



Beauty and the Beast

or:

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde meet the ProModeler SB2C-4 Helldiver

By Doug Barbier

This won't be a kit/construction review in the typical sense, because there have already been two published in the McKinstry newsletter (February and July 1998) but I will give a quick rundown of my experience with building the kit.

In a nutshell, this kit is absolutely wonderful and builds into an absolute 'Beauty' - with one glaring exception - which is a 'Beast' to fix. The vast majority of the parts are very well molded and proportioned, but my kit had a warped left fuselage (which seems to be pretty common) and the rear gunners compartment must have been designed while Mr. Hyde was in charge.....

"call Monogram and have them replace the fuselage" said Norris, when I was first describing the warp..... did I listen? NOPE - Mr. Macho, "been building kits for 4 decades, I can get this one together too" didn't. bad mistake. The warp didn't bother the forward cockpit much, but hoo boy, the rear gunners compartment, and to a lesser extent, the bomb bay, became a nightmare to assemble. I tried building the gunners compartment according to the instructions.... absolutely no way - it wouldn't work. I

finally ended up building it in exactly the opposite order that the kit instructions call for, in order to get everything assembled and placed properly. Between the warpage - which really wasn't completely cured by gluing the fuselage halves together, the radio equipment being slightly too large for the space it was supposed to occupy, the complexity of the rear gunners seat and the generally inadequate 'exploded view' instructions, I spent at least as much time on this one area as the entire rest of the kit! I did use the etched metal scarf ring, which may be the cause of some of the difficulty, but it looks so much better than the plastic version, it was worth the effort. Having said all that, the end result is beautiful.

If you haven't built the kit already, it has an etched metal fret that contain the dive brakes (!), scarf ring and sight for the rear gun and an ignition harness for the engine. If you invest the sweat and effort to do it properly, the rear gunners compartment becomes a model in itself. It's very 'busy' and complete - ditto the much easier to assemble front cockpit, although the front seat has the molded on seatbelts. Make sure you paint the red interiors of the dive brakes because you'll be able to see it, even if you close them up.

The engine is molded as one piece, with only a half row of back cylinders, not full depth - something I don't care for at all, but by the time you get it installed, it's not too noticeable. While I used the etched ignition harness, you'll get a much better effect by using brass wire instead, and drilling out the sparkplug holes and distributor ring. Be careful installing the underwing rocket racks (unfortunately, no rockets are provided with the kit) because they are 'handed' and it looks odd if you get one in backwards..... The bomb bay is reasonably detailed and the double crutch bomb carrier is included, but it will never drop a bomb, because it's far too wide to clear the opening.....which means either the bay opening is too narrow or the crutch is seriously too wide..... I think that it's the former. I didn't care for the kit decals - the white was too yellowish, so I went with an aftermarket set by Aeromaster which went on fine.

All in all, if you put the effort into the rear cockpit to do it right, it builds up into a really nice looking kit.

