

Hawker Sea Hawk



Classic Airframes 1/48th Scale

By Dick Smith

Until a few years ago, modelers wanting to add a Fleet Air Arm Hawker Sea Hawk to their collection were limited to finding a rare 1/72nd scale Airfix kit first issued in 1959. Recently several model manufacturers realized a demand for the 1950s carrier jet and now produce at least four Sea Hawk kits; one in 1/72 scale and three in 1/48th scale.

One of the most accurate versions is from Classic Airframes in 1/48th scale. It is a "multi-media" offering with cast resin, photo-etched metal and polystyrene parts. Construction starts by painting the cockpit "aircraft interior black," FS-37031. The resin cockpit castings benefit from a dry brushing with neutral gray, FS-36270, to bring out the details. The frame on the ejection seat is flat black with khaki seat cushions and light gray seat belts.

The cockpit instrument faces are reproduced on an acetate "film" that is brushed with white on the reverse side. Paint the front of the photo-etched instrument panel black, align the dials so that they show through the openings in the panel and then sandwich the two together with white glue. A few dots of silver, yellow and red completes the cockpit. This combination of metal, resin and acetate film produces an extremely realistic "front office" that fits neatly into the bottom of the horizontally split forward fuselage section.

The resin main wheel well and engine intake castings should be test fitted and then cemented into the fuselage with dabs of super glue. It is important to "dry fit" all parts before they are cemented into place. To keep your Sea Hawk from becoming a "tail sitter," pack as much ballast as possible behind the cockpit using lead fishing sinkers or BBs. A good rule here is when you think you've added enough weight, add a little more.



One of the most difficult tasks in constructing this kit is the gluing of the photo-etched engine intake vanes into place. These metal parts are very thin, distort easily and must be handled with extreme care. Next the exhaust fairings are test fitted and glued into place.

It's now time to determine whether or not you want to display your Sea Hawk with the wings folded. I chose not to take advantage of this option but if you elect otherwise, test fit the metal and resin parts that make up the wing fold assembly. Use white glue to tack these pieces into position and when satisfied with the placement, apply super glue sparingly and then set the fuselage aside to dry. The right and left sections of the rear fuselage are now glued together and the horizontal stabilizer is slipped into the slot in the tail. Be sure this part lines up perfectly with the vertical stabilizer or your model will appear off center. Another critical step in construction comes when mating the front and rear sections of the fuselage. To aid in alignment, glue a few tabs of scrap plastic into one side of the fuselage half to act as a guide in positioning and to strengthen the joint.

With the airframe construction complete, check over the model and fill and sand any areas where the seams are not acceptable. A coat of Gunze Sangyo's "Mr. Surfacer 500" will fill tiny flaws and will prepare the model for painting. This is a lacquer based product, so use with plenty of ventilation.

Sea Hawks flew with several FAA squadrons in the mid to late 50s. Most had "Sky," FS-34504, undersides and "extra dark sea gray," FS-36118, topsides. Extra dark sea gray appears too dark, so I substituted the lighter "dark sea gray," BS-381/C638. This is not exactly correct but it is certain that the topside paint faded in the sun and when exposed to the sea air.



There are no after market decal sheets offered for the Sea Hawk, however ClassicAirframes includes markings for four aircraft in the kit. I selected an aircraft from 897 Squadron that was assigned to HMS Eagle in 1956. This aircraft carried the squadron's stylized bird motif on the nose and took part in Operation Musketeer over the Middle East in October 1956. Many aircraft that participated in "Suez Crisis" action carried distinctive black and yellow identification bands on the wings and fuselage but this aircraft did not.

This kit is more complicated than many of the mainstream offerings and is intended for the more experienced modeler. With patience it will build into an excellent representation of an important aircraft of the 1950s.

