

Bronco Models 1/35th Scale Light Tank M-24 "Chaffee" (British Army)

by Andrew Birkbeck

For those who have been interested in building a 1/35th scale World War Two M-24 Chaffee light tank, the only game until very recently has been the Italeri kit from the mid 1980s. For the time, it was a pretty decent kit, but the original pressing of the model had some "issues" in terms of accuracy. Most notable was the inclusion of post-war rubber block T85E1 track, as well as a few hull and turret parts that again were more in keeping with post-war variants of the M-24.

More recently Italeri rereleased their kit as an "early" version, providing the modeler with the (correct) all-metal T-72 tracks, and removing a few of the other "errors" in the kit. The US firm Formations came out with a brilliantly detailed "upgrade" set for the Italeri kit, which had the modeler replacing over half the Italeri kit with state of the art resin parts. The problem was the price: the resin "upgrade" was two to three times what you could find the base Italeri kit for!

Earlier this year, the Hong Kong firm Bronco Models released a 21st century state of the art WW2 M-24 Chaffee, supplied with USA Army markings. This had one (to me minor, but what do I know!) "error" in the shape of the turret roof layout. The second release of Bronco's kit, and the model under discussion in this review, is the "British Army" version. To Bronco's great credit, they have updated the turret tooling, and fixed the error. So kudos to Bronco on this matter.

The kit under review has me convinced that Bronco design engineers get paid on a per part basis: the more parts, and the smaller the parts, the more they get paid! This kit consists of over 700 injection molded parts in tan and clear plastic and a lovely photo-etched parts fret. The tracks in this kit are the all metal T-72 variety, and are individual link on 14 small sprues. The



detail on both the injection plastic and PE parts is breathtaking. Decals for five vehicles are included, four listing the vehicles as 1944-45 examples, and one from 1946. A length of "string" is included to provide the tow cable.

The initial sequences of the instruction sheet cover the lower hull and suspension construction. The suspension is "workable", which to me is rather annoying. Don't get me wrong. The detail is phenomenal, and sure enough, the set up allows the modeler to position the suspension and road wheels in various layouts. However, how many modelers really want "workable" suspension? To assemble Bronco's workable suspension requires the modeler to have two or three pairs of hands in order to properly assemble the parts. With my one pair of hands, I must admit to a fair number of curses as I got the parts into position, only to have them "work" themselves into another (not desired by me) position. In the end I aligned the parts as best I could, and glued them solidly, then quickly tweaked things as best I could before the glue set up. This worked, and I am very happy with the end result.

The link by link tracks are one of the highlights of this kit. They are beautifully and delicately detailed, there are no

ejection marks to clean up, and "only" three sprue attachment points per part, one part per link. They really weren't any hassle to clean up, and then simply "popped" into position link after link, for fully workable tracks! And the rest of the kit's parts are just as well detailed as the track links, and assemble just as easily (with the exception of that suspension!).

As mentioned, the kit comes with five markings options. The decals are very well printed, with good color saturation, and alignment. All naturally enough, given the title of this kit, are British Army units:

Option 1: HQ Troop, 5th RTR (Royal Tank Regiment), 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Div, Germany 1945

Option 2: C Squadron, Recon Regiment, 5th Infantry Div, 1946

Option 3: trials vehicle, England, 1944

Option 4: 3rd RTR, 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Div., 1944-45

Option 5: 1st RTR, 22nd Armoured Brigade, 7th Armoured Div., 1945

As always, check references if you are hyper sensitive to having the markings be 100% accurate.

All in all this is a brilliant model kit. If you take your time, and plan for the "working" suspension, it should assemble into a breathtakingly detailed model of this diminutive tank. I am half way through building mine, and apart from the challenge of the working assembly, everything is going swimmingly. I would like to thank DragonUSA for providing the review sample.