

Trumpeter 1/350th Scale USS Freedom LCS-1

by Tracy White

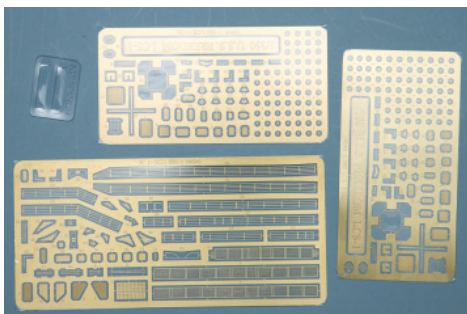
The US Navy's Littoral Combat Ship program has been mired in controversy and cost-overruns from the beginning, yet no one can argue that the two designs that have been put forth haven't been distinct looking designs.

Trumpeter was first to market with the LCS-2 Independence, and now has released the competing LCS-1 USS Freedom in 1/350th scale. LCS-1 Freedom has changed a bit since her initial trials as any prototype does, and Trumpeter has provided pieces for the different phases of her life so far.

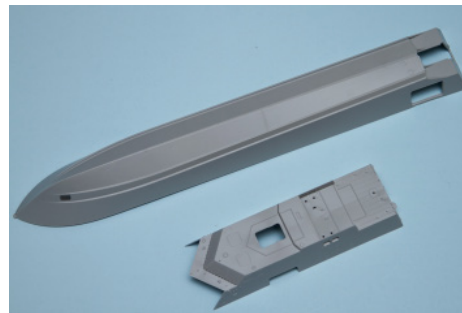
The kit is comprised of over 500 parts; a solid (non-waterline) hull, main deck, and mostly complete superstructure make up the most recognizable parts. The high part count for a medium sized hull is due in part to how they decided to handle detail.

There are, for example, 120 tie-downs on the aft deck for helicopters, and Trumpeter provides a separate photo-etch piece for each one instead of molding them as part of the deck. They could have easily molded the detail into the deck, but chose to add the pieces as separate tie-downs.

Parts breakdown is otherwise fine and logical, with a good split of slide-molded pieces and simpler flat pieces. The superstructure shell, for example, is largely one piece, with some smaller pieces for the front slope and hangar interior. Part edges mostly have a 45



degree mating surface, which can be a positive or a negative, and it works well in this case. Detail is crisp and not too fiddly, unless one is a hater of photo-etch and the aforementioned tiedowns.



The shape is generally good - it certainly looks like the USS Freedom. However, the shape of the bow is not quite correct - the hull stays parallel too far forward, making the bow look a bit fatter than it should.

Trumpeter's railings are also a bit hit or miss. There's an area of the superstructure that is missing the option of railings (they were installed after initial trials and the kit purports to give details for both versions) and the top level railings do not lean in as they should. There is still room for aftermarket railings, but those provided will probably satisfy 90% of the builders out there. I really wish a manufacturer

would do a good, accurate set of RHIBs for modern warships out of the box.

Instructions are included in a 12-page booklet that is well laid out and easy to understand. Views of each tree or photoetch fret are provided for reference and the exploded views clearly show parts placement. I would suggest not following the build order too closely as it would have the builder put detail parts on before fit and finish problems (filling and sanding) are finished. One complaint I have is that reference is made to "State II" with some options without actually explaining that this means later details that have been added since her trials that the stock instructions represent.

The Trumpeter 1/350th LCS-1 USS Freedom is a relatively safe build and would be a good first-time ship build.

There are some issues that some may want to fix, but by and large the ship can be built out of the box without much trouble.

With its interior pieces, there is potential for lots of extra work to bring the ship to life in a dockside or at sea diorama. My thanks to Stevens International for the review sample.