

Trumpeter 1:48 Douglas A3D-2 Skywarrior

by Gerry Nilles

Scale: 1/48

Company: Trumpeter

Price: \$99.99

Product/Stock #: 02868

Product Type:

Aircraft - Strategic Bomber

Website: Trumpeter.com

Product Web Page: View

With the post-WWII advent of nuclear weapons and jet engines, the US Navy looked seriously at the potential of establishing a carrier-based strategic strike capability. Initial designs for a super carrier were already on the drawing boards and a bomber capable of carrying a nuclear weapon needed to be part of that scenario. The Navy issued initial design specifications for a carrier-based bomber in 1947. Douglas responded 24 months later with its "Skywarrior" concept that proposed a high sweptback wing design, powered by two (podded) jet engines mounted under the wings. Additionally, the Douglas design called for a three-man crew operating in a pressurized cockpit, the ability to carry a 12,000 lb bomb load, and a defensive capability that consisted of a radar-operated tail turret with twin 20mm cannons. The Skywarrior came in at a



whopping 60,000 lbs gross weight that, along with its dimensions, made it both the largest and heaviest aircraft ever proposed for carrier use to that date. Contract award to Douglas, for two prototype XA3D-1s, occurred in March of 1949.

First flight of an XA3D-1 took place in October 1952, with preproduction testing and evaluation continuing for the next three years. Initial production deliveries of 50 A3D-1s began in March of 1956 to Heavy Attack Squadron VAH-1. VAH-1 continued operational evaluations through 1957 while concentrating primarily on total strategic potentials

as well as defining problems associated with operating such a large aircraft from a carrier. However, deliveries of the definitive production version of the Skywarrior, the A3D-2, did not begin until 1957. Upgrades to the A3D-2 included the more powerful J57-P-10 engines, revisions to the weapons bay that now accommodated a variety of stores including mines, and in-flight refueling capability. VAH-2 became the first of the eight Heavy Attack Squadrons to receive the A3D-2s who were now operating from the modernized Essex and Midway class carriers as well as the new class of super carriers.

My first impression is that there certainly is no lack of detail. Actually, the amount of it, at first glance, is almost to the point of being a bit overwhelming. However, on closer examination I found that some of it comes under the category of optional. For example, a very complete radar assembly (made up of 15 parts) is included. Of course, that is if you want it showing, otherwise, delete it and just have the radome in the closed position.

Likewise, the same goes for the bomb bay area, the wings, and vertical stabilizer, if in the folded position rather than extended, and one of the engine pods, which includes removable panels and what looks to be a rather nicely done complete engine. As for those areas where extensive detail is sought, such as the cockpit and wheel wells, I do not see disappointment being the reaction. Actually, I would go so far as to say that those areas are literally models within a model.

The kit consists of no less than 16 individual part trees, three of which are clear, and three photo-etched frets. I have no idea what the part count is, but it has to be extensive. [NOTE: *The Trumpeter web site gives the count as "370+" - ED*]. The molding appears excellent and

free of sink marks or flash, and there is no apparent warping. As a side note the styrene used in this kit has a nice rigidity to it even though some parts, such as the fuselage halves, are rather thin walled.

A quick check of the alignment of those same fuselage halves resulted in an excellent fit. Of course, that is without the addition of all of the interior subassemblies, such as the cockpit, bomb bay, wheel wells etc. Now, there are some very fine locating pins molded in; however, I am not so sure that these pins will be of much help when joining the parts especially along the upper surfaces of the fuselage considering how flat it is. Therefore, I plan to add some plastic card stock tabs along this area to make sure I get a perfect alignment and maintain the flat upper fuselage surface.

Other areas of note in the kit include separate and well-detailed air brakes, rubber tires, leading edge slats, flaps, ailerons, elevators and rudder. As I referenced previously, there is the choice of having the wings and vertical stabilizer either in the extended or folded position. Speaking of the vertical stabilizer, two different versions are available including the

standard plain vertical and the one mounting a radar pod at the top. Interestingly the box art shows the aircraft with a standard vertical where as the Painting and Markings guide shows it with this radar pod attached to the top of the vertical. Finally, and typical of Trumpeter, the 20-page instruction guide is both comprehensive and easy to follow.

The only markings provided with the kit are for VAH-9. However, along with the main decal sheet, two supplemental sheets of variously-sized numbers are included for doing any of the squadron's other aircraft.

As a big fan of 1950s aircraft, I am very happy to see another major 1/48th scale omission finally addressed. Overall, this looks to be a very good kit with lots and lots of detail. However, and because of this extensive amount of detail, I do not see this as being an easy kit to build, (translation, modeling experience definitely a requirement). The markings look good, although it would have been nice to have a least one additional choice. I guess Trumpeter decided to leave at least one thing for the aftermarket businesses, because this is certainly is a very complete kit.