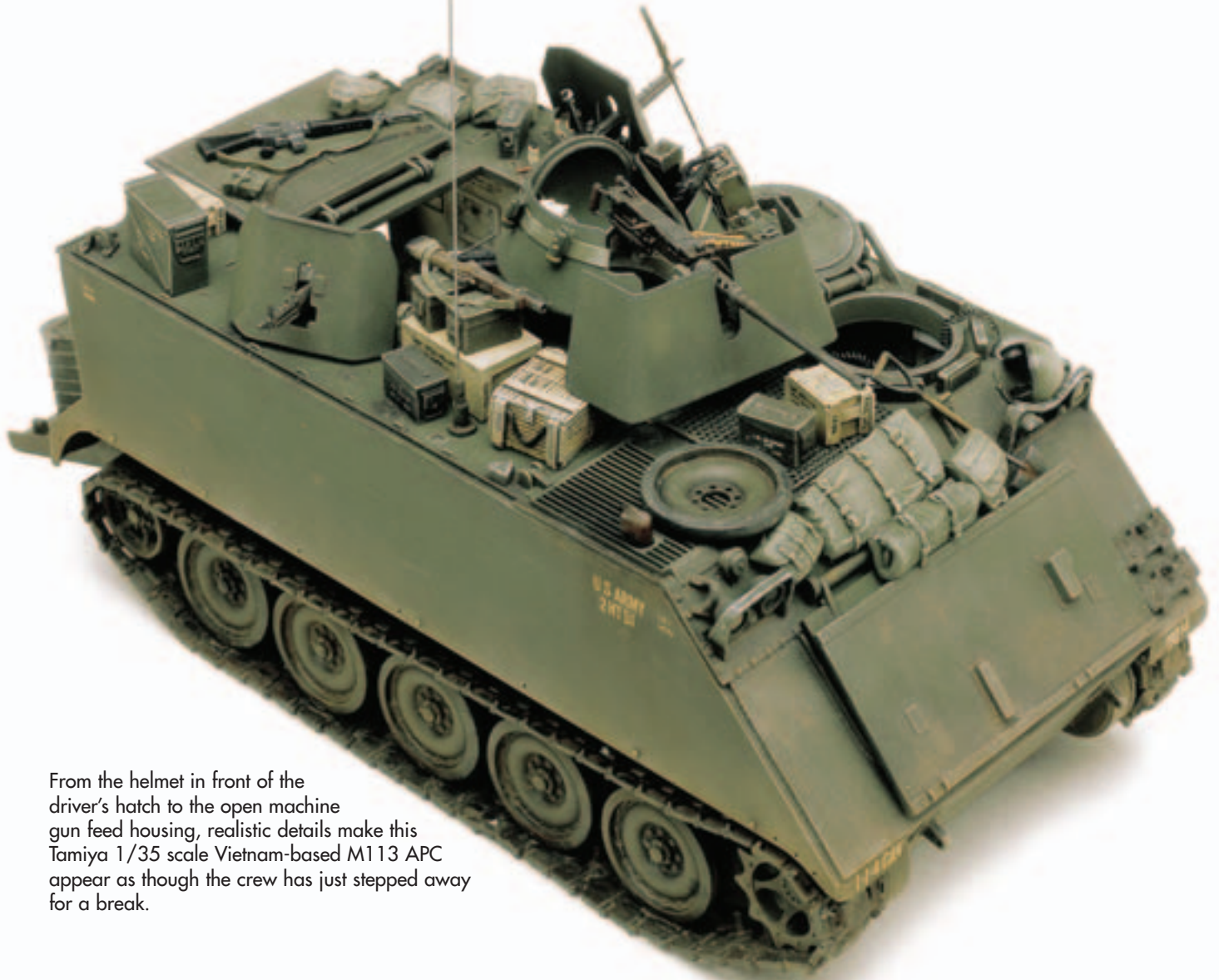


# M113 MASTERPIECE

Scratchbuilt detail recreates the grunt's home away from home

*Story and photos by David Huffman*

**W**hen I started building Tamiya's 1/35 scale Vietnam-era M113 armored personnel carrier, I decided a few of the extras I'd seen in photographs would really bring the model to life. I began my quest for greater detail by researching the M60 machine gun, and then shifted gears to replicate additional 1/35 scale details.



From the helmet in front of the driver's hatch to the open machine gun feed housing, realistic details make this Tamiya 1/35 scale Vietnam-based M113 APC appear as though the crew has just stepped away for a break.

**Gunning for accuracy.** I didn't have access to an actual M60 for reference, so I settled for a photo in a gun book showing one disassembled for cleaning. This showed me the modifications required to fully detail my M113's machine gun. I would need more than one to do what I wanted, so I obtained a pair of Dragon figure kits, "Tet Offensive" and "Marines at Khe Sanh," in order to get some M60s.

To model the gun with the top cover open and the feed mechanism exposed, I began by cutting the existing feed housing off one of the tiny weapons, then ground the housing off the other, **1**. I used the motor tool to hollow out an area in the feed housing to install a cartridge feed rail like the one in my reference photograph.

Using .010" styrene sheet, I made the cartridge feeder mechanism and carefully drilled holes in the appropriate places. The rails were also made from .010" styrene sheet and fitted to the hollowed-out area on the breech. I glued the housing perpendicular to the bolt and the trigger assembly.

