Trumpeter's



By Larry Schramm
Photos by Jim Forbes and William Zuback

The much-anticipated 1/32 scale F-105s are finally here! Trumpeter has taken the field at the big-scale ballpark once again with two issues, the single-seat F-105D Thunderchief and this kit, the F-105G "Wild Weasel."

The kit comes in a large, sturdy box with gobs of parts – 443 total, **1**, but a lot of the ordnance common to both issues goes unused in the Weasel version. The G model doesn't use the Bullpup missiles, the napalm canisters, or the 500- and 750-pound bombs.

Other features include posable canopies, exposed radar gear, a refueling probe, Vulcan cannon, and movable control surfaces. A well-detailed engine is provided, along with the ammo drum for the cannon and the auxiliary fuel tank that was installed in the Thud's unused internal bomb bay. With the exception of the engine's afterburner, however, these last three items will not be visible once the fuselage is assembled. To show them, you would have to either display them outside the model or perform plastic surgery to open panels and doors.

You also get 13 steel rods to use with photoetched metal hinge tabs for the rudder, flaps, ailerons, and leading-edge slats. The tires and the ammo feed belts for the cannon are cast in black vinyl.

The decal sheets are among the high points, **2**. Designed by Twobobs and printed by Microscale, the sheets offer three marking choices (two for one aircraft at different times), and lots of airframe and weapons stencils.

Twin offices. I started construction with the cockpits, **3**. Detail is just average here, not as well done as Trumpeter's MiG-21 (reviewed in the January 2002 FSM). The instrument panels are molded clear and don't have proper relief for the scale. Complicating the matter, the holes for the instruments are too small, and the back of the panel is thick, which places the photo-film instruments so far "in" that they are difficult to see from the cockpit, **4**.

The seats seem undersize and are hollow in back. The cockpit assemblies all fit in the fuselage, but the bulkheads behind the seats don't quite reach the inside arcs of the fuselage, **5**. I used filler to close the gaps.

Up front, the M61 Vulcan cannon has an unusual problem; the holes for the barrels in the muzzle don't line up with the barrel ends, **6**. You're better off ignoring the holes and gluing the muzzle in proper alignment. Trumpeter also gives you the retractable refueling probe and a radar

new Wild Weasel



Trumpeter's two-seat F-105G is an impressive model. This right-side view shows the anti-radar Standard ARM missile and ECM pod underwing.

set with the option of showing the radome open. In back, the 43-part J-75 engine is gorgeous, **7**.

Gear down. The nose gear strut is a 10-piece affair including the vinyl tire. The axle isn't quite long enough to reach through the wheel, so I shaved the hub a little. The strut must be placed in the gear bay before the bay is installed in the fuselage, making the strut vulnerable to breakage through the rest of the project, **8**.

The main gear struts look just right, but the plastic is soft, the attachment points are weak, and the struts won't hold the weight of the model. (I noticed that none of the box-top photos show the model resting on its landing gear.) Here's hoping some aftermarket company produces a set of cast-metal struts.

