MODEL REVIEW
A-10, Trumpeter 1:32

Reviewed by Brian Casteel

I love 1/32 scale models! I love that they are too big to put anywhere in my house, including my closet, I love that they are heavy, I love that I have to contort my own body while sanding and painting on them. With five built, one on the bench and over forty more waiting patiently in the closet, I can't wait to get to them all. So what if some of them are huge. I'll build them, and then figure out what to do with them. I know what my wife wants to do with them...something about "not in her house" and the "dumpster".

I am also a fan of the Fairchild A-10 Thunderbolt II warthog as a couple of you may already know. Having said that I'm sure you can guess what I'm going to talk about. When trumpeter, (whom I had never heard of at the time) announced its future release of their 1/32 scale A-10 kit I foamed at the mouth for what seemed like an eternity. I know Paolo Pizzi already reported on the A-10 and its various pros and cons, But I have started the kit and wish to share some of the splendor and pain in this venture. Well, to start I think anyone that has bought the kit or has perused its contents at the hobby store will definitely be impressed with all the plastic that comes in this giant box not to mention how handsomely it is all packed. But, one could also agree that the cockpit that comes in the box is nothing spectacular. I held off on starting the kit at first because of this fact... Thank goodness, for The Black Box after market A-10 cockpit detail set was soon released. And I bought it for $30. I also bought the Tiger Wings decal set too (it has five variants to choose from!) so far I have close to $150.00 invested in this kit. When I did eventually start, I went ahead and assembled the kit's cockpit anyways to get a feel for Trumpeter's plastic. And this was a good idea for which I will tell you why in a bit.)

The Black Box (BB) Cockpit set is nice looking upon first glance... and even second glance. and not being one to nit pick the details I went ahead and compared it to pictures of the real thing in the Squadron A-10 walk around, and the various pictures A-10 cockpits I could find on the internet and I found little discrepancies. I began painting and picking out the details as best I could and I think I did a pretty good job. I painted the ACES II ejection seat as well. The stock cockpit seat from the Trumpeter kit is pretty nice, but it seems kind of sterile and lacks that lived-in feel to it. With the money I invested in this A-10 and the love I have of the aircraft, I didn't want to rush this part of the assembly. Having only worked with resin after-market kits a couple of times before, I'm not an expert at them. But I can tell you about some of the problems I had with the BB set. When it came time to put the cockpit into the fuselage I had to dry fit and reshape all the pieces so many times that it became quite frustrating. I felt pretty smart though when I looked forward a few steps and realized that I had to cut the cockpit resin down a lot to get it to fit into the desired spot. If you don't do this it will interfere with the nose gear assembly. And I figured this out long before I glued anything in place! I gave myself a pat on the back. This is where the kit's cockpit tub I built a while ago comes in handy, you can place it in the alignment ribs in the fuselage (one of which you will have to remove for the BB kit) and

draw lines on the inside of the fuselage where you need to make sure the BB kit doesn't go past. Then you need to start shaping the BB cockpit tub. The bottom of the BB cockpit is basically a big block. You will need to cut the sides of it in and up to avoid fit problems. I also had to add a little strip of styrene to the side of the fuselage to level out the cockpit. The front instrument panel was not very fun at all, shade around it was very thin and I sanded right through it while trying to get it and the kit to the same shape. There are two triangular shaped side panels for the cockpit in the BB kit, and I found that they had to be trimmed down considerably in order to make it all fit right. There is a lot of guess work in getting the cockpit into the right spot. Holding the fuselage pieces together while trying to dry fit the tub and make sure it line up where turtle deck will go and the front instrument panel is just plain work. Personally I think the BB A-10 Cockpit Kit seems to be a lot more work than it should be. After reading the reviews for Verlinden's A-10 cockpit kit I really wish that I had waited. And for less money you get photo-etched parts with it too! I didn't put the gatlin gun on the inside of the fuselage. It seemed like a huge waist of what seems to be a pretty cool sub assembly. Instead I will build it and display it separately. Perhaps I will take a stab at scratch building a stand for it. The kit calls for 80 grams of weight to be placed inside the recovery barrel and another 80 grams in front of that (to prevent tail-sit). Anyone know how much 80 grams is? Well I didn't and I didn't a have a conversion chart or a scale. So I figured about 20 pounds of fishing weights super glued to the inside should be enough. Well, actually its probably closer to 8 oz but pretty heavy none the- less. I haven't affixed the turtle deck yet so if I have to add more weight later I can. I'll check it all at once the wings are on.

