

Kit Review

by Alex Valz

Model Subject: Panzer IV Ausf.F2(G)

Manufacturer: Dragon

Scale: 1/35

Model Type: Styrene, some photo-etched brass

Recommended? Yes

History

Next to the Soviet T-34 and the American M4 Sherman, the German Panzer IV was the most widely used tank of WWII. Some variation of this notable tank was used from the invasion of Poland in 1939 to Germany's surrender in 1945. Early versions of the Panzer IV mounted a short-barreled 75mm howitzer and were used principally for infantry support. In 1942, the need was seen to counter the potent Soviet T-34, since the shorter gun mounted by the Panzer IV was largely ineffective except at short range. The new Ausf.F2 version mounted a newer 75mm KwK 40 L/43 high

velocity cannon that gave it a distinct advantage over Allied tanks. Current research reveals that the Ausf.F2 version of the tank was actually an Early Ausf.G version. The distinctive feature of the Ausf.F2(G) was the single baffle bulbous-shaped muzzle brake. Later versions of the Ausf.G featured a longer, double baffle muzzle brake that gave it a little more range and power.

Dubbed the Mark IV Special by the British, the Ausf.F2(G) served in North Africa and Russia. A number of these were instrumental in the Afrika Korp's lopsided victory over the U.S. Army at the Kasserine Pass in February 1943. Fortunately for the U.S., Field Marshal Rommel feared a trap and withdrew after nearly pushing U.S. forces out of Tunisia.

The Kit

This is another example of Dragon's superb line of Smart Kits. On a scale of 1 to 5, molding, detail, fit and accuracy are definitely a 5. Instructions require a little study due to the parts count, but are very good overall. Clear parts are provided for periscopes and a small photo-etched brass fret provides engine screens and various small fender braces. Tracks are individual link "Smart Tracks," which require a good deal of assembly. After several past experiences with this type of track, I have found them to work extremely well. However, some smoothing of ejector pin marks is required. The gun barrel is one piece and is slide molded with only a small seam present. Hatches can be left open or closed but not much interior detail is present.

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Decals and painting guides are provided for six tanks including those in North Africa and the Eastern Front.

Finishing

I decided to make this tank into a Deutsches Afrikakorps (D.A.K.) version. When these tanks were sent to North Africa in 1942, they were painted in overall Panzer grey. In the field, they were given an overall coat of yellowish brown, sometimes referred to as honey brown. Due to wear and tear from crew traffic, sandstorms, combat and other factors the outer brown coat was often worn off in places revealing the grey undercoat. To simulate similar weathering effects, some expert modelers in our club have used what is known as the "hairspray technique" with some good results and I decided to take a crack at this myself. This involves decanting hairspray (Tres Semme brand recommended) into a bottle and applying it with an airbrush. After painting the model overall with Vallejo Panzer Grey primer, I applied the hairspray in a small area. I then mixed Tamiya Khaki and Dark Yellow into what I think is a good representation of D.A.K. honey brown and applied it to that small area with my airbrush. The next step involves applying water to that painted area and waiting for the outer coat of paint to wrinkle up. After the wrinkling is detected, a stiff brush can be used to remove areas of the outer paint coat. When using this technique, you should work slowly and try to remove only small chips.

Satisfied with initial results, I applied the outer coat to the entire tank and chipped in areas where I thought the most wear would be shown. Although I had to later re-touch some overly chipped areas, I was very pleased with the results and plan to use this on future projects.

Final finishing involved application of Archer Fine Transfers for the turret numbers and insignias. Many D.A.K. units used a single turret number and I thought the white outlined black number "7" blended well with my finish. I painted tools and spare tracks with Model Master Metalizer Gunmetal, which looks metallic without being overly garish. After an overall pin wash of raw umber artists' oil paint mixed with Turpenoid, I sealed the whole model with Vallejo matt varnish. I highly recommend this product to those who are looking for a dead flat finish on their models

The tank commander is an Alpine Models resin figure which has excellent detail. After priming him with Tamiya primer out of a can, I painted him with Vallejo D.A.K. tank crewman colors. I highlighted the face with various shades of flesh and brown but didn't overdo highlights in order to show a fair complexion.

