SILICON VALLEY SCALE MODELERS

THE STYRENE SHEET

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"I got the need, the need for speed"

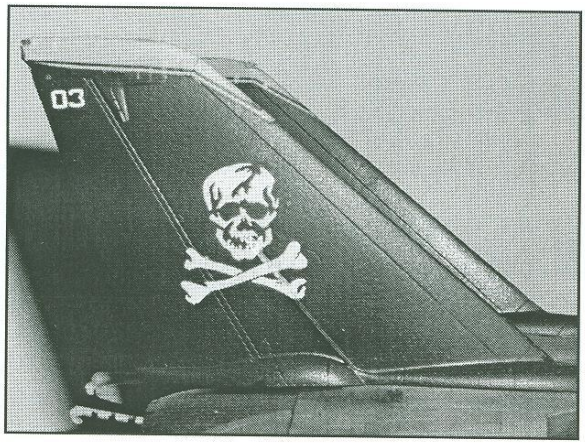
By Jared Bishop

I love tomcats. Why I don't know. I think I've been brainwashed. I have seen them everywhere. Most notably I've seen them in Top Gun. I think that some of it has to do with their use in Robotech. Robotech is an 80's anime cartoon that has jets, which look like a tomcat and transform into robots. Or maybe it was G.I. Joe, where a robot Skyfire is a copy from the anime cartoon Robotech. Then there is the Television show Jag, which also uses some footage from Top Gun. However it got there I can't get it out of my head. So I guess I'll build a model of it. 17 of them to be exact. Well no, I started 17 of them. I've only actually finished four of them. 3 1/32 Revell and 1 1/48 Hasegawa. I'm working on one 1/32 Tamiya and about 12 1/350 Tamiya tomcats for my 1/350 Tamiya Enterprise.

From the books I've read Tomcats have not seen much air to air combat. Too late for Vietnam and too old for Desert Storm. It was however credited for 30% of the kills while in Kosovo. It is my understanding that in its final days it was limited to bombing runs, and surveillance. Now they're off the carriers and moving into museums and air shows. I've talked to a few Tomcat pilots that said they joined the Navy because of the movie Top Gun. There also seems to be a bit of sibling rivalry between the pilots of the F-14 and those of the FA-18.

The FA-18 was built to replace the F-14. Even though it's an old bird the replacement still can't out class the Tomcat with speed and in my opinion looks. The F-14 clocks in at Mach 2.34 while the F-18 Super Hornet maxes out at Mach 1.8+. In any case the F-14 was built on the back of the F-4 Phantom II to replace it. In the end The Tomcat seemed to be a great stepping stone in advancing our fighter arsenal. Taking the advances in technology to the digital age the F-18 now takes over where the F-14 left off. As for looks, well I believe the smooth curves and long wings give it a very exotic look.

Hasegawa 1/48 VF-103 Jolly Roger. This front view show off the wonderful curves that makes this model so appealing to build.



I found information on 5 variations of the Tomcat. F-14A, F-14A+, F-14B, F-14C, F-14D. In the final days of the Tomcat there were a few F-14Bs including VF-103 Jolly Roger. The majority of them have been upgraded to F-14Ds. On the F-14A they use Twin Pratt & Whitney TF30-P-41A turbofan engines. F-14B, C & D use Twin General Electric F110-GE-400 turbofan engines. On a kit this is the major difference you'll see.

So on to the kits. The Tamiya

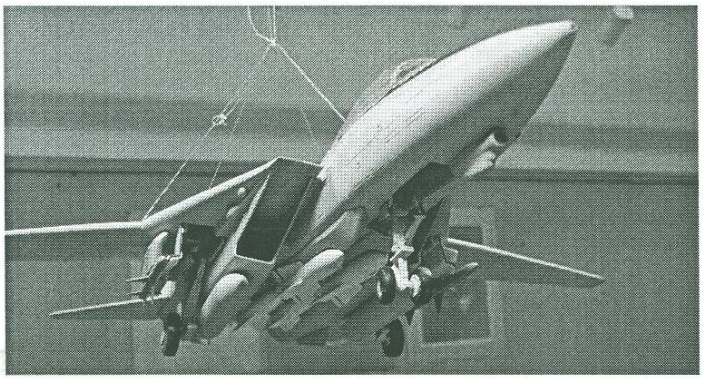
Continued on page 3

The *Styrene Sheet* is a monthly publication of the Silicon Valley Chapter of the International Plastic Modelers Society (IPMS). Articles and comments should be submitted to Jared Bishop, Editor, P.O. Box 361644, Milpitas, CA 95036, or by E-mail at editor@svsm.org. Excerpts may be published only with written permission of the editor.

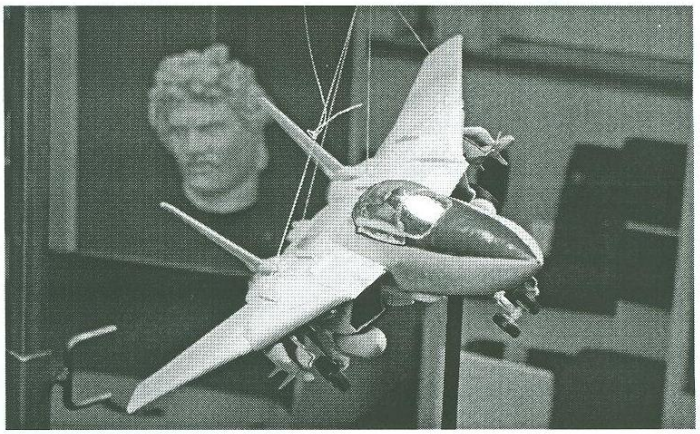
EDITOR'S BRIEF BRIEF

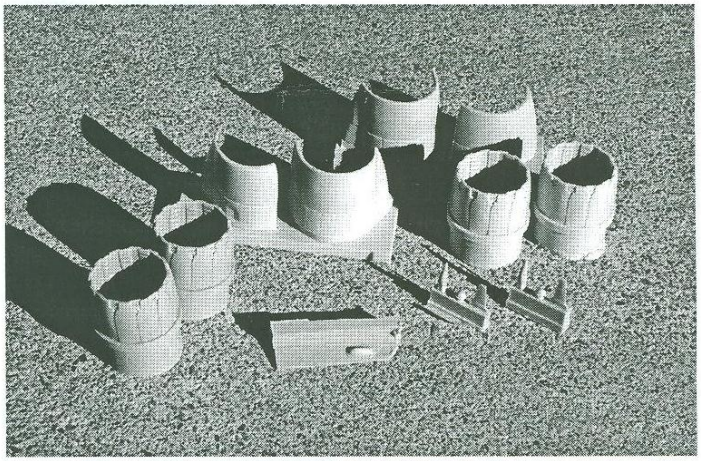
Well I need more articles. I've reached an and. This issue has been interesting in that I've written a lot with my articles. I know that there are people out there building models. Just write up a review or comments and e-mail them to me. I've found that many of them only spend about half of the text about the actual model. The other half is about why thy picked the model. I spent time on my write up so I'm keeping this section short. I have to say it's been fun but a lot of work. I thought I would have more that just Bill Abbott and I. Oh well I know that there are a lot of people out there that have built armor. I'd like to do an issue on armor.

- *The Editor*



These photos are from my Revel 1/32. I put it together rather quickly and used as photo reference for a painting.