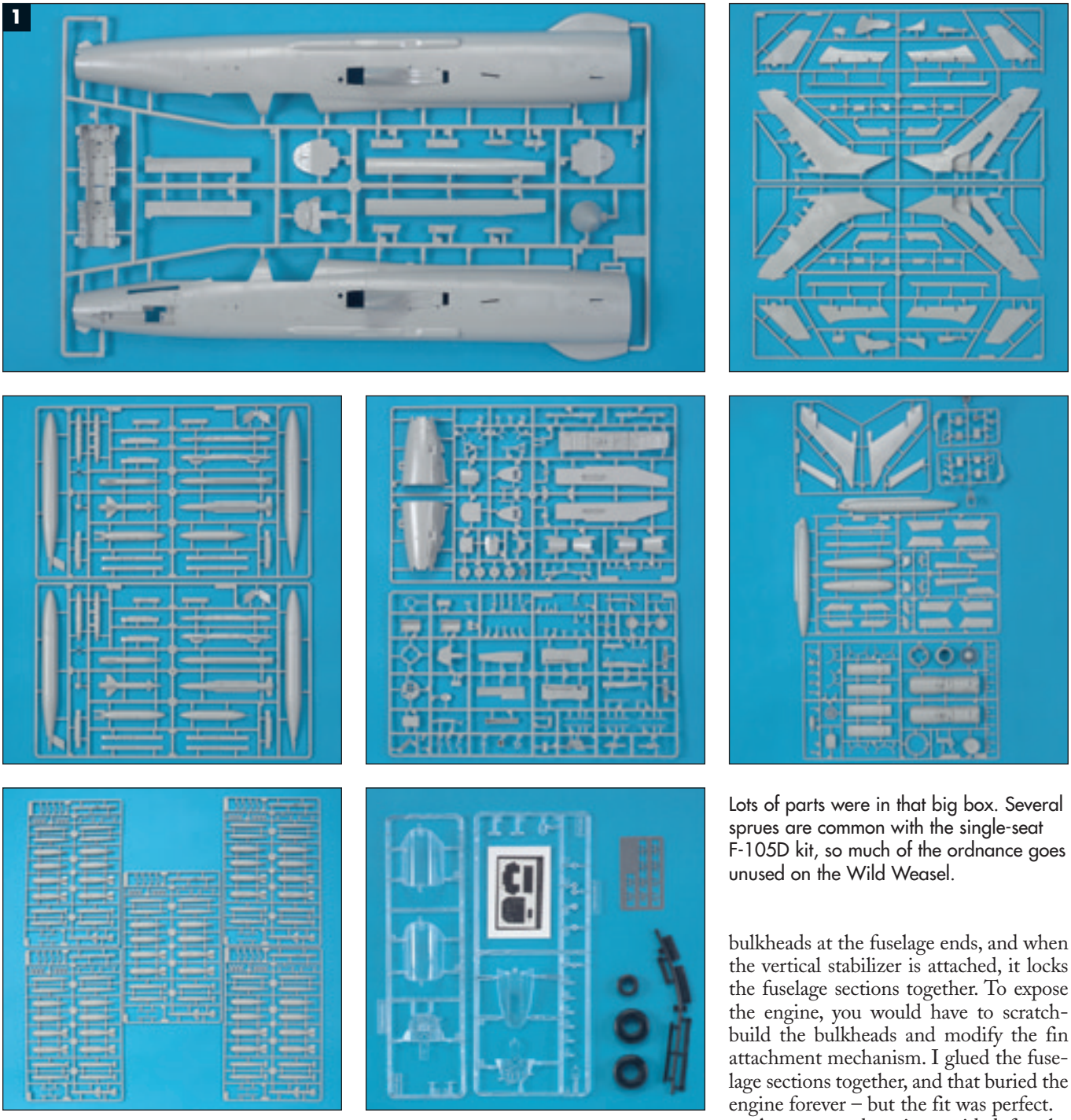
All of the gear doors lack interior detail and are marred by ejector-pin marks.



Kit: No. 02202
Scale: 1/32
Manufacturer: Trumpeter, distributed by Stevens International, P.O. Box 126, 706 N. White Horse Pike, Magnolia, NJ 08049, 856-435-1555
Price: $124.95
Comments: Injection-molded, 443 parts (10 photoetched-metal, 13 steel-wire, 6 vinyl, 1 photo-film), decals
Pros: Impressive kit, long-awaited subject, loads of weapons, good exterior detail, option to show radar and cannon, excellent decals
Cons: Movable control surfaces don't work well, cockpit details are basic and undersize, detailed engine is hidden in fuselage, weak landing gear

Unused bomb bay. Trumpeter provides an internal bomb bay and the auxiliary fuel tank that was usually installed in it. However, you'll have to cut the bomb bay door from the fuselage to see the bay.

The fuselage halves went together without a hitch, but it takes some care to



Lots of parts were in that big box. Several sprues are common with the single-seat F-105D kit, so much of the ordnance goes unused on the Wild Weasel.

get the nose gear bay, cockpit assembly, and engine to line up.

Flippy flappy wings. Trumpeter provided separate leading-edge slats, ailerons, flaps, and even upper-surface spoilers. All but the spoilers are hinged with photoetched tabs and steel-wire hinge pins. Although hinging the controls is a nice idea in principle, the system doesn't work well. With only a central hinge tab for each aileron and no end pins, they flop at crazy angles.

Installing the tabs for the leading-edge slats is difficult; they end up loose but can't be deflected much, **9**. They're better off glued in place. I had to sand down the inside surfaces of the trailing-edge flap halves to get them to fit and drop properly.

