

King Tiger “katbash”

Story by Harvey Low

Photos by Harvey Low and Richard Briggs



It's grrrrreat! Harvey kitbashed Revell and Italeri kits – and added in a pile of photoetched and scratchbuilt goodies – to model this striking 1/72 scale Tiger II. Richard Briggs photo

Build a
stunning late-
war Tiger II with
the best of two
small-scale kits

The King Tiger was one of the best-known and most formidable tanks of World War II. Its imposing looks and the variety of camouflage schemes it wore make the Tiger II one of the most popular armor subjects in 1/35 scale. Small-scale fans have fewer choices, but they include two accurate 1/72 scale kits from Revell (No. 03129) and Italeri (No. 7004) and photoetched detail sets from Eduard and Part.

Although Italeri's offering is an ex-Escii kit that's about 25 years older than the Revell one, both kits have strengths and weaknesses. Since both were in my collection and I believe I should build what I buy, I decided to construct a Tiger from the best parts of both kits.

Turret treatment

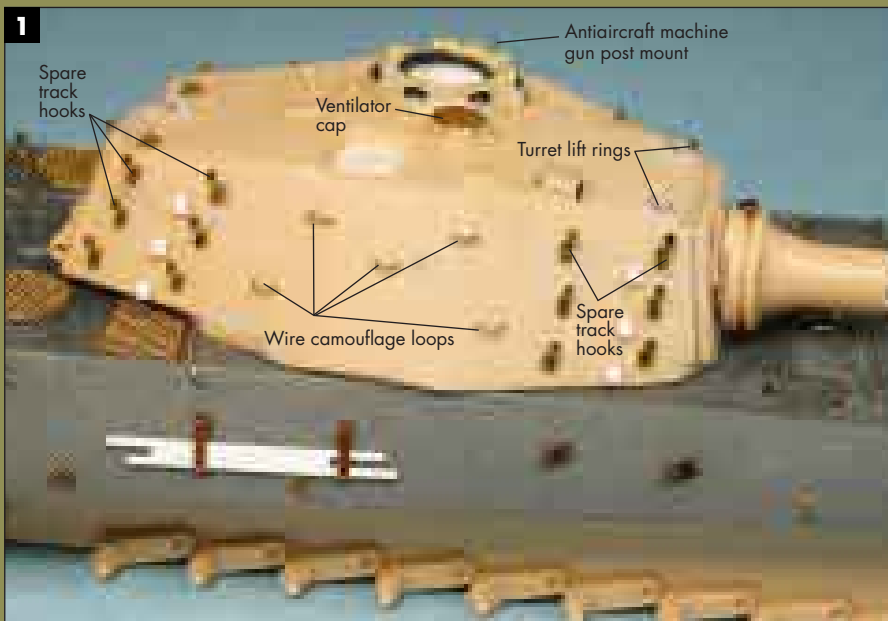
The Revell turret is much more accurately shaped than Italeri's, so I modified it to represent the final production version made in March 1945, **1**. I added scratch-built spare-track hooks made from bits of plastic and spare strips of photoetched

fret. After drilling tiny holes with a pin vise, I inserted small camouflage tie-down loops fashioned from fine brass wire. More wire in various gauges forms grab handles and turret lift rings. I omitted the anti-aircraft machine gun ring mount on the commander's cupola because it was left off some late-war Tigers.

Although Aber and Armo make beautiful turned-metal barrels, Revell's barrel was more than serviceable after I cleaned it up and carefully drilled out the bore. I airbrushed the barrel dark steel and set it aside to dry, **2**.

Lower hull and running gear

Although Italeri's road wheels have good detail, they are molded together rather than as separate wheels. There is no easy way to fix this problem, so I used the lower hull, wheels, and beautiful individual-link tracks from the Revell kit. Purists might argue that Revell's drive sprocket and tracks are not the final late-war version, but in this scale, it's not noticeable after painting and weathering.



1 Harvey kicked off the project by detailing the turret with numerous photoetched and scratch-built styrene items. He also detailed the inside of the loader's hatch.

2 After cleaning up and drilling out the barrel from the Revell kit, Harvey airbrushed it a dark steel color. Richard Briggs photo

3 The rear hull plate, as well as the more-accurate exhaust pipes and armored covers from the Revell kit were used. Richard Briggs photo

4 The rear deck received numerous photoetched brass grilles, piping made from wire, and other goodies.



I aligned, glued, and painted the tracks in sections off the model, then super glued them on after the rest of the model was assembled and finished.

Since I wanted to have figures standing in the open hatches, I glued pieces of styrene into the lower hull to support them. (This is best done before the upper hull is glued on.) In this scale, the interior can't be seen with figures in the hatches, so I painted it flat black and called it a day.