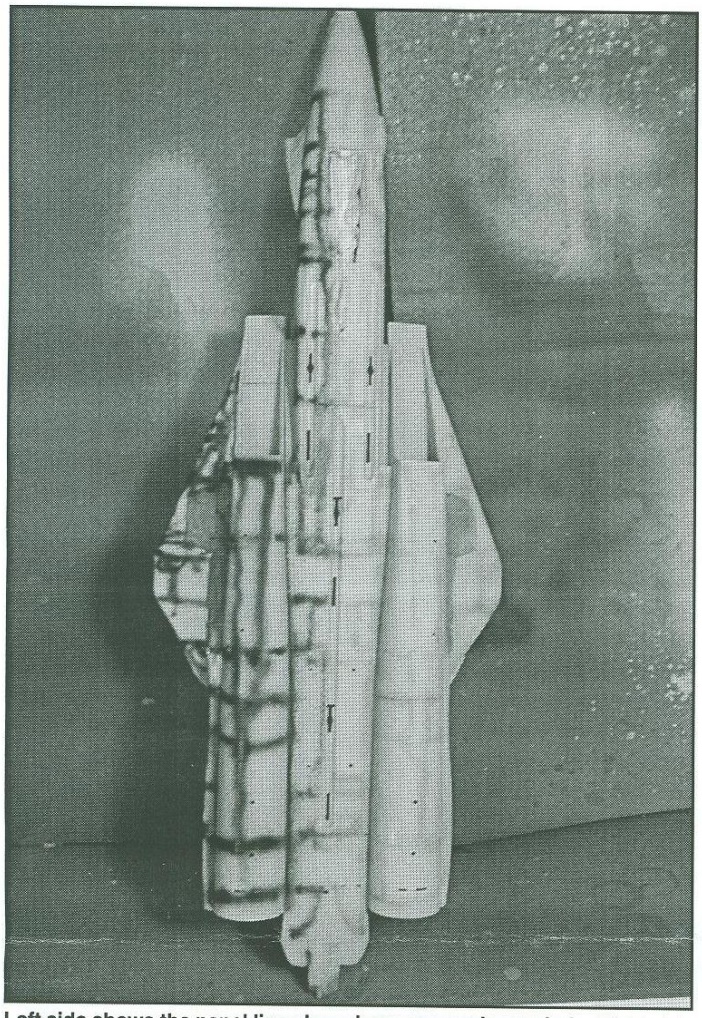


This is Teknics airframe conversion kit for F-14B. For some reason they sent me an extra set of exhausts. I guess they don't have much faith in me and figured I'd mess one set up and need another.

CONTEST CALENDAR

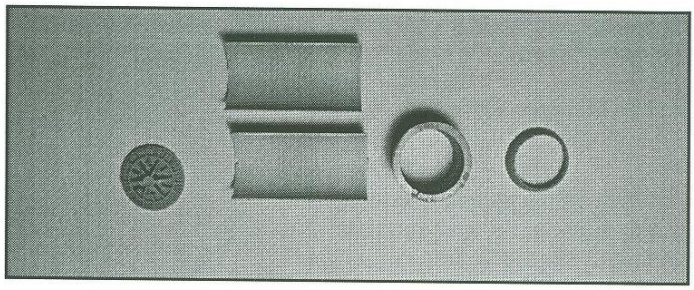
Saturday, August 12
The Kings County Scale Model Club presents its Second Annual Kings County Classic at the Lemoore Civic Auditorium, 435 C. Street, Lemoore, California. For more information, visit their Website at http://kcscalemodelers.com or call Richard Horton at (559) 924-8067 or e-mail him at rainbowwarrior24@hotmail.com.

Saturday, November 4
The Antelope Valley Group hosts Desert Classic X Regional Meet at the Antelope Valley College, 3041 West Ave. K in Lancaster, California. For details, call Mike Valdez at (661) 256-0410 or e-mail him at mikevaldez151@msn.com, or visit the club website at www.avg-ipms.org.



Left side shows the panel lines have been sprayed very dark. Right side show the local color of the jet.

1/350 Tomcats are only really worth the time if you have a carrier and need them for that scale. They are the F-14A but at that scale I don't think it is worth the time or effort to cut off the exhaust and replace them with the upgraded engines.

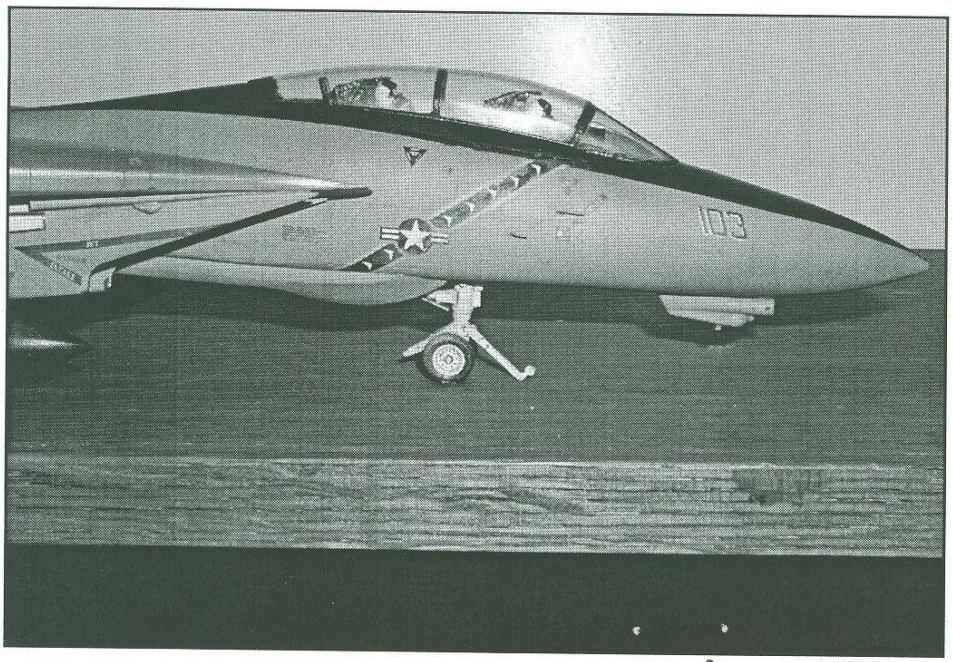


When the exost is completed a seam line can still be seen. I difficult problem I chose not to address.

I have seen someone use a laser etcher and CAD drawing to produce beautiful models with all the panel lines. But at that scale I think the gaps would end up to be about foot wide.

The Hasegawa is a very nice kit. The best Tomcat I've ever built. In fact the only draw back to this kit is that it's not a 1/32 scale kit. The panel lines are crisp. I don't think I had any flash to sand off. 99% of the parts fit without any problem. About the only part to cause me grief was the fuselage to the main body. A bit of putty, a bit of sanding and you're done. The kit includes some photo etched parts and metal rims for the wheels. The main gears seem to need some extra support or they bow out a bit. You can see this in my models. Running some brass tubing can fix that. It does give you the option to have the slats and flaps extended. There are some minor errors here. Some extra hinge parts will be needed need to make if you extend them. It is simple to fix. It does give you the option of having the nose gear extended or compressed for a catapult launch. I think it is the only model with this option.

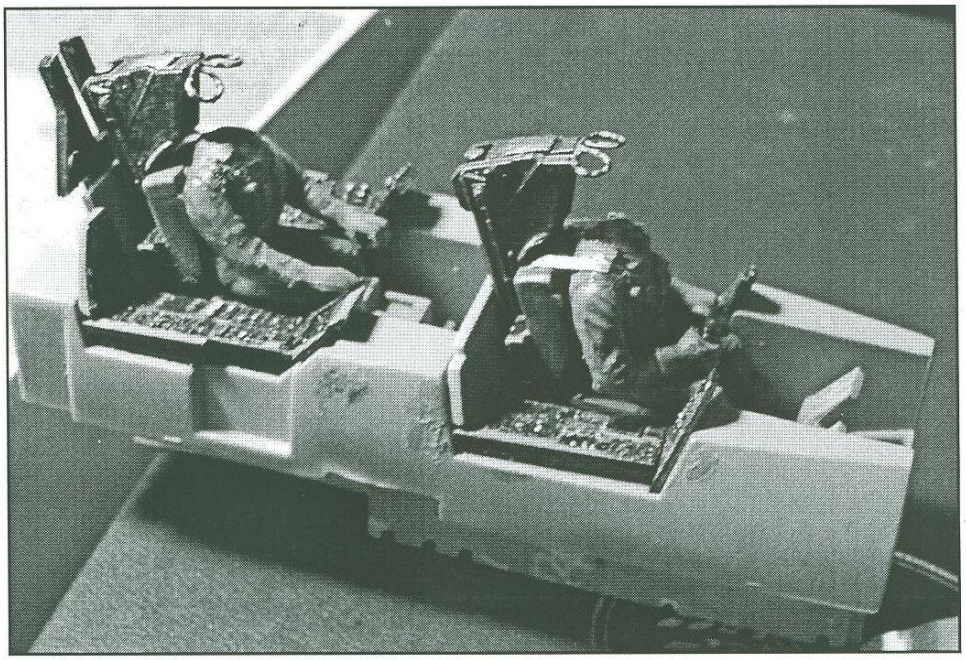
I've seen several versions of the Hasegawa kit. So you can build the version you want out of the box. You might have to spend the extra money on aftermarket parts or decals. For $40 or $50 I'd say you're getting your moneys worth. One Hasegawa drawback it the lack of armaments. I had to buy two different sets to get what I wanted. I guess I'll have to build some more 1/48 scale jets or trade them with others. This kit does come with the TRAPS pod. I didn't put that on. As you may have noticed I have I have a F-14A but F-14B markings. Yeah oh well. This brings up aftermarket products. There are cockpits you can order. I believe the one included offers sufficient detail for my skill level. Had I done a bit of planning I would have got Hasegawa's F-14B with VF-103 markings rather then spending the money on Eagle Strike decals. The decals are good overall but I had issues with two parts. The decals on the vertical stabilizers do not cover the area they should. I painted the tops yellow to cover the black. On the fuel tanks they also did not line up quite right. A bit of trimming fixed that. Other than that I'd recommend Eagle Strike decals.



