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Detailing a B-25D

Conversion tips for Monogram's Mitchell

Seemingly defying gravity, Paul's Mitchell shows off more than just detail. Brass tubes mounted on the propeller and inside the engines allow the props to spin with just a little breeze.



BY PAUL BUDZIK

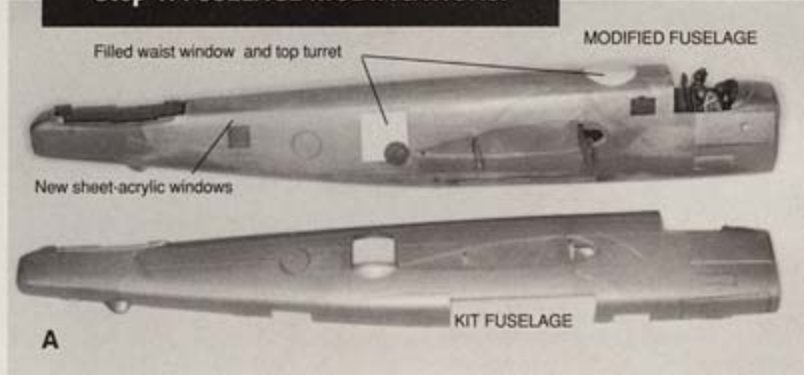
THE B-25 MITCHELL has always been one of my favorite bombers; something about its lines, I guess. The Mitchell was at its best as a low-level bomber and strafing mission against Japanese shipping and military installations in World War II. Early versions had only a single forward-firing machine gun in the nose, so crews added firepower for the strafing mission. As many as eight .50-cal. machine guns were bolted onto and into the nose of the Mitchell.

I wanted a model of a gun-nosed strafing mission for my 1/48 scale collection, so I backdated Monogram's late B-25J into a D model. I could have reached the same result with the Revell B-25B kit, but I decided instead to use a few parts from Revell on the better-detailed Monogram kit.

strafer in 1/48 scale



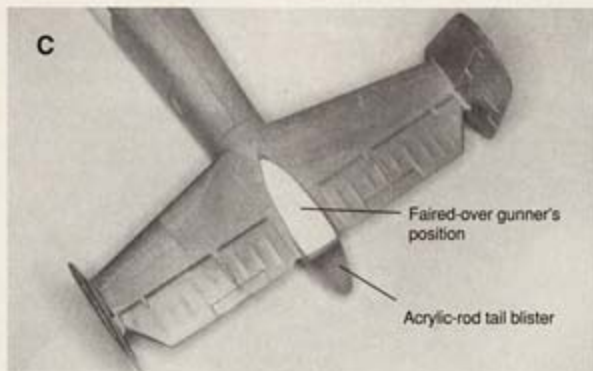
Step 1. FUSELAGE MODIFICATIONS.



Monogram's interior detail is outstanding. I added full seat backs and headrests to the kit seats using .020" sheet styrene. I enlarged and filled the waist gun positions, upper turret opening, entrance hatches, and nose gear door with sheet styrene and sanded them smooth. My model would be posed gear up on a stand, so I didn't have to work on the landing gear. I also closed the bomb bay doors but added

.030" styrene strips to the center line of each door to fill the gap. I cut slightly oversize window openings and filled them with clear sheet acrylic, (A). After sanding and polishing, the "glass" areas would be masked before painting.

After painting the interior, I placed Monogram's pilot in the copilot's seat and a figure from Monogram's B-26 Marauder in the pilot's seat (B).



Step 1 continued – I cemented the fuselage halves, then drilled a hole through the top and bottom on the center line just aft of the bomb bay doors to hold a rod for a stand. Mounting the end of the rod in a vise helps to align the wings and tail plane on the fuselage. I added the tail plane first, then removed the late-model's tail-gunner fairing and filled the opening with sheet styrene (C). The new clear tail blister is shaped and polished acrylic rod.

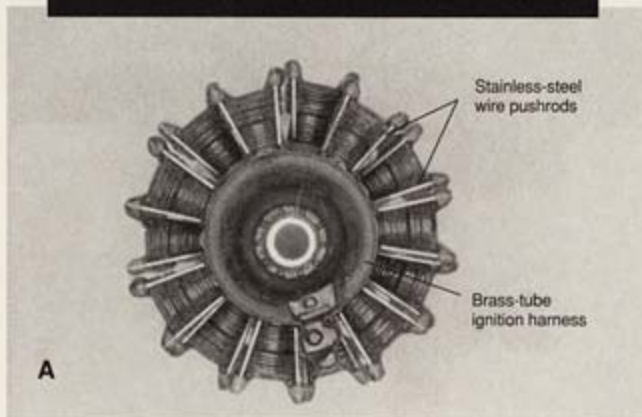
I used the kit's clear nose piece for the new gun nose. I filled the original holes and added acrylic inside to support the new gun barrels. After drilling four new holes (slightly larger in diameter than the barrels), I attached the nose to the fuselage (D). The exterior framing was sanded smooth, replaced with strips of Bare-Metal Foil, and painted over with the rest of the fuselage.

I located the new opening for the top turret by striking an average dimension from several scale drawings which differed in its location. Monogram's turret interior is one of the best I have ever seen, but the clear bubble seems too

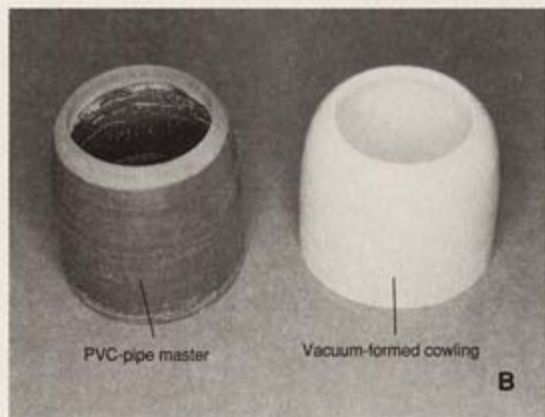


big. I fashioned a master from acrylic rod and vacuum formed over it with thin sheet acrylic (E). I made new gun barrels for the nose and turret from .040" brass wire.

