Fixing up the Italeri 1/35th Scale M6 Anti Tank Dodge

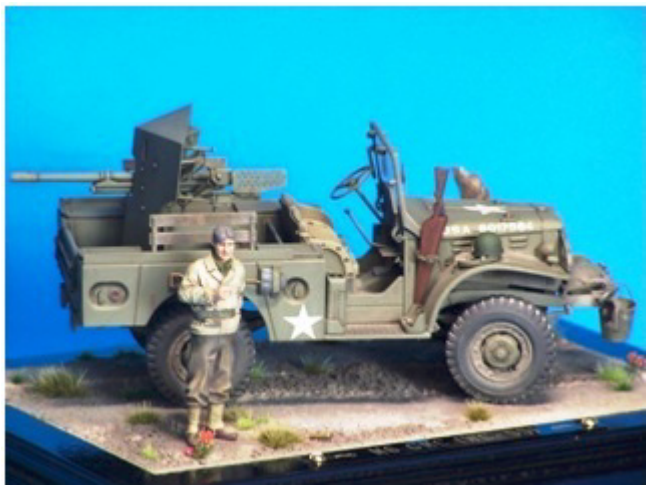
by George Stray

I want to start with a couple things about the kit and why I chose it. The old Italeri kits hold a lot of nostalgia simply because these were the kits that I grew up with. When I was young, these were the only kits available. There were not a lot of aftermarket parts, resin or photo-etch. Aftermarket overkill is not the point of this article. It's to show that this older kit (which is probably twenty-five to thirty years old), can still turn into a really nice model. You can make it attractive with styrene, putty, sanding, a minimum of photo-etch and patience.

Chassis

The chassis is pretty rough. This kit, (Italeri Kit no. 245), as many of the older offerings, suffers from antiquated molding techniques and milling processes. By today's CAD standards, these 'oldies' fall short in detail and finesse. There are a lot of ejector pin marks, and slide molding marks, some flash, clunky parts, bad seams, etc… Of course, all of those have to be filled, removed and/or sanded or replaced.

This is the improved winch. I added a wine foil cover, ship rigging as the cable, cable clamps, chain and a Tamiya hook. I mounted it on this contraption to paint it.



I decided to start with the chassis. The front of the chassis holds a winch assembly. There is a butt joint where the winch attaches to the chassis that needs to be filled and sanded smooth. I also drilled all the way through the winch wheel with a .030 and drilled through the winch holding assembly and made a styrene rod .025 that would hold the winch in place. This would allow me to paint, weather, and assemble it and make it look proper instead of worrying about missing spots during painting and weathering. I added nuts, bolts, and rivets that would attach the winch assembly to not only the chassis, but the bumper. I also added .010 styrene bolts from my Historex hex punch-and-die set to the towing hooks that are on front of the bumper. On the rear of the chassis, I added a new towing clevis which was scavenged from a Skybow kit. The one in the kit was woefully inaccurate and poorly molded.

The muffler received a thorough cleaning and sanding, as well as a hole in the exhaust pipe. I added a very thin wine foil strap around the muffler and a .005 styrene punch to the holder representing a nut that would hold it on and support it.

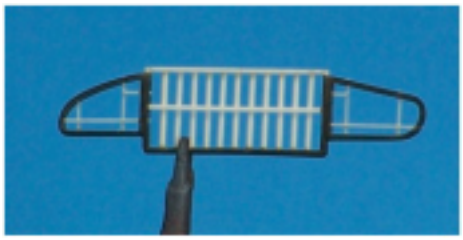
Wheels

The wheels may be the most accurate part of the kit. They only need a valve stem. I drilled a .020 hole in the notched area of the wheel to accept and help keep the valve stem glued. I added valve stems to

This is the unpainted chassis. I left off the gun, shield, seats and tools as sub-assemblies for painting.

the wheels with .015 Plastruct rod. I used two wheels from the Dodge kit and two wheels from the Italeri Water Tank and Cargo Trailer set (Kit No. 229). These two wheels became the front wheels and I used the kit wheels on the rear. The reference books I used show a very minor difference in the center hub and the Italeri trailer kit had these wheels.

This is another view before painting. It's mostly 'kit' with some rivets and putty.



This is the completed grille. I kept the outer portion by carefully removing the inner bars with a fine razor saw. I replaced them with Evergreen .020 rod. I kept them spaced evenly by placing a .025 styrene block in between each bar . The headlight guards are Plastruct .010 square rod.

Grille

I kept the basic shape of the grille. However, I cut out all the rods in the center of the grill and I used .020 Evergreen rod as replacements and .025 styrene blocks as spacers for the rods to keep them square and equal. I started by gluing the center rod and worked outward toward each side. There are eleven rods in the grill and I used a piece of tape to hold the grill steady while I lined up the rods and glued them one by one using the styrene block spacers to keep them square as I went along. I also added new fine light guards on the grille made from Plastruct .010 square rod. This gave a more scale appearance to the grille which again was very thick and unrealistic. I added MV lenses (part no. 193) to the headlights.