The Revell was a fun kit to build. But now all I see is a model for kids. In fact it feels kind of toy like. However its price is right for young modelers. The Revel you can build right out of the box. It includes the armament you'll need.

Some good points are that canopy has no seam line, unlike the Hasegawa and Tamiya kits. Also the exhaust cans are one part. In Hasegawa and Tamiya kits they are split in half. So sanding is a nightmare.

Now on to the Tamiya kits. I was once living ignorantly in bliss until I actually saw a Tamiya kit. Then I could never look at the Revel model the same way again. I think it has taken me several years and a lot of time to be able to appreciate the challenge of a Tamiya kit. The kit is... well it's big and um it's big. I love big models so let's build it. First we'll need to spend $50 on a replacement cockpit form Teknic. The one provided has flat surfaces perfect for the decals of the instrument panels. The decals for the Tomcat are in good condition and I expect them to be about the same quality as all Tamiya decals. I'm building the F-14 B VF-103 Jolly Roger so I'll be using Yellow Hammer Decals another $10. This will sit next to the F-18 VFA-103 Jolly Roger and F-4 VF-84 Jolly Roger, Well as soon as someone builds a 1/32 F-18F Super Hornet.



I think Hasegawa's cockpit is just fine. Here I have added small sholder straps to the Pilots. After all I woudn't want them to lose their heads.

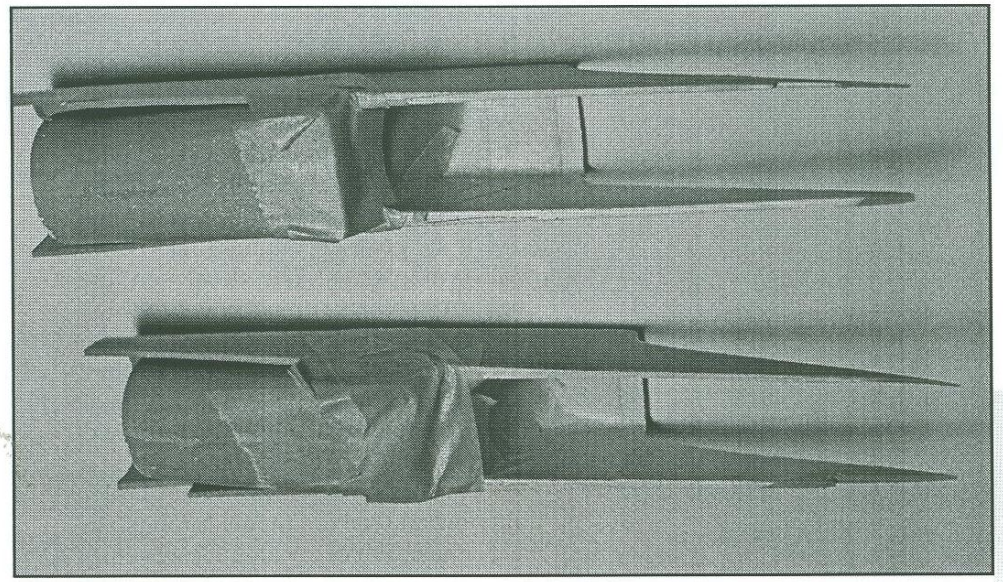
If you wish to build anything other than a F-14A, like me, you'll need to buy Teknic's engine replacements $45. This is beginning to sound like a MasterCard commercial. I hope to get to the "Priceless" part soon.

What the Tamiya kit has is a good starting point to a great kit. With all the errors and inaccuracies I think this kit does offer a challenge and a great reward. About half the panel lines are raised and the other half are lowered. The good news is they are grouped together. The wings have all lowered, and parts of the body are raised. So on this kit I hope to lean how to scribe panel lines. After some sanding I look at drawing, photos and I even took a trip to the Oakland Air Museum to look at the real thing. Then I draw on the kit. I used tape for a label maker as a ruler. It works well on flat surfaces. I found out that you need to be careful on curved parts. And a bunch of #11 Exacto blades. I change them often to keep a sharp edge. I save them for later use. Just because the tip is not sharp does not mean they are useless.

Tamiya also included support rods for the gears. This prevents the bowing from the weight of the model. If you like to have the gears down this is a great model to do it. There is lots of detail on the gears, and the scale allows you to add even more detail with little problem. They did include rubber tires which are nice.

So with the knowledge of what a Tomcat should look like I can't help but take my kit and fix all the panel lines that are raised, correct the wrong lines, replace the cockpit and the exhaust, and add detail to every inch I can till my wife tells me to move on.

I have found a lot of information at www.anft.net. There is almost all the information you'll need. If you want to read more about F-14 Osprey publishes what I'd call a reference guide US Navy F-14 Tomcat Units of Operation Iraqi Freedom. www.aircraftresourcecenter.com offers a forum that is a lot of help for modeling in general. Also DACO put out a book on the F-14 which I heard great things about.



I have preped these intakes for a paint job. There are 3 colors not including all the weathering.

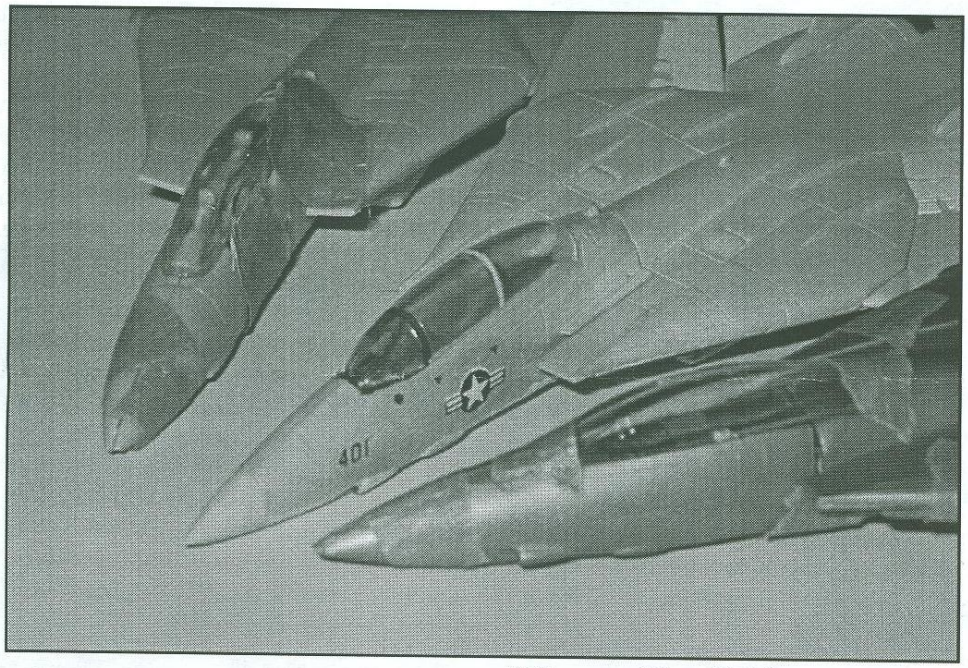
Jared Bishop has been a member of SVSM since 2005. The first model he ever built was an SR-71 Blackbird at age 8. He builds 1/32 and 1/48 aircraft and 1/35 armor. He has also taken on the challenge of building Tamiya's 1/350 USS Enterprise.

