



SPRUE CONFESSIONS

THE HEADSHED

I love this time of year. With the stress, the traffic jams and, for some, depression, of the holidays over, February's IPMS Regionals signal the annual rebirth of Bondo's urge to create in plastic. The first action is to take stock of all my partially completed, or "Bransonized," projects, as my Katy friend, Boyd Waechter, calls 'em. And, mine are an embarrassingly large bunch, some underway in excess of four years! The trick is to realistically appraise which have any chance at all of seeing the San Antonio display tables. It's easy to kid myself here, to imagine cranking 'em out eight hours a day for thirty days. Yeah...right! A second reality check pares the list down to, say, two. If there's time left, maybe one other...but there's never time left.

It's no secret that we modelers have become jaded and demanding in light of the wealth and overall excellence of available kits and aftermarket goodies in this Golden Age of Modeling, and we so often see brickbats

thrown at manufacturers for the slightest discrepancy, such as the teeny bump on one half of the Pro Modeler Me-110G-4 fuselage a few years ago. Bad reviews rarely result in across-the-board fixes, so when a manufacturer owns up to a discrepancy and does something about it, it's always news.

To that end, Bondo received a parcel from out of the blue last week. I knew I hadn't ordered anything lately from the talented guys at C&H Aeronautical Miniatures in Tennessee, and the package was definitely model-sized. Inside was a retooled resin forward fuselage section of a 1/48 TF-102, and a smaller bag with retooled vacuformed canopy, new intakes and miscellaneous pieces. Altogether the new parts added up to at least 85% of the original \$50 conversion for the Monogram Deuce kit. An enclosed sheet said that, shortly after the conversion set's release about two years ago, some contour and dimensional inaccuracies—my cursory inspection right after I bought the kit surely didn't reveal anything obviously wrong—were brought to the attention of
(continued on page 2)

from the Editor...

"Happy New Modeling Year!"

It looks like another good year. We have lots to work on— new kits, old kits, kits to finish, and probably some new tools and equipment to try.

This month's meeting is back at Luby's Cafeteria on North Loop and it's at 7 PM. Come early and have dinner with the gang. The program is by Daryl Miller and will be all about casting resin parts. You don't want to miss it.

Next month we should have a new slate of officers. It appears that all four officers will have to be replaced. As for me, it's just about time for me to hang it up and let someone else enjoy that pleasure of being editor. No, I'm not leaving right away. I just want you to know that this will be the last year (perhaps less) that I will edit the newsletter.

This isn't a hard job—it's just a little more demanding than I need at the moment. I figure it's time to begin building some of those kits I've been collecting. I may even get around to painting some of those that are "almost done."

It takes about a week to pull all parts of the newsletter together. That doesn't include collecting bits of information from the internet, which I check daily, and looking over the articles that are sent my way from the membership (you!) When I get all the necessary bits collected, I put them together to make the newsletter. The largest practical size for us is 12 pages. Any more costs more postage. Less is just fine but I usually have more than 10 pages can hold.

About all that's needed is a computer and the willingness to do it! A little experience with word processing and newsletter layout won't hurt but if you can type in the material and
(continued on page 2)

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(Head Shed continued)

C&H. Wanting to “do right” by their customers, John Carlton and Novus Henry immediately started revising the affected parts and have now sent them out gratis. Talk about some good guys!

Contrast this gratifying customer regard with the other side of the coin, wherein Bondo was told last week in a call to Verlinden Products that a simple reprinting fix to the significantly out-of-scale (unusable) instrument backing sheet (to be mounted behind the PE instrument panel) in their recently released \$28 1/32 Fw-190D detail set was an impossibility.

Couldn't (and wouldn't) be done, said Francois' daughter-in-law in a French-tinged, Belgique accent, and she added that Francois was in agreement with the decision not to 'fix.' After all, she said, I was the only one to complain, and they only did 300 or so of the sets.

I contrasted Verlinden's response to what would be an easily fixed goof with the relatively expensive and time-consuming effort put forth by C&H. Even over the hundreds of miles between us, I could sense her shoulders shrugging. Wasn't it in “Monty Python and the Holy Grail” where the French soldier up high on the fortress wall says, “I blow my nose on yewwww”?

This will be my last “Headshed” column, since our January ASMS meetings always mean elections, and Bondo has chosen not to run...along with some of our other officeholders. It's been much fun, and I value greatly your trust in me and the experience of representing ASMS for the past three years. At the same time, any organization prospers by the periodic influx of new officers with new ideas and energies. Please give serious thought to nominees before we meet at Luby's on the 18th.

Phil

(Editor continued)

arrange it on a page, you can do it. And I'll be happy to assist whoever gets the job. If you don't have a scanner, I can do that for you and send you the images. And, it really can be fun!

I had a call from Bill Lacey regarding the Bergstrom display. If you have been to the airport lately and noticed the display, you probably also saw a lot of dust on the glass shelves. The city wanted to clean the cases so Phil and I went along to remove the models, lest someone decided to dust off the antennae and aerials. We will let you know how the operation went.

In another matter, Lacey says the folks in charge of the display cases were thinking of combining the display into one case and using the other for a Korean War retrospective. Lacey has been collecting photos and other stuff from that era and of course they want some models. This time they aren't looking for us to build kits—they want things already done. (We still need some models for the Bergstrom theme, such as an RF4C and some others.)

Anyway, if you have something from that era—F-84s, F-86s, F-80, P-51D, etc.—and would like to loan it, there may be a call. At this point, it's still in the planning stages.

Masahiko has given several of us the address of the Hamamatsu BMC (modeling club) in Shizuoka City and it appears in the minutes on the next page. Check it out. I think you will want to bookmark the site. These guys are phenomenal. They pride themselves in doing modeling the “hard way”—brush painting and using NO decals. And they apparently paint *before* assembly. The results will knock your socks off!

