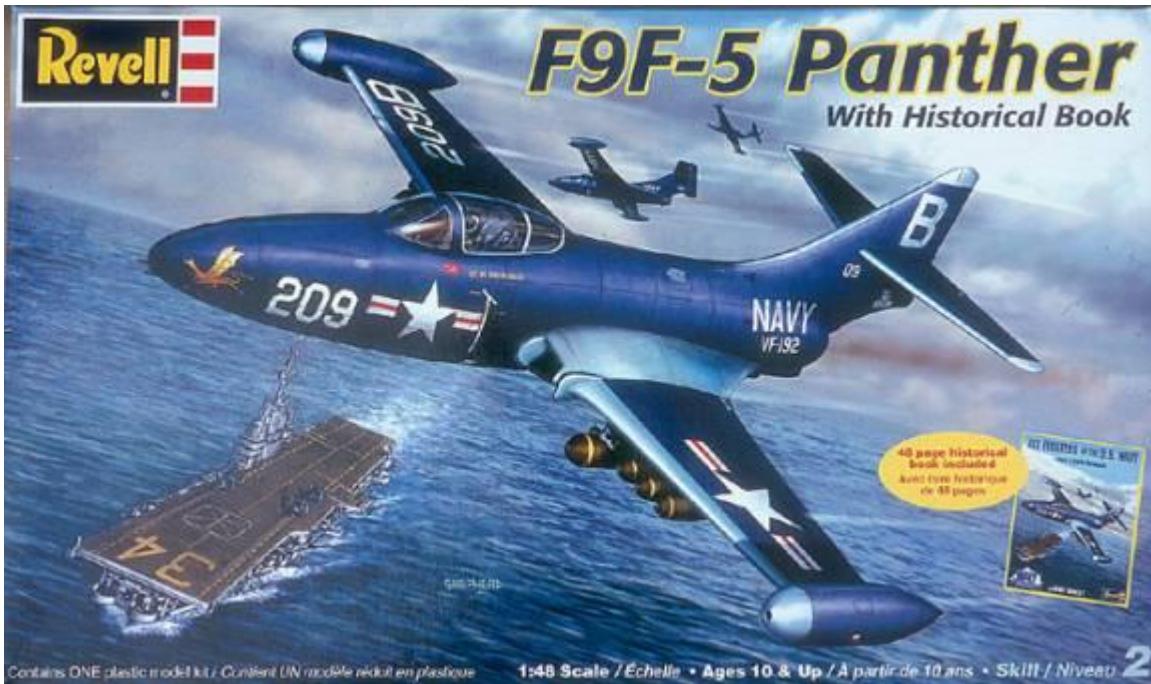


Revell Panther F9F-4/5 kit # 85-6865 – 1/48th scale



By Norris Graser

Revell has just re-issued the F9F-4/5 Panther kit in 1/48th scale. Originally tooled and released in 1990, the kit features raised panel lines. Changes to the model include: modeler friendly neutral gray plastic rather than the dark blue previously seen; a nice decal sheet, featuring a Marine F9F-4 and an F9F-5 featured in the movie, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*; and a very nice little surprise not even mentioned in the instructions, the AN/ARA-25 fairing, which was used on Panthers late in their career. Also included is a nifty softbound reference featuring thirteen early Navy jet designs, by Bert Kinzey.

Here are a few modeling notes for use when building this model.

The cockpit consists of a tub, instrument panel, rudder pedals and joystick. There is also a two-piece pilot figure, if you wish to use one. The correct four-piece ejection seat assembles in no time, however when you sandwich the completed cockpit between the two fuselage halves, you will find the instrument panel is a bit fiddly when butting against the panel cover. I'd suggest that you use a slow setting glue and add the panel when you mate the fuselage halves, allowing a little time to align it more precisely.

Before enclosing the cockpit within the fuselage halves, you will need to add the tail pipe, tail hook and nose guns to the inside walls. I chose to skip the kit guns and added metal tubing later. Brass tubing looks a bit more authentic and without the plastic guns protruding, you will be able to sand the nose area seam a lot more easily. Don't forget to add weight to the forward fuselage so that the aircraft will sit properly on its gear. One thing I didn't care for was that you must attach the nose gear at this time, as

the interior parts form the front wall of the nose well. I only mention it because I have built two Panthers and have managed to break the gear on both of them. So be careful!



You will find the fuselage goes together easily enough, but some minor filling will be required. I used cyanoacrylate for filling the seams, notably on the forward fuselage and the length of the underside. Just a little sanding and it's onto the next step.