They Wanted a Real Air Superiority Fighter

By Bill Abbott

The Grumman F-14 Tomcat is a remarkable airplane and was a ground-breaking weapons system. It starkly showed the advantages and problems of the military-industrial complex, the costs and benefits of planning for the worst case rather than the most likely case, and, of course, nearly bankrupted the famous company who's last independent design it was. And it was the star of a major Hollywood movie. Warming-up for an un-winable land war in Asia, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara demanded in the early 1960s that the Air Force and Navy cooperate to purchase TFX 'fighters' for the disparate roles of all-weather strike and fleet air defense.

"...the costs and benefits of planning for the worst case rather than the most likely case, and, of course, nearly bankrupted the famous company..."



In theory, the doubled production run would lower cost, increase quantities and make up for the less-than-optimal match of the basic platform to its assigned tasks. The General Dynamics F-111 that resulted ended up as a good long range, all weather, bomber, for the U. S. Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force, but was never the fighter that the Navy had wanted to replace the F-4 Phantom II. Grumman built the Navy's F-111B development airframes as a subcontractor to General Dynamics, and actual carrier landings and takeoffs were made, but nobody was much surprised when the Navy canceled their part of the program and announced that they wanted a real air superiority fighter. By now, Grumman engineers knew the TF-30 engine, AWG-9 fire-control system and AIM-54 Phoenix missile, which would have to be the basis of the new fighter, They lost no time in re-packaging these subsystems into a product the Navy DID want.

What the Navy wanted was a weapons system to defend the fleet in the event of World War III, something to shoot down cruise-missiles and their launchers from 100 miles away, far, far away from the fleet. Naturally it all had to work at night and in bad weather. Working closely with the E-2 Hawkeye Airborne Command and Control platform, this was very futuristic in 1969, a decade or more ahead of the rest of the world's thinking or practice. Medium and short range missiles would also be carried, and a gun, but eyeball to eyeball 'hassling' was a side issue- no enemy should be allowed to get that close.

The resulting F-14 was big, heavy, complex, fast, hard-hitting, very expensive and cursed with the same marginal engines as the F-111. But the Navy intended to evolve to better engines. Before they could get there, cost-overruns on the original contract nearly killed Grumman, and the stink coupled with a realistic price put the improved model beyond reach for a while. The Very Expensive part wasn't helping either.

The only export sales were to the Shah of Iran, who simply wanted the best. He didn't get to enjoy them for long, and even after the US Embassy hostages were released, spare parts were an obvious problem. On the other hand, if any AIM-54 Phoenix have been fired in anger, they were fired by the Islamic Republic of Iran's Air Force. In service with the US Navy for over 30 years, the Tomcat missed the shooting war in Viet Nam, but did cover the final evacuation of U.S. personnel when Saigon fell. F-14s won their first air-to-air engagement when two Libyan Su-22s came at them over international waters in the Gulf of Sidra. Later, two Libyan MiG-23s were shot down under similar circumstances.

"The resulting F-14 was big, heavy, complex, fast, hard-hitting, very expensive..."

Tomcats operated mostly as Combat Air Patrol (CAP) over the fleet during the 1991 war to liberate Kuwait, in part because the Air Force seemed to want all air to air missions tasked to F-15s. With no air-to-ground role at that time, and no Iraqi Air Force after the first few days, there wasn't much the Tomcats could do. Ironically, the range and carrying capability of the Tomcat allowed it to become the Bombcat late in life, carrying precision guided bombs on adaptors mounted to the pallets originally intended for AIM-54s. With excellent visibility and maneuverability, the F-14s operated as close air support, fast Forward Air Controllers and long-range, all weather strikers in Bosnia, Afghanistan and in the 2003 beginning of the present war in Iraq.

The last F-14 operational missions have been flown, and the last F-14 squadron will stand down soon. Nobody can be sorry they never had to do the job they were designed for. And they did get to star with Kelly McGillis and Val Kilmer in Top

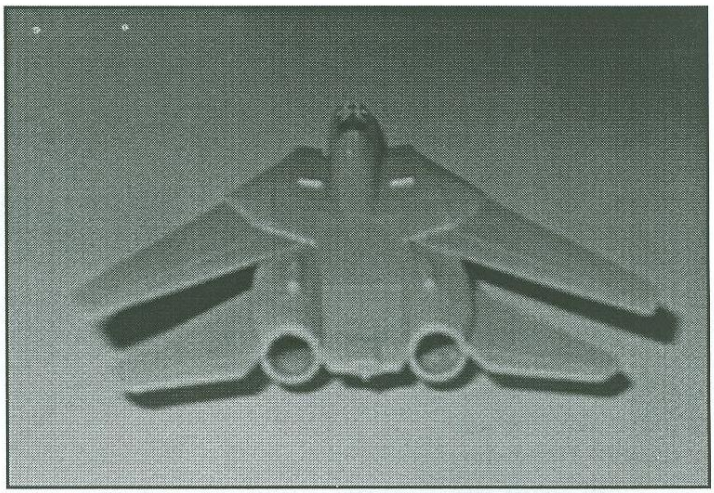
Gun! On to the kits.

Besides the Otaki/Entex kit I actually completed 25 years ago, there are four other 1/144 F-14 Tomcat kits. In rank order: First place goes to the Dragon/DML kit, available both in air-to-air and Bombcat forms. The best feature of this kit is that the forward fuselage is correct in profile and plan-view, not too narrow and pointy. Second best is that the canopy is spot on, and third, the glare shields and openings are provided for the cockpit, as well as the standard Dragon/DML zombies-melted-into-chairs one-piece crew and interior. Maybe higher than fourth for some people, complete pylons (the unique wing glove items and the pallets for the AIM-54s) AND complete missile load-outs AND TARPS recon pods AND drop-tanks (always carried by carrier-based Tomcats) are provided. No other kit offers anything more than average-to-poor AIM-7 Sparrows.

Finally, in the old Bombcat version, you got CBUs, and in the improved version in the 2-for-1 box, you get GBUs and a targeting pod. All versions come with 3 different under-nose sensor options. Decals are nice too. On the other hand, the wings don't sweep all the way forward, AND the fuselage is molded with the wing fairings in place for forward wing position, so if you sweep them back, they take on a quite surprising dihedral. Pigeon-like.

"Ironically, the range and carrying capability of the Tomcat allowed it to become the Bombcat..."