That's all for this month. Now go build a model.

Milton

Austin Scale Modelers Society (ASMS) is affiliated with the International Plastic Modeler's Society (IPMS) as the Republic of Texas Chapter. ASMS meets the third Thursday of each month except December. Dues for full membership are \$15.00 yearly. Subscription to the newsletter *Sprue Confessions* is \$10 yearly. For more information on meeting times and location, call Milton Bell at (512) 454-2395. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. The Austin Scale Modelers Society does not endorse the contents of any article.

November Minutes

Old Business

There was no formal meeting in December. The following are the minutes from the November meeting of ASMS.

We welcomed one visitor at the November meeting, Bobby Galvez who builds 1/48 scale aircraft.

Phil Brandt followed up with Masahiko in contacting the modeling club in Shizuoka, Japan. They have a very good website in both Japanese and English and are interested in establishing an alliance with a club in the US. Phil is sending them a newsletter and will continue to make contact with them. We will have an update in January as to how this progresses. Take a minute to check it out:

http://www.d9.dion.ne.jp/~taira_m/english.htm

Bill Delk has the Alps printer up and running—if you need any decals printed let him know.

The annual Muster Day gathering at Camp Mabry was smaller than usual this year due to heavy rain. However, plenty of re-enactors were on hand doing live-fire demonstrations. The theme was military food and there was plenty of hard-tack and beans to go around.

The report from San Marcos is the P-39 is still not airworthy, but is three to four weeks away (as of mid-November). It has been joined by the B-25 "Yellow Rose of Texas", which unfortunately is also not airworthy. The hangar is open on Saturdays if anyone is interested in helping or watching.

On a related note, the replica Me 262s formerly of Arlington are resuming construction and the replica Fw 190s in Europe are ready to fly.

The annual ASMS Christmas party was again a huge success. We owe a big thanks to George Liebl for getting his clubhouse and hosting a great party. I'm sorry I had to leave early.

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New Business

Floyd Werner is looking for three aircraft Profiles for a very worthy cause. A modeler friend of his who can no longer build still loves to read and research. He is trying to complete his collection of Profiles and needs the SOC-3 Seagull, Fiesler Storch and OS2U Kingfisher. If anyone has a spare they could let go of, please contact Floyd.

Milton Bell reported that in the October issue of Replic, it was "mentioned" that Tamiya *might* release a new 1/48 SM-79 and B-17.

Finally, don't forget: officer elections will be held at the January meeting. If you are interested in running for office let Phil Brandt know before the meeting on Thursday. I would like to take this opportunity to say that I will not be running for Secretary again this year. After three years I have decided to take a break from politics. As Secretary, I would generally spend an hour or two each month typing the minutes plus an extra hour in contest months listing the local winners (it's not a terribly demanding job). If anyone is interested in taking over the job and would like more details, feel free to call me. It has been a pleasure serving as your Secretary these last three years. Thank you.

How I Started Modeling

By
Jeff Forster

I've had an interest in airplanes since I was a little kid. I grew up on air force bases until I graduated from high school and it seems like all I ever wanted to do was be around airplanes. My interest in modeling developed from watching my dad build kits of airplanes he worked on. He would take my brother and me to his shop on base and we would watch the F-100's and B-58's on the parking ramps. Best of all we would get to tag along on his trips to the hobby shops for control-line kits and get to look at all the plastic kits on the shelves!

I remember the first two kits I built—they were the Aurora kits of the Batman and the TV show batmobile. My dad showed me how to build them and I managed it although to be honest, there was just as much glue on the outside as on the inside! I was hooked from then on!

I have great memories of growing up building models, it seems like everytime I visited my Granma and Granpa Johnson in Memphis, Granma would walk me down to the local five and dime and we would pick up a kit and a tube of glue. After building that kit I would spend hours pretending to fly that plane and practicing my landings, it would be later on that I learned that adding pyrotechnics made it much more interesting!

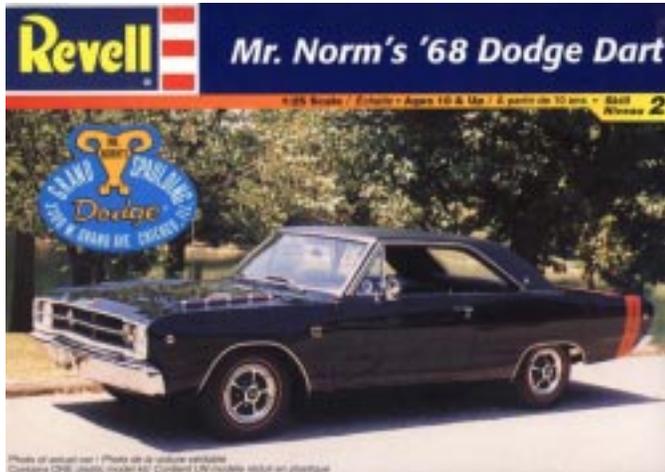
(continued on page 10)



CAR CORNER

by Skip Perrine

Mr. Norm's '68 Dodge Dart (GSS) Revell kit# 85-7667 skill level 2



Molded in white, clear and transparent red with chrome plated parts and black vinyl tires. Can only be built one way: stock, 1:25th scale.

They said it couldn't be done, but that never stopped Mr. Norm and his Grand Spaulding team from creating some of the fastest cars of the 60's and 70's. Even Chrysler engineering couldn't fit a 440 engine into Dodge's compact Dart, but even if it was physically impossible by their standards, it wasn't by Mr. Norm's. And even if it meant putting the battery in the trunk, Mr. Norm was determined to make it work.