The BB cockpit tub isn't really a tub at all, and I realized this a little too late. After I got the two front fuselage halves together and the nose gear well assembly in place, filled the seems and made it all smooth and pretty. I looked deep into the front of the cockpit and low and behold, not only did I miss a piece of the gear-well assembly but I didn't add anything to the front of the tub in front of the rudder pedals! DOH!!! (Insert many bad words here) this is where my earlier feeling of smart crumbled. Instead of tearing the whole thing apart I just left it for now hoping to be hit with an incredible idea to fix it later. I may still be able to put something in through the refueling hole that is in the nose. I really like to make things hard on myself. I went ahead and assembled the front fuselage assembly to the rear one. (This A-10 kit has four parts to the fuselage 2 front and 2 back split right down the middle both ways, all because it was easier to package into the box I suspect) Sheesh! This thing is long! I LOVE IT ALREADY!!!

Well, here it is... Part two of my yearlong review... OK, so it won't be that long but it sure feels that way sometimes the way it's taking me so long to work on this blasted thing. Ah, but don't get me wrong I'm still loving it. When you have a subject that you love in a scale that you love, you just want to do it right. I took a break from my big A-10 for a while and built a couple of other smaller models. Plus there's TamiyaCon coming up so it's kind of taken a back shelf as of late. But I am once again regaining steam and the desire to see this beast finished.

The last we spoke I had put the fuselage together and was marveling at it's hugeness. Then I built the horizontal stabilizer and attached it. I decided to keep the parts movable so I built it very carefully. The next things in line are the wings. These are also of great magnitude. They are almost 10î wide on each side. The two halves went together fine with little problems. The first thing you do is assembling the two sets of flaps for each wing. Then put those in without glue so you can pose them later. The ailerons can also be posed, but I haven't put them on yet because I know in my great clumsiness I would break them while still having to manhandle this thing. Upon putting the wing halves together, I filled the tips of the wings with green putty. I

did this because it was easier to contour and shape into such a tight and curvaceous spot than super glue would have been.

The main landing gear wells are half way molded into the top of the wing. The bottom half is a piece all its own. The main gear spring is molded into the top of the gear well of the wing as well as other details, not to mention the great big eighth inch ejector pin marks right in the middle of the whole dang thing, on both sides too. The molded spring really looked hokey up there so I decided to fix this on my model. I used my Dremel to take out the molded detail and used small strips of styrene to replace it. I then built supports for a new spring, which I fashioned out of some small gauge wire. Wire was also added to simulate the various tubing that runs throughout the wells. I then painted and weathered the wheel wells. Hmmm, a much improved gear well even if I do say so myself. The instructions call for the landing gear to be installed at this point, but there is a lot more to be done before that happens. Now it's time to attach the wings to the fuselage. They dry fitted on very nicely but I went ahead and made a crude jig out of foam core so I could get the wings on nice and straight. I used super glue here because it's more solid. Once they were on I found some pretty bad gaps at the bottom of the wing to fuselage assembly; they required a lot of filling. The top will require a little bit of filling but not nearly as bad as the bottom. Plus there was this really strange piece of rogue plastic on the wing that needed to be bent way back into shape. Not really sure what happened here but I fixed it.

The next thing I will start is the engine. However, that is going to come in the next installment seeing how that could take a while itself. I have however already sprayed the nicely detailed resin engines in metalizer steel. (In my best Homer Simpson voice) Hmmm Shiny. It will get darker once I start to weather it all. Maybe I will bring what I have in this month so ya'll can see it in its rawest form.

Well, here it is, my final installment of the 1/32 A10 WARTHOG Trilogy. At last submission I was about to tackle the engines. I tackled them and detailed them. I went to a lot of trouble without really giving them much forethought. The engine pods are molded in clear plastic so you can view all your detailing handy work when you are done. Personally I didn't like the fact that it looked like a plastic model with the see-through parts. So after all the work I did on the engine I buried them in their pods and painted the pods. That was a waste of a few hours... and with OrangeCon is rapidly approaching I wish I had those precious hours back. Next I placed the pods in the nacelles and put the fairings on. This whole assembly was really quite tricky and took way longer than one would think. After the engine assembly is finished and put on to the main fuselage assembly the Hawg really starts to come together. But there is a lot of work in just getting the plastic ready to paint. A lot of the detail gets sanded away and you need to re-scribe the panel lines. In some place you will need to just deepen the panel lines all together. I spent a lot of time just doing this kind of work. The outer flaps take a while to get positioned the way I wanted them. I chose to have them in the closed position since I was running out of time, but getting them lined up right and getting all the excess plastic off took a good portion of a one night session.