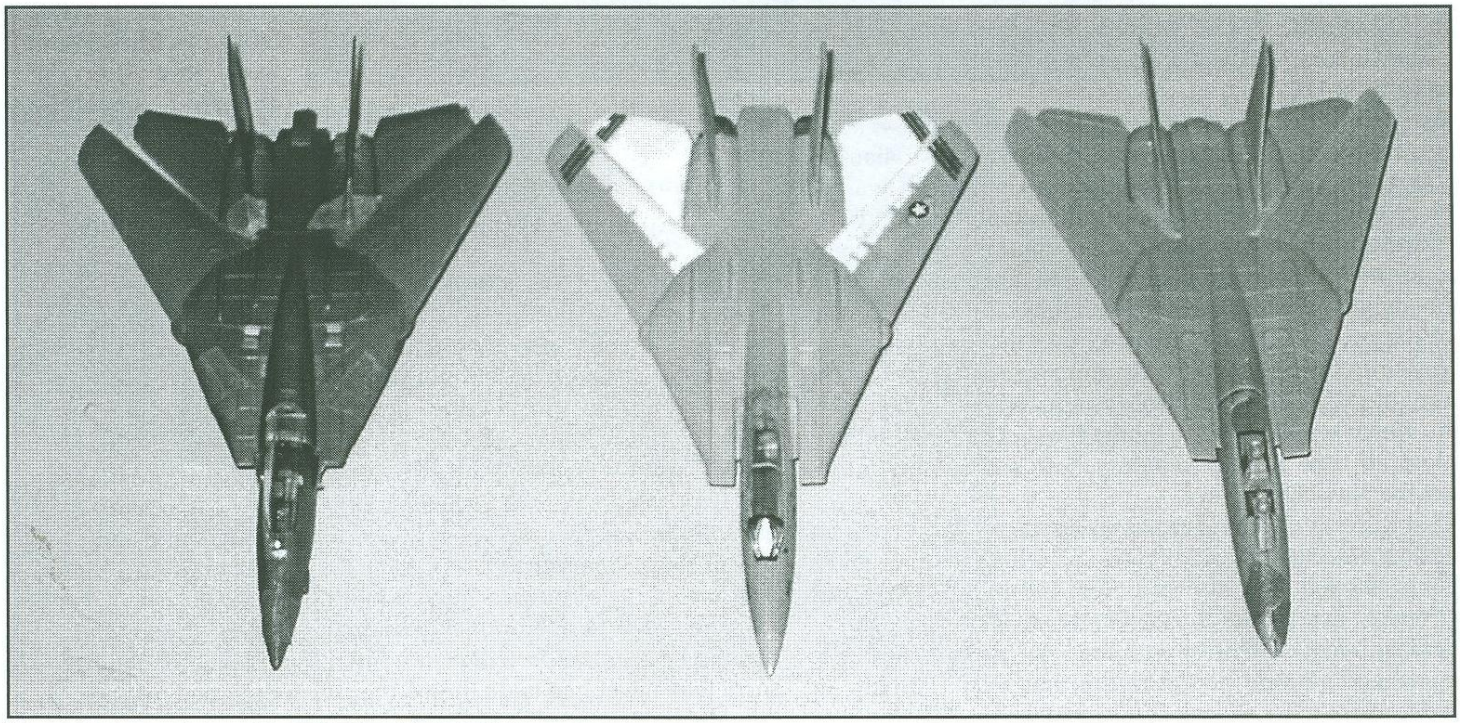
The engine intakes are noticably too narrow. The surface of the plastic is pebbly, not just the ground glass flat of some other kits. And the engraved panel lines are wider than the L&S/Arii or Otaki/Entex kits, though 15 years newer! Finally, the strakes under the engines are molded as part of the lower fuselage, with inaccurate profiles. And in common with every other kit, the nose landing gear well is too shallow. Second place is tougher. I say the Otaki/Entex kit I've written



up elsewhere takes it. Shapes other than the nose are good, and the intakes are the right size, though filled with a blanking plate, as is the cockpit! Crisp, engraved panel lines. Separate strakes under the rear fuselage, nice landing gear. Engine exhausts are blocked with wheel-like turbines. No main gear wells, the doors just go on smooth surfaces, and the wings are about 0.1" too long each. Only AIM-7 Sparrows are supplied.

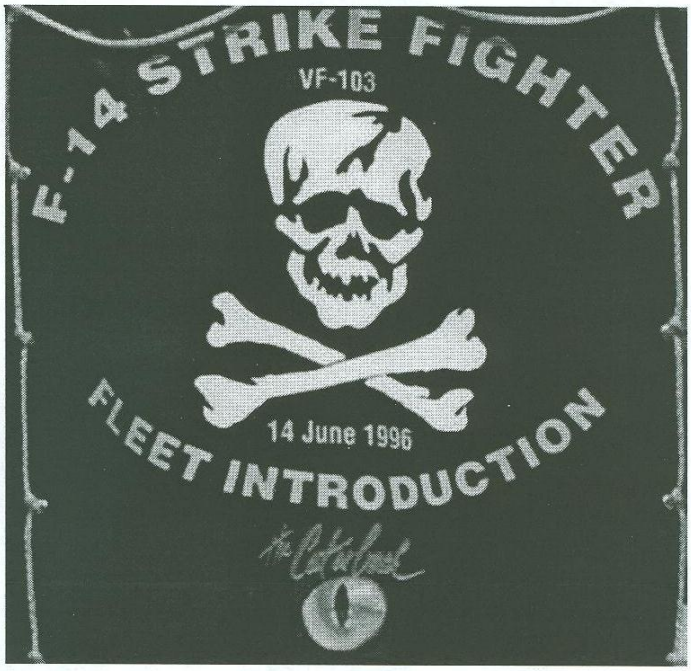
The kit is available on the second-hand market but I haven't seen one in a store in a long time. The Hobby Link Japan (HLJ) site says the Arii kit in VF-124 markings (same Otaki's) is this kit. I guess I need to order one... Third I'd put the L&S/Arii kit. It has generally good shapes, but too pointed a nose. Cockpits are cut open but have no glare shields, much less seats or crew. The panel lines are engraved and very sharp. Intakes too narrow, strakes molded as part of the lower fuselage. Only AIM-7 Sparrows are supplied. The basic kit is boxed with several different high vis (VF-142 Ghost Riders, VF-111 Sundowners, VF-84 Jolly Rogers) and low vis (VF-111) scheme decals, so there's variety, and its in stock at HLJ and some local stores.

Forth, for my money, the Academy kit. Shapes are a little

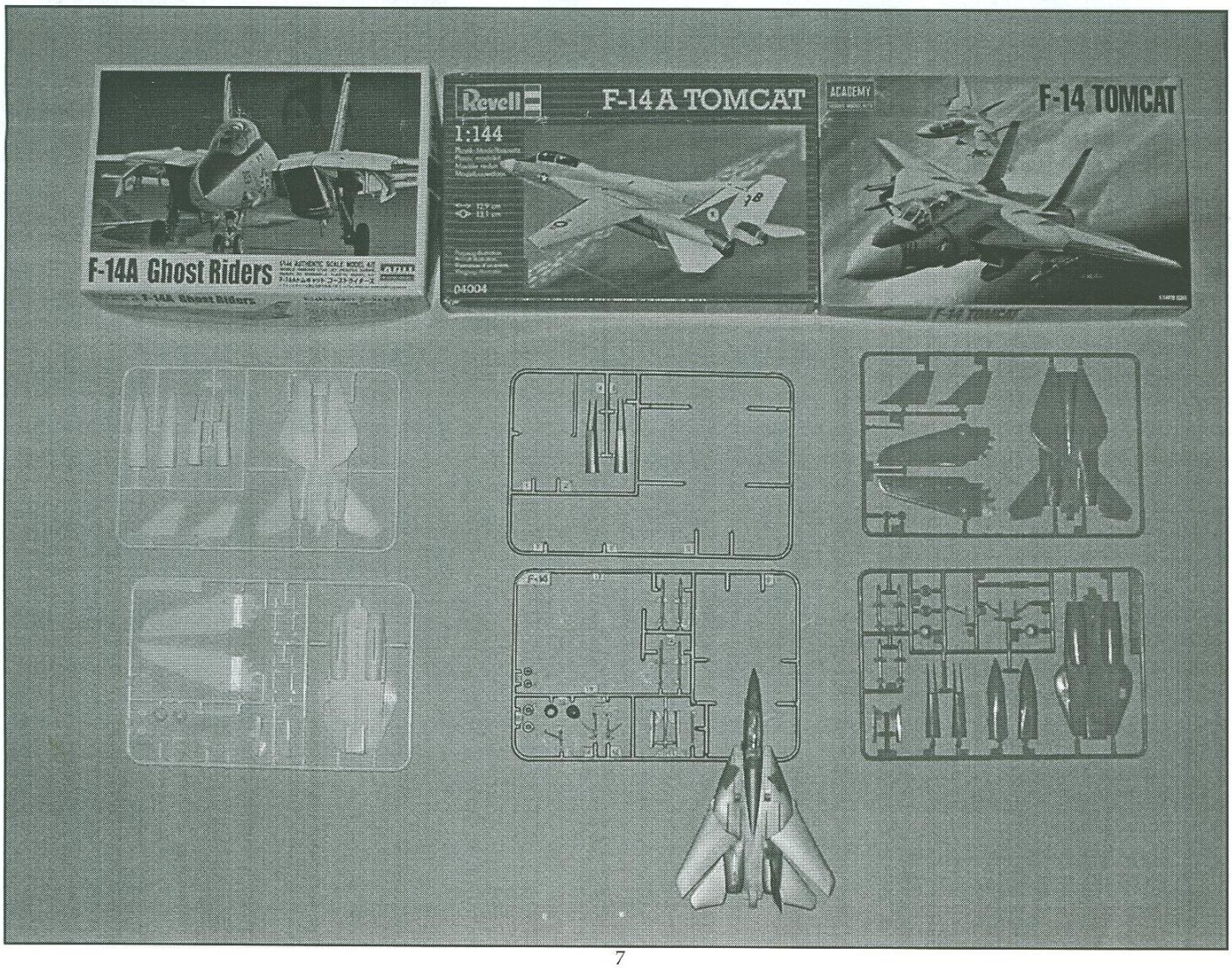


From left to right; Revell, Otaki, DML/Dragon

questionable, nose too pointy, two openings, but nothing else to suggest the cockpit, This kit has the conventional shiny surface finish one associates with mainstream plastic models, but lacks fine details. The usual 4 Sparrows are included, looking a little over-scale in diameter. I bought this one for the decals, the orange aardvark markings of VF-114, a notable west coast Tomcat squadron and before that, the first F-4B operators in the Pacific Fleet. They were on the first cruise of the Kitty Hawk, CVA-63, when my father was aboard her. Fifth, and dead last, is the evil clone that Revell has for sale. Overall shape has a wierd blimpiness, cockpit canopy has a very odd shape, squinty, and you can tell its a clone of the ARII tooling, as the breakdown is exactly the same pieces, with the same dimensions, ALL in the same relative locations on the two trees. Nice decals thought, VF-1, Wolfpack, high visibility. Happy modeling!



