catapult bases. Around each base I added various shapes, including salvaged electronics and model-railroad parts, various styrene shapes, and calculator keys from decades ago! These were placed to match details on reference photos.

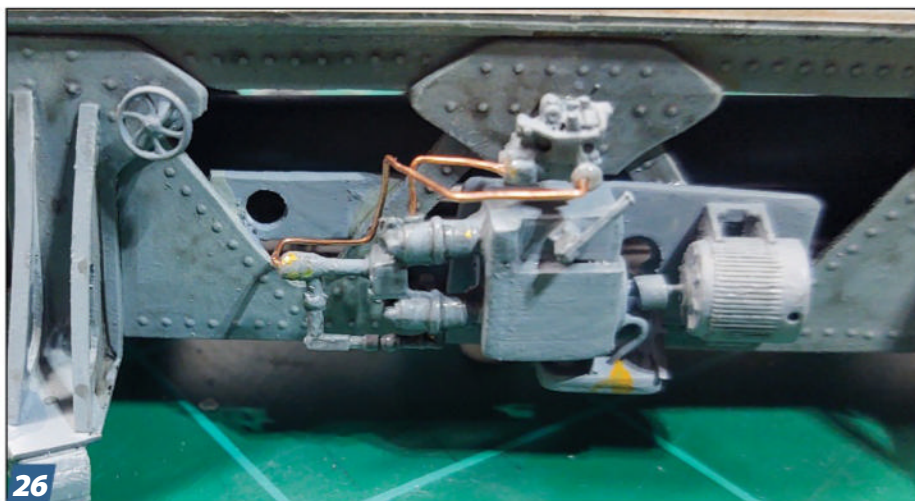


24 The propulsion mechanism for the catapult was a 5-inch Mk.111 shell cartridge. I based my CAD drawings on photographs I took of the USS *Alabama*'s catapult. Various styrene tubes made up the gun with Tichy Train Group pulleys. I laced the cable (or "rope") and then added the assembly to the frames I made in Step 21.



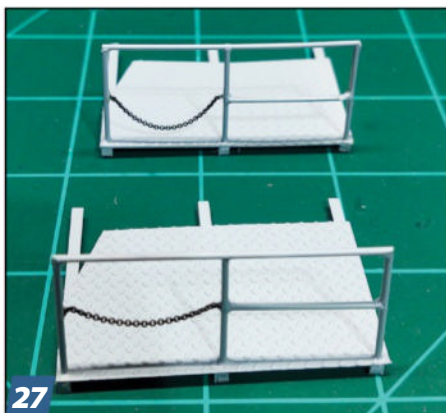
25

The catapult blast reducer was made from a combination of styrene tubing and 3D-printed parts elbows and end caps. I clamped the tube in a vice mounted to an X-Y table and used a drill press to drill the holes.



26

I went over the catapults, adding 3D-printed hydraulic motors and model-railroad hand cranks. Styrene parts made tanks and some piping, while other pipes were modeled with copper wire. I even took gears from a watch to use as a master to cast more gears from resin.



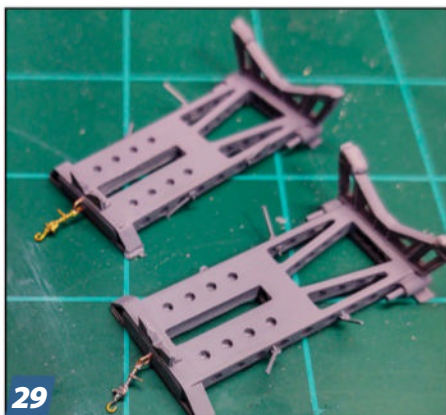
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For the series of catwalks surrounding the catapults, I soldered phosphore bronze wire together for the rails. The walkways were a combination of styrene angle stock and diamond plate. Details in Scale 40-link-per-inch chain completed the rails.



