

Bell XP-77 1/48 Czech Model



By Paul Gasiorowski

Conceived in 1941 as a point defense interceptor it was made largely of wood, a non-strategic material. The idea was to design a light weight, low cost nimble interceptor that could be deployed quickly around US cities and overseas installations. It finally flew in the summer of 1944, and combined with rising costs and poor performance the contract was terminated in December 1944, the war being almost won at this point.

The kit consisted of one sprue of medium gray plastic and 11 pieces of resin parts, to replace the wheels, floorboard, front panel, seat and rear bulkhead, and front of the engine.

I started with cleaning up the resin parts by washing them with soap and water solution and rinsing them to dry. I started with the cockpit area first, Assembling the floorboard and seat and dry fitting them to the fuselage halves. I had to do some filing and sanding to insure that the cockpit would fit when I glued the fuselage halves together. After I was satisfied that it would fit okay, I started the painting process. I glued the side panels to the fuselage and painted the interior and seat Model Master Acryl Chromate Green. I then highlighted the side panels with spots of black, red, yellow and green to bring out some of the detail on the resin panels. The seat already had molded seat harness and belts and these just need to be painted, harness and belt tan and the buckles silver.

The front of the engine (resin) did not fit very well and had to be separated from the rest of the resin block so it would sit correctly in the nose. Considering that the opening for the air intake was very small, it would be unnecessary to paint the engine block. The remainder of the resin block was glued in to add the necessary weight so it wouldn't be a tail sitter.



The propeller and spinner consisted of 4 pieces, which was painted the appropriate colors of silver for the spinner and black for the blades with yellow tips. This piece was left off till the final assembly.

The interior of the wheel wells were painted Chromate Green before cementing the lower part of the wing to the fuselage. The upper parts of the wings were then glued in place with little or no filler required to make a seamless fitting. I had to cut into the wings and glued red and green plastic pieces for the running lights. I then sanded these pieces to shape using various grits of sanding stick to get a smooth finish. I then taped these pieces off prior to painting. The horizontal stabilizers just had small bumps on them and the fuselage had small dimples. I drilled these out so the horizontal stabilizers would fit better. I washed the entire plane down with Plastic Prep prior to painting and let it dry for a day. After stuffing all the openings with wet tissue I was ready to paint. Since the fuselage was silver I airbrushed Model Master Flat Black Acryl over the entire body and gear doors. Letting it dry for 48 hours I then painted the body and gear

doors with Model Master Metalizer Aluminum Plate Buffing (can) and then polished it with a soft cloth after about 20 minutes. I then sealed it with a couple of coats of Future, before applying the decals.



After applying the decals I finished by attaching the struts, wheels and gear doors to the plane. I used a straight pin for the pitot tube. The hardest part was the canopy. The kit supplied 2 vacuform pieces. I cut the canopy in two. These I found difficult to tape off and paint silver. After a couple of unsuccessful tries of masking, painting and unmasking I decided to try another approach. I found a silver pen by Faber Castell 1.5 Artist pen at Hobby Lobby. It came with a pretty nice point and I found it would adhere to the canopy just fine. After letting it dry I dipped it in Future. On the original aircraft the rear of the canopy slid back under the rear of the fuselage. This was not possible so I just let the canopy sit on the top of the fuselage.

This was the first Czech Model I have built and it helped improve my skills as there are no pins on the fuselage halves and the addition of resin parts adds detail to the model.

References for ideas and issues with this kit.

Internet sources. Model built by Caz Dalton, www.aircraftresourcecenter.com

Model built by Scott Van Aken, www.modelingmadness.com