Mr. Norm's Grand Spaulding Dodge, located on Grand Avenue in Chicago, Illinois, was the epicenter of Mopar Performance in the late 60's and early 70's and one of the most famous high performance auto dealerships in the country. Like Royal Oak Pontiac in Michigan and Yenko Chevrolet in Pennsylvania, Grand Spaulding Dodge gained nationwide notoriety for its dyno tuning skills and extra hot special edition cars. Under the guidance of "Mr. Norm" Kraus, Grand Spaulding Dodge was as much a full service speed shop as it was a new car dealership, with complete chassis dynamometer equipment and a full scale high performance parts department.

Through aggressive advertising and promotion, the word spread far and wide and soon muscle car shoppers from all

across the US and Canada were going to Chicago to buy their machines from Mr. Norm.

The 1968 Dodge Dart GSS was one of Mr. Norm's exclusive special edition cars—the only way you could buy a '68 Dart equipped with a 440 was through Mr. Norm. The engine was a definite tight fit, but in the hands of a good driver, a dart GSS could dip into the high 12s.

This highly detailed Revell kit captures all the details of this super rare, limited production muscle car from the golden age of the high performance auto dealership. I rate this one an 8.

'71 Hemi 'Cuda Street Machine Revell kit #85-2984

Skill level 2, requires glue and paint. Molded in white and clear with chrome plated parts and black vinyl tires.

In 1971, the Hemi 'Cuda was one of the most powerful muscle cars on the road, but for those who wanted to push the envelope, there were a variety of aftermarket parts available to make their street machines go even faster.

"Strongest Street Motor in History" is a title that probably belongs to the famous Chrysler street Hemi. Originally designed as an all-out racing engine, the Mopar "Elephant Motor" was civilized slightly and then utilized in some of the most breathtaking production cars that ever smoked their tires. And although it was factory rated at 425 horsepower, output in stock form was actually much more. Set up as on our model, with some internal cleanup, headers and noisier air cleaner, well over 500 horses was attainable—now that's power any way you look at it!

With so much power at its disposal, a Hemi 'Cuda was a special car. This model has been made even more desirable, and its performance enhanced, by discreet customizing. The new hood has greater cold-air intake area. High-tech Center Line wheels provide a better foundation for increased tire performance, and traction bars have been added to the rear suspension so the "Elephant Motor" can really "let it all hang out," one of the most popular of the Pony Cars ever made, the Hemi 'Cuda still draws oos! and ahhs! at car meets around the country.

Now on to our model of this famous muscle car. The mold looks very clean with little if any flash and the chrome is very well done. The instructions are clear and concise and the engine assembly is a 17-piece procedure. The wheel assemblies consist of a chrome wheel and a inner wheel, to be mounted with Goodyear tires, the lettering facing outward, unless you desire blackwalls.

For the interior, just follow the instructions and you can't go wrong. This is still a favorite of all my muscle cars since I use

(continued on page 10)



BY THE LATEST PACKET. . .

by George Lewis
TPMS 15401

Trumpeter 03205 R.I.N. Pola 1/350 scale

180 parts in gray plastic and motorizing stuff.
MSRP \$18.00

In the late 1920s the Italian navy built a class of four heavy cruisers, Pola, Zara, Fiume, and Goriza. These followed the classic shape of a raised forecastle, two turrets fore and aft. Mounting eight 8-inch cannon in twin turrets and a secondary battery of sixteen 3.7-inch they were well armed. In keeping with Italian tradition they sacrificed armor thickness for more speed, making 39 knots on trials (in actual service they never reached such speed). They were the embodiment of the battlecruiser in a heavy cruiser design. There were some differences in each ship's superstructure but all presented a handsome, aggressive silhouette. Fate was not kind to these ships.

At the Battle of Cape Matapan, 28 May, 1941, the Italian fleet attempted to intercept a British convoy. The initial attack was beaten off by the close escort while the covering force of British battleships moved to intercept. The Pola was hit by a torpedo while retiring. The Zara and Fiume stayed behind to escort her home. After dark the Pola broke down and stopped; the other cruisers stayed with her while the destroyers continued on—after all they were in Mare Nostrum; the British wouldn't come this close to the Italian mainland. Ah, but they did. The battleships Warspite and Valiant were able to steam undetected to within point-blank range before opening fire. Sixteen 15-inch cannon quickly sent all three Italian cruisers to the bottom. Overwhelming fire superiority in an environment that was target rich gave the hard pressed British a victory and clouded all future Italian fleet movements.

When I got the fax listing new Trumpeter kits all it said was "Italian cruiser." Not knowing what to expect, but suspecting a copy of some other kit, I ordered several. When the box arrived I saw immediately that this was a copy of the old Tauro kit from the early 70s. The three Tauro kits were reviewed several years ago in Model Ship Builder magazine and, while dated, still make up into good ship models. However, they are 1/400 scale and now most companies are doing 1/350 scale, following Tamiya's lead. I compared the Tauro and Trumpeter kits and yes, indeed, the Trumpeter kit is 1/350 scale. Much was copied, or appears to be so. There are differences. The Trumpeter hull is a one-piece casting with the motor and gearbox already installed. Yeah, right, more motorized pool toys. Trumpeter provided both scale and operating props and shafts so if the builder wants a scale

display model it can be done; the switch slot must be covered with something. Some of the assembly sequences are simplified from the Tauro kit though Trumpeter didn't lose much detail in the copy. In truth, there wasn't much surface detail on the Tauro kit, either. Just clean up each part and assemble. With the wealth of aftermarket rail and detail sets available this could make an impressive model to sit next to any of the other 1/350 cruisers out there.

