

RoR Step-by-Step Review 20150122*
F9-F Grumman Panther 1:48 Scale AMT Model Kit #813 Review



Grumman's first construction of a Navy jet fighter was a big success with two versions powered by different engines. The FPF-2 used the Pratt & Whitney and the FPF-3 housed an Allison engine. Prototyped in 1947, it saw production the next year. Fast and maneuverable they were the first Navy jet fighters to see combat in the Korean War. They were primarily designed for ground support, but were found to be effective interceptors as well and through its lifespan was fitted with different armaments for a variety of combat and support roles. The Allison design had a top speed of 575 mph and carried four 20 mm cannons in the J-33 configuration.

For the Modeler: This is a review of the F9-F Grumman Panther 1:48 Scale AMT Model Kit #813. This the latest re-release of the old AMT kit. It is rated a skill level 2 kit for intermediate modelers and is part of the Retro Deluxe Series. Included is an updated and enhanced decal sheet, and refurbished part trees. The kit contains 40+ pieces. They are molded in dark blue styrene with a clear canopy. Decals are provided for three aircraft, Navy, Marine and Blue Angel liveries are included. The parts are very clean from flash and are crisply molded. Finished dimensions of the kit are: Length: 9½" x Wingspan 9½" x Height: 3".

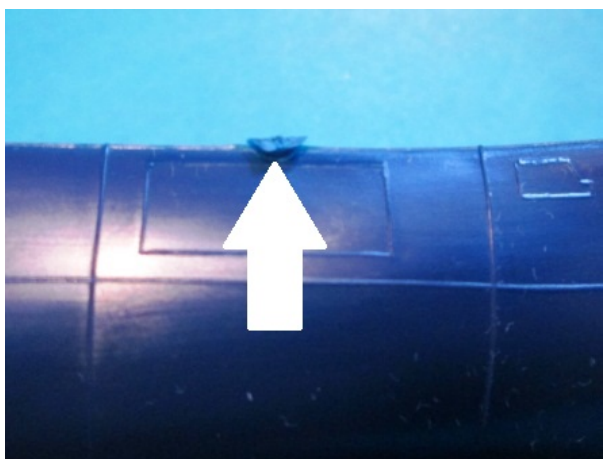
Covered in this Review: If you want to perfect your build; basic construction; preparing parts for better finishing; extensive paint and finishing information; adhesive selections and applications; alternate assembly sequence for improved fit and finish; repairing seams and sinks; replacing lost panel lines are discussed; cockpit console and instrument panel treatment and highlighting; gluing clear parts without crazing; detailed landing gear construction; clamping methods and locations; clarifying part location information; using Parafilm masking; how to "tone down" raised panel lines; black washes with diluted paint; decal preparation and application; removing unwanted paint guides; how to mask for panel painting; using decal setting solutions; removing locating posts and bosses for improved fit; mounting the plane for spray painting; using tacky putty as a painting aid; applying Pledge floor finish for perfectly clear "glass" parts; livery and version considerations; decal treatments; identifying pin marks; detailed masking instructions; pilot figure colors and paint sources; are all fully examined in this extensive **17 page, full-color** Step-by-Step review.



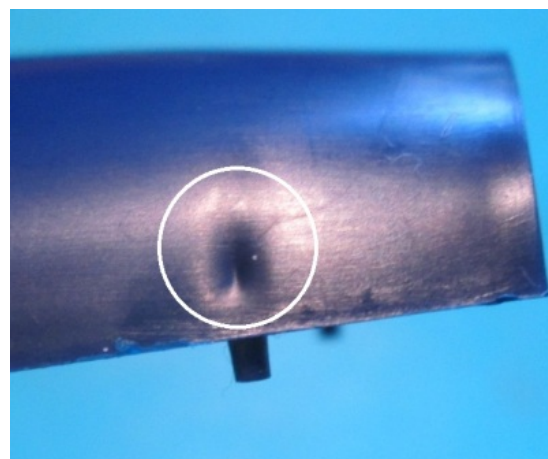
Pic 1 & 2 This is the box art for this kit as released in the 2012 Retro Deluxe Edition. On the right is the layout of the kit's contents. Unless otherwise stated I use Testors Tube Glue (Orange Tube) for assembly of the parts. Other adhesives used in the construction are Superglue and White Glue. Paints consist of Testors (Model Masters) Enamel or Acrylic bottle paints and "rattle can" spray paints especially for primers and flat paints. Use a good quality airbrush product because lacquer thinner will destroy the cheaper ones quickly. Assembly paint colors may vary from the instructions, as I use simplified colors that most model builders should have on hand. Note to remember: Always follow the Manufacturer's Safety and Use guidelines when using any of the products mentioned in the review for your own protection.

