HASEGAWA 1/48th P-51D "Miss Marilyn"

By Mark Murray

Introduction

When this kit was released in 1991, I had to be one of the happiest modelers around. While other models of this plane were done, when compared with this kit, they all seemed to be lacking. Hasegawa's release became top dog for Mustang admirers. I for one bought several, and still have them, as I find that they are still one of the two top kits of this marque one can obtain. This kit was re-released several times with various changes, mostly having to do with different decals.

Overview of the kit

This kit is molded in Hasegawa's usual gray styrene with fine recessed panel lines. To their credit, the manufacturer included several options of how this aircraft can be built. They include wing stores of the following: 5"rockets and their associated launch rails, bazooka tubes, 75 and 110gal. fuel tanks, and 500lb bombs. Other part options include two different canopies, (one for the D model, the other for the K, or Dallas style,) two different prop blades, and two different styles of exhaust manifolds, the latter being the shrouded and un-shrouded types. An optional rear view mirror for mounting on the top of the canopy frame is als0o included. Another feature I noticed when examining this kit, is that you have the option of posing the radiator and oil cooler exhaust doors up or down.

The decal sheet included markings for three different aircraft: “Jumpin Jacques” of the 3rd Fighter Gp. 3rd Fighter Sq., Lt. Col. John Meyer’s aircraft from the 352nd Fighter Grp. 487th Fighter Sq., and Col. Turners mount from the 354th Fighter Grp. 353rd Fighter Sq.

Building the P-51D “Miss Marilyn”

Before I started building this plane, I made two decisions; first that I wasn’t going to build any of the versions included on the decal sheet. Second, the kit would be built Out-Of-the-Box. However, it would be built that way to the fullest potential the term Out-Of-the-Box means. With this in mind, I started in on what I hoped would be a pleasant modeling project.

Actual assembly for me always starts with a dry-fit of all the major parts. This way I can determine where the problem spots might be. Sure enough, I noticed a couple of areas that looked like they may pose a concern if I didn’t correct things before the fuselage halves were glued together. The first one was in the tail gear area. I noticed that even with the tail gear installed, one could see up into the inside of the fuselage by the rear cockpit area, and into the tail itself. So this was going to be boxed off, and painted to look presentable. I found out later you wouldn’t be able to see too much of the inside of this box, once the tail gear and it’s associated wheel was installed. The other problem was a design goof (at least that’s what I think,) in the installation of the exhaust headers, (manifolds, pipes, whatever you want to call ‘em.) The manufacturer only gives you a small shelf, or horizontal tab on which to glue the parts onto. This to me created a two-pronged problem. First, masking the exhaust pipes to paint the airframe, because you’re going to have to paint them to put them in when the instructions tell you to. Second, you just know that when handling the model during the building that you’re going to knock the little buggers into the sealed fuselage. Then they’ll just rattle around the inside taunting you on your gullibility on following the instructions. So what to do? Well, once I saw that there weren’t going to be any obstructions on the inside of that part of the fuselage, I installed a wall, or abutment on the inside edge of this little shelf. I made this out of Evergreen square rod, and cemented it. Of course this means that the exhaust headers are going to stick out too far. To rectify this, just file down the backside until they are hanging out just enough. Just remember the thicker the square rod you glue to the shelf, the more you’re going to have to file down the backside of the exhaust. So plan ahead, and be careful.