The horizontal stabilizers will need some sanding and test fitting to adapt to the tail. Before assembling the wings, you need to determine if your Panther will be carrying bombs or rockets and then carve out the appropriate holes in the one-piece lower wing. You can add the appropriate pylons later. The wings are a lot easier and less daunting than they appear, and with care, go together quickly. I suggest test fitting the lower one piece and two topside wings, which lay over the intake trunking before gluing to place. I eliminated the mating pins to insure a good join at the wing root. Minor sanding and you are ready to attach these parts with glue. Again, I suggest liquid glue so you will have a bit of time to position the parts for best fit. Pay attention to the port side aft area at the wing root as it has a tendency to drift open. Don't worry about tip tank alignment; it is critical to get the wings to match at the wing roots. When the glue has set up, you will have to even out the tip tanks with some sanding and perhaps a little filling. I found medium and fine sanding sticks made quick work of the slightly askew seams on the front end of both tanks, but the seams are more pronounced on the port side.

On to the weapons pylons, although the kit has been easy to assemble, (if you paid attention to what you were doing!) at this point you have to work the pylons over. It almost always seems to me that manufacturers do not pay quite as much attention to the fit of weapons as they do the rest of the model, and it appears to be true with the Panther as well. The bomb racks do not fit the contour of the lower wing so you will

have to do some sanding and test fitting until adapted. The bombs also have seams that will need filling and sanding. Although the rockets are well detailed, and ready to paint except for thinning the fins and drilling out the exhausts, they are not easy to attach to the pylons. This is not so much a fault of the engineering as it is to the fact that the rockets are held in place by two small contact areas on the real aircraft. If you use them, you will need a bit of patience. Cyanoacrylate is the glue of choice here.



When painting your Panther, you will find it easier to spray the metal leading edges first, before applying the blue finish. Masking the leading edges is not a concern, but you will definitely find masking the wing tip tanks much easier by starting with the metalized areas first. I also have found that spraying a metallic finish anywhere near a dark color just doesn't work. No matter how much masking you do, it seems inevitable that the metal will find its way on to the darker color. The metal on both of my models is Gunze Sangyo Aluminum dusted with Stainless. For the Blue, the Golden Dragons aircraft was painted with Model Master Dark Sea Blue FS 15042. For the VMF-334 Marine machine, I used Gunze Sangyo Midnight Blue. Placed side by side, both colors are very close, so I can recommend either one. I used Future Floor Acrylic on both models using several coats and wet sanding with very fine (12000 grade) sanding cloths. I think the sanding cloths polished the finish more than sanded it and with a little patience I came up with a very nice, in-scale effect.

Decals in the kit cover two aircraft; one is a Marine F9F-4 assigned to VMF-334, which features a colorful scheme with a red and white flame treatment. The -5 is Lt. Brubaker's Panther from the movie, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*. I used the Marine markings made for the kit as this model was used on the box top of the new release. My other model features markings for a different Golden Dragons F9F-5 Panther. I built that

particular Panther a few years ago and it is from the same squadron used in the filming of Toko-Ri.