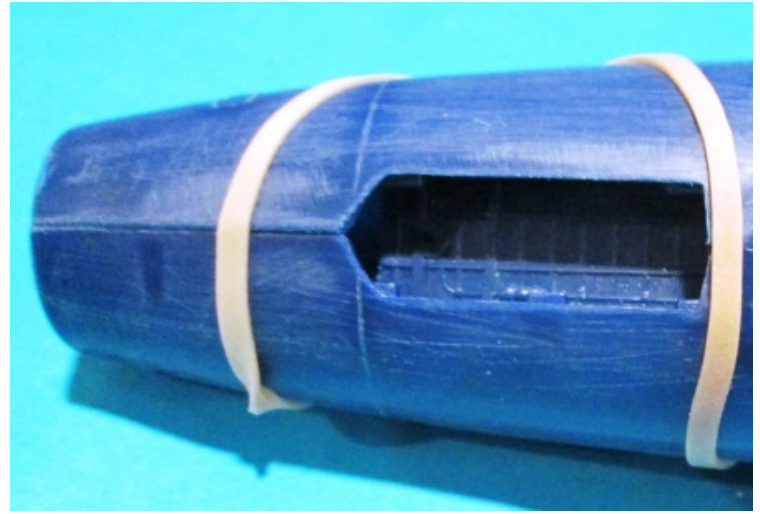


Pic 3 & 4 Before beginning your build soak and wash your parts with a mild dish detergent to remove any mold release agents and help with paint adhesion.



Pic 5 & 6 Although this kit is in remarkably good condition for its age you will still find the customary sprue joints, light flash and sinks that will have to be taken care of.

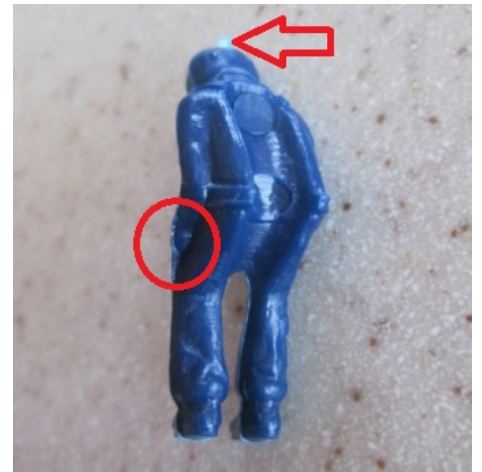




Pic 7 & 8 The first step in the instructions constructs the interior of the plane and the fuselage as well as some landing doors. I elected to install the landing doors later in the build because of finish considerations but they would probably get broken off during handling at this point anyway. For now I began by painting the landing gear compartment base flat black on top. I then installed this on top of the locating tabs in the starboard half of the fuselage (red arrows) with some slow setting tube glue. I did not glue the part to the other half yet, but simply fit the two halves together to allow it to dry in place on the one side only.

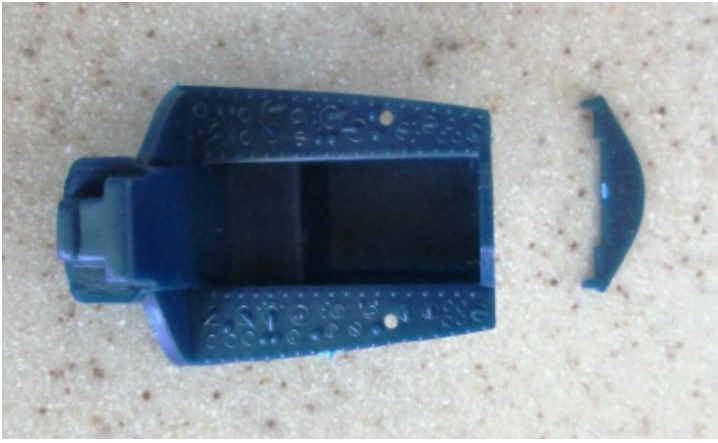


Pic 9 & 10 This is the pilot figure and he is very nicely molded with enough detail to be seen through he canopy. There is a bit of sprue attachment at the top and some flash on the side to remove with a hobby knife and sanding stick.



Pic 11 & 12 I mounted the figure on a wooden seat with some superglue then gave him an overall coating of khaki green with some brush paint. I then painted the bomber jacket brown, the boots and oxygen mask and tube are flat black. The life vest is dark yellow and the seat belts are medium gray. The skin is flat flesh and finally, the helmet is gloss white.





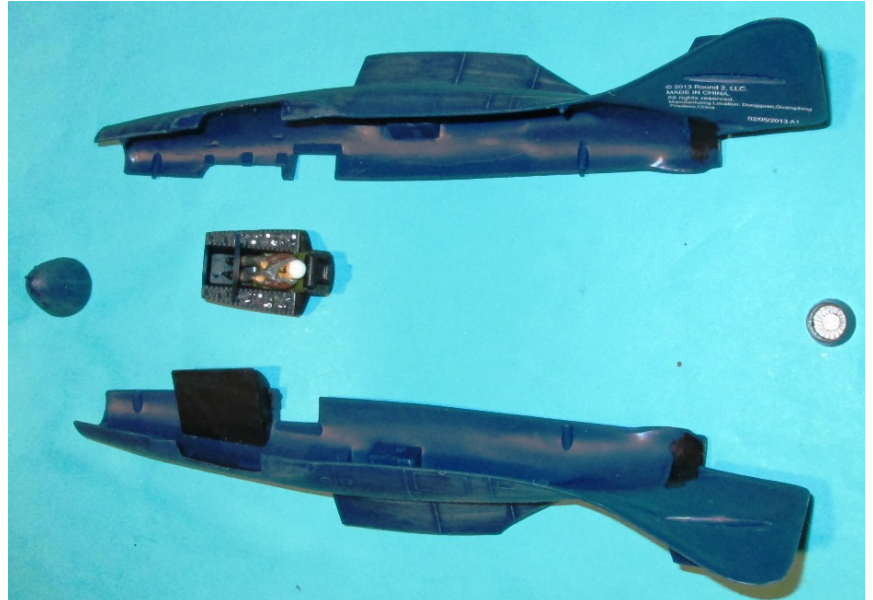
Pic 13 & 14 The gauge decals that are included in this kit don't fit the small instrument panel at all. I painted it flat black and picked out the individual gauges with a toothpick and some white and silver bottle paint. I did the same to the cockpit console switches and gauges after an overall coating of flat black had dried.