The instructions are fair but the painting guide is confusing. Colors are keyed to Tamiya paints and there are names for the paint numbers. To make it even more accurate there are now paint chips available for the Italian Navy, as well as USN, RN, IJN, and soon the KM. The confusion arises with step 9; it has the quarterdeck painted dark gray. Not So! The quarterdeck was planked and left bright. The diagonal red and white stripes on the forecastle are correct; these were aerial recognition marks. The Royal Italian Air Force flyguys were just as likely to attack their own ships as the enemy, a failing of all flyguys everywhere regardless of nationality; the Luftwaffe holds the worst record. Back to the subject. The plan and profile in step 11 is correct.

Clean her up, add a rail set, eat lasagna for dinner. I recommend this kit.

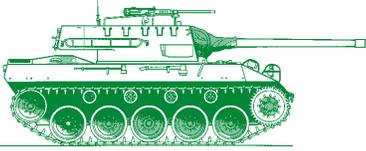
Trumpeter Chinese destroyer 1/200 scale

212 parts in gray plastic and motorizing stuff.
MSRP app \$45.00.

At first I found the actual title of this model somewhat ludicrous "Former Soviet Courageous Destroyer (with fish torpedo)." Yes, that is the box name. In reality Trumpeter is trying to say this is a model of a former Soviet "Gordy" class destroyer. Four were transferred to the Chinese Peoples Republic Army Navy in 1954. The ships were built in 1936-41 at various Soviet yards to a design prepared by the Italian firm of Odero-Terni-Orlando. Large for their time they displaced 2,150 tons loaded, mounted a battery of four 130mm cannon, eight- 37mm AA and six- 21-inch torpedo tubes in two triple mountings; they were all fitted for minelaying. Trumpeter offers the kit two ways: as initially fitted for the PRAN and as refitted with missile boxes replacing the torpedo tubes.

The box art isn't so hot but what's inside more than makes up for it. This is a very nice model, well detailed and with good instructions. Multiple parts make up the small assemblies. For example: the 130mm main battery has eight parts per gun; the torpedo tubes are 15 parts; even the superstructure is built up from separate bulkheads and overheads. Each step clearly shows where the multitude of small parts goes. Yes, it is motorized but Trumpeter gives the builder the option of scale props and shafts; the on-off switch will have to be dealt with, about the only flaw in an otherwise first-rate model.

(continued on page 10)



The Armor Column

**DML 1/35 '39-'45 Series No. 6126;
Sd.kfz. 184 "Elefant"**

489 parts in grey styrene; price estimated at \$39.98

Advantages: Fresh, new moldings of a popular subject; includes single link track; separate engine grilles make detailing much easier

Disadvantages: Separate link tracks; no zimmerit molded in place (see text)

Rating: Highly Recommended

Recommendation: for all German tank fans

FIRST LOOK

Well, after much heavy speculation on the Internet, the good news is that the first of DML's "Mystery" kits is now on the way to hobby shops, and the joy of German armor fans, it is a totally new model of the "other" Tiger. While some modelers will be a bit disappointed that the first effort from DML is the late model version of the "Elefant", and not the early model "Ferdinand" from Kursk, rest assured – the other "mystery kit", Number 6133, is the early model and will follow this one.

For those who remembered the first DML Sherman variants which borrowed heavily from the Italeri M4A1 kit, this model consists of totally new molds. While there will be those who grouse about the now standard DML single link tracks, these are actually quite spectacular. DML found a new method of molding the links so that they are formed without injection pin markings on the links themselves. They will necessitate careful removal from the sprues, however, as they are rather firmly connected (the injection pins are on the sprue next to the links, which is how they neatly got around that problem.)

The kit is quite different from the old Italeri mold, and the engine deck is very involved and detailed, providing the covered gratings via separate external grilles and an inner former with grillework cut into it. This compares well with the photos of the APG Elefant during its assessment for restoration, which appeared in Museum Ordnance Special Number 4: Elefant Panzerjaeger Tiger (P) by Tom Jentz and Jeff McKaughan. The screening on the cooling vent over the rear electric motors (parts B9, B10, B19 and B20) is solid, however, but as it is joined to the hull at a reverse angle below the rear of the fighting compartment, it shouldn't be a major complaint.

The hull comes in a number of pieces—nine, to be exact: hull with sponsons, rear sides, rear plate and bottom rear of hull, bow

plate and glacis, rear backing plate to glacis, glacis with ball mount, engine and forward compartment deck, and casemate. All are nicely detailed but smooth (i.e. no zimmerit paste is applied, or simulated by being molded into the plastic.) Parts placement is by small raised lines, which some modelers find annoying.

The suspension is totally new, and each one of the six bogies consists of nine parts, which do not move as the Italeri ones did. Installing the tracks once the wheels are in place is cagey though, as the hull comes with the sponsons molded in place which makes access to the top run difficult. DML recommends installing the tracks before the fenders (parts B1 and B2) but most modelers will probably want to try and avoid this for painting and finishing reasons. If you have problems with this sort of thing, perhaps a set of Fruilmodel tracks would be advisable, as they can be "snaked" through in this situation.

The kit also includes parts for the 8.8 cm L/71 gun to include a basic mount, recoil cylinders, and guards at the rear of the breech. The gun mount (parts C14 and C15) appears to cement in place, which limits traverse of the weapon once installed, but it would seem from the entirety of the gun mount and its components that it could be left loose to also provide the minimal traverse this big gun had in real life. The mantelet alone comprises five parts, so that the massive bolt heads on the joining plates can be accurately reproduced.