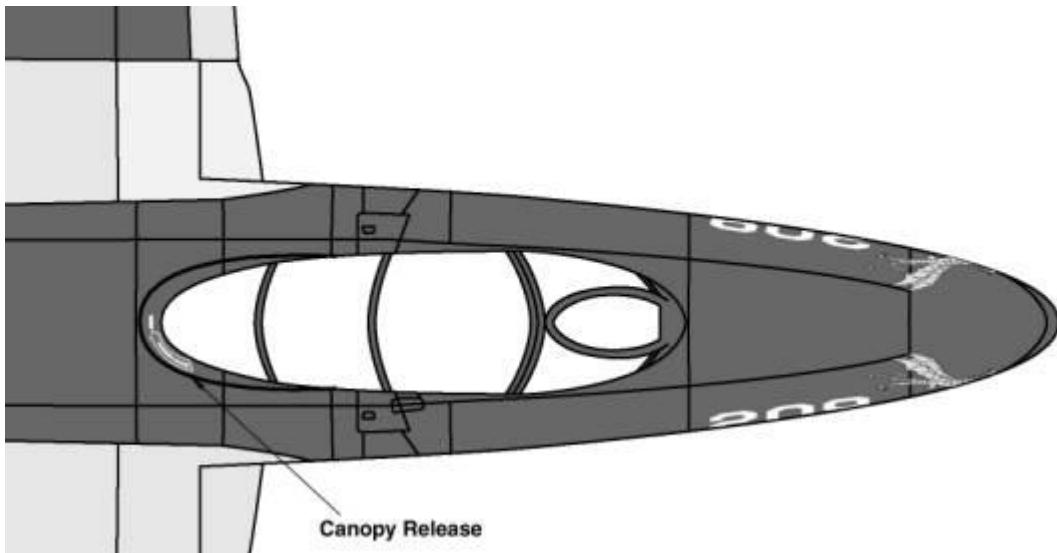


I'd like to comment on both the kit decals from the current release, and also on those used on the earlier build, from 1999. Decals for my Golden Dragons Panther came from several sources. The main markings are all from SuperScale decal 48-373. The instructions indicate that this particular aircraft also sported white air exercise bands on the wings and top of the tail. I have seen pictures of this aircraft and I believe I wisely chose to depict the aircraft prior to, or after the exercise. I understand that it is important to portray the aircraft from your references, but for the life of me, I cannot understand why anyone would add uneven, lap marked, sloppy, somewhat see through white to an aircraft otherwise decked out in uniform markings. I once saw this treatment applied to a Panther that was entered in a contest and I can tell you, that although it probably looked that bad on the actual Panther, the model I saw looked like a terribly built model! Getting back to the decals; the national insignia needed additional attention because of the printing technology of the time; the decal was manufactured, (and it was state of the art back then,) with a wide carrier film that was not feathered. Nowadays we are used to thin, clear carrier around our decals and the film tapers to almost nothing.

Not so important for a military aircraft in flat paint, but if you use the older decals on a high gloss subject, you are going to see a very definite step from the clear surround, over the painted area, adjacent to the national insignia on the decal. To correct this, I sprayed undiluted Future into the stepped area surrounding the insignia. I repeated this 3 or 4 times and when it was dry, I sanded into the decal, being very careful not to sand away any color. This worked just fine, but I would suggest that it retrospect, might have been easier to trim the carrier film before applying the decal or, better yet, use a modern decal sheet, which would eliminate the problem altogether.

Kit decals

There is one small problem you should know about on the kit decals. A two- piece, curved rescue arrow (decal item no. 12 and 13) are not mentioned in the instructions. This arrow is to be used on the Toko-Ri, Golden Dragon aircraft flown by Lt. Brubaker. It is placed on the back painted area of the canopy frame. It is not standard for any other Panther Squadron I have found, but was used on all of the VF-192 aircraft used in the movie, The Bridges at Toko-Ri.



This drawing shows the correct position of the rescue arrow
Used on the Toko-Ri Panthers, but omitted from the kit instructions.

I used the markings for VMF-334 for the box top model. As is general practice for a new release, I did not have access to the kit decals but rather; a proof set was printed on an ALPS printer. As a result, I cannot comment on the quality of the kit decals. What I can tell you is that the ALPS decals (which give modelers the opportunity to create markings that might not otherwise available) went on very well. Particular attention was paid to test fitting these markings in the art stage to make sure that the flames would fit the contours of the model.



Both wing tank flames went on without a hitch and the two-part nose decal went over the tapered nose easily. I can assure you, if the ALPS markings went on without a hitch, the kit decals will work too!

As I did the research for the decals in this release, I thought that I might give you a little insight and trivia about the Toko-Ri aircraft. I spent a lot of time looking at a VHS copy of the movie and had a lot of difficulty in finalizing some of the markings. Fortunately, it was released on DVD shortly before the project was due and I have to say that the DVD medium was a lifesaver, especially for the under wing markings. VHS can be stopped anywhere but there is so much blurring of the action that it almost comes down to guess work as to what you are really seeing. DVD just simply freezes a single frame of the image and is very clear.

Using the DVD media I was able to note the following: there are two aircraft that show the underside details plainly, when landing over the bow of the carrier. It's plain enough

to note the somewhat unusual placement of the aircraft number (209) located only on the port side flap. I also found by stopping the DVD, to check folded wings of other Panthers for clues, that there are a lot of swept wing Cougars mixed in with the Panthers! Something you just can't see in the film version or VHS format because of the blur! (If you pay attention, one can also find Gull Gray or natural metal Banshees in a few scenes, as well.) I also noted that Brubaker's name is on both sides of the cockpit in yellow, except for an approximately three second segment, where in the portside name is white. The number 209 is carried on the starboard wing top, port underside flap, and both sides of the nose. Just under the stabilizers on both sides are the last two digits, 09. Except when Brubaker gets out of his crashed F9F for the final part of the movie when the number magically becomes 04!



Final comments:

Although this kit features raised panel lines, which were the norm back in 1990, it builds into a detailed replica of the dash 4/5 Panther. It's an easy build if you pay attention to what you are doing and you will probably spend more time working over that gloss blue finish and metal tipped wing tanks than actually putting the model together. I might add that it also is an ideal kit for your first try at scribing panel lines as most of them are straight-forward and there are not all that many to rescribe. The AN/ARA-25 fairing, even though not used with either squadron featured in the kit, opens up several more schemes for aftermarket decals.