Pic 15 The main fuselage part needs to be trimmed and I gave the whole thing a light sanding with some 800 grit paper to "tone down" the raised panel lines and provide some bite for the primer. The roughed up half shows in contrast to the untouched (upper) half.



Pic 16 & 17 On the nose piece there is a “panel” line that appears to be a paint guide for the VMF-115 Marine livery. If your making that version, leave it intact for the flat black paint, otherwise remove the line from the nose piece for the other versions.



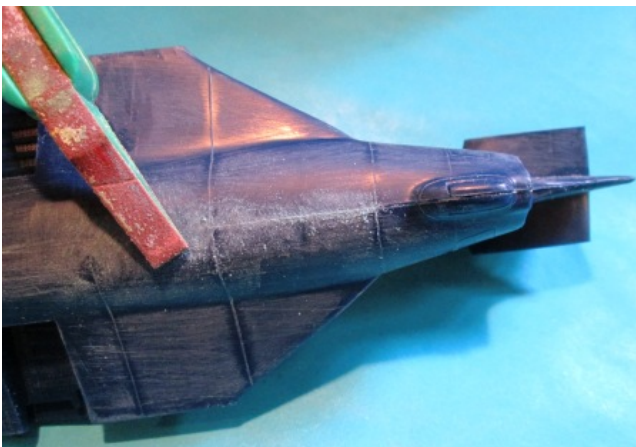
Pic 18 & 19 Paint the sidewalls of the cockpit and exhaust areas flat black. Install the pilot into the cockpit then gather the fuselage halves, nose piece, tail pipe and cockpit assembly together.

Pic 20 Use some slow setting tube glue to install the cockpit assembly into the starboard half of the fuselage along with the cockpit floor. Note the tabs and location there as the seats rest on top of the two locating tabs and is flush against the back tab to position it properly in the cockpit opening. The pilot's headrest will locate at the back of the cockpit opening as well for reference.

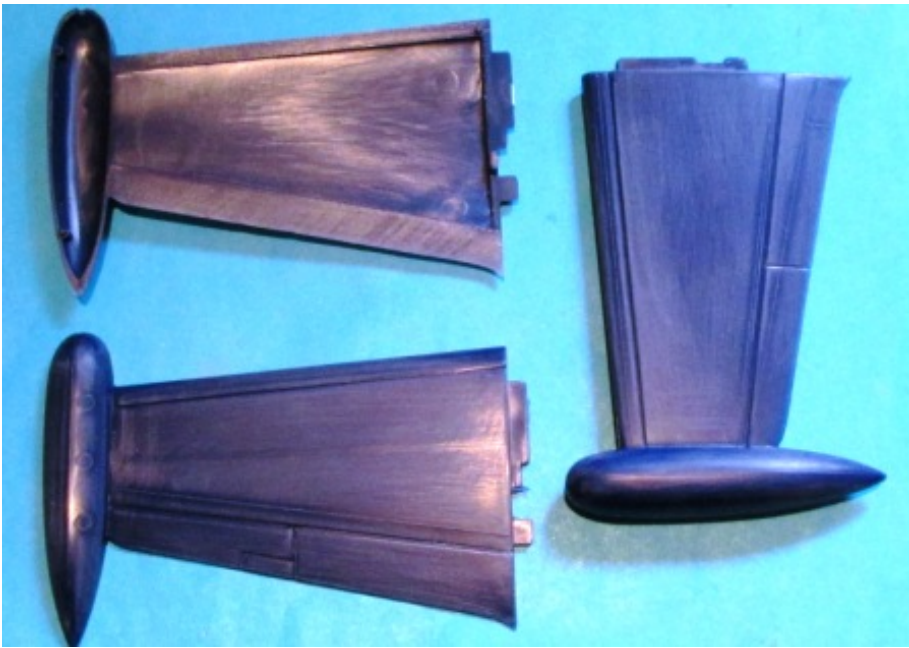
*****NOTE***** It is at this point you must add some nose weight to the model. Just behind the nose cone on both halves, coat some (about 1 ounce) lead fishing weights or shot with epoxy and glue them into place to avoid the "tail dragger syndrome."



Pic 21 Align the tail cone in its tabs at the rear and then apply some liquid glue to the edges of the fuselage. It is a good fit so once it's together make any last minute adjustments and then apply some rubber bands to the front and some light clamps to the tail section.