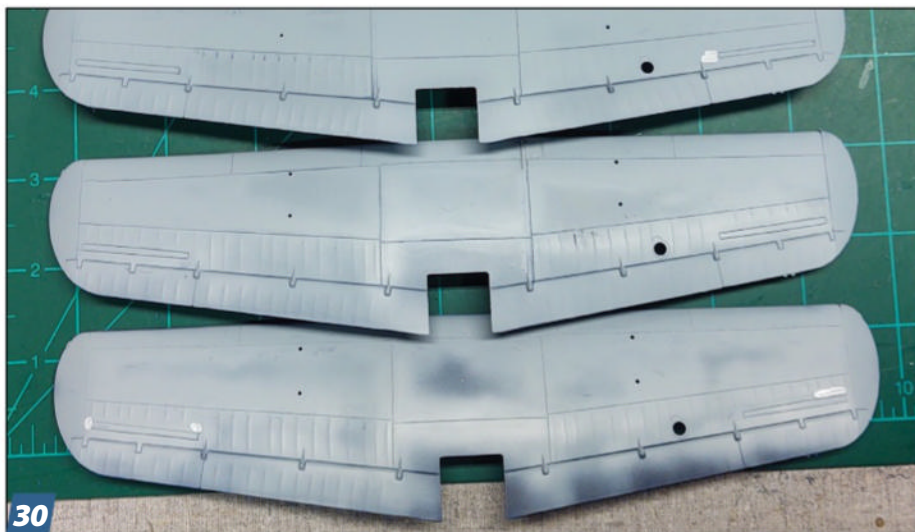
28

I assembled the firing mechanism, base, and catwalks for each catapult and sprayed them haze gray. A light wash made for a bit of weathering. The only thing left to add was the launch cars.



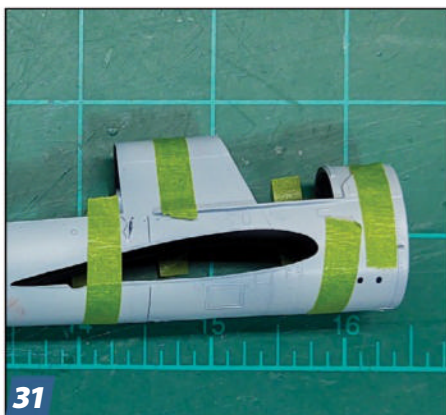
29

Back to Fusion360 to design and then print the launch cars. The attachment points to the catapult rails were made from styrene strip and channel stock. I located eyebolts on the sides for the Kingfisher support rods. One version has rollers for the Kingfisher that would be mounted on the quarterdeck.



30

Working with the old Monogram Kingfisher poses challenges, like an undersized main float, incorrect cowl, a dreary cockpit, and raised panel lines. I'd never re-scribed panel lines before, so I bought four kits, sanded the panel lines off, scribed new ones, and picked the best three results.



31 Before re-scribing the fuselage panel lines, I removed the cowl-flap boundary and floats with a razor saw. I taped the fuselage halves together and laid down Sujibori Scribing Guide Tape and lightly started the lines, gradually deepening the details.



32 For the interior of one Kingfisher (the others would be hidden under tarps), I combined an out-of-production Cutting Edge resin set and a 3D-printed set from Flightline Engineering (FLE). I sprayed the interior Vallejo U.S. Dark Green FS34079 (No. 70.893) and detail painted.



33 I replaced the kit's pilot seat with an F6F Hellcat seat (not exact, but better), made seat belts from masking tape and spare photo-etched metal buckles, placed all the new parts in one half of the fuselage, and attached the other fuselage half with two-part epoxy.



34 The damaged Kingfisher's wing was broken at the end. To model this, I cut the wing's lower half near the end and added torn wine-bottle foil to the edges to simulate the break.



35 I warmed the upper wing-half with a heat gun (be careful not to melt the plastic) and bent it to shape to match the lower half. Then I glued the upper and lower wing halves together. Note the damaged wing on the port side. The non-damaged Kingfishers had their wings assembled per the kit instructions.



36 I used FLE 3D-printed parts for the Kingfishers' main floats, glued them together, cleaned up the joins, and replaced the locator pins with wire. I drilled corresponding holes in the fuselages and attached the floats with epoxy. I made float supports from phosphor bronze wire.



37 For the damaged Kingfisher, I used the FLE engine and added pushrod tubes and ignition wires. I drilled the exhaust ports on the FLE cowl and replaced the exhausts with brass tube. For the intact Kingfishers, I purchased replacement cowls on eBay and also replaced the exhausts with brass tube.



38 I glued the canopies of the two undamaged OS2Us in place. I masked the interior of the damaged one and painted the lower surfaces light gray (FS36495), masked, and painted the upper surfaces blue gray (FS35189). The wing walks were flat black.



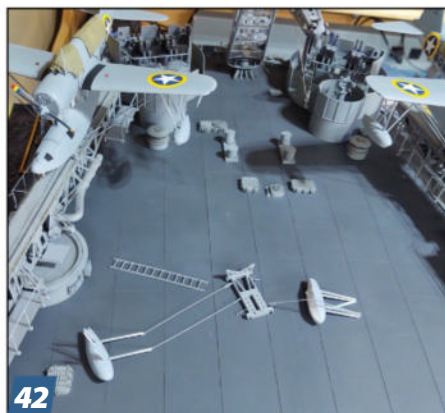
39 I replaced the damaged plane's canopy with old Squadron vacuum-formed glass. I cut it apart, masked, and painted it. The canopy covers are tissue layered with white glue over the canopy of the fourth unused kit. I painted them olive drab and dry-brushed highlights.