Step 2. ENGINES, COWLS, AND NACELLES.



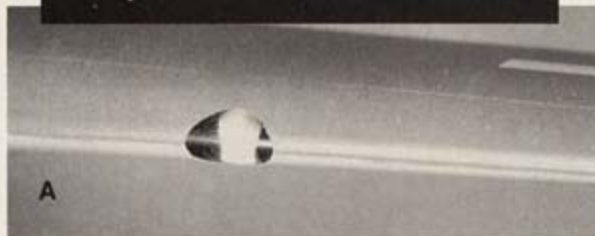
The gear cases of Monogram's engines looked too small, so I modified Revell B-25 engines. I began by assembling the two cylinder rows, then chucked the gear case in a miniature lathe and drilled out the center. I attached a brass tube (long enough to extend beyond the rear row of cylinders) with super glue. The tube allows me to center the engine assemblies through the remaining modifications. I mounted the engine in a lathe and ground away the molded-on ignition harness and pushrods. My new ignition harness was made from brass tubing and fine copper wire, while the new pushrods were cut from stainless-steel wire (A).



My references indicate the cowls were round, but the rear of Monogram's were irregular ovals. I made new cowlings by vacuum forming .060" sheet styrene over masters turned from thick-walled PVC pipe (B). I then trimmed each cowl to length and scribed panel lines. Next I fashioned a couple of styrene disks for engine mounts; these have a hole drilled in the center to accept the brass tubing inserted into the engines.

Early B-25s had a single collector exhaust pipe on the side of the nacelle. Late models had individual

Step 3. SMALL DETAILS.



I made the landing lights in the wing leading edges from aluminum turnings press fit into small blocks of clear acrylic (A). After cementing the blocks into the wing, I sanded them to match the leading edge and polished them smooth.

I attached brass tubes to the rear of the propellers to fit inside the slightly larger tubes in the engines. I added sectioned brass tubes over the turbo outlets on top of the starboard wing (B).

I modified the gun packs from the Revell kit by thinning them down and adding an extra blister (C). I made new barrels from .040" brass wire and placed the top ones slightly forward of the bottom pair. The new astro-compass blister was turned from acrylic.

After masking all clear panels I sprayed the model with lacquer primer. I removed the masks and sanded everything again, polished the clear panels, and masked them for the final time.

I did not attempt to replicate one specific aircraft, but I wanted the model to represent a typical B-25D straffer of the 501st Bomb Squadron, 345th Bomb Group, in May 1944. I first painted white stripes on the tail fins and orange on the cowl fronts, then masked these and applied a typical Olive Drab and Neutral Gray camouflage scheme. When the paint was dry, I scribed in panel lines and applied decals. The

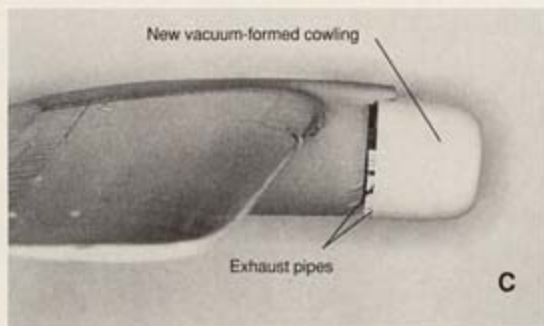


nose art came from Monogram's P-61 and is only there because I like Snuffy Smith.

There it is: A detailed 1/48 scale desk model of the U.S. Army Air Force's most famous medium bomber! **FSM**

REFERENCE

- Hickey, Lawrence J., *Warpath Across the Pacific*, International Research and Publishing Corp., Boulder, Colorado, 1984

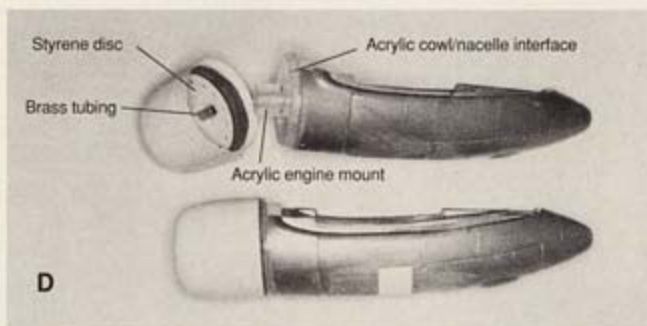


pipes exiting from fairings all around the cowl. I wanted to model an intermediate style of individual pipes exiting in groups behind the cowl flaps.

I made the exhaust pipes from a machined ring of PVC pipe. I cut slots in the ring with a jeweler's saw, then separated each into four sections: two each of four pipes and three pipes (C).

My next challenge was mating my new round cowlings to the slightly oval Monogram nacelles. I removed the fronts of the nacelles back to the prominent panel line and replaced them with sections of turned acrylic rod (D). I sanded the interface to blend the nacelles with the cowlings.

A smaller rod with a hole drilled in it serves as the



engine mount. This system allows the cowlings to realistically stand out from the nacelles. The drilled hole accepts the brass tube from the engine.

The last chore was to cut the carburetor intakes from the Monogram cowl flap assemblies, clean them, and attach them to the cowlings (E).