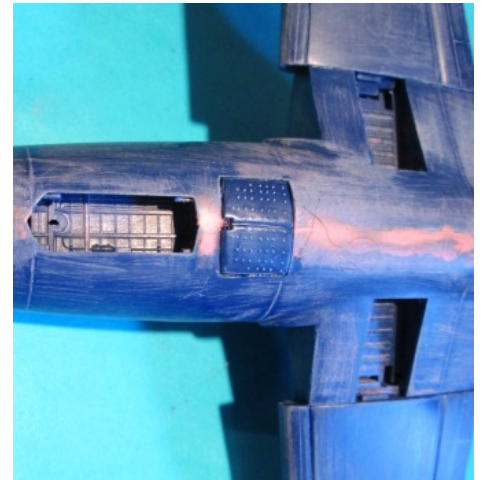
Pic 22 & 23 After the glue has set remove the clamps and bands and take a sanding stick to the main seams. Follow that up with your favorite putty. After it dries, sand it off with a fine grit paper and repeat as needed if any seams are still visible. You may find that it's impossible to avoid removing some of the panel lines. You'll have two options to replace them. The first is to use "stretched" sprue. That is plastic tree sprue that is heated and stretched into thin plastic strings that can be glued over the removed, raised, panel lines which is preferred for a contest model. Or you can simply re-scribe the section where the lines are weak, which is what I did with a steel rule and the backside of the hobby knife blade. After paint, it's hard to tell the difference without a magnifying glass.



Pic 24 & 25 Gather the main wing halves and assemble them with some liquid cement. After they've dried use the sanding boards to smooth off the parting at the edges. After they have set, glue the air brakes into the opening where the tab is from the cockpit floor piece. It will protrude through the air brake opening in the center, at the aft part of the opening.



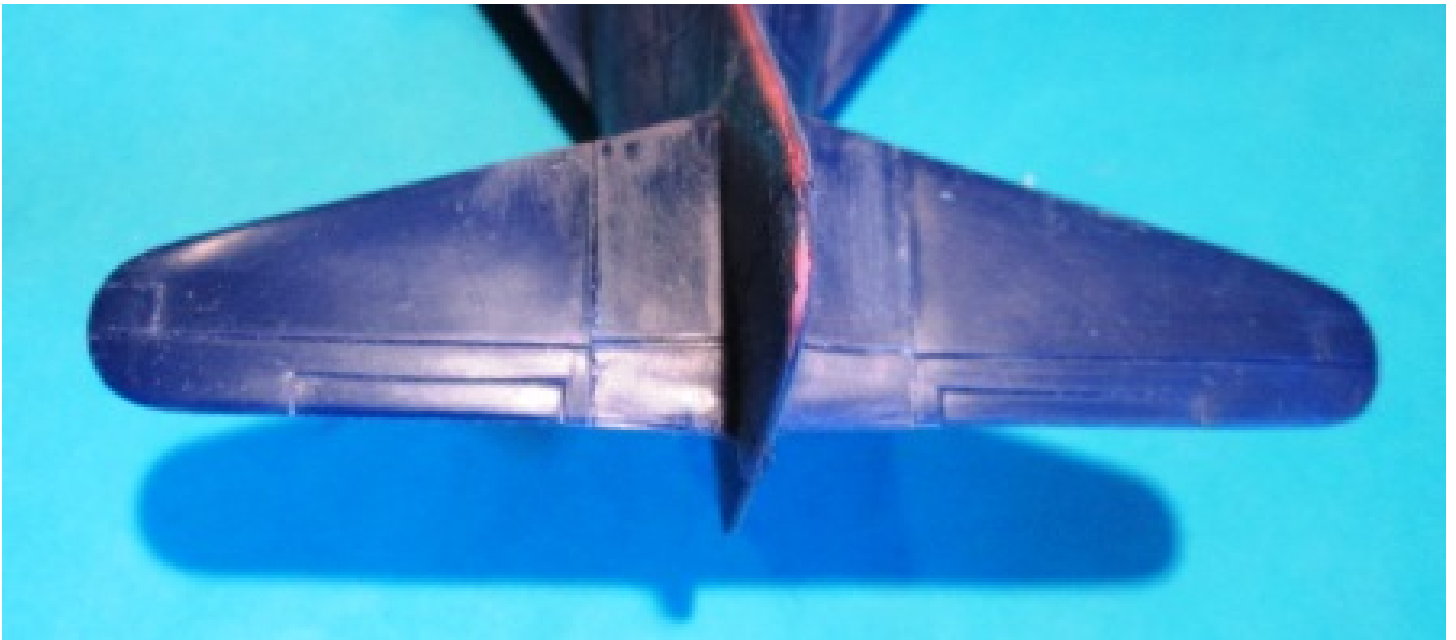
Pic 26 & 27 Test fitting is important as I found that I had to remove some of the positioning tabs to permit the wing to seat flush against the body here. I glued them in with some superglue for strength. After the join, I held them in place long enough to add a little zip kicker (CA accelerant) to ensure they remained flush. As you can see, the air brakes are in place just behind the nose wheel opening.