As noted, the model does not come with zimmerit detail embellished on its parts. Some modelers have complained about this, saying that "if it's on the box it should be on the kit", but most German modelers have preferred to do it themselves and "get it right" rather than some of the methods which kit manufacturers have to use. (The Italeri Panthers and Tigers are a case in point; while they do replicate zimmerit paste in plastic, it is hard to get all of the bits lined up right, and then still looks manufactured rather than installed by hand, as on the actual vehicle.) But with products like the Cavalier ultra-thin resin applique zimmerit or R&J's excellent Zimmerit-it-Right product (which includes the paste and applicators) it is not as much of a problem as they would think.

No tow cables are provided for this kit, albeit one is shown on the box art. Decals are provided for two machines from Panzerjaeger Abteilung 653 in Galicia, 1944.

I suspect it will not be long before the after-market boys have a resin interior and etched brass for this kit, and with those additions this one can sure become a show-stopper. It is at least as nice a kit as the Jagdtiger kits were and is a great improvement over the 25-year-old Italeri kit.

Thanks to Freddie Leung of DML for the review sample.

Cookie Sewell
AMPS

Collect-Aire 1/48 Grumman Guardian

Kit Number 4849, \$159.95

Resin Kit Review

by Phil Brandt, IPMS 14091

The esoteric Grumman AF-2 Guardian, though very short-lived, was the Navy's antisubmarine warfare (ASW) mainstay in the early Fifties. The largest single piston-engined prop aircraft ever to see carrier service, the AF-2 was a handful, and was replaced in 1954 by the S2F Tracker. Steve Ginter's excellent Guardian book, *Naval Fighters Number 20*, whetted my appetite to get going on an AF-2, and things went downhill from there.

I was always going to do the nice 1/72 RarePlanes/Esoteric vac kit I've had on the shelf for years, but really wanted the bird in 1/48th, and couldn't wait the requisite decade or so for a name manufacturer to do an injected quarter-inch bird. Soooo, once again, the Collect-Aire mystique kicked in; Bondo bit the bullet and "invested."

Overall, I've gotta say that Collect-Aire's getting better and better. The long wings and large fuselage w/integrated vertical fin—this 1/48 bird's equal to the size of a normal 1/32 fighter kit!—are hollow cast for significant weight savings. All surfaces are very smooth, and the engraving is exceptionally delicate, easily the equal of Tamiyagawa's best. Flash is minimal and very thin. My only gripe is the odoriferous, caramel-colored resin used in this and some other Collect-Aire releases, as opposed to the non-smelly, cream-colored stuff. Lou Maglio, Collect-Aire's honcho, assures me the acrid resin meets federal safety specs, but sez he'll address my concerns with the resin manufacturers.

Parts are included for all three AF-2 versions: the /2S, 2W and /3S. Collect-Aire provides lotsa opportunities to "busy up" this model: flaps and slats are separately cast, and both ASW and radar compartments are detailed, with opened hatches. Black Box and Aires they're not, but, with a touch of added detailing, the cockpit and two rear compartments should look quite decent. I do wish that Collect-Aire would provide PE seat belts, as they've done with some kits in the past, such as the F11F-1.

The large gear struts need to be strong and are done in cast metal, as is the multi-piece R2800 engine. All metal is relatively flash-free, but I think I'll do the Teknics R2800 resin/PE aftermarket engine instead because it's more detailed. Various engine compartment bulkheads and segmented cowls are included if the builder wishes to display the engine.

The canopies (two sets included) are fairly thin, free of marring and very clear. The Scale-Master decals are very nice, and registration is dead on. Markings for both blue and gray/white versions are covered, as well as placards. My

only worry is that the extensive white markings for fat-raddomed /2W version that I've chosen to do may be too translucent against the navy blue overall paint scheme. This was the case with the Collect-Aire X-15s, and I had to superimpose a second set of decals after the first had set.

Large exploded parts diagrams and markings three-views are plentiful and very good, with just a few of the characteristic Collect-Aire over-contrasted pix.

I like this kit, and price is the only "showstopper." However, there is a definite segment of modelers willing to belly up to the bar, money in hand, because Lou often sells out of two-hundred kit production runs. For many desirable 1/48 aircraft models, it's the only game in town, and let's face it, even 109s and 190s have a finite number of versions. You'll have to build something else someday.

The Mach 2 X-24 A 2and B

Mach 2 Kit MC0026, \$32.95, Obtained from King's Hobbies, Austin, TX

In-the-box review by "Bondo Phil" Brandt, IPMS 14091

The X-plane "lifting body" research that culminated in the Space Shuttle was long and arduous, but obviously paid off. And, fortunately, various strangely-shaped representatives of this research are still in existence, in museums (the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson) and on display pedestals (Edwards AFB and The Air Force Academy). Probably the best-known of these aircraft are the blunt-nosed, portly X-24A and it's needle-nosed descendant, the X-24B.

A few years ago, Eagles Talon did a vacuform two-bird kit of the A and B. It's a quite decent effort, with smooth molding, fine engraving, excellent clear parts, good decals and excellent assembly, markings and historical reference material. As with most vac kits, the builder had to scratch the interior and wheel wells.

When Mach 2 released its latest injected kit of the same two shapes, I went for it with eyes wide open, assuming the worst...and I wasn't disappointed!

I think I've mentioned this before; these folks just don't improve! The main fuselage portions are okay, albeit slightly rough. Engraving is a shade less than delicate, but still acceptable. It's in the small parts where the grossness comes in. The small parts are overcome with typical Mach 2 flash, so much that its gonna take a dedicated day of cleaning up. And, the rude and crude, overly thick molding style continues, especially with the cockpit tubs, which have a great big ejector spigot in the center of the floor, but maybe the seat will cover it. And, the side consoles seem to have a noticeable sag.

