

Cyber-Hobby (Dragon) 1/48th Scale Messerschmitt Bf 110D-3

by Walt Babst

In aviation it has been shown on many occasions that when engineers try to design an aircraft that is supposed to be good at many things, they often end up with a plane that is not good at anything. This is often the way the story of the Bf 110 was portrayed.



The idea of a Kampfzerstörer or Battle-Destroyer was that of an aircraft that could achieve aerial supremacy over enemy territory, have a long enough range to escort bombers, be able to intercept enemy bomber formations and also carry out ground attack and bombing missions on its own. This idea received favor with Herman Goering and led to the issuance of a directive in 1934 calling for the design of an aircraft that would be able to perform all these tasks. After design review three prototypes would be commissioned from three different companies, Focke-Wulf, Henschel and Fayerische Flugzeugwerke (BFW). Trial results quickly showed that Focke-Wulf's Fw 57 and Henschel's Hs 124 were not able to compete with BFW's Bf 110.

Finding favor with Goering the Bf 110 was rushed into production. The plane enjoyed initial success in Poland and France, but suffered unacceptably high loss rates when matched against the British Spitfires and Hawker Hurricanes. Instead of achieving air superiority the Bf 110s had to be escorted by their sister ships, the single-engine Bf 109s.

On December 17, 1939, a flight of 22 RAF Wellingtons flew out on a mission over Heligoland Bight, a bay in the North Sea at the mouth of the Elbe River. These bombers were intercepted by a flight of Bf 109s and Bf 110s, when the ensuing battle was over twelve of the Wellingtons had been shot down, nine of them credited to Bf 110s.

During the Battle of France though the Bf 110 faced modern single engine fighters and had higher loss rates than previously encountered, losing approximately 35 percent of the Bf 110s deployed in that battle. This situation would be repeated again when the Bf 110 was deployed against the Hurricane and Spitfire during the Battle of Britain. During the Month of August 1940 over 120 Bf 110s were lost, or about 40 percent of the Zerstöreregruppen aircraft deployed against England. It had become clear that the Bf 110 could not fight head-to-head with the more maneuverable single-engine fighters.

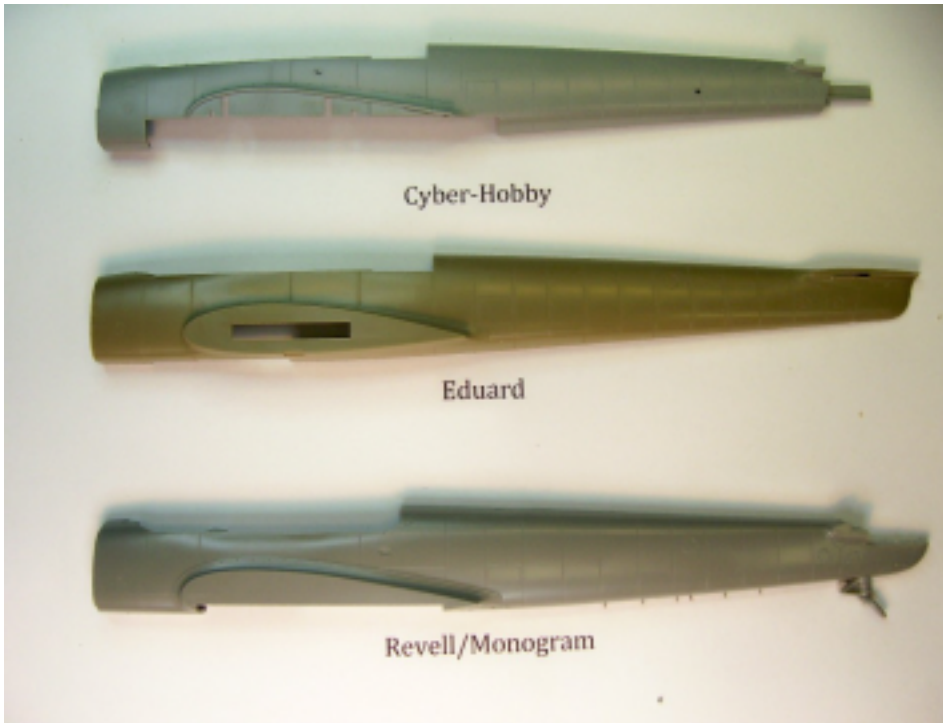
When the Americans entered the war and began their campaign of daylight strategic bombing it was an opportunity again for the Bf 110 to destroy the enemy the way it had at Heligoland Bight. The problem was that the Americans quickly learned to escort their bombers with single-engine fighters that could help keep the enemy fighters at bay. As long and as far as the single-engine fighter stayed with the bombers the Bf 110 could not be an effective weapon against the bombers.