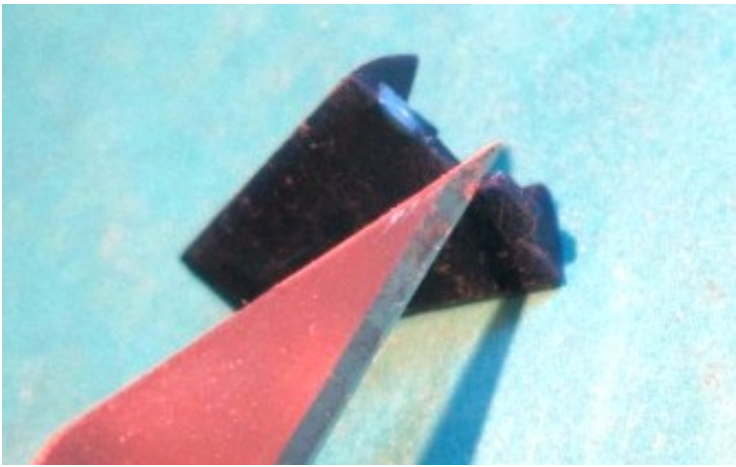
Pic 28 The instruction sheet would have you install the landing gear and bay doors at this point and that would work out well if you're not going to paint the model. In my case it's time to finish the airframe by gathering the horizontal stabilizers and air intakes.



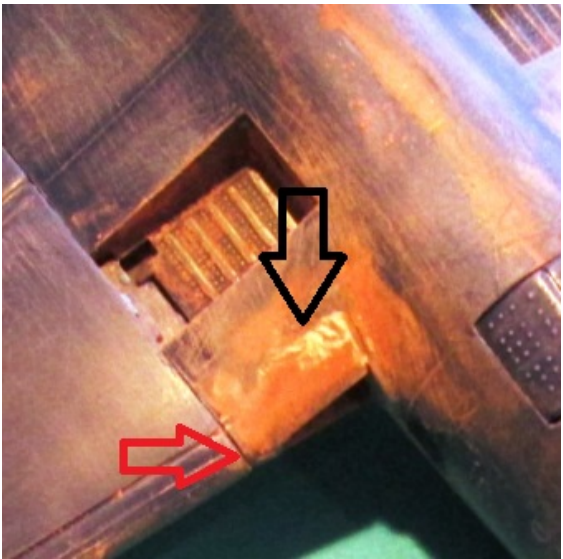
Pic 29 & 30 When test fitting the two-piece stabilizers together, I noticed the locating posts made the insert set too high. Remove the top part of the post with a hobby knife or rotary grinder. They position well without the post and after applying some tube glue just place a light duty clamp on it to keep them in place while they dry.



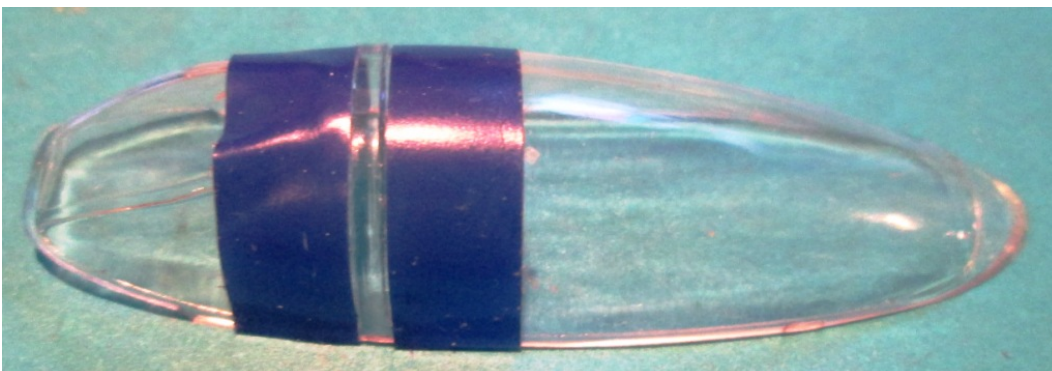
Pic 31 There are tabs for each side, so match that up and glue them into place with some liquid cement, being certain to get them straight and level with each other at right angles to the tailfin.



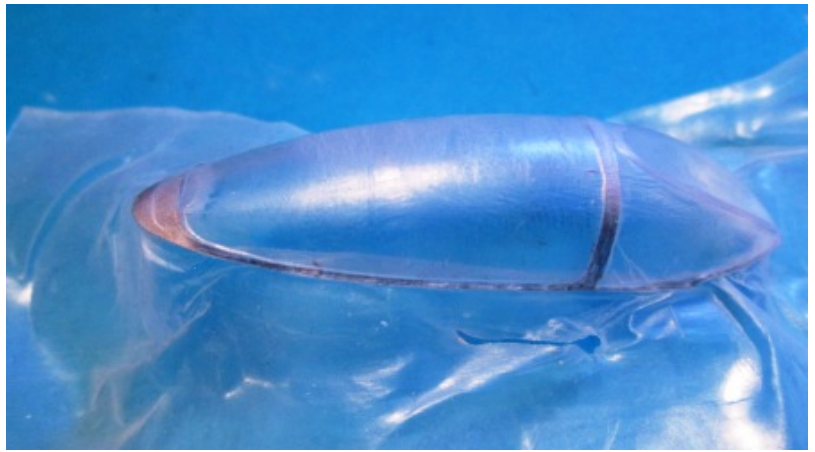
Pic 32 & 33 Because the wings have been installed, you'll have to remove the locating tabs from the air intakes. Just note what side they are designed for, add a little tube glue to the wing side, and slide them in from the top or bottom locating them in the most nominal position.