(continued on page 10)

ICM Spitfire Mk. IX Kit number 48061

An "in box" review
By
Jarrod Cunningham



I would like to start this review by stating that I am by no means a "Spitfire expert." I am mainly I guy who likes building models. I am using the Squadron's "In Action" book to identify differences in the versions offered in the kit. I am aware that there are better reference materials available, but for the purposes of this review, I think it will suffice. Now that I have the "disclaimer" in place, let's get to the "meat and potatoes" of it all.

I was very excited about the release of this kit since the previous Occidental kit fell way short of expectations. My purchase of this offering proved wise. In my opinion, this is one of the better kits of the Spitfire available at present. I do believe that ICM has got another winner with this one!

From out of the box, the kit comprises ten sprues one of which is clear. The clear sprue is somewhat "cloudy" it will clean up a little better, but some may want to replace it with a Squadron canopy or other. The others are of a pale, almost white color and have a good "smooth" mold cast to them. Overall panel detail has recessed lines that are nicely done and rivet detail appears to be correct to scale. Flash is present but is nothing that a sharp #11 blade or a sanding stick can't correct. My kit has a little mold release grease/oil present, so I would recommend a thorough wash down before assembly.

Upon further inspection there are sinkholes present on some assemblies. The most glaring ones appear around the upper and lower wing halves around the aileron areas as well as the trailing edge of the wing at the wing root and the rear of the gun bay. In my example they correspond with the inject release points on the inner part of the wing. These aren't really that catastrophic, and with a little filler or Mr. Surfacer

can easily be corrected. Another area that has these present is on the fuselage around the tail wheel. These correspond to the attachment point for the tail wheel assembly. These are minor and can be easily corrected as well. The main wheels also have them, but these can be fixed with filler or replaced with aftermarket wheels. The rockets have sink marks in them and the same goes for them. Many RAF kits come with these and they can substituted if you choose not to fill these in. The last area that these were present was at the propeller blades around the base. These aren't too bad, and can be fixed again with filler or Mr. Surfacer. The bottom line is the kit does have sink marks, but ALL can be overcome with little detail loss in the process.

I did have two areas that were incompletely molded. The first was the rudder pedals, the upper part missing. The second incomplete mold was the clear one. One of the canopies was only partially molded. In this aspect of the kit, I have heard of other buyers having these problems and others who have not. I wonder if the Quality Control department may have changed personnel or inspection criteria to cause these irregularities. [it was probably a Monday. ed]

There are several "extras" that compensate for some of the kit's flaws. The first is the Rolls-Royce engine with good detail and separate cowls that allow the option of an exposed engine if the modeler desires. The second are a separate set of rear control surfaces for late and early marks of the aircraft. The wings can be "clipped," rounded or "extended." I have only seen the "extended" on the HF Mk. VI and the Mk. VIII, so these may fall into the "questionable zone." As I said, I'm no expert. It appears that both a "C" wing as well as the "E" wing can be built with parts supplied in the kit. The ailerons can be positioned, as they are separate items. The gun bays can also be displayed open if chosen. A "slipper" external tank is included with this kit, as is external stores. The stores offer two different bomb load out types, or rockets. The bombs can be mounted on the centerline or wing stations. The rockets have separate rails and as such have a better level of detail.

The cockpit appears to give the modeler the basics and with a little help would look very nice. The instrument panel, although correct in shape, doesn't offer any instrument detail other than bezels. The kit offers decals for the instrument faces. The fuselage has the cockpit door closed but can be opened similar to the Tamiya Mk.V series. A separate door is provided for those who choose to door this option. It looks like the walls of the cockpit have all the correct framing present, and the throttle quadrant and flap levers are molded accurately.

The landing gear bays appear to be represented correctly with the detail comparable to other Spitfire kits in 48th. Both landing struts are molded cleanly and will require minimal cleanup. The tail wheel is molded as one piece, and it is a fair molding.

The best thing I think this kit offers is the “Merlin” engine option. It is a fine molding and depicts the engine quite well. The basics of the engine framing are included as well. The possibilities of displaying the engine out of the box are definitely there, since the separate engine cowlings are provided as well. With a little wiring added to the kit engine the results could be very pleasing. I like this for the reason that no other Spitfire kit offers this option from the box.

The decals are well printed, at least mine were. I have also heard that they have had some with some printed off register. I guess I was lucky this time. The markings give the modeler a very nice selection from which to choose. The fact that six different examples are present counts for something. All of these are fairly colorful, so the average modeler should be satisfied with the kit decals. If not, aftermarket ones are readily available.

Overall, I like what I see. It is not perfect by any means, but it’s a better kit than what Occidental brought to the table. If you take the negatives with a “grain of salt” most modelers can overcome the shortcomings and have a Mk. IX that is very nice. With some motivation and some “extra-cheese” (my accolade for aftermarket resin and such) in the cockpit, a truly outstanding model can be built. I would recommend this kit to the person looking to build a Mk. IX Spitfire.

JC

Tamiya 1/72 Bf 109E-3

by Milton Bell, IPMS 16702



Well, I did it again. After building the Tamiya Corsair and Fw 190D, I couldn’t resist the little Messerschmitt. Now I can tell you that it is probably the best of the lot—of course I haven’t done the P-51D or Spitfire. Hmm.

Construction of the “Emil” is generally straightforward. About the only departure from the norm is the single piece forward cowling that covers an “engine.” I mention that because the cowling has a couple of vent holes that allow the engine to be seen. More about that later. There is ample detail for this little kit. I wish the cockpit detail was “deeper” but since the kit is designed to be built with a closed cockpit, it doesn’t really matter. However, if you want to open it, via a vac formed canopy, you may want to look for some extra detail parts.

Be very careful of that Revi gunsight. It’s on the clear runner, tiny, and easy to lose. I exerted a little too much pressure on the tweezers and the next thing I knew, my gunsight was whizzing past my ear! Never found it.