40 The models were gloss-coated and dressed in Operation Torch markings from Yellow-Wing Decals. Then I sprayed them with Testors Dullcote to seal everything. Next came the outboard floats, propellers, tarps, and EZ Line to tie them down.



41 The 40mm Bofors were built from a number of 3D-printed parts, as were the Mk.51 Directors with splinter shields. The guns were painted haze gray with black breaches and barrels before an overall wash to pop details. Then they were mounted to their tubs.



42 I glued the catapult bases and accoutrements to the deck. Reference photos showed support bars connecting the launch cars to the inboard mount of the outboard floats. These bars were added and painted after the planes were mounted. I started placing crash debris, too.



43 I painted 27 figures for the scene, many of them 3D-printed. I swapped heads, arms, torsos — whatever I had to in order to get the poses I wanted. When finished, they were placed to match poses from my reference photos.



44 I attached the hull to 3/4-inch plywood and built up the water with Celluclay. I worked in sections, giving the material time to dry to avoid warping the wood. I mixed the sea color from Liquitex acrylic paints and applied Liquitex acrylic gel after the paint dried to build up the ripples in the water.



45 Lastly, I made the wake from poly-fiber soaked in Liquitex gloss medium and worked it into the joint between sea and hull, manipulating the fiber until it looked right. At last, the damaged Kingfisher was added, just in time to win Judges' Best of Show at DowneastCon 2022. **FSM**



Revell '69 Camaro Z/28 3'n 1

The last time I saw the Revell 1/12 scale '69 Camaro Z/28 kit was when it was released as a Chip Foose edition. This new re-boxing, the Revell 1/12 scale '69 Camaro Z/28 3'n 1 plastic model kit, gives you the ability to build the car stock, street, or drag. I liked the enticing retro box art, and it's also particularly helpful that Revell shows the decal sheet on the side panel of the box, along with a paint guide for if you choose to use Revell colors.

When you open up your kit, you will notice that everything is wrapped securely and inside compartments to keep parts safe from damage. A 24-page booklet provides suggestions for tools you'll need as well as assembly instructions. The step-by-step instructions can be vague at times. If you're mindful and always test-fit the parts before applying glue, and you shouldn't have too many problems. The instructions also have a helpful paint guide.

The kit's V8 engine assembly starts with the carburetors and air cleaner. Choose

from a stock or street-racing setup. Assembly is straightforward, and the variety of decal options adds realism to the large-scale engine. The kit does not have stock exhaust manifolds, using headers instead, which I prefer in this instance. The kit provides spark-plug wires and a diagram for proper wiring in Step 14. Make sure that you leave the stock air cleaner with the carburetor setup off — you'll install them near the end of the build.

The nicely detailed chassis looked good out of the box, and I decided not to paint it. For Step 22, as you assemble the radiator (Part 42), radiator shroud (Part 43), and radiator support (Part 41), you may want to leave this entire assembly out and not place it during Step 23. When I joined the finished chassis to the body, the radiator support panel made it nearly impossible to close up. I ended up removing this entire subassembly, which allowed me to install the chassis into the body. Then put the radiator support with the radiator and shroud in from the top. Revell also supplies



tubing for heater hoses. Nice!

The front suspension assembled in typical fashion, but I noticed the front wheels sit a little proud. The exhaust fits nicely into all the locator holes. However, I think that the ends of the exhaust could be spread out



Model photos by Mike Klessig

shackles for a better ride height.

You have a variety of choices when it comes to wheels and tires for this kit: stock wheels; a set of four street-racing, five-spoke mag wheels; and 10 tires. I went with the street-racing setup.

The Camaro's interior went together without any issues. I really liked all the decal options, from the houndstooth seats to the custom wood-grain center console and dashboard. I did have a slight problem getting a seat decal to lay properly, but it may have been from handling the decal a little too much.

When it came to the Camaro body, I had my heart set on using the decal stripes. First, they aren't particularly opaque. Second, despite great care, it was almost impossible to get them to lay straight on the hood without tearing. I tried to save the stripes, but nothing seemed to work. I ended up painting the stripes for my car instead of using the decals.