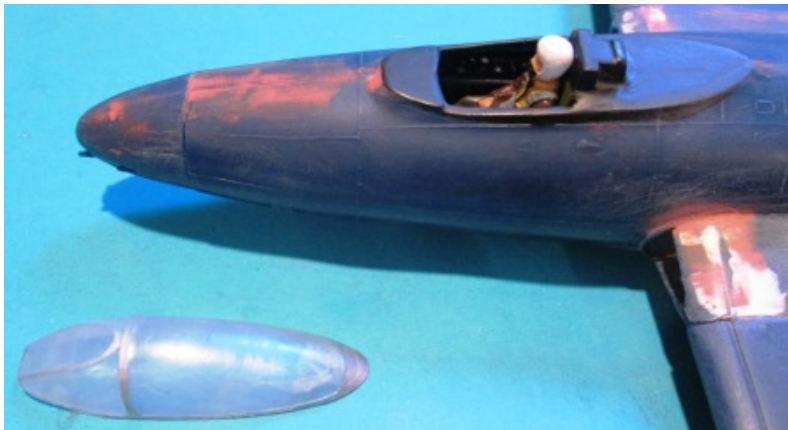
Pic 34 & 35 Once dried, you can add some putty here (black arrow) to make for a seamless finish to the wing. Also note that the wings on the real plane fold up for storage on a carrier ship so the panel line shown by the red arrow should be left intact. In the right photo, note that there is another layer of fine putty to finish off this joint. While that was drying, I filled the landing gear bays with some tacky putty and placed the landing gear bay doors into their positions. This will prevent panel shading variations with the glossy finish. They are shown here both open and closed to show the procedure but when you're ready for primer make sure they are all closed up. *****NOTE***** there are some pronounced ejector pin marks on the main landing gear doors that would need to be removed for a contest model.



Pic 36 Turning to the canopy, I used some blue 3M tape (available at automotive paint shops) to place the first rib on it. I simply used a silver Sharpie for this and then removed the tape. Follow that up by outlining the other ribs freehand. They are raised from the canopy so it's pretty easy to follow along.



Pic 37 & 38 After the canopy ribs were dry I used some Parafilm frisket to mask the canopy. Simply stretch it on and tuck it under the whole thing. This is known as frisket film and you can find it at a hobby store.



Pic 39 & 40 Use some clear glue to place the cockpit on the airframe. I used a little Testor's Clear Parts glue lightly around the bottom edge of the cockpit and set it into place. Let it dry overnight.

Pic 41 Go over the entire airframe looking for places that need some attention and then mount the plane on a 3/8" towel fitted to the tailpipe for priming.





Pic 42 & 43 After spraying the model with a gray primer and a light sanding I noticed a couple areas that needed some more filling. It's here that you do the final prep for your color coats. Address anything you can see or feel and sand it down with some 2000 grit paper. Wipe clean with a lightly dampened cotton cloth and a tack cloth and remount the model into the dowel. I used Model Masters Dark Sea Blue #1717 which corresponds perfectly to FS15042. I mixed it with 40% lacquer thinner and sprayed it with an airbrush, but this plane's contours are probably suited for a rattle can version of the paint just as well. Just go over it with light successive coats building up the color until a rich, even hue is applied.



Pic 44 These are the decals I chose to use for this livery which corresponds to the Navy version VF-123.



Pic 45 & 46 This was the kit's biggest disappointment however, because they were brittle and were often breaking apart when being applied. Had I suspected that, I would have sprayed the entire sheet with some fixative or clear lacquer and cut them apart individually. I ended up having to section a piece from the tail stabilizer decal to make it appear somewhat coordinated with the wingtip decals.





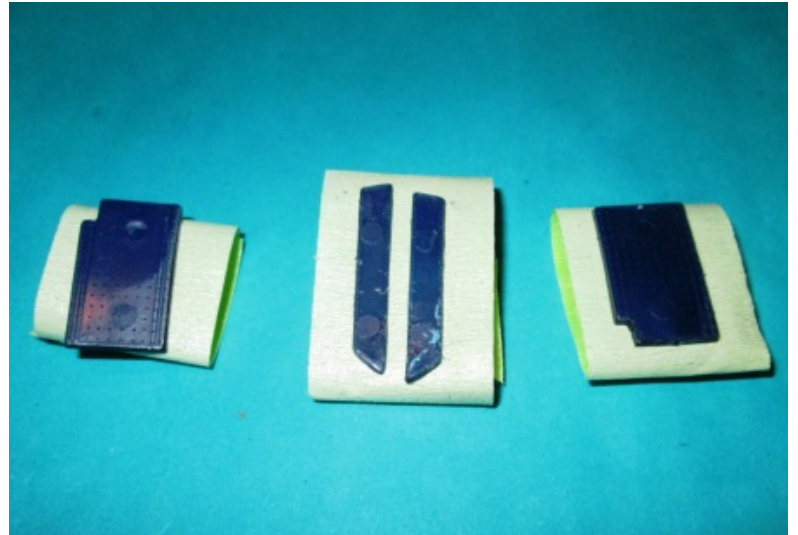
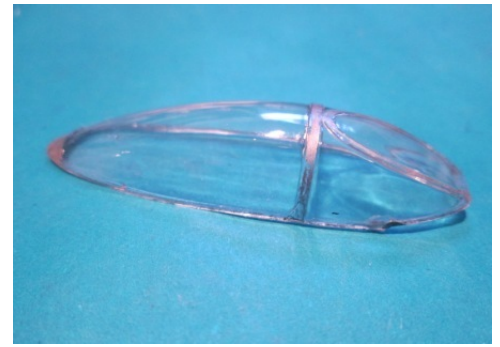
Pic 47 & 48 Just follow the instruction sheet or box art for placement information. *****NOTE***** Most of the decals here are placed over the raised panel lines on the plane which can cause silvering at those locations. To help avoid, that I recommend the use of some decal setting solution as an aid to prevent it and help any decals lay down over a contour. I use Microscale's product but there are several on the market. Just follow the manufacturer's suggestions for application. Clear coat the plane for a shiny finish.