All the parts for the trop version, except the canopy are included in the E-3 kit. All the parts are on a single sprue so you can see the kit is small and compact. That’s not to say there isn’t good detail. Typical of Tamiya’s new kits, it’s all engraved. The oil cooler/carb inlet is a three piece affair. There are six pieces in the cockpit. Instrument faces are raised on the panel or you can use the decals supplied. There is also a decal “seatbelt” or you can use PE.

Now for the best part—the fit. Forget the putty. All you *may* need on this one is a little superglue on the wing fuselage joint on the bottom. That’s all. If you really want to hurry, you can assemble it in an evening. After painting the cockpit RLM 02, I painted the switch boxes, oxy regulator and such as indicated on the instructions. After it was dry, I finished assembling the cockpit, adding the seat with belts last. The whole thing traps easily between fuselage halves. The three part wing had perfect fit as well and the only sanding was along the leading edge to clean up the glue line. The separate rudder was attached, slightly off center. The tailplanes are held up by struts and these also fit well although I did have to trip the pegs back some and remove the mold seam with a little 400 grit paper. Any excess gap in the strut glue point was taken up by a drop of Mr. Surfacer.

One of the most impressive fits is with the forward cowl. I left mine off so I could paint the engine block before the final assembly. I used Future to hold the cowl in place while I masked off the splinter pattern. When the paint was dry I snapped off the cowling, painted the engine and then permanently attached the cowl. The fit is near perfect.

OK, so I’m working in the “wrong” scale. I had a lot of enjoyment for just a little money, compared to the usual 1/48 kit, and that’s what the hobby is about. If you want to try something different, I can recommend any of the 1/72 Tamiya kits, especially the Bf 109s.

MB



(How I Got Started... continued)

About the time I was in the 6th grade we moved to Okinawa and I really got into my stride because several things clicked together now: 1. There were a whole lot of kits to be had both at the hobbyshop on base and the little shops off base at the schoolbus pick-up spot. 2. I was considered old enough to do chores like washing/waxing the family Corvair and to be entrusted with the lawn mower so I could earn money cutting yards. 3. I discovered all the base libraries and the new worlds the books opened up for me. It was at this time I discovered I had an incurable lust for history! I was finally learning the stories all those models had been trying to tell me.

My Dad's last duty assignment, (almost five years worth!), was in Minot, N.D. My days were looking very dark here in the middle of nowhere until I discovered a little basement hobby shop around the corner from my high school! To this day I thank my lucky stars for that shop because this was the first time I've ever been somewhere that the snow stayed more than a few hours and those winters were long and cold and you didn't venture outside very much. I could spend hours up in my room building models without anyone complaining about it! By the time we left I must have had 60 or more models hanging from my ceiling, and those got farmed out, if I remember correctly, to the local squadron offices. The best part of being in Minot was when some friends from church talked me into building a kit for their local show, and surprise—I walked away with 1st place!

After high school I quickly joined the army, (big mistake, going after the money and rank instead of the dream). Too much to do with job and family pretty much caused me to give up modeling. After getting out of the army 8 years later, my wife (perhaps sensing a spark that needed to shine?), surprised me with an airbrush and compressor. So, I guess you could but the blame on her, (although she refuses to accept any blame to this day while casting a look at all the boxes of models filling the garage and storage building!).

I have enjoyed this hobby since day one and it's only getting better now that my two younger children have taken an interest in it as well, and yes, Yoda, I've steered my better half away from the dark side and into the light of this great hobby!

JF

(Latest Packet continued)

Painting is keyed to Tamiya paints by color and number. The instructions fall down on rigging—one must refer to the box art for that. All in all this is excellent value for the money and will stand up to the exquisite Nichimo Japanese destroyers that for decades set the standard in 1/200 scale ships. I highly recommend this kit. And don't forget, you now have several choices of 1/200 scale aftermarket rail sets to further detail this eastern beauty.

George Lewis

(Car Corner continued)

the Hemi engine in a lot of my other Mopar models. I rate this a 7.

Note: I recommend the engine in this kit to make the following Hemi Cars: '70 Road Runner, '70 Superbird, '68-69 Dodge Darts, '71 GTX, Road Runner, Dodge Challengers, Dusters, Dodge Super Bees, and of course, Dodge Chargers.

Skipster

(Mach 2 continued)

Sink marks abound, mainly on the surfaces of the various fins mounted on the empennages. Clear parts, ie. the two identical canopies are rough and Coke bottle thick; they'll need lotsa polishing to regain clarity. I don't know why Mach 2 doesn't just give up on injected clear parts and go vac as have so many other limited run manufacturers. It would make a world of difference.

Although the instrument panel layout seems to agree with the pic in Jay Millers "The X-Planes," I only found one in my kit, leaving ol' Bondo the chore of scratchbuilding the second one. The ejection seats are, as one would also suspect, El Crude, and a suitably modified True Details 1/72 seat would probably be preferred.

The gear wells are unadorned except for a couple of strips of Evergreen that have been laid across to simulate strengthening members. Looks, and is, crude.

Happily, the decals are not too bad, which for Mach 2 is saying a lot! They're not quite as detailed as the Eagles Talon sheet, and the registration on the logos is off.

Held beside the six-page Eagles Talon instructions/markings/history handout, the Mach 2 single-sided, non-text instruction sheet is an embarrassment for a \$33 kit. Yes, one can build the models by looking at the diagrams, but there is simply no comparison with any but the most rudimentary, garage-produced effort. The X-24A and B had a variety of color schemes depending on what time period they were being flown. Mach 2 ignores all these possibilities, devoting only a few words, such as "overall silver" or "overall white." It's this minimalist, seeming lack of concern for the modeler who has anted up the bucks for these overpriced kits that bothers this grizzled Mach 2 veteran.