One might think that the failure of the Bf 110 to fulfill any of the missions it was designed for would lead to it being phased out. It is true that production was halted in the expectation of its replacement the Me 210, but this aircraft performed so poorly that production lines quickly resumed production of the Bf 110. Soon after production resumed the ultimate version, the Bf 110G, started rolling off production lines. Production would continue until March 1945 even after its successor the Me 410 went into production. What spurred Germany to produce an aircraft for nine years when they had learned early on

that it really could not fulfill the roles it had originally been designed for? Adaptability would be one reason and no viable replacement another.

The Bf 110 continued to fight the American bombers during the day, using standoff weapons that enabled them to engage the bombers without getting as close in and having to tangle with the fighter coverage. As America continued to bomb during the day, the British would follow up with their own raids at night. Defending Germany from these nightly raids is really where the Bf 110 found its strength. At first early versions of the plane were painted black and sent up at night to shoot down bombers caught in the spot lights. Radar was used to guide the fighters into the bomber stream also. It was dangerous and deadly work, but the crews of the Bf 110 were highly successful. The size of the aircraft enabled the installation of radar on board the aircraft itself. This enabled the crews of the Bf 110 to be hunter aircraft capable of finding and tracking their own quarry. It proved to a role that Bf 110s would fill till the last days of the war. The Bf 110 found its stride, and its success, in a role that had not even been created before the war, that of a Night Fighter.

A major player in the Luftwaffe during World War II, today the Bf 110 is a popular modeling subject. Many kits of different versions of the Bf 110 have long been available in all the popular scales. Recently modelers have been blessed with new releases in all the popular scales. Eduard led off in recent years with their 1/48th scale C/D version that set a new mark class and detail for Bf 110 kits. Most recently Airfix and Eduard have released 1/72nd scale versions that have received favorable reviews also. In between Dragon waded in with their own 1/32nd scale kit and also a 1/48th scale kit marketed under the Cyber-Hobby label of the Bf 110D-3. I was given a Cyber-Hobby kit as payment for some automotive work performed for a fellow modeler. I love deals like that. When I opened the kit I knew it would move to the top of my to-do stack.



When you open the box you are greeted by a well packed and packaged stack of sprues. The base kit has eleven different sprues, three of which are doubles; one small photo etch fret, a piece of pre-bent stainless wire and a decal sheet for two different aircraft. Since this kit was a first production for the United States and Japan, there were two additional identical sprues containing parts to build the engines for each nacelle. It is really pretty creative engineering that the nacelle panel parts are the same with or without the engine. The instruction sheet does not reference the engine parts at all, they are addressed on a separate sheet. The engine parts look to build a nice representation of the DB 601A engine and with a little detailing should look quite realistic.

The decal sheet only offers two options and I was a little surprised to find that one of the choices matched one of the options in the Eduard kit of the E version. Both of the kits offer the markings for an Iraqi Bf 110 from 1941. Well, a little research led me to page 92 of *The Messerschmitt Bf 110 in Color Profile 1939-1945*, where there is a nice clear picture of this aircraft identified as an E, with the extended tail and the

release cable clearly visible. This does not match the Eduard fuselage options, but does match the Cyber-Hobby fuselage. If you want to build this aircraft it would probably be better represented with the Cyber-Hobby kit.