Pic 49 & 50 Cautiously, use your hobby knife to go around the cockpit at the join to the fuselage and pop off the canopy. Carefully, remove the Parafilm with your fingernails.



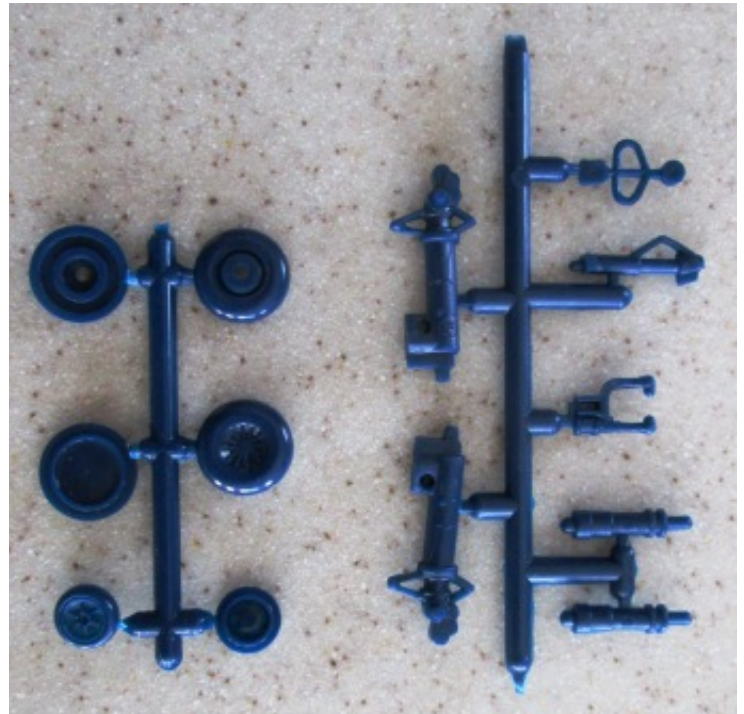
Pic 51 & 52 *****OPTIONAL***** Grab the canopy with a pair of long tweezers at the back end and dip it into some Pledge Floor Care (formerly Future). Alternatively, fill a small cup big enough to submerge the part in for dipping. You can pour the leftover wax back into the container after you've finished. Let the excess wick off on a piece of tissue paper and set aside to dry. This gives the canopy a great crystal-clear look!



Pic 53 & 54 Trace the outside of the landing gear doors with the blade of a hobby knife to make sure none are still attached by paint and pop the doors out of their bays. Remove the tacky putty completely. Mount the doors with the insides facing up and paint them Interior Green with a brush. I used Model Masters #1715 which corresponds to FS34151.



Pic 55 & 56 Set the plane aside to dry the bays and gather the parts for the landing gear.