I'll probably use some Mach 2 parts such as the cockpit tub and the gear struts/wells in the construction of the Eagles Talon kit but, sad to say, the vac kit may get the nod! Be that as it may, I'll say again that I'm glad there are small modeling firms that tackle aircraft out of the mainstream, and I'll take the financial hit to support them, but why oh why can't Mach 2 get even one foot on the ladder of modeling evolution?

Phil

Old Rumors & New Kits

To begin with, I have heard from our old friend Laddie Dick. Laddie and his wife Betty are no longer in snowy Colorado; they are in sunny (but cool) Florida. They moved in last year but just recently got back on-line. Laddie says they live in a “fly-in” community near Daytona Beach. Several of the houses sport hangars as well as garages and there is a canal behind several, theirs included, for birds, boats and ‘gators. There is a restored F3F flying off the strip plus several other “warbirds.” Sounds like a nice place to retire to. Laddie’s email is: betlad@earthlink.net

Also had a note from another former member, Ray Katzaman who moved to the DC area last year. He is doing fine but still hasn’t hooked up with a model club. Says he misses Austin traffic! ?? It takes him 45 minutes to make the 32 mile trip to work—on good days. But, he says he has a nice office with a good view of the Potomoc and Kennedy Center and it’s interesting work. If you want to write to Ray, his address is:

Ray S. Katzaman
4062 Cardinal Crest Drive
Woodbridge, VA 22193

I’ve been getting some interesting web sites lately and one of the most interesting is a collection of photos from aircraft boneyards. Go to www.barnstormers.com/bones000.html .

For the armor builders who might be interested in Japanese armor camouflage in WWII, check out this site:
<http://member.nifty.ne.jp/takixxx/> .

Need a compressor? Morris Duet has a new one and needs a home for the old model. According to Morris it works just great but he just found a deal he couldn’t pass up. If you’re interested, see Morris at the meeting.

And now for some news of models. I have in my possession an Eduard P400/P-39 kit in 1/48. I would like to have another, perhaps the P-39Q or the K, or maybe the ProfiPak kit. Alas, we have none of the new Eduard kits in any of the local shops. As much as I like to support my local shop, I had to resort to mail order from a Pennsylvania shop. Somewhere there is a serious glitch in Eduard’s marketing policy. The local shop owners are as frustrated as anyone. It’s an excellent kit and I hope to have an “in-the-box” review next month.

According to Hobby Link Japan, the Hasegawa Kate is available there. It should be in the states before the month is out. (Don’t hold me to that.) Presently, Hasegawa has their excellent A4 and F4U-7 Corsair on the shelves. Both are excellent kits and good value, considering today’s prices. The equally excellent N1K2 George, late version, is also available. I’m putting the final touches on my own George—early one—at the moment and it’s just about as good as the Frank.

Tamiya has released the two-seat trainer version of the Do-335, the A-12. What can I say; it’s just about the same as the single seater. Aires does have some very nice resin for the kits that you should check out.

ICM has two more versions of the Spitfire; a Mk IX in Israeli markings and a Mk VIII in US markings. These are excellent values.

From other sources I notice that the Hobby Craft F9F-6 Cougar and P-59A and B Airacomet may be making an appearance soon. I’m not holding my breath but it is nice to see them listed.

Revell-Monogram has released their Do 210 and it looks like a winner. Haven’t seen one built but the articles on build ups look good. Later on look for a Fw 190D-11 from RM, certainly based on the earlier work from DML.

For you armor modelers, you probably read the first look review by former ASMS member Cookie Sewell on the DML SdKfz184 Elefant. This will be followed by the Ferdinand. Skybow has a Dodge WC51 3/4 ton Dodge Truck in 35th scale. Guess I should build one. I’ve spent several hours getting my bones rearranged while riding in the back of one with a bunch of FDC gear.

I notice that Meteor Products has a restock of Moskit metal exhausts for all scales of aircraft and several for 1/35 armor. These super thin real metal exhausts look really nice on aircraft and should really dress up a T-34 or a Panther. There are 12 subjects to choose from if you like German or Russian tanks. Oh yes, there is one for a Valentine/Bishop. Check out their website for a full list.

Today I received a packet from our friends in San Antonio. As you know, they are the host of this year’s Regional and it’s a two day affair. In case you want to go and stay over, they have added another motel to their list of discounters for the show. This is the Ramada Inn, 10811 IH-35 North at Weidner Road. Call 210 590-4646 for reservations. Special rates are \$45 plus tax. This motel is about ten minutes from the contest site.

Alamo Squadron is soliciting funds for trophy packages—\$35 a set—and they need to have the orders in by Jan. 31. In addition to the usual activities at the convention, this year’s will have a “make-n-take” activity for the kids. If you are interested in helping out with some of these activities, you would be most welcome. And you’ll get five free raffle tickets for your services!

The Brunch is being catered by Casarita Restaurant and the menu is Mexican: beef and chicken fajitas, cheese enchiladas, rice, beans, guacamole salad, fruit salad, chips, salsa, tortillas, and ice tea for just \$12. Tickets are on sale all day Saturday. I’ll have flyers at the Thursday meeting. MB

SHOW DATES!

**IPMS/SWAMP, 2001 Calcasieu Parish Model Exposition,
CALMEX IV, Lake Charles LA, Sunday, January 21, 2001**

**IPMS/Alamo Squadron, Region VI Convention &
ModelFiesta XX, San Antonio, TX February 24,25, 2001**

**IPMS/Houston, Modelmania '01, March 24, 2001
Humble Civic Center, Humble TX**

**Next Meeting:
Thursday, January 18**