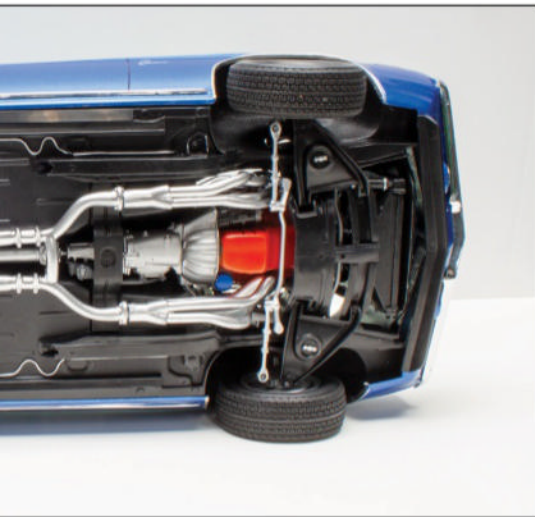
Up front, the grille, fog lights, bumper, and lower chin spoiler fit well. In steps 48 and 49, you install the rear and front glass. The windshield doesn't fit properly. Be careful not to stretch it too far to the pillar posts or you will crack it, like I did. Luckily, I had a backup windshield and set it in place without pressing it completely to the pillar post, leaving a slight gap.

Joining the body to the chassis can be a bit of a challenge. As mentioned, I left out the radiator support and assembly. Take your time and work through any problems you encounter. Once it's on, all that's left

are the antenna, mirrors, windshield wipers, and door handles. I saved a few under-the-hood components from the earlier steps in the kit and some factory decals for the end.

The Revell 1/12 scale '69 Camaro Z/28 3'n 1 plastic model kit takes a lot of time and patience, but builds into a nicely detailed replica, though with a few shortcomings that modelers will have to work to minimize or correct. These challenges make the Camaro a good kit for experienced builders, but unsuitable for novices.

— Tom Nowak



a little farther so they don't contact the rear spring shackles. I had the stock rear shackles in place and wasn't happy with the ride height. The rear sat way too low, and there is no room to adjust to make them sit higher. So, I switched to the street-racing



Kit No.: 12812 **Scale:** 1/12 **Price:**

\$71.99 **Mfr.:** Revell (Sample courtesy of Carrera Revell of Americas) **Comments:** Injection-molded plastic (white, transparent red, clear and chrome); 175 parts (vinyl tires, tubing, and spark-plug detailing); decals **Pros:** Nice engine detailing; interior decals add realistic features **Cons:** Difficult stripe decals; rear suspension sits too low; closing the finished chassis to the body is a challenge



Italeri Opel Blitz fire truck

Opel manufactured the Blitz for 57 years before retiring it in 1987. Known as a reliable commercial vehicle, the Blitz was used in many roles, including military, delivery, and fire service.

The Italeri 1/24 scale Opel Blitz fire truck plastic model kit seems to replicate the 3-ton heavy-duty chassis produced from 1937 to 1943. The body and badging markings date this particular vehicle to about 1937-38. I was happy to see all parts and glass separately bagged in the kit with minimal flash and most ejector-pin marks relegated to hidden areas.

Starting with the Opel's 11-piece ladder-style chassis, I noticed a slight warp that I corrected with a little heat from my hair dryer and some tape during construction. The four-piece rear end was then installed, along with the six-part, steerable front axle.

Following the assembly instructions, I built and installed the convincing 10-piece, 75 horsepower, 3.6-liter six-cylinder engine, only for it to be hidden under the non-opening bonnet — always a sad discovery. The cooling system, exhaust, and the wheels and tires go on at the same time as the chassis here. The tires are made from a nice vinyl rubber that stretches over the wheels, and together they replicate the appearance of the full-scale fire truck beautifully.

The functional interior attaches to the floor pan and the back wall of the body with no issues. Almost everything has a positive connector. The multipart cab went together cleanly and easily, all the parts fitting together without difficulty. The assembled cab mates to the rear cab wall and interior floor pan, which also includes the inner fender wells.

The four-part tank fits together soundly. Take your time installing the rear fender brackets, as they were the only parts that did not have positive attachment points. The firefighting equipment, toolboxes, ladders, and the like all fit well and look the part. I drilled and pinned the headlights just to make sure I didn't accidentally knock them off.

Make sure to line up the power take-off driveshaft when placing the pump subassembly. After more boxes and hoses and the high-intensity spotlight, you'll attach the rear-mounted hose reel assembly. No worries, though, because the attachment points locate the reel exactly where it belongs.

There are two different sets of decals for this kit: the blue and white markings (as seen on the box art), and the more traditional gold markings found on firetrucks around the world. I chose the gold markings to show the other option available.

Overall, the Italeri 1/24 scale Opel Blitz fire truck was an incredibly satisfying build.