I glued the flaps in the dropped position, the ailerons offset, the leading-edge slats up, and the spoilers down.

Inseparable. The rear fuselage is molded separately and divided from the front at the frame where the aircraft would be pulled apart to allow engine maintenance. However, there are no bulkheads at the fuselage ends, and when the vertical stabilizer is attached, it locks the fuselage sections together. To expose the engine, you would have to scratchbuild the bulkheads and modify the fin attachment mechanism. I glued the fuselage sections together, and that buried the engine forever – but the fit was perfect.

A separate door is provided for the drag chute compartment near the rear of the vertical stabilizer's base, but there is no compartment to show, so I glued it in the closed position.

The radar array in the nose is nicely done and gives you a good basis for added wires and cables, **10**. The nose-cone taper is too straight; it should have an ogival shape.

I had a little trouble attaching the windscreen. The forward instrument panel sits high, preventing the shroud from fitting flush, **11**. On top of that (lit-



Twobobs made the decals for both of Trumpeter's Thud kits, and they include stenciling and weapons markings.


Cockpit detail is basic, and the ejection seats are undersize.


The photo-film instruments are barely visible through the tiny holes in the panels.

erally), the Head-Up Display (HUD) is too tall, and I had to shave some off its bottom.

Watch out for the tiny clear position lights that go on the fuselage. I lost a couple to the parts-eating rug when I dropped them. I replaced them with Micro Krystal Kleer tinted with Tamiya clear paints.

Underwing things. The ordnance and hardpoints went together without a hitch. I chose the seldom-seen double-Shrike launcher for the outboard left wing, accompanied by a 450-gallon drop tank, **12**. On the right wing, I mounted a Standard ARM and ECM pod. The centerline carries a 650-gallon fuel tank.

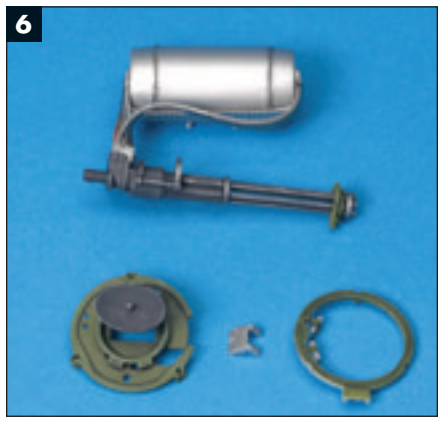
I airbrushed the camouflage with Testor Model Master enamels and overcoated with Future in preparation for a wash and the decals. My sheet of Twobobs markings went on perfectly. Watch out, though; if you leave the decal sitting in water for more than 10 seconds, the decal will float off the paper. Just dip in water and set the decal down on a paper towel.

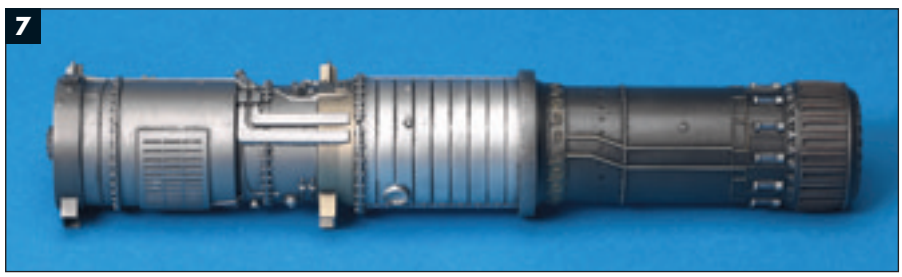
Done. The finished Weasel looks almost perfect. The fin has the correct increased height for the two-seater, but it's missing the increased chord, most noticeable at the leading-edge kink by the ram-air intake.

The model is tail heavy, and there's no easy solution. Adding weight to the nose will only make the weak main gear collapse sooner. You could leave out the hidden bomb bay and tank, and most of the engine, but that still may not be enough.