Bill Abbott has been a member of SVSM since 1992 and been building plastic models since his dad bought him a McDonnell Banshee in a plastic bag in 1961. He builds airliners, road racing cars, US Navy and RAF planes, as well as balsa and paper flying models. His son Benjamin often helps him with part cutting and assembly.



JUNE MINUTES

There was a little business at the last meeting, but it was all time-sensitive and we jumped quickly into model talk, where Milt Poulos showed off his Matchbox 1:32 Puma helicopter, the model that claimed Best of Show at the Fremont contest. Milt detailed the model and finished it with a coat of Xtracolor; his wife helped out with the decals, which were created on the computer and printed out on an ALPS printer. Milt made the clear parts extra clear by first buffing them with Turtle Wax, then hitting them with the Final Detail model car polish. Milt's next expedition into the world of large flying things is a Trumpeter 1:48 RA-5C Vigilante; just the nose and cockpit of this big bird were on the table. Bert McDowell brought in several carrier decks to illustrate the degrees of accuracy in the new kits of the short and long-hull Essex-class carriers. He also pointed out that a section of deck needs to be removed if you wish to build U.S.S. Ticonderoga as she appeared at her commissioning. Bill Dye's finished his A-Model I-270, which was quite a challenge, he says. He's now forging ahead on an Anigrand Douglas D-558-1 Skystreak, a resin kit that he really likes. The only major change is the vertical fin; Bill's made a new one from styrene card to better represent its unique shape. Bill's also hard at work on a Project X 1:72 vacuformed XF-88 turboprop Voodoo; he says the kit has good plans, which clearly point out the differences between the A and B-model features. Jim Lund took ICM's 1:72 I-5 and converted it into the UT-11 No. 2, one of the developmental aircraft, Jim also wowed the crowd with his Republic XF-12 Rainbow, which he built from the Griffin/Combat Models/Roberts Models kit. It was a tough build; at points, Jim filled the fuselage with two-part epoxy and grinded it down! Andy Kellock's conversion kick continued with a 2-door Chrysler 300 hardtop. Andy filled the door lines, removed the B-pillar and cut out the front window sections. Andy used Photoshop to plan his cuts before he made them. Don Savage had to fight to get the chrome off Revell's 427 Cobra, but otherwise he had nothing but praise for the kit. Don's also finished a Tamiya Volkswagen Golf; the model sat nearly finished for several years before he finished it up, adding aftermarket wheels as the only non-kit details. Paul Bishop's next project is the Ferrari 312T Formula 1 car from 1975; he has the frame built and painted with Testors buffable aluminum metallizer paint. Paul handled the chrome on his kit by soaking them in Simple Green cleaner. Nick Moran first started his BRM-1 surface-to-air missile launcher in 1985, but only recently put the finishing touches on it. He mixed his own paints from various Gunze Sangyo shades and topped the whole thing off with Soviet Naval Infantry decals. Jared Bishop is working up his courage to build the AMT kit of the Star Trek: Deep Space 9 ship Defiant by building the same company's Runabout shuttle, but the shuttle kit has soured him on the prospects. Soft detail and poor fit have made the build less than satisfying so far. Mike Meek's Czech Model 1:48 Bell XP-77 is being built straight from the box, but his version of the P-51D "Ridge Runner III" in its racing guise is getting a revamped radiator scoop. Mike's also working on a 1:144 Minicraft XC-97 Globemaster, with parts from a Fujimi B-29, and he's converting a Fujimi B-29 into a B-50 using parts from an Academy Globemaster! Steve Travis' most recent foray into aircraft is an Airfix 1:48 Spitfire Mk. 24, which he finished in a lovely hand-painted camouflage scheme. Jim Priete turned Fujimi's Porsche 917 into a lovely little racer; Jim says the parts fit like a glove

and he may build another one because of it. Ron Wergin's 1:700 Japanese destroyer Yukikaze is built from the old Aoshima kit; he consulted photos and made numerous revisions until he realized the photos were all from different periods! Ron has Hasegawa's 1:72 Type 22 Zero almost finished, and he's also nearing completion of a Tamiya Type 21, which has AeroMaster paints and canopy framing from the now-defunct Fast Frames. Finished and wearing a neat camouflage scheme is a Tamiya A6M2 Type 23, to which Ron applied decals before painting a series of blotches with an airbrush. The Tamiya kit decals took 15 coats of Solvaset to smooth itself out. Alan Weber drew on Brad Baumgartner's paint mixes to finish a 1:48 Me 163 that Brad started years ago. The result was quite impressive. Alan's now turning his attentions to Minicraft's 1:48 Cessna 172; he's plotting to slice and stretch it into a Cessna 182. Ben Pada added a True Details cockpit and a Squadron vacuformed canopy to his Tamiya P-51D, which also benefits from Obscureco wheels and AeroMaster decals. Ben's Tamiya P-47D is in its finishing stages, wearing Gunze Sangyo paint for its camouflage and SuperScale decals. Ben's Hasegawa Raiden is coated in SnJ and Model Master metallizers; Ben saw a photo of an all-metal "Jack" and had to build one for his collection. Ken Miller is building with his eye on the annual airliner convention; his Monogram 1:400 Boeing SST is coming along, and his as-yet-unfinished Tu-144 i a similar scale was started for the "Eight is Enough" contest of a few months ago. Ken's also making decent progress on the old Monogram DC-3 in box scale – about 1:88, Ken thinks – will eventually wear Pacific Southwest Airlines colors. Bill Ferrante is finding Tamiya's 1:72 F4D-1 Skyray a fairly easy build; the model is destined for the display of Sidewinder shooters at NAS China Lake. Greg Plummer seized on the idea of "what might have been" and finished a Hobbycraft 1:72 Avro CF-105 in RAF markings. Kent McClure is digging some new offerings from Pegasus depicting U.S. Marines in Vietnam; they're about 1:76, and very nicely detailed, although they're cast in a vinyl-like plastic. Kent's also enthused about Emhar's WWI German artillery set, which presents a 77mm howitzer and crew and makes a nice compliment to Emhar's new 1:72 Whippet tank. The 2003 Dale Earnhart Jr. NASCAR racer Kent's working on was supposed to be a birthday gift for his daughter last year, but when Kent finished the engine it wouldn't fit under the hood! Kent's also making considerable progress on a Frog 1:72 Bristol 138, which has a cockpit scratchbuilt from limited