The flash cleanup was easy; all the parts fit and went together well with minimal — if any — alignment issues. The clear plastic glass fit precisely, and the model feels solid when assembled. I highly recommend this kit to most seasoned builders or even a novice modeler who has patience and is willing to take their time to test-fit and follow the instructions. It's a well-engineered kit and a joy to assemble!

— Tom Valenta



Kit No.: 3966 **Scale:** 1/24 **Price:** \$45
Mfr.: Italeri (Sample courtesy of Model Rectifier Corp.) **Comments:** Injection-molded plastic (red, black, and clear); rubber tires; decals **Pros:** Great build; great decals; little cleanup needed **Cons:** No opening bonnet to display engine detail

Tamiya H39 French light tank

The Tamiya 1/35 scale H39 French light tank plastic model kit captures the updated commander's cupola and other subtle changes the Germans made after the fall of France. An evolution of the earlier H35, the Hotchkiss H39 featured a more powerful engine and an upgraded 37mm gun. Originally designed as a cavalry tank in pre-World War II France, the Germans repurposed many of these light tanks for security and policing duties. This versatile kit allows builders to re-create either the original French version or the German-modified variant.

Before you start, decide whether to build the French or German version of the tank — parts differ throughout, so follow the instructions closely. I chose the French version and to display it with the swaggering French crew figure, which adds a humorous contrast to this tiny, unimposing vehicle.

Assembly begins with the multipiece hull, which goes together smoothly with no alignment issues. Hull sides C8 and C9 have faint ejector-pin marks that you can easily scrape away.

I followed the instructions up to Step 9, when the tracks are installed, but skipped this step to paint them separately. I continued, temporarily fitting the fenders, hull top, rear skid assembly, and a few other parts, per the instructions.

Overall, assembly was quick and enjoyable, thanks to smart engineering and excellent parts fit. No filler was needed, and cleanup was minimal. For extra realism, I drilled out the jack handle (Part B58) and gun barrel (Part B1), and used Mr. Surfacer



500 to blend the hull hooks (parts A17) for a welded look.

Initial assembly took just five hours. I used the recommended Tamiya colors for the camouflage. After painting, I applied the decals over a coat of Tamiya Clear (No. X-22). Using Micro Set and Micro Sol, the decals settled perfectly over the hull texture. A second coat of clear sealed everything in.

With that painting done, final assembly involved painting and installing the tracks and attaching the remaining subassemblies. The tracks were the most challenging part of this build — gluing all the pieces at once and adjusting them before the glue set worked best. The included chain had a glossy finish that resisted blackening solution due to its coating, so I painted it. Some may be fine with the stock chain, but I'd

prefer if Tamiya supplied it uncoated.

From this point, you can paint a few details, flat coat, and do some quick weathering to finish it off. It's an excellent model that comes together fast and could serve as a weekend build.

I was so impressed with the kit's out-of-the-box detail that I put extra time into the finish and spent at least twice as long on painting and detailing the figure as I did on building the tank.

I highly recommend the Tamiya 1/35 scale H39 French light tank to anyone looking for a quick, trouble-free build. It's ideal for modelers with some experience and also great for seasoned builders who want to focus on the finishing without a big time commitment in assembly.

— Robert Raver



Kit No.: 35389 **Scale:** 1/35 **Price:** \$34
Mfr.: Tamiya (Sample courtesy of Tamiya America) **Comments:** Injection-molded plastic (tan); 251 parts (4 poly-caps, 1 length of chain); decals **Pros:** Excellent detail; molded hull and turret texture; thoughtful engineering; well-sculpted figures **Cons:** None



Model photos by Kyle Nelson

ICM Bristol Beaufort Mk.IA torpedo bomber

Drawing on lessons learned from the Blenheim, the Bristol Beaufort entered Royal Air Force service in 1940. Designed as a torpedo bomber, it also served as a medium bomber and trainer, and many units were converted into a heavy fighter called the Beaufighter. Roughly 1,200 Beauforts were produced in Britain and Australia. The ICM 1/48 scale Bristol Beaufort Mk.IA plastic model kit is the company's sixth offering of Beaufort variants and comes with generally clear instructions and three schemes.

The instructions are organized into 94 mostly logical steps, though depending on how you intend to paint the kit, you will need to modify the order of assembly. Fortunately, the kit is designed to facilitate this. The instructions only reference ICM paints, which may not be available in all markets, but the company provides a comprehensive cross-reference chart on its website (icm.com.ua/paints) to help match colors from other major brands.