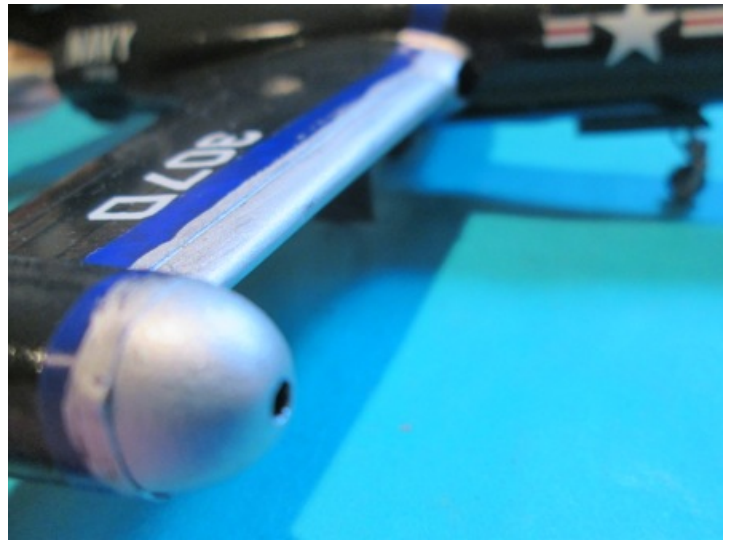
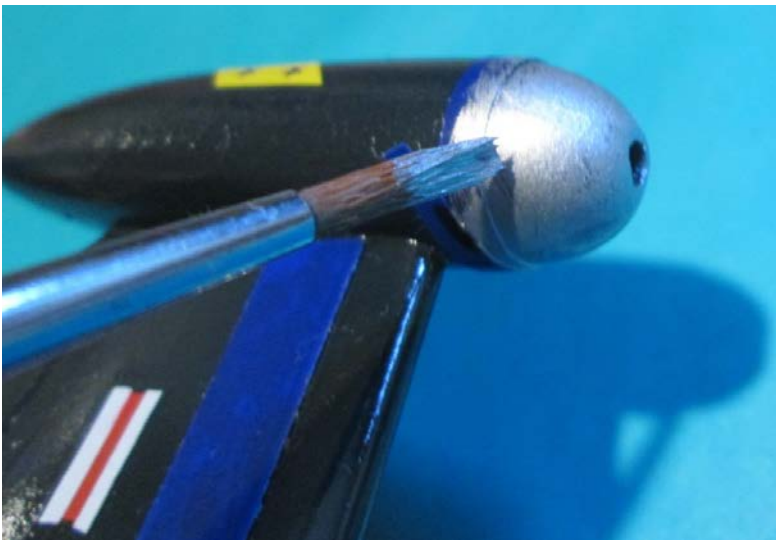
Pic 57 & 57a Paint the struts and wheel centers aluminum and tires flat black and let them dry. Assemble the front strut with the fork and add the wheel with superglue and install it into the forward bay in the locating slot provided. Glue the wheels onto the main gear struts with superglue and let that harden. *****NOTE***** the kit includes two wheel bearings (57a) that can be used if you want to allow your wheels to roll. Simply put them inside the wheels with some glue in the centers to receive the tabs on the struts



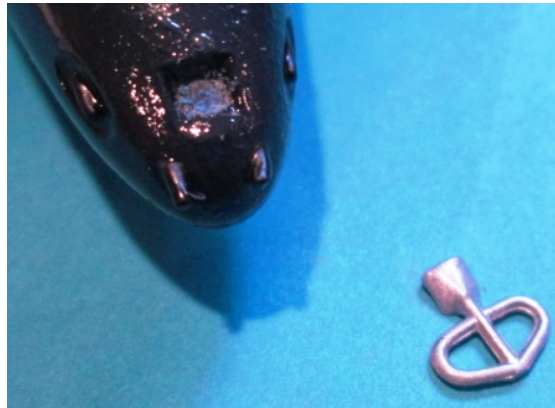
Pic 58 & 59 Use a little slow setting glue on both ends of the retraction struts and place them into their horizontal positions in the bays, leaving them tipped upward as far as they'll go. Place the main struts into their respective bays. The mounting slots for each side are keyed so you can't put them in wrong. Lean the horizontal retractors into the positioning hole in the main struts. Make sure both sides are leaning the same from all directions and set aside to dry. Check periodically to make sure they've stay put.



Pic 60 & 61 After the wax dip has dried place a tape handle on top of the cockpit and rim the bottom with clear parts glue as before. Carefully put the cockpit into place on top of the fuselage and let it dry, then remove the tape handle.



Pic 62 & 63 Tape off the forward edges of the main wings and wingtips with some good painters tape and brush on (or spray) some flat aluminum. I used Tamiya XF-16 for its great sheen and authenticity. Some of my research indicated that the leading edge of the tail section was also bare aluminum but I could not determine whether it was for all these planes or later version only, so I omitted that from this build.



Pics 64-66 There's still a bit of detailing to do to finish up. I painted the forward cannon and nacelles flat black. I painted the nose handle aluminum and glued it to the nose position with some superglue. I used some aluminum for the jet engine rotor at the rear and the tailpipe was painted flat black as well. Finally, I gave the wheels and struts some black wash to pick out the highlights.



Pic 67 The business end of the Grumman Panther F9-F.



Pic 68 The underside of the craft and its detailing. There were no parts leftover from the kit except the two wheel aforementioned wheel bearings and the decals for the other versions that weren't used.



Pic 999 Overall: This kit is a sheer delight to assemble. I was amazed at the lack of flash (there was virtually none on the wings) and they fit together precisely. The only disappointment was the brittle nature of the decals which could have been avoided with an overspray of fixative or lacquer. One surprise in the kit was the lack of part numbers. None of the parts on the sprues have numbers assigned to them and they really didn't need them. At just over 40 pieces, they are all easily identified and keyed so that you can't build the model incorrectly. There is also some detailing that could be added, such as opening up the tail hook hatch and adding a tail hook or drilling out the cannon nacelles and using brass tubes to replace them. Even a set of aftermarket decals to offer greater choices of livery and the multitude of available resin replacements for landing gear, cockpits and pilot figures from online sources could really add some detail and flavor to this simple kit. Speaking of which, you can simply build it like I did in a weekend, and have a great looking model in short order. As one of the first generation of American fighter jets this kit's subject also has that cool factor going for it.