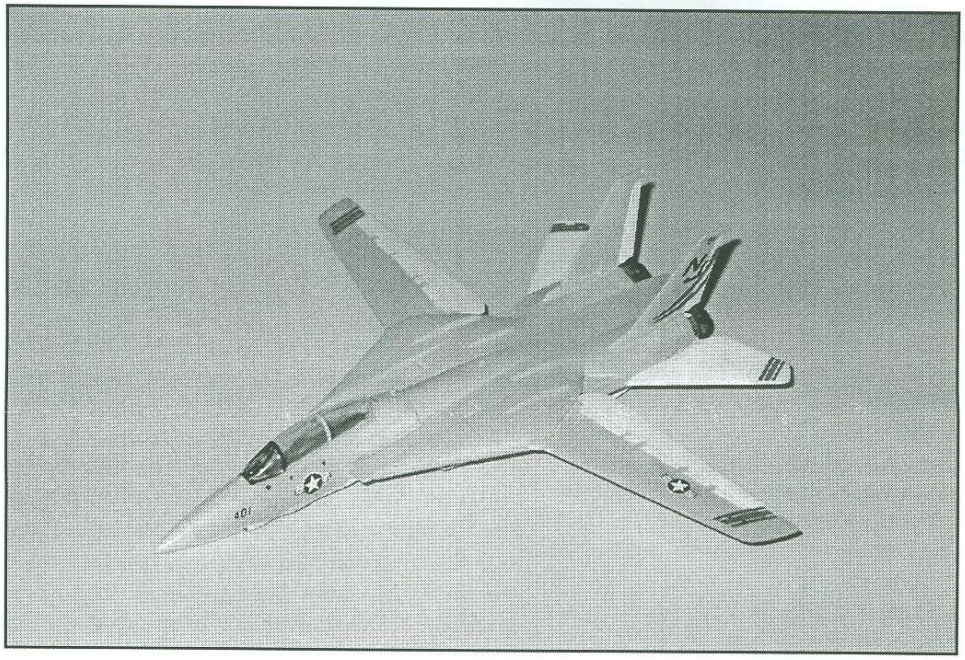
references. Gabriel Lee's 1:35 Bandai Batmobile is making progress, but much of his effort has gone into his 1:144 Rutanized B-29. Gabriel swapped the wings and horizontals, and now he's adding contra-rotating propellers to further modify the Super-duperfortress. John Heck added the tail back to his Collect Aire F8U-3 Super Crusader, and he stole the plumbing under the variable-incidence wing from a Hasegawa F-8 so that his raised wing can show off some detail. Frank Babbitt took the long route to complete his Vampire NF.11; he bashed together parts from the wonderful 1:48 Aeroclub kit and the wretched Hobbycraft kit, the sculpted the rear fuselage from putty Cliff Kranz' yellow Peterbilt wrecker was built in 1970; Cliff used the Peterbilt cab from a kit, then scratchbuilt the bed and booms. Cliff's also building a 1:48 P-51D Mustang as the one Jack Roush owns, complete with second seat and white gear legs. Mike Burton pulled an all-nighter to finish his Trumpeter F-107 in time for the Tri-City Classic, but he won the "Shoulda, Coulda, Woulda" award for it. Mike's also finished a Rareplanes F-107, dressing it Vietnam warpaint and adding ordnance to depict what it might have looked like had it been adopted. He's almost finished with his 1:72 DML P-38J, and his "Virginia is for Lovers" Busch-series NASCAR is just about ready for paint. Mike's building AMT's 1949 Ford as an all-black hot-rod, and his F-117 isn't all black but silver instead; the 1:144 Stealth fighter is portrayed as it looked when it was delivered to the Air Force Museum, minus its radar-absorbent material but adorned in spray-painted graffiti. To illustrate the size of the F-117, Mike brought in his B-58 Hustler in the same scale. And the model of the month goes to... Hanchang Kuo, who took the Tamiya 1:700 Cushing-class destroyer and turned it into the U.S.S. Johsnton, adding photoetched parts from Tom's Modelworks, Gold Medal Models and White Ensign, then mounted the finished ship in a beautiful ocean base.

Otaki/Entex, F-14A Tomcat

By Bill Abbott

C. A. Hood & Associates illustrate the ENTEX boxing: http://www.cahood.com/M6040.htm

This kit appeared in the late 1970s and for me it marked a real improvement in 1/144 modern aircraft. Entex also imported Otaki's F-15, RA-5C and F-102. Compared to the Crown F-111 (painfully inaccurate), and the "MiG-23" FLIPPER (E-166), also boxed by Entex, these were really nice kits. They featured matte finish parts, the molds being textured rather than smooth, so a youngster who didn't paint them would still get an authentic look. While the boxes said "Entex" the decal sheet said "Otaki", confirming that regardless of Entex's red, white and blue colors, the product was actually Japanese.



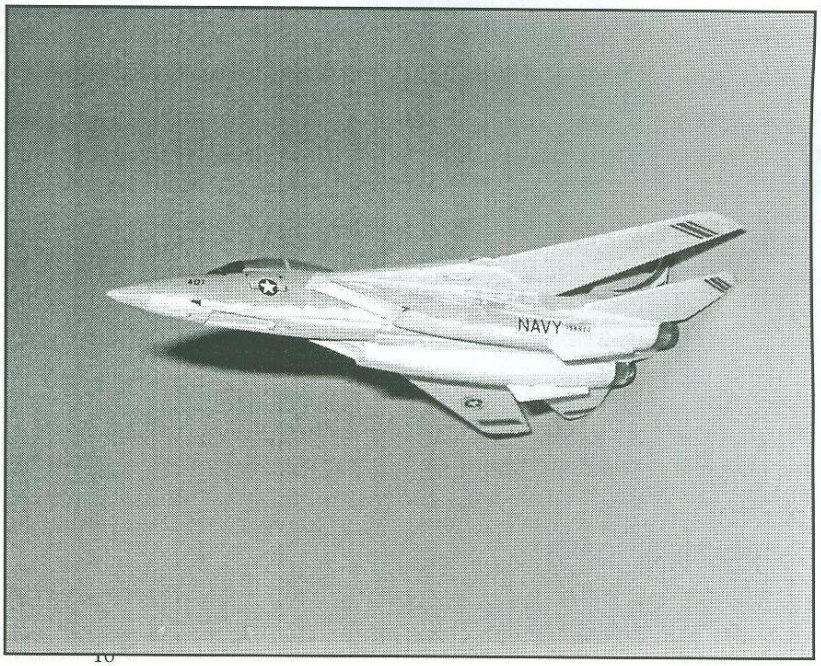
Like most Tomcat kits, the front fuselage is split in two vertically, and the aft is split in two horizontally, to accommodate the swing wings. Otaki's kit designers originally just put a flat surface under the canopy where ejection seats and crew might be found. I didn't make an interior, or crew, but I did cut open the cockpit area, correctly reasoning that the open space would look better than a flat piece of plastic painted grey or black. (In spite of the one-piece crew-and-interior in the DML F-14A/D, there remains a great opportunity for someone (you, me, Cooper Details, Obscurco?) to make good 1/144 Tomcat ejection seats (early or late...), cockpit tubs and instrument panels.)

All the parts are crisply formed, with recessed panel lines (back in 1970-something!) and fit very well. Only one seam needs attention and its that particular challenge of F-14s, the front fuselage to aft fuselage joint. Otaki hid it deep within the shoulders of the intakes, so you can only see the seam at the top and bottom. Landing gear wheels and tires have a nice heft and cross section, and are separate from the single-piece gear legs. The gear legs are detailed enough but also oversize enough to be quite strong. Gear well doors are far too thick, but the right size and shape. I didn't sand mine down but doing so would improve them. The nose-gear well is too shallow and the main gear don't have wells at all. The gear doors attach to flat surfaces like an old Aurora kit. Again, this is young-modeler-friendly, if you don't want the gear, you just have to close the nose well and you're done.