Assembly begins with the bomb bay, cockpit, and fuselage. Two internal wing spars are sandwiched between the fuselage halves, adding strength, setting the correct dihedral, and ensuring a clean, positive wing-to-fuselage fit. At Step 26, the

instructions introduce a recurring issue: optional holes to be drilled in the fuselage, with a vague reference to Step 85 for context. Why do you need to drill the holes? There's no indication other than the scheme profiles to discern which option to go for. This lack of clarity is consistent throughout the instructions. If you can find reference photos of the aircraft you are building, that will help you make accurate decisions.

The build proceeded smoothly for me, but you need to plan ahead on how you intend to paint the model. The tailwheel and landing gear, called for in steps 22 and 50, can be installed after painting.

One of the trickier areas was the engine assembly — each exhaust tube is molded separately with no positive locator on the collector ring. In Step 54, the instructions called for adding the propellers, but that would have made painting difficult — I left them off until later. As a result, I had to settle for props that don't spin, but I was able to assemble the cowlings and flaps and slide them over the engines without obstruction.

Reaching the painting stage was especially exciting thanks to the inclusion of paint-mask templates for the canopy in the instructions. Unfortunately, the templates are oversized. If you have access to a copier,

reducing them slightly should yield usable masks. The canopy frames are crisp, so using a toothpick and a sharp hobby knife worked to trim my masks. Don't be daunted by the large amount of cockpit glass; the fit is excellent, and the clarity impressive. With one exception, all seams fall along canopy frames. That outlier is the gun camera housing atop the fuselage, which requires careful sanding and a dip in clear gloss to restore transparency.

The ICM 1/48 scale Bristol Beaufort Mk.IA torpedo bomber kit is not for the beginner, but modelers with a bit of experience will find it builds into a beautiful model of this iconic World War II bomber. And if you prefer to go off script and not follow the instructions, this kit offers plenty of opportunities to do just that.

— *Harold Parsons*



Kit No.: 48315 **Scale:** 1/48 **Mfr.:** ICM (Sample courtesy of mfr.) **Price:** \$100
Comments: Injection-molded plastic (light gray, clear); 287 parts; decals **Pros:** Excellent fit and parts design; beautiful clear parts; great decals **Cons:** Masks are sized poorly; schemes not indicated in instructions; confusing engine and exhaust illustrations

AMT '68 Chevy El Camino street machine

The AMT 1/25 scale '68 Chevy El Camino street machine plastic model kit shares about three-quarters of its parts with its companion kit — the AMT '68 Chevy El Camino SS (*Coca-Cola*) with soap box derby car (No. AMT1362). While the factory-stock version has seen multiple reissues since its 1998 debut, this is the first street-machine variant.

This street machine kit reflects the restomod trend in the 1/1 scale hot rod world. Popularized in the early '90s by magazines like *Popular Hot Rodding*, these builds keep a mostly stock exterior while packing serious performance upgrades underneath. Chassis and powertrain mods aim to boost handling and speed, with visual cues often limited to a lowered stance, aggressive wheels and tires, and a deep exhaust note.

The kit features a detailed separate frame, a fully detailed underbody, and an 11-piece rear suspension with a stabilizer bar. The engine bay includes heater hoses and a steering shaft, while the bed is built from six parts for accuracy. It comes with a Chevy 396 big-block and GM400 Turbo HydraMatic automatic transmission. The interior has bucket seats, a console, and the classic "Horseshoe" shifter. Subtle vinyl top texture is engraved on the body, with a tree of clear parts for lights and a windshield washer container, plus red-tinted taillights.

While it shares many features with the factory-stock version, 25% of the street machine parts are updated to reflect the Pro Touring theme. A lowered front and rear suspension with mini-tubs in the bed allows for a modern stance. It includes wide

Goodyear GS-C tires — P255/455 R17 and P285/40 R17 on five-slot billet-style wheels. Under the hood lies a detailed B&M High Energy Supercharger with *Superjection EFI*, one of the first aftermarket electronic fuel-injection systems. A unique radiator with electric fan detailing is also included. The decal sheet adds SS-396 striping in three colors, dash and nameplate details, and silver-blue hot-rod flames.

Builders will appreciate the clean molding — no flash, no frame warping, and minimal parting lines. My kit had two faint sink marks in the B-pillars and two more noticeable ones on the top of the instrument panel. Ejector-pin marks are common but mostly hidden on the finished model, except for the interior floorboard (Part 43) and front bed panel (Part 62). Be sure to remove pin marks where parts join, and some locator holes may need slight drilling for a better fit.

Parts 44, 45, 91, and 92 have alignment pins underneath — don't remove them, because they aid assembly. Blower belt accessories may need slight filling to fit flush to the engine block. The interior console (Part 6) is shown reversed; the armrest should face the rear.

