



Mitsubishi Zero Model 22 by Hasegawa in quarter scale

This is the re-tooled version released within the last couple of years. The kit features extremely fine scribing (sand it hard at all & it'll disappear!), a nicely detailed cockpit and comes with the drop tank that extended the range so far that the allies thought there were far more of this nimble fighter in the air than actually existed in the early days of WW2.

With one exception, I found that this kit literally 'fell together'. The cockpit features detailed sidewalls with raised relief, but no extra parts. I felt that the throttle quadrant was a little 'anemic' but left it alone rather than try to sand it off and replace it. Separate gun butts are provided for the two cowl mounted machine guns, but in looking at my finished model, there's no gunsight- so either I missed it, or one isn't included in the kit! A basic seat is included, and I'm not enough of an expert to comment on whether it's correct or not, but there are 'dimples' molded in the back rest to represent the lightening holes and you may want to drill all of those out. There are no provisions for seat belts or straps, so you're on your own for those. I'd say that overall, the cockpit was average for a new release - fairly well detailed, but with room for improvements.

The twin row radial 'Sakae' engine is nicely done, although it's so tightly cowled that the outer third or so of the cylinders aren't visible, just like on the real aircraft. The chin airscoops are very nice and the cowling machine guns come with separate barrels and the troughs look good, but the cowl flaps are molded closed and the engine exhaust pieces should be drilled out to give them some depth.

The landing gear is straightforward and all detail is molded into the gear wells, but here is where I started having problems with the assembly.

The lower wing is molded as a single piece, with the exception of a single separate piece that comprises the lower fuselage between the aft end of the engine cowling and the forward third of the main landing gear wells. I assume that Hasegawa did this so that they could get all of the complicated curvatures in this area correct, but I had an absolute devil of a time getting this piece to match with the lower wing half and get everything aligned properly. I ended up tearing the entire assembly out once, doing a fair amount of trimming and then puttying both the trailing edge of the wing assembly and both sides of the fuselage joint between the leading edge of the wing and the cowling.... This also goofed up the upper wing to fuselage joints somewhat and I yanked the upper right wing off at least once as well, before doing a 'putty and sand' job along the upper wing to fuselage joint.... just call me clumsy, but I think that if I were to do it again, I might try gluing the upper wing halves on first, then fitting in the lower wing. Or just plan to do some putty work. The rest of the assembly is very straightforward and the kit includes both the tailhook for this first 'navalized' version and the external mass balances for the ailerons.

The clear parts are VERY thin, fit well and have very fine engraving representing the canopy frames... almost too fine, as I had a tough time trying to mask them when I was getting ready to paint.

I experimented somewhat with the paint job, trying to match the 'lightly shining ash green' that the designer called what used to be known by modellers as "Japanese Navy Gray". That's the subject of a whole article in itself, and I'm not going any deeper here! Likewise, I tried to tint the cowling so it came out a 'bluish-black' to match the Mitsubishi color, but in retrospect, I should have simply broken down and bought a bottle of the Aeromaster color. I also tried to cover the prop with 'Bare Metal Foil' to give it a bright metallic sheen without having to mess around with SNJ metal paints for such a small job. I couldn't really all of the miniscule wrinkles out of the metal foil, but hey, that's what experiments are for! Next time I'll try SNJ.

Decals are a combination of the kit decals - which are very sensitive to the use of setting solvents (hint, hint) - and an aftermarket Aeromaster set that is likewise very thin and solvent sensitive. The model represents an aircraft from December 7, 1941 and if it wasn't two thirty in the morning right now, I'd probably even know which carrier it was, but off the top of my head right now I can't remember. So I'm going to get this out via e-mail right now to get Norris off my back for a while and go to bed! Happy modelling.

Doug Barbier