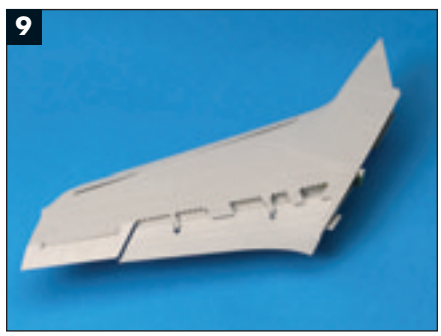
There are several good books available on the F-105, among them Bert Kinzey's *F-105 Thunderchief in Detail & Scale*,


The bulkheads behind the seats don't quite reach the top of the fuselage.


Extra details include the M61 Vulcan cannon with its ammo drum and the nose-mounted radar unit.

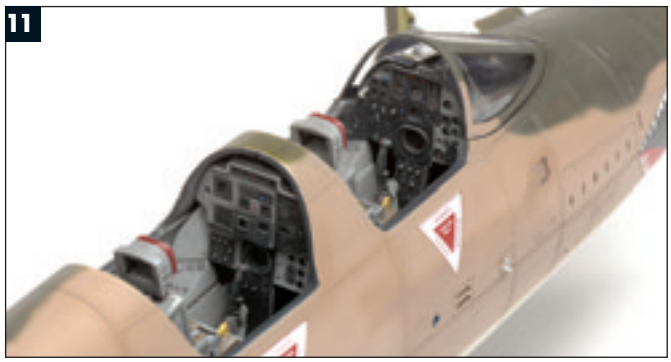

The J-75 engine is well-detailed, but it will be invisible once installed in the fuselage.


The landing gear looks right to scale, but it bends under the weight of the finished model.


Here's the left wing with the hinged slat, flap, and aileron installed. They are all best glued in place.



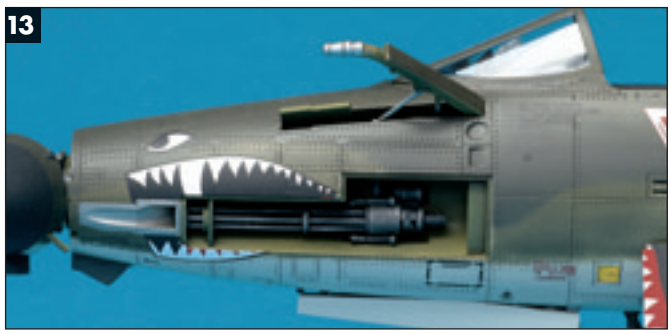
The finished radar unit installed in the posable nose.



There's not quite enough room under the windscreen for the instrument panel shroud and Head-Up Display.



Larry couldn't resist the double Shrike missile launcher.



A close-up of the nose shows the exposed M61 Vulcan cannon and retractable refueling probe.

Squadron/Signal's *Walk Around F-105 Thunderchief* and *F-105 Thunderchief in Action*, Specialty Press' *Warbird Tech Vol.18, F-105 Thunderchief*, and Schiffer's *Roll Call: Thud – A Photo Record*.

Trumpeter's model is as impressive as the real Thud was imposing, **13**. Modelers with intermediate skills will be able to finish it out of the box. Beginners may have trouble with the awkward control surface hinging. I spent 68 hours building and painting my model. I have no doubt experts will buy this kit – along with aftermarket sets to add detail to the gear doors and correct the cockpit and vertical stabilizer. **FSM**



The U.S. Air Force named the Republic F-105 the "Thunderchief," but crews quickly shortened it to "Thud."

Wild Weasel

"Wild Weasel" was the unofficial nickname for the seemingly insane mission of deliberately attracting the attention of radar-directed antiaircraft gun and missile batteries and then diving down to destroy them. It was dangerous work, but it saved hundreds of American aircrews in Vietnam.

The key weapon of the Wild Weasel was the "anti-radiation" missile; first the Shrike, then the bigger Standard ARM, both carried by Wild Weasel F-105Gs. The missiles were radar-guided weapons that would ride radar beam back to their sources.

The Wild Weasel F-105Gs were retired shortly after the Vietnam war. Taking their place in the "suppression of enemy air defense" (SEAD) missions were F-4G Phantom IIs, rebuilt F-4Es with special electronic detection systems and new High-speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM). F-4G Weasels saw action in Operation Desert Storm but were retired in the late 1990s. Currently, the SEAD assignment goes to specially equipped F-16 Falcons in the U.S. Air Force, and F-18 Hornets and EA-6B Prowlers in the U.S. Navy and Marines.

– Paul Boyer