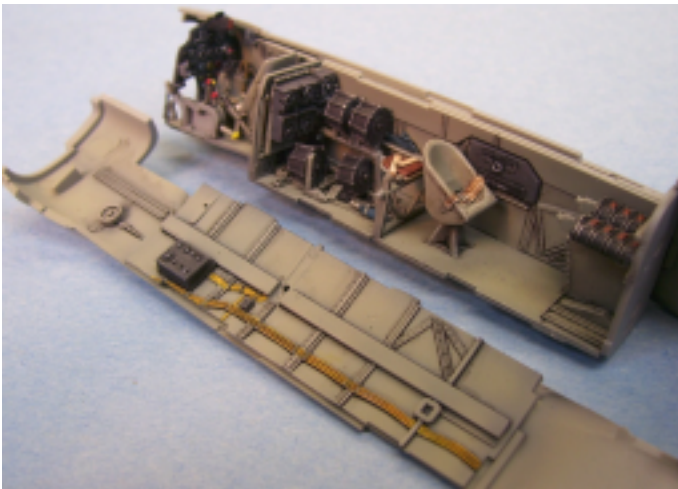
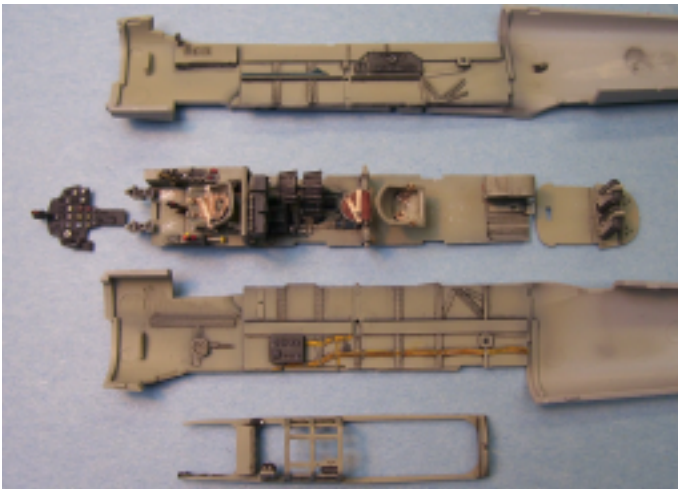
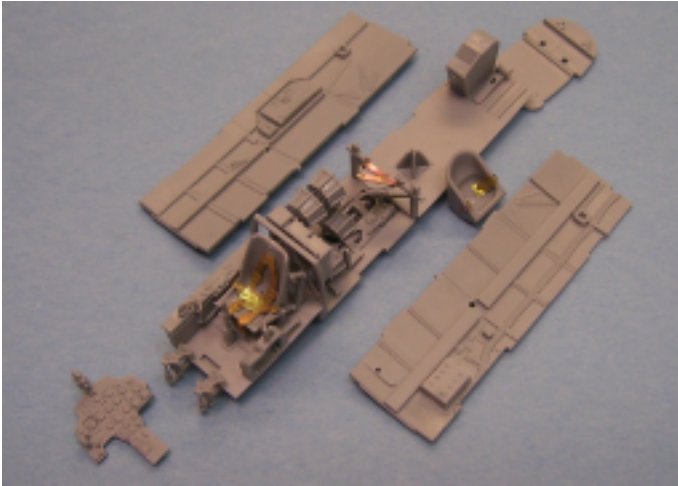
When it comes to modeling I worry about detail and accuracy but I do not let it consume me. I have seen guys get lost in a build moving panel lines and worrying if the shape of something exactly matches the latest scale diagrams. I want to enjoy myself and actually finish the model, and I build too slow to worry about certain things. Still though I respect those who focus on accuracy and I did lay the fuselage and wings up against scale drawings. I will not go into millimeters, but just say that the outline of the fuselage looked just about perfect and the wings were really close, maybe just a tad short in span. I did take a picture of the fuselages from the three main Bf 110 kits on the market, in a side by side comparison. They are all very close to the same and while you could probably almost join the Eduard to the Cyber-Hobby fuselages together they do not agree on the location of the fuselage segments.



The engraving on all the exterior surfaces is fine and delicate, but I think it lacks the finesse of the Eduard kit. The control surfaces may be a little heavy handed for some but I think they will look okay when painted and weathered. The direction sheet looks complete but beware that there are a lot of steps covered in some of the pictures. It might be easy to miss something.

Beginning construction in the cockpit I deviated from the directions and glued the sidewalls to the side of the fuselage instead of building the cockpit first and trapping it in the fuselage. At this point you run into your first glitch in the directions. The directions show two locating sockets for the side of the fuselage to help set the side panels in the proper location. The sockets are on part A1, the port side of the fuselage, but one is missing on the starboard side. In the end it did not matter; the side panel was sufficiently located with just the one socket. As I built up some of the parts I ran into a few little things. One was the photo-etch harness for the pilot's seat. The directions show it passing through the slot in backrest which was molded closed in the kit. Silly me, I drilled it out and folded up the photo-etch to get it to pass through and then unfolded it to glue it in place. Next time I would just cut it and make look like it passed through. There is also no call out in the directions for part F12, the trim wheel, to be glued to fuselage side A1.

All-in-all the cockpit builds up to be very complete and very attractive straight from the box. The one thing I will note is that while the parts are delicate and very intricate the fit of the items is not always very positive and secure. I also ran into an issue when I joined the fuselage halves together. The fuselage mold seems to be wide at the cockpit area. I had to clamp the



The wheel wells are very nice and appropriately detailed. The individual side braces are supplied in plastic and in my opinion are nicer than photo-etch. I do warn you though that you should be careful with these as each of them is different just enough that if you try to put them in the wrong spot they do not fit correctly, yet they look almost identical (as you can imagine, I found this out the hard way).