After the 1/32 Tamiya F-14 Black Bunny you would think that I would know better than to get into another tough subject... but as I said before, I like making things difficult on myself. Here is what I am talking about. I chose to do my A-10 in the "Peanut Scheme". It's a camo scheme painted in earth tone type colors. There was one aircraft done like this and wasn't very popular

as far as I can tell. Personally I think the A-10 screams out to wear a scheme like this. The colors called out in Squadrons A-10 Walk around are FS33303, FS33245 and FS33105. None of these colors exist in premixed form. Not to mention they didn't really match the photos either. Finding a Photograph of the plane that was in good shape was not an easy task either and I only managed to find about 4 color pictures to look at. All of them varied from each other as far as shades of light and dark so who really knows what the true exact colors of this plane are. I managed to come across four illustrations depicting the color scheme too, and wouldn't you know it... everyone of those was different too. A friend and I color corrected the photos I found on the internet. We compensated for the haze and tarmac colors and adjusted the plane colors from there. I ended up with what I feel was a realistic interpretation of the true colors.

I ended up mixing my own paints to match the new corrected photos using Testors Armor Sand for the light color, Testors Flat Brown for the medium color and Leather for my darkest color. All of these were my base colors. I started with one 1/2oz. jar of Armor Sand and added a pipette of Sand to it. The Flat Brown came in the small bottles so I used 2 of these and added the same amount of Sand paint to it as well. For the Leather, again I used one 1/2oz. bottle and I added a pipette of Russian Grey and a pipette of Flat Black. These mixtures seemed to mach the photographs pretty well. Once I got all the paint mixed I took the masked plane down to the garage and spent about 4 hours working on the first 2 colors.

Later that night I was able to shoot the rest back in my hobby room since it wasn't as much coverage. I shot the light color first then the medium color, the dark went on last. After a day of drying I put a few coats of Future on it and set it aside to cure for a couple of days. With the paint done and the Future drying, I turned my attention to the armament. This A-10 is going to be armed to the teeth: 12 MK 82s, 6 Maverick, 1 LGB 10, 1 GBU-8, 2 MK 20s, and 1 ECM pod. So far all but one hard point will be filled and I may throw a couple of sidewinders on there just for the grins and giggles of it. The armament is probably the worst part of the kit. While the mavericks look OK, the LGB and MK 82s are terrible. With 12 of the MK 82s there will be a lot of work involved. I managed to get them all assembled and filled, but I kind of wished I had gone down to Brookhurst Hobbies and got the CAM resin versions. Same for the LGB-10, it goes together OK but then there is this unfinished hole in the back of it. If you pick up the Eduard photo etch for the armament you might be able to fix all the problems. With a nice base of future on the plane I spent a couple nights decaling the plane, The Tiger Wings decals I purchased for the peanut scheme were very nice and thin. They went on with very little trouble but there were a lot of them. I sealed them with a few more coats of Future. Then after a few days of drying I hit the panel lines with a dark brown wash.

Some times I can get the Photo Etch (P.E.) stuff assembled real nice and other times I struggle with it, as I did with the parts for the landing gear. I tried to do as the Eduard instructions called for but the P.E. parts didn't fit the landing gear the way they should have. While metal landing gears are nice and sturdy, these particular ones are not formed very well and require a lot of cleaning up. I didn't add all the P.E. for fear of cutting certain key pieces off and then trying to replace it with a P.E. piece only to have it not fit right. But I did add brake lines to the mains; I made them out of copper wire. I then painted the gear, weathered them and put them on.

I didn't like the way the gun muzzle looked on this so opened up the air vent holes on the side, but that created another problem. Since I didn't install the gun you could see all the way through the muzzle. I fixed this by putting some small aluminum tubing in there to simulate the gun barrels. I painted them gun metal and I even rifled them out a little on the ends to make the diameter of the barrels a little bigger. The plane is together now and all that is left are a few final

touches. I put on the last of the antennas, fuel dumps, lights and other odds and ends. Then all the armament was put on, and the engine covers were posed open even though you can't see the engines themselves. The last thing I did was install the canopy.

Wow what a big plane... and heavy too! With the A-10 kit itself, decals, cockpit, photo etch parts and special paint I bought for this, I spent close to $225. I worked on this thing for about 14 months off and on. I guesstimated that the total hours I spent on this beast was probably in the neighborhood of 300+ hours, 150 of those coming in the last six weeks I worked on it. The last 6 hours the night before OrangeCon. It was all worth it. This is definitely not a plane for a beginner. but very fun and challenging to work on, not to mention very impressive when it's done. OK Trumpeter, I'm ready, now bring on that 1/32 F-105.

Until then I'm going to take a nap.