During final assembly, the interior did not seat fully and needed clamping with superglue and two-part epoxy. The instrument panel (Part 53) interfered with the windshield; filing its front edges helped. The air inlet (Part 81) blocked the hood from shutting; I remounted it facing downward and this fixed the issue.

Despite minor assembly challenges, this kit and its factory-stock version are arguably the most complete and accurately



Kit No.: AMT1484-200 **Scale:** 1/25

Price: \$36 **Mfr.:** AMT (Sample courtesy of Round 2) **Comments:** Injection-molded plastic (white, chrome plated, clear, red); 108 parts (104 plastic, 4 vinyl tires); decals **Pros:** Superb detail; modern tooling with restomod updates **Cons:** Dated engine accessories and wheels; extensive ejector-pin marks; challenging final assembly

detailed El Camino kits ever offered in 1/24 and 1/25 scale. The restomod treatment delivers a spot-on stance with a subtle forward rake, enhancing realism. While elements like the B&M engine induction setup, Chevy Heartbeat valve covers, and the 17-inch wheels may feel dated, they are easily swapped out with modern alternatives sourced from your spares box or aftermarket parts.

The AMT 1/25 scale '68 Chevy El Camino street machine is a near-flawless gem. If you are an experienced modeler interested in restomod or El Camino projects, I highly recommend adding this kit to your collection.

— Tim Boyd





Eduard Heavy Retro Turbulet L-410UVP

The L-410 was designed for the short take-off and landing requirements of the then-Soviet Aeroflot and filled the need for a rugged aircraft capable of operating from unpaved runways in frigid temperatures. Designed to replace the obsolete AN-2, the L-410 has one of the worst safety records of any aircraft ever built. However, one could argue that's because it operates where other aircraft cannot, in extreme cold, rugged mountains, and jungles.

The Eduard Heavy Retro 1/72 scale Turbulet L-410UVP plastic model kit is an older molding enhanced by photo-etched (PE) metal and resin parts. The kit includes six pages of instructions and five pages of beautiful full-color illustrations for painting and decal placement. The two decal sheets provide markings for five different aircraft: one German, two Czechoslovakian, and two for the Czech Republic.

Construction starts with the passenger compartment and cockpit. Pre-painted instrument and side panels are included, along with decals for the seat belts for 14 seats. Red diagrams alert you to what parts to eliminate if you want to build the model with wheels down.

This version needs the nose cut off, which I did with a hobby knife (Step E), carefully cutting along the panel line and

then sanding. The fuselage halves have no locating pins, nor do any other parts, so be careful to check alignments before gluing. The cockpit window is in one piece and fits well without trimming. The passenger windows fit nicely, aside from huge sink holes, which I tried filling with clear canopy glue and Pledge Floor Gloss (out of production), which didn't work as well as I hoped. So, be prepared to fix the windows before gluing them on.

The propellers are five-piece units, and the kit supplies two different types. I recommend using the resin ones for this version. The wings go together with no problems, other than light sanding, but pay close attention to the alignment. On the nacelles, Part 32 needed to be trimmed before fastening the halves together.

Next, I cemented the nacelles to the wings, and then the wings to the fuselage, and finally, the landing-gear housing to the fuselage. These steps require a lot of fitting and filling with Tamiya putty and need a lot of patience and time, so have plenty of refreshments on hand.

The landing gear is sturdy, but the nose gear door is really delicate, so I cemented this last. The photo-etched metal parts on fret PE8 are so small that I couldn't attach them correctly. I left them off since these details can be drawn with a pencil. The sup-

plied masking worked well, but I wasn't sure what some of the colors on the masking sheet were for.

All in all, this Eduard Heavy Retro 1/72 scale Turbulet L-410UVP plastic model kit is not a quick build and is not for the inexperienced, but the subject is great, even though it needs updated moldings. It's refreshing to build a civilian aircraft with some history attached.

— Ted Horn



Kit No.: 2148 **Scale:** 1/72 **Mfr.:** Eduard (Sample courtesy of mfr.) **Price:** \$49.95
Comments: Injection-molded plastic (gray, clear); 190 parts (photo-etched metal, resin); masks; decals **Pros:** Clear color illustrations; smooth wing assembly; masks **Cons:** Small photo-etched metal parts; no locator pins

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By Tim Boyd

Mid-engine misfire

Revell-Monogram's Aerovette tells the story of what could have been a GM first

At one point the Aerovette was reportedly scheduled to become the all-new 1980 Corvette. Had that happened, the concept car would have become the first mid-engine Corvette, entering series production some four decades prior to the arrival of the current C8 mid-engine Corvette. It was also the subject of a 1/25 scale kit, though one that would arrive on the scale-auto scene nearly two decades after the real car would have become available for purchase.

