

## Tamiya 1:50 scale Aichi D3A1 Val



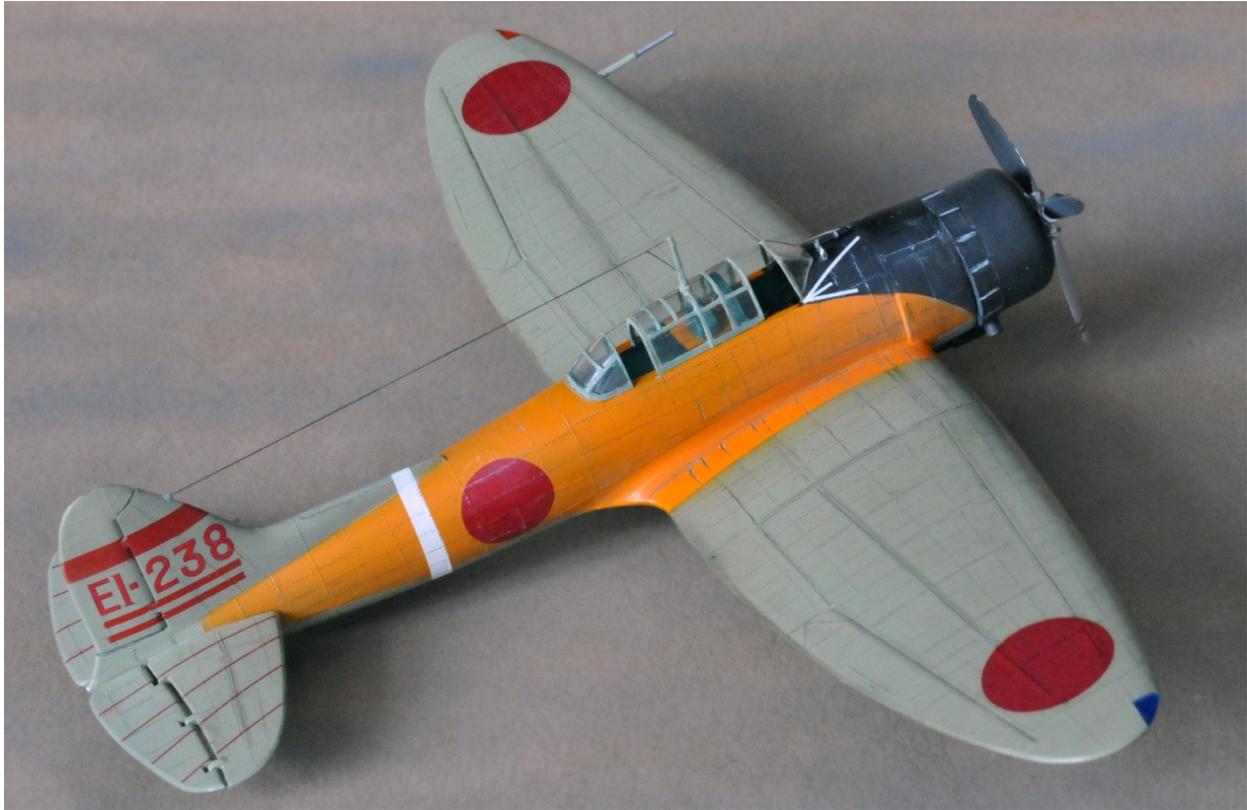
Pat Westerberg

I'm getting to like doing this review stuff! It really gives me a chance to "tell it like it is" about the plastic model airplanes that I build and whether they're worth building. Until now, I had been building aircraft from the Pacific Theatre of the Second World War. The kits that I have built are usually from Tamiya, Fujimi or Hasegawa with an occasional Accurate Miniatures kit thrown in for good measure. I have been pleased with all four companies because they feature engraved panel lines which make it easier to do a wash which accentuates the panel lines and makes the aircraft look more realistic.

I just recently finished an older (1973 vintage) Tamiya 1:50 scale Aichi D3A1 Val dive bomber. I wanted to do this kit because it had raised rivet panel lines which I had never attempted before. In approaching this new venture, I decided to spray the entire aircraft with 2 colors mixed together; Tamiya flat silver and Tamiya flat black. I chose this method over the more traditional approach of just airbrushing or pre-shading the panel lines because there were just too many rows of raised rivets to pre-shade. I sprayed the aircraft with the black-silver color and let it dry. I then used Tamiya's Gray-Green, the Japanese called it Ame-iro, (or candy color) to spray over it. Once the color dried, I took a tongue depressor and used the flat side to rub off the gray-green top color leaving the black-silver color underneath. It took a bit of effort, but the gray-green color finally came off letting the silver-black show through.

After much doubt about this method (Yes, I do get paranoid about things occasionally). I was pleased with the results. The only other color I used for this project was a flat

bright orange from Tamiya that I used to spray the fuselage. I used this color because I learned that one of the Hikotaicho or Group Leader's aircraft may have been painted in this unusual color.



The pilot's name was Lt Cmdr. Kakuichi Takahashi. He was in charge of the 51 dive-bombers of the 1st wave of the "Hawaiian Operation" or Pearl Harbor attack.

Although there were reports of Takahashi's aircraft being an orange color during the attack on the seaplane ramps at Ford Island, it has never been confirmed. I believe that as a Group Leader, Takahashi wanted the other dive-bombers to be able to see him and then form up on him at the designated rendezvous point after completing their mission and fly back to the carriers.

The cockpit detail is sparse when compared to more recent Hasegawa and Tamiya kits. Some of the newer kits even include photo etch seat belts. This kit did not have those so I made the seat belts from small pieces of masking tape cut to the proper size and brush painted with Tamiya's Flat Khaki.

The decals were rather old and I didn't want to take a chance on using them for fear they would fall apart. Instead, I used decals made by Eagle Strike which came off perfectly using warm water and a paintbrush. I used Model Master Decal set to help the decals adhere to the raised rivets. They almost looked as if they were painted on.

I think that the model turned out better than I had hoped but was more work than I had expected. I would like to do another aircraft like this so I can hone my skills doing a different wash technique.....maybe even the traditional way.



I would recommend this kit (if you can find it. it's rare!) to anyone who would like to try their hand at raised panel lines. They can be a little tricky at first and seem to be a little intimidating as well, but if you have a little patience and time, they can be done properly. I think for now I'm going to stick with the recessed panel lines. They're easier to do with a wash and require much less work. I would have to say that the experience was positive. If you can find one, do give it a try.