Upper hull upgrades

Both kits have accurate upper hulls, but I chose Italeri's because its hatches can be posed open. It also has separate parts for the periscopes and other fine details, right down to a tiny molded-on wire for the headlight. Although the Italeri upper is slightly longer, it mated neatly with Revell's lower hull after I added styrene shims to keep the two properly aligned. Judicious application of putty guaranteed a seamless fit.

Italeri's rear hull plate lacks tow cleats, so it was back to the Revell box for those

parts. (I sanded-off the jack rest block and omitted the jack as these were deleted on late Tigers). Fortunately, Revell's exhaust pipes and shields were more accurate, so I had no trouble mating those parts to the hull plate, **3**. I then finely textured all hull surfaces with a round dental drill bit to simulate rolled steel.

I began adding the finer details to the rear deck, **4**, by cutting off the center armored air vent (located between the fire extinguisher and wire cutters) from the Revell kit. Before attaching it to the Italeri hull, I had to move Italeri's misplaced antenna mount from the same spot to its proper location at the rear of the engine deck. Only then could I install the air vent next to the fire extinguisher, which also came from the Revell box.

Next, I installed tool brackets, engine screens, and engine-deck armored plates from one of the Part photoetched sets. These were followed by fuel-tank air pipes and grab handles fashioned from fine brass wire. All the effort paid off: The suitably busy, business-like rear deck

turned out to be one of the high points of the finished model, **5**.

On the hull sides, I added more photoetched brass brackets to hold gun-cleaning rods made from Evergreen styrene rod and the starter crank from the Revell kit, **6**. Revell's headlight, shovel, U-hooks, and hull machine gun were also fine, so I installed them on the front plate, **7**.

Part offers a lovely set of thin brass fenders and side-skirts, which I crumpled, dinged, and dented to realistically "distress" them before installing on the model, **8**. Side skirts were often damaged or torn-off in combat, so I didn't install all of them. As a result, I have spares to equip a future Tiger II or Jagdtiger.

Weathering up a storm

The paint scheme represents a late-war scheme found on some King Tigers. There is some debate as to whether one of the colors was actually just primer. The vehicles were also rushed to the front so quickly that some had no markings. I decided to make my model one of those.



5

With all the bits and pieces installed, the highly detailed engine deck is a highlight of the finished model. Richard Briggs photo



6

The hull sides received barrel cleaning rods made from Evergreen styrene rod held down with photoetched brass mounting brackets. The engine starter crank came from the Revell kit.



7

Most of the front hull detail, including the headlight, U-hooks, and machine gun also came from the Revell box.



8

The realistically ratty fenders and side skirts came from one of the Part photoetched set. Richard Briggs photo

Although barely 4" long, Harvey's model comprises more than 300 parts. It represents a Tiger II of the 3rd Kompanie PzAbt 511 in 1945. Richard Briggs photo



I first primed the model with Tamiya flat white (XF-2) to even out the color between the various plastic and photoetched parts that would show through the base coat. This was followed with a base coat of Tamiya hull red (XF-9) with a bit of light brown and white mixed in for scale effect. I chose this color to simulate the red oxide primer introduced in October 1944 and used as a base coat on many German tanks.

I then airbrushed Tamiya dark yellow (XF-60) free-hand in a random pattern over the whole vehicle. I blended the colors by applying "filter" colors: essentially very diluted light coats airbrushed on (roughly 95 percent thinner to 5 percent paint). This added a depth to the color that cannot be achieved with washes alone. I started with a mixture of Tamiya clear gloss (X-22) and the red-brown base color with more red added for warmth. Tamiya earth brown (XF-52) was misted onto all the lower surfaces to simulate dirt, followed by a coat of clear gloss to prepare the surface for the washes.

A wash of black-brown to accentuate the details followed an overall wash of raw umber oil paint and Humbrol thinner.

Dry-brushing with the original base color and a bit of white oil paint helped accentuate the details further, and a coat of weathering powders by MIG Productions finished up the process.

I rubbed the rims of the wheels heavily with pencil lead to simulate wear from contact with the tracks. The tracks were painted gun metal, followed by a heavy raw-umber oil wash. They were weathered with rust- and dirt-colored weathering powders and finished with a light dry-brushing of steel. A silver coloring pencil was used for the subtle chipped-paint effect. I gave the entire model several light coats of Testor Dullcote thinned with lacquer thinner to flatten and even out the finish.

I modified figures from a Preiser German tank crew set to put in the open turret hatches. Tamiya acrylics were followed by washes and dry-brushing for added realism.

The model has approximately 300 separate parts – a lot to pack into a tank barely 4" long. It was an enjoyable project, and best of all, the finished model takes up precious little real estate on my display shelves! **FSM**

Harvey Low, a policy analyst with the city of Toronto, started modeling in 1974: A 1/48 scale Spitfire "with about 10 parts!" he says. He soon moved into 1/72 scale aircraft and now builds a lot of Japanese WWII aircraft in that scale. But that doesn't preclude armor projects and IJN ships (his Fuso battleship was featured in the cover story of the September 2002 FSM).

SOURCES

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