Let's go back to the beginning. Former GM Vice President of Design Chuck Jordan was well known among model-car enthusiasts, particularly given his interest in Ferrari collectibles. Eventually, Revell-Monogram management cultivated a relationship with Jordan, which resulted in the kitmaker receiving copies of blueprints that spawned the landmark 1/12 and 1/25 scale 1969 Camaro kits. These kits, even 35 years later, arguably remain top of class for that subject and have seen multiple releases.

Next, the parties agreed that 1/25 scale kits of GM's latest concept vehicles at the time — the Pontiac Banshee and the Sting Ray III — might make great kit subjects. Both reportedly sold well for Revell-Monogram, naturally leading to the question, "What would be an appropriate follow-up kit?"

The answer was a fully detailed kit of the Aerovette, a design concept that first debuted nearly 20 years earlier. The Aerovette was an evolution of two previous Corvette design stud-

ies, the XP-882 and the Four Rotor (Wankel). Much like today's C8 Corvette, the

Aerovette featured a small-block Chevy V8 positioned just ahead of its rear driveline. Providing

all the handling and performance benefits of a mid-engine format, the Aerovette also featured stunning proportions and design language unusual among American sports cars.

In the book *Cars that Never Were: The Prototypes* (Richard M. Langworth, Beekman House, ISBN 978-0-517-30990-3), then-recently retired GM Vice President Bill Mitchell was quoted as saying, "The only difference between the Aerovette and its production derivation was an inch more headroom. Otherwise, it was the same." The book reports the program was approved for 1980 production by GM Chairman Thomas Murphy, but it was cancelled shortly thereafter due to pending federal safety regulations and an expected downturn in the U.S. auto market.

Revell-Monogram's Aerovette kit engine comprised 16 parts and mounted directly to a two-piece transaxle. With

some individual 1/1 scale components molded together, the front and rear suspension was designed for trouble-free assembly. However, given the fully detailed engraving, it could yield a visually accurate representation of each individual suspension part with suitable detail painting. The interior included separately molded interior door panels. The body shape did require separate front and rear lower pans. The one-piece clear styrene front and side glazing installed from the outside. Plated wheels mounted to low-profile Goodyear Eagle GS-C tires. A diminutive decal sheet featured engine compartment, exterior nomenclature, and wheel center liveries.

While not a well-known or particularly valuable collectible, given its role as a replica of what might have been the 1980 Corvette, Revell-Monogram's Aerovette represents a key piece of GM's sports-car lineage. It's also a classic kit that, even today, if you have one, fairly cries out to be built. I'm envisioning mine in deep candy red with British tan guts. What about you?

REVELL-MONOGRAM 1/25 SCALE AEROVETTE

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DUCATI SUPERLEGGERA V4

With Racing Kit

In February 2020 legendary Italian motorcycle maker Ducati wowed the world with the Superleggera V4, an ultra-light high performance bike with a production run of just 500 that was delivered to its lucky owners in a dedicated wooden box, accompanied by a Racing Kit of parts to make it ready for the circuit. The Racing Kit includes a super stylish and high performance Akrapovic exhaust, clutch cover, brake lever guard, fuel cap and more. With the parts fitted, output reaches an eye-popping 234hp and the bike records an astonishing power to weight ratio of 0.65kg/ps, turning the already impressive Superleggera V4 into a honed track machine.



Length: 176 mm.

This is a 1/12 scale plastic model assembly kit. Length: 176mm, width: 67mm, height: 98mm. ★ Accurately recreates the powerful racing form with biplane wings and removed side mirrors, turn signals and number plate stay. ★ The V4 engine, swingarm, front fork, side cowls and fuel tank are all screw-attached to the frame. ★ The complex lines of the Akrapovic racing exhaust are recreated using an ergonomic parts breakdown. ★ 2-part clutch for ease of painting. ★ Separate parts depict the racing filler cap, brake lever protector, swingarm cover and more. ★ Features solid racing slick tires. ★ Cowl carbon fiber patterns are recreated using decals. ★ The model comes with a racing stand.



Without the turn signals and number plate stay, the Superleggera V4 transforms into a circuit bike.



The brake lever guard is on the right of the handlebar; on this image you can also see the racing filler cap.



The front cowlings fits onto the model without cement, and side cowlings are screw-attached, meaning you can remove them and admire the inner workings.



The clutch is made up of 2 parts for an easier paint job, while the Akrapovic exhaust is of course highly realistic.



Drilled brake discs and Brembo calipers are artfully recreated. Tires are solid molded parts.



The license plate-less seat cowl shows off Ducati's design prowess.