The cockpit of this model is very nice. It has more detail than any other kit that I know of. In my opinion, some resin sets of P-51D interiors are still lacking when compared to what Hasegawa offers. The area is made up of a floor with molded in rear fuel bladder, separate sidewalls, a well done instrument panel, separate pilot seat with molded in seat belts, seat armor, rudder pedals, control stick and various bits and pieces that round out the interior including the gun sight, fuel filler neck for the fuel bladder, a fuel gauge that installs on top of the bladder, and the radio set that was in back of the seat armor. I painted these items in their appropriate colors. According to my references some colors deviate from the kit instructions. One of the most noticeable and visual is the rear fuel bladder in the cockpit. I believe that the instructions guide the builder to paint this Khaki Green, however the actual color should be either a flat, or semi-gloss black. Another tip, when painting the floor of the cockpit, apply light brown first, then gradually dry brush on a darker brown. This helps to accentuate the fine wood grain that was molded into the floor. Once all the painting was done, I glued in the cockpit to the fuselage. Before joining the two fuselage halves together, I also painted and installed the oil and water radiators in the belly scoop along with the rear tail gear. A word of caution; when installing all these parts, use slow acting glue so you'll be able to check and re-check your alignment of the parts with the other half of the fuselage, before joining the two permanently. After putting the fuselage together, assembly for the rest of the plane is fairly straightforward. There are a few areas that I should point out. When attaching the chin scoop on the front of the plane, make sure there is a little blanking piece a bit back from the opening. If this isn't done, one can see through to the rudder pedals. Another area of concern is the installation of the prop blades. Make sure that all four key into the prop spinner at the same pitch, as there is just enough slop in the spinner to throw this off, and it is noticeable. By the way, I left the propeller off until the end, as it made painting the rest of the model easier. I attached the wing to the fuselage in the usual manner by joining the tops of the wings to the bottom, then sliding the whole unit in as one large piece. Since I had previously checked the fit of

this beforehand, I knew there wouldn't be any problems at the wing root to fuselage joint. It fit almost perfectly, just a slight bit of sanding at the leading edges of the root area, and you're done. Now, just pop on the rear horizontal stabilizers, and you've just about finished building the kit. I usually leave off the landing gear and other fragile parts till the end, as chances are you'll break them off as you proceed with the challenge of painting this aircraft.

Painting "Miss Marilyn"

As I stated earlier, I had chosen not to go with any of the schemes that are on the decal sheet provided in this kit. Instead, I chose to model the mount of 1st. Lt. Robert Welch, of the 343rd fighter squadron, 55th fighter Group. What appealed to me was the combination of the British Dark Green and natural metal fuselage divided by a colored stripe. All of this further enhanced by a yellow rudder, with yellow and green checked cowl band. The only unknown was the actual color of the cheat line that separates the British Dark Green from the natural metal, more on this latter.

To start with, I painted the wings with Floquil Old Silver, top and bottom. After this had dried a couple of days, I masked off the flaps and wings at the wing roots. The underside was a little more involved. Here I had to mask the area under the belly scoop, and at a panel line in front of the main landing gear wells, additionally masking off the underside of the flaps. The reason for all this masking was so I didn't get any overspray on the Old Silver already applied. Now all I pretty much had showing was the fuselage, and the flaps on the wings. These were painted with Model Master Aluminum Buffing Metalizer. I knew that I wouldn't have to apply this past the trailing edges of the wings, or very high up the fuselage, as the British Dark Green would be covering the rest of the airframe. After waiting about twenty minutes, I buffed out the Metalizer with cotton balls, and a piece of flannel that had been washed a few times. After achieving a fairly realistic aluminum finish, I sealed the metalized areas with Future. I let this dry for about a week, then masked off the area around the exhaust, so I could spray Model

Master Non-Buffing Steel. I found this gave a good effect for the darker color of the panels above and below the exhaust. At this point I should mention that the tape I found most effective for masking is 3-M blue vinyl masking tape. The width that I most used was 1/8th inch wide. This width allows me to bend the tape into curves, and allows me to get it into tight areas. To mask over the Aluminum Metalizer, I would reduce the stickiness by first running the tape across my forehead, (which I seem to have a lot of,) this way I didn't have to worry about pulling up the future coated Metalizer when removing the tape. However, I was still VERY CAREFUL when removing the tape.

Now onto the dark green; using the aforementioned tape, I masked off the areas that were to receive Model Master British Dark Green. When I first shot the color, my first reaction was, "OH NO, this is way too dark." So I decided to let it dry in hopes that the color would lighten up. After waiting about thirty minutes, It didn't get any lighter. So still having the tape in place, I re-applied the color, only this time I had mixed about 40% of a light grey to tone down the green. I liked the result so I set it aside to dry for about another week.