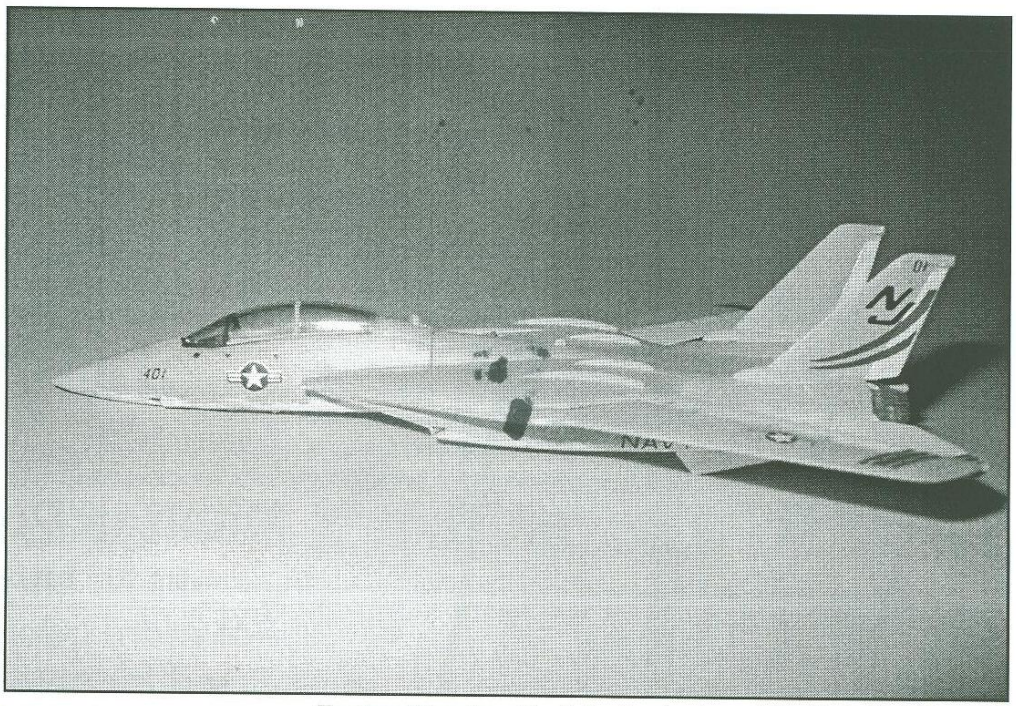
"I wanted this kit done, as an antidote to Advanced Modeler's Syndrome (AMS) "

A unique strong point of this kit are the under-engine strakes, which Otaki made as separate pieces, with NACA intakes included. All other 1/144 F-14s I've seen mold the strakes as part of the lower rear fuselage, eliminating a potential seam filling problem but compromising accurate shape. On the other hand, the back of the engine exhausts have a completely fake 'turbine face' that closes the opening. I should have just drilled it out. The accuracy heartbreaker is that the engine intakes are closed by a flat filler recessed just a bit inside the lips. If you don't look closely you can miss it but once you see it, well, what are you going to do?

I wanted this kit done, as an antidote to Advanced Modeler's Syndrome (AMS)



and I wasn't going to make a cockpit or fix the intakes, so I didn't use any filler, either, I just glued the pieces together and painted. I should have put natural metal finish on the leading edges of the flight surfaces and lower intake lip, but I haven't, yet. The swing-wings work, but are NOT interconnected, and look good at all positions from take off to max-in-flight-sweep. For this article I checked them against the In Detail & Scale plans and they do sweep to the correct forward and aft limits for flight, but don't go to the 72 degree oversweep for parking. The wings are too long however, and could benefit by being shortened 0.1" (2.5mm)



Decals for one aircraft are supplied, in my example, VF-124, tail code NJ, nose-number 401, for the original Gull Grey (36440) and White finish. I spray painted the underside and moving surfaces flat white, masked the moving surfaces and painted the upper part 36440, probably PolyS. The cockpit interior I painted a darker grey, and the gear door edges were red when they were present.

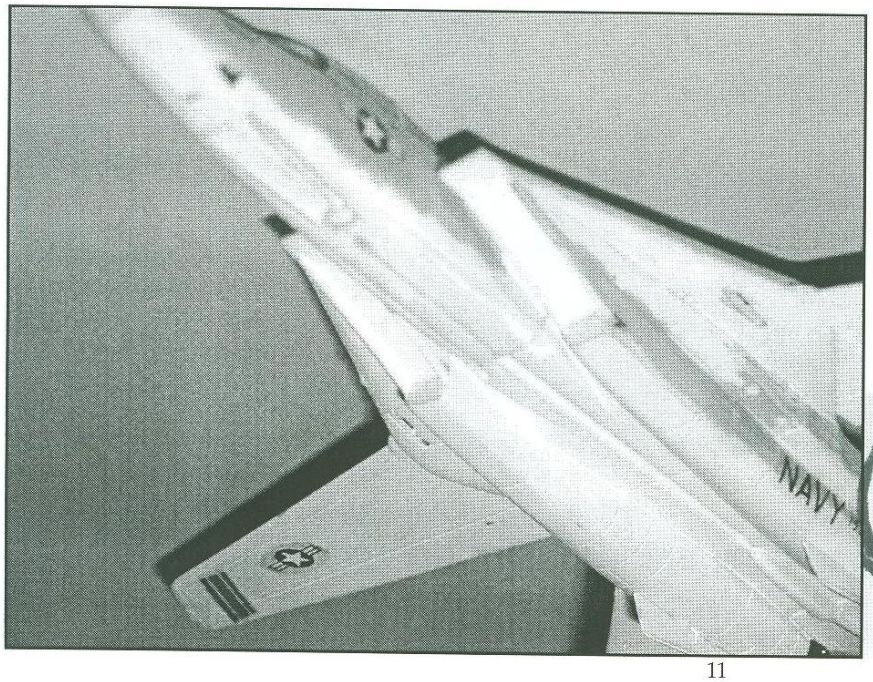
"A unique strong point of this kit are the under-engine strakes..."

The decals adhere well and have good colors and register, but the red wing-tip and horizontal stabilizer stripes seemed a bit short in length to me. They went on well, no silvering, and Testors Dulcote everywhere but the canopy made it all look very nice. I hand painted the windscreen frame black but left the canopy rails grey for contrast. I think it looks sharp. The tip of the radome should be 'natural plastic' beige, aka "Radome Tan" or "Random Tan". I mixed mine with a little light brown, yellow and red.

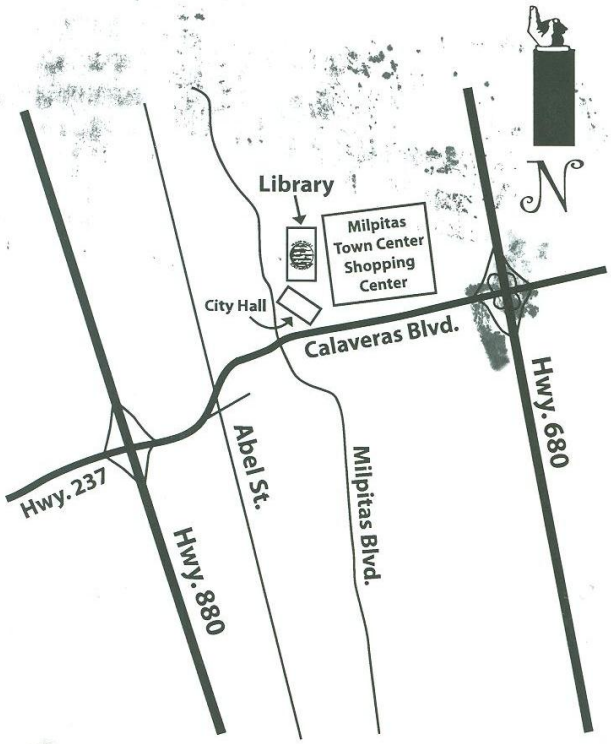
The box art showed no under wing ordinance, or tanks, but the kit came with 4 fair AIM-7 Sparrows, the load carried by the original F-14 prototypes in early flights. This loadout is repeated in the L&S kit of similar vintage, the Academy kit and the evil clone of the L&S kit that can be found presently boxed by Revell.

L&S released a 1/144 air-to-air weapon set and an air-to-ground weapon set in the 1980s, similar in concept to those from Hasegawa. So you can build a Phoenix/Sparrow/Sidewinder armed Tomcat but you'll have to buy or build the missiles separately and the launchers too. Dragon/DML's 1/144 F-14 kits include the launchers and missiles, but their F-14 misses some of the crispness of the Otaki molding. On the other hand, while Otaki "got" the forward fuselage cross section, I think the Otaki's nose profile is too pointy and not curved enough underneath. From some angles it looks ok, from some angles its clearly not deep enough. DML nailed this, and offers three different under-nose IR/TV/ sensor options.

About 20 years after I built this kit, the landing gear and the doors were removed during a move, but it still looks good hanging on a thread. Good enough that I'm now wondering about finding another and kit-bashing one with a Dragon/DML example...



Bill Abbott has been a member of SVSM since 1992 and been building plastic models since his dad bought him a McDonnell Banshee in a plastic bag in 1961. He builds airliners, road racing cars, US Navy and RAF planes, as well as balsa and paper flying models. His son Benjamin often helps him with part cutting and assembly.



Next meeting:

7:00 p.m., Friday, July 21st

at the Milpitas Public Library

40 N. Milpitas Blvd.

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