

Building the Bomber SAC Didn't Want The B-58 "Hustler"



By Dick Smith

The Convair B-58 Hustler was the world's first supersonic jet bomber but the Strategic Air Command's Commander-in-Chief, General Curtis E. Lemay, wasn't interested in the sleek and technologically advanced aircraft. General Lemay was a "big bomber" advocate and wanted aircraft like the Consolidated B-36 and the Boeing B-52 for SAC's arsenal.

However, his successor General Thomas S. Power, then the head of the Air Research and Development Command, campaigned for the advanced B-58 and SAC finally adopted the "Hustler" in the early 1960's.

B-58 models are produced in all of the popular scales. The smallest is from Academy in 1/144th scale and fits comfortably on desktops or display shelves.

Construction starts with assembling and painting the interior crew compartments gloss aircraft gray, FS-16473. Decals are provided for the three instrument panels. For a little color contrast, paint the crew ejection pods a slightly darker gray.

Glue the completed interior to a fuselage side and then cement the two halves together. The large delta wing is next glued into place. The wing-to-fuselage joint will take careful fitting to avoid a large filling and sanding job later. Skip the assembly of the landing gear and build up the four General Electric J-79 engine pods.

On the real aircraft, the pods were fabricated from several alloys. Painting them several shades of “silver” will add contrast to an otherwise dull color scheme. The exhaust cones are airbrushed with Model Master’s “magnesium,” the aft portion of the main pod with “titanium,” and the forward sections with Floquil “old silver.”



With the engines complete, go back to the fuselage and fill, sand, and polish all of the seams. An undercoat of light gray will bring out any construction errors. Metalizer paints magnify surface scratches and flaws, so work to get a mirror-like finish on the plastic. I painted the fuselage of the “Hustler” with Floquil’s “platinum mist.” This is a lusterless color that simulates aluminum that has been subjected to wear and high speeds.

Again to simulate the different types of metal used in the construction of the aircraft, mask and spray the leading edges of the wing and vertical stabilizer with Floquil “bright silver.” This will give the impression that the metal has been subjected to high temperatures and speed. (Floquil paints are lacquer based and should be used with proper ventilation.)

When the fuselage paint has dried completely, mask and paint the radome with semi-gloss black, FS-27038, and the anti-glare panel in front of the cockpit flat black, FS-37038. The nose booms on B-58’s were generally painted silver or white with a contrasting “barber pole” spiral of red or day-glo orange. Paint the boom according to your references but hold off attaching it until the model is finished. This piece is very fragile and will pop off and “disappear” easily.

The B-58 landing gear was an “18-wheeler.” (Sixteen tires on the main gear and two on the nose gear.) The tires are aircraft interior black, FS-37031. To paint the wheel rims cut the point off of a wooden toothpick and “dot” the centers with Testor’s silver.

The final construction steps include painting the inside of the crew compartment covers gloss white, the landing gear wells and door covers, interior green, FS-36151, and constructing and painting the large weapons-fuel pod located under the fuselage with “platinum mist.”

With painting complete, attach the engine pods to the wings using white glue. To get a good fit here will require some trimming and sanding. The kit decals for the model represent an aircraft from the 43rd Bomb Wing stationed at Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, in 1961. Jay Miller’s book *“Convair B-58 Hustler,”* published by AeroFax is an excellent reference for details and markings.



With the decaling finished, “weather” the model by spraying a very thin mixture of Tamiya’s “smoke” in streaks over the panel lines to simulate exposure to the elements. The “less is more” principle is best applied here.

Assemble and attach the very delicate landing gear to the fuselage. A steady hand will be required to glue the more than a dozen parts required to completing the undercarriage. Mask the clear sections and paint the pilot’s windscreen and then paint the frames with silver. Attach it to the front cockpit along with the hatch covers for the crew compartments.

Finally glue the needle-sized nose boom to the front of the radome and your model of the B-58 Hustler is ready for display.