I painted the M60 with a coat of Model Master Metalizer gunmetal, applied a wash, then dry-brushed it with Humbrol matte aluminum. When the paint was dry, I attached the finished gun to the shield, **2**.

**Hot and spicy!** I was not surprised to find photographs of soldiers resorting to little bottles of hot sauce to spice up their bland field rations. A reference was as close as my kitchen pantry.

I heated a short piece of clear sprue over a lit candle until it was soft enough to pull into a cone shape, **3**. Next, with a fresh No. 11 blade in my hobby knife, I finished shaping the bottle, **4**. To be sure I got the correct scale size, I frequently stopped to place it near the hand of a 1/35 scale figure and compare the shape to a full-size bottle in my own hand.

With my smallest drill bit in my pin vise, I drilled out the inside of the plastic, **5**, and painted the inside with just enough red to represent a half-empty (or would it be half-full?) bottle. Using a small brush with most of the bristles cut off, I painted the label with Model Master insignia red and white and a mixture of Polly S jungle green and slime green, **6**.

**Finishing touches.** To create the helmet resting in front of the open driver's compartment hatch, I removed the head from a figure and used the motor



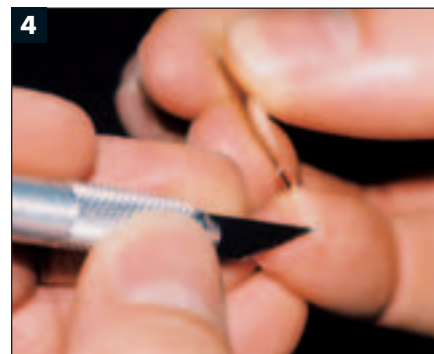
**1** David used a motor tool to grind out the feed housing from one of the tiny M60 machine guns.



**2** With the gun's feed housing cover open to expose the detail he had added, David fitted it to the shield.



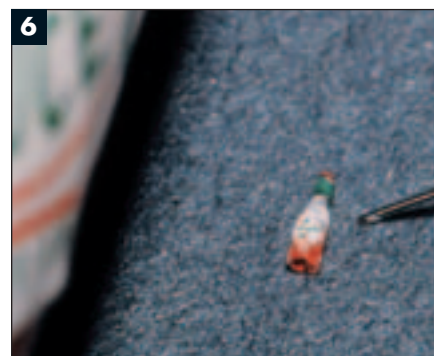
**3** To make the miniature bottle of hot sauce, David began by stretching a piece of clear sprue.



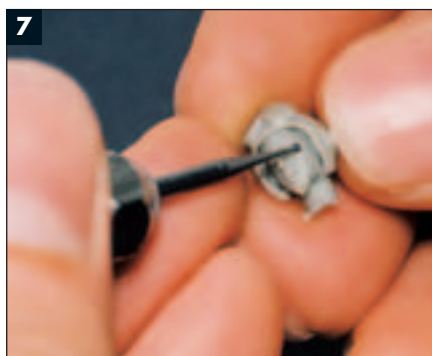
**4** David carved the bottle to its final shape with a sharp hobby knife.



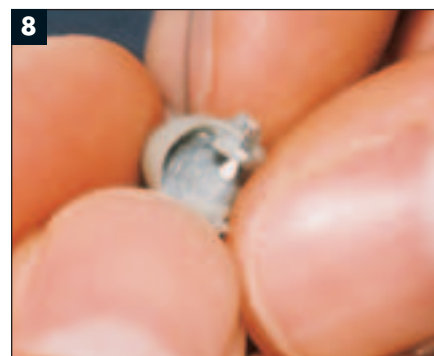
**5** Tight work: drilling out the inside of the bottle with a pin vise.



**6** A tiny label completes an unusual project: a 1/35 scale bottle of Tabasco sauce.



**7** Motor tool time again: To create an empty helmet, David carved out the head and ...



**8** ... added a tiny microphone assembly made from styrene strip and wire.



Using skills not often required of an armor modeler, David detailed the driver's instrument panel with a tiny snapshot.



The cluttered topside of the vehicle is a treasure trove of details from a soldier's everyday life.

tool to carve the head out of the helmet, **7**. I left the headphones intact and added a microphone made from .010" styrene and wire, **8**.

I finished the driver's compartment by painting a small scene of a bikini-clad girl at the beach on a tiny piece of inkjet paper. I attached it carefully to the driver's instrument panel, **9**.

For good measure, the rest of the vehicle is detailed with scattered letters from home, an open can of beans, an M16 rifle, packs of cigarettes, and even some open notebooks made from pieces of Verlinden C-ration boxes, **10**. All these items help make the model look as it would if the crew had just stepped away on a break.

Adding figures to a static model isn't the only way to show how the full-scale vehicle was occupied. The right details can give your model a "lived in" look. Approach the project from a historical perspective and create a realistic slice of everyday life. **FSM**

Below: As this rear three-quarter view shows, the interior of David's M113 is as meticulously detailed as the topside.



## Meet David Huffman

David started modeling when he was 8, with Apollo rocket displays, a natural choice since his father worked for NASA. In time, David moved on to World War II subjects – mostly aircraft but some armor, too. He also built sci-fi models, including those of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*.

After a hiatus during his teen years, David became interested in Vietnam when he was a senior in college. He returned to modeling to further his understanding of the conflict.

"Doing the research necessary to accurately create a Vietnam diorama enabled me to learn much about what caused the Vietnam war," he says.

David lives in Atlanta, Georgia, where he works as a research assistant at a nutritional medical laboratory.