The engine firewalls are handed for starboard and port wing, but it appears to me that the hoses for the starboard wing are on the wrong side of the firewall. That fact, plus it was my intention to save one engine for some other project, and I wanted to compare the assemblies of the nacelles with and without an engine, led me to build it with just the port engine. I say it was my plan to save one engine for another project, but my dog had other plans. The engine fell onto the floor without me noticing but her. I heard crunching

fuselage in order to get the side to touch the bulkheads. Part F35, which has the framework on it for the canopy and closes out the top of the cockpit, seems to be a little narrow, again requiring clamp, and I was still left with little gaps. On the positive side though, the fit of the fuselage halves was excellent.

sounds and found my engine looking like it had been hit by a few 30 mm cannon shells. The engines themselves are nice and without any enhancements make a reasonable presentation of the engine. In fact, much of the detail is lost under the rear panel of the nacelle that is not

removable in this kit. The assembly of the engine and nacelles is tricky, I did not follow the directions and it caused me many frustrations trying to get it all to fit. The problem is that if you assemble it as the instructions direct, you are trying to attach the wheel wells, firewall, engine, nacelle all at same time. I did not go this route, and still had issues with alignment.

The wings go together fairly well, you are given the option of building it with the leading edge slats deployed or stowed. Showing them deployed requires a little kit surgery, but it is relatively straight forward and I think adds a nice touch. You also are given the option of flaps up or down, I chose down. All of the flight controls are positional which I found to be a nice touch.

When it comes time to attach the wings to the fuselage you are aided by two wing spars which help insure a nice positive strong fit with the correct dihedral. Kudos to Dragon for engineering this feature into the kit; Revell/Monogram and Eduard do not have this feature. The tail also has a nice positive fit and alignment is very easy to achieve.

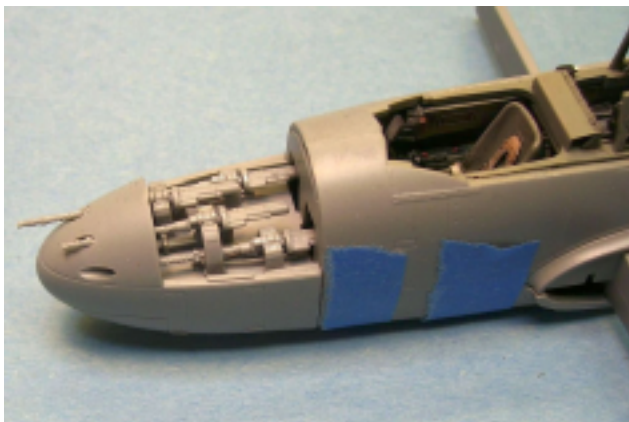
The nose gun bay is also nicely detailed and looks nice straight out of the box. The problem is the strange engineering of the nose piece. Instead of molding a solid one-piece for displaying it closed and a two-piece for displaying it open, Dragon chose to mold it as a two-piece for closed that has a piece missing where I do not believe it was separable on the actual aircraft. (See photo opposite). In order to display it open you have to cut part of the molded nose off and use another piece that slides on. The fit is good if not fiddly, but since I was building this as a review and wanted to take full advantage of what the kit offered I went this route.

After all the subassemblies were put together I was ready for paint. There was very little work that needed to be done after assembly, the only seams that gave me any real issues were the nose to the fuselage, and the underside fuselage to the main fuselage towards the front. Overall it

was not really too bad and required minimal amounts of putty. One word of warning though, throughout assembly I forgot to drill out the holes for various items, like the drop tanks and the cable holders for the dingy release cable. It took some work but I was able to locate and drill them from the outside, sure would have been easier to do it before assembly though!

Now ready for paint, I used my photo references to get the scheme right for my bird. I love the German 02/71/65 paint scheme, although I did lighten my 65 blue with some 76 blue to lighten it up a little bit. I used the kit decals and found that they generally worked well although it did take a few applications of Microsol and Solveset to get them to snuggle down completely. The shark mouth is supplied in two pieces and I ended up with open parts where the decal did not come together in the relief cuts. I ended up touching them up with some red paint. If I had it to do over I would probably paint the mouth and then cut the teeth from the decal. I have done it that way before and it worked well.

I put on some of the detail parts after all this and weathered the bird. I found the photo etch loop antenna to be more trouble than it was worth. If I looked at it wrong it bent and when it bent the paint tended to flake. I guess I am somewhat photo-etch challenged. Overall though I would say this was a very enjoyable, well detailed kit that gives you a lot in the box. Having built the Revell/Monogram kit I can say that it is definitely a much more advanced and better kit. I have not yet



built the Eduard kit, but having read other's reviews and looked at the plastic in the box I am guessing that these two kits would be very close in quality. I would highly recommend the Dragon kit to anyone who likes the Bf 110 and wants an enjoyable build that will give you a really nice build straight out of the box.

1-10 Scale Ratings

Value- 10 (lots of options, photo etch, positional flight controls, optional canopies)
 Fit- 7 (generally very good, but some parts location points not very positive)
 Decals -8 (nice good color and registry but take some effort to get them to settle down)
 Directions- 6 (no real directions just pictures with high parts count assemblies in each)
 Molding - 9 (no flash or sink marks to speak of, crisp details and fine engraving).