Now that the paint had plenty of time to cure, I could set about masking the nose and rudder to take the trim color of yellow. I matched the yellow to the checkerboard decal that would wrap around the nose in front of the exhaust area. Before I applied the yellow paint and the checkerboard decal, I sprayed a base coat of white, as this was best for coverage as an undercoat to brighten the final yellow color on the rudder, and help with any translucence of the decal on the nose area. Once the white was dry, I went ahead and sprayed on the custom mixed yellow. At this point of the build, most of the painting was done. It was time for me to put the airframe aside, and do the final detail painting on the miscellaneous parts that were left off so I could handle the plane. Some of these pieces include the main landing gear and their associated doors, the main and tail wheels, tail gear doors, oil and water radiator shutter doors, antenna mast, front of belly scoop, propeller, windscreen and canopy. Before I get too far off the path, the ETO stripes on the wing weren't carried over to the rear horizontal tail. Applying the stripe on these surfaces was standard practice for most aircraft in this theatre of operations. However on this particular aircraft this wasn't done. This shows the importance of checking your references. As for applying the rest of the decals, they went on without a hitch. The sheet that was used for "Miss Marilyn" is Aeromaster 48-071.

Returning to the cheat line that I mentioned earlier: I have all kinds of documentation on this particular plane, unfortunately all color drawings and artwork are misleading or inconclusive as to what color it really was. I have an equal number of references depicting this line as either red or yellow. Not knowing which was the correct color, I decided on yellow as it was used for most of the trim. To replicate this line, I used narrow pieces of decal stripping, and carefully worked the decal into the arc that separates the natural metal from the British Dark Green.

Once all the decals were applied and allowed to dry, I gave the fuselage a wash of dark brown and did the same for the gear wells and some other surfaces. I did not apply a wash of any kind to the surfaces of the main wing, on the real aircraft these areas were

filled and painted, so I figured in 1/48th scale not applying the wash was more correct. Next time I may fill in the panel lines, as this would be more accurate. Once finished with the wash, the green on the fuselage was sprayed with a final flat clear coat, while the wings (excluding the flaps or ailerons) were given a coat of semi-gloss. I made sure that the natural metal areas stayed nice and shiney by polishing them with a plastic polish. Now "Miss Marilyn" was just about finished, all I had to do was add the few detail parts, (i.e. the landing gear, prop, rear gear doors, etc. etc.) The canopy was dunked into a jar of Future, when dry I masked off the frame area and painted it flat black to represent the interior color of the framing, then this was sprayed over with Floquil Platinum Mist. Here's another tip, I painted the propeller blades in two colors. The outer half was painted black, while the inner portion was done in a dark grey. These were then given a topcoat of clear flat for the outer half, and semi-gloss for the inner half. The reason for this is that the inner portion, (the wide part near the spinner) is made up of a hard rubber material. These are usually called cuffs and incidentally were also used on Grumman Wildcats. Anyway, once the canopy was dry I drilled out the lightening holes in the canopy reinforcement bow, and glued it to the inside of the canopy. This was then mounted to the cockpit rails and…"VOILA" a finished P-51.

Conclusion

Hasegawa did a great job in producing this kit, and while other fine examples of this notable aircraft have appeared, I personally think this one has a lot going for it. Yes, the main landing gear wells are a bit shallow; but I'll still take this over a sparsely detailed cockpit almost anytime. As for ease of build, I'll admit that this kit will be a bit more of a challenge than say the Tamiya example, however, Tamiya had the advantage of a few extra years of refinement that comes with being able to see what your competitors did, both right and wrong. Anyway, unless you're a total hack, this kit will build into a fine example of one of the best combat planes of World War II. I enjoyed this kit and plan on building a few more examples for my collection.


M-CY


CY-M