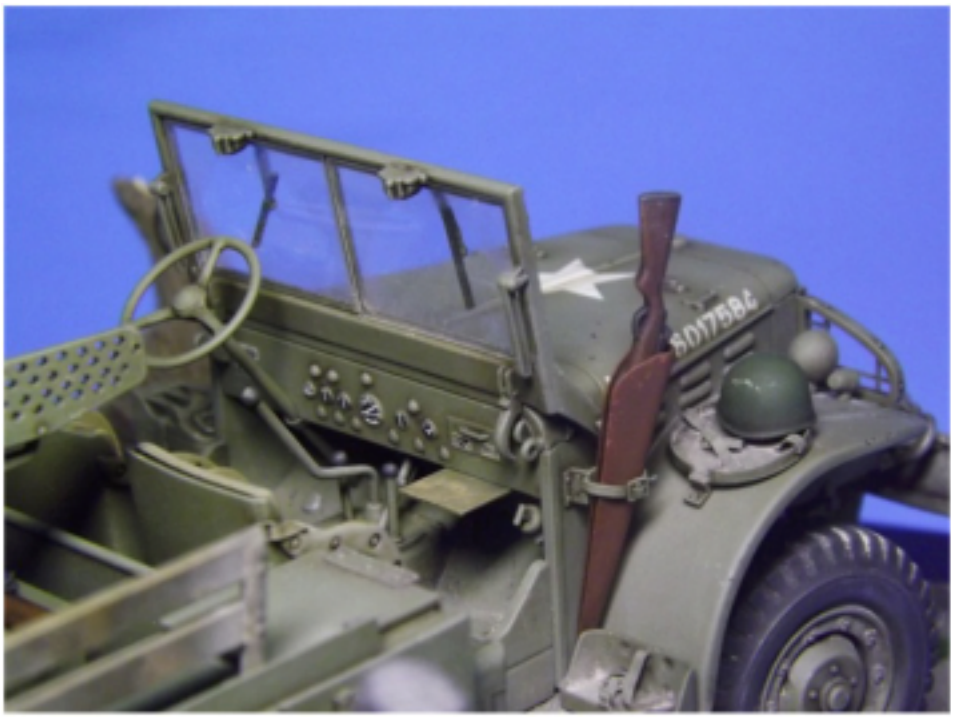
Hood/Driving Compartment

I added a new side mirror which I made from .015 Plastruct rod and a photo-etch side mirror from the scraps box. Fender supports were also added underneath using Plastruct U-channel and I added Grandt Line (item no. 127) nuts and bolts to the inside and punch-and-die rivets and a .005 supporting styrene strap on the fender on the outside. I also added a handle on the glove box, scratch built fire extinguisher which contained seven pieces, and a small writing desk. All of the aforementioned items were made from Plastruct and Evergeen items. Moving backward to the driver's compartment, I also scavenged a steering wheel from a Skybow kit and made a new steering column from Evergreen rod. The holder for the steering wheel is a piece of wine foil that was bent to turn into a support for the steering column. I kept the kit seats, but they needed to be upgraded. I was inspired by an article I saw in another magazine to make them armored seats and to make them more accurate. I made a template from fifteenth thousandths styrene, and made four identical armored seat side panels.

Close-up of the seat. Note the detail pressed into the seat cushion arm. This was done with a piece of rod with a hole drilled in it. I dipped it in water so it wouldn't stick to the soft putty .

I added the new sides to the seats and blended them with Mr. Surfacer putty. The cushion on the outside of the seat was made from ApoxieSculpt. While it was still soft, I embossed the 'snap' detail with a small styrene rod I had drilled a hole in. This would create a center button or snap and then a little bit of a tufted impression around it. This replicated the look of fabric. I also added wine foil seat belts and photo etched buckles from Resicast.

Reference books show that there were leather scabbards on each side of the vehicle, just outside of the driver's and passenger's compartments. These each



The driver's compartment. I used a punch set to custom size the instrument panel. The writing desk is made from Evergreen styrene. Note the subtle nicks on the scabbard.

held a weapon. I put one on my vehicle, on the passenger side. I made this item from, (you guessed it!) wine foil. Once cut, I wrapped it around a toothpick and trimmed it to fit inside the retaining strap I made from more foil. For shadow, I painted the inside of the scabbard black and I paired it with an Italeri rifle.

I kept the kit windshield frame. I detailed it with wiper motors and blades from the Skybow Dodge Staff Car kit. However, I put new blades on the wipers made from .015 styrene strip. Bolts for the detailing where the windshield wipers attach were added to the front of the windshield. I also made new supports for the windshield by placing a styrene rod underneath the hood. This went from the left side all the way through to the right side as one continuous rod. This allowed me to attach the windshield in a more realistic fashion closer to the real vehicle. The kit version is more toy-like where you slide in one of the pins and then you slide the windshield over and insert the other and then it locks in place. It didn't look realistic at all, so I decided to fix it.

Tools

The tools on the kit are also a bit rough, so I fixed them up starting with the shovel. I kept the shovel head and added a .005 Evergreen strap along the top as the retaining band. I applied .005 rivets made with a Brach Models punch set. I fashioned a 'D' shaped piece made from wine foil wrapped around an Evergreen half-circle for the shovel handle to slide over. I also added wine foil straps with a photo etched buckle from spares box to give the impression that they are not only held in by in the steel tie-down points but also a leather strap.

The axe was also detailed in the same fashion as the shovel. I used a Masters Productions pick-axe head and Skybow handle, which will be put behind the seats.

The jerry cans are from Tasca (kit no 35-L14) and they are magnificent. I used one gas and one water can. They were detailed with wine foil straps and Resicast etch buckles. The holders for the cans were made from .010 Evergreen strip that I carefully wrapped around the completed cans. I sanded any joints smooth.

Gun and Shield

The gun in the kit is poorly molded and 'jogged'. That is, the two parts of the mold do not mate well creating an elliptical looking gun. I decided to tackle this anyway, using putty and sanding as my cure.

I started by applying a thinned solution of Tamiya Putty down the length of the barrel. Once this had dried, I sanded out the seam and attempted to make a rounder representation of the gun. I also drilled 27 holes (.022 dia.) in the protecting plate. There were also two round and one oval

The gun is ready for paint. The muzzle cover is ApoxieSculpt. The stitching is embossed with a toothpick.

hole I drilled in the support. Once I was satisfied with the gun, I added a muzzle cover fashioned from ApoxieSculpt. I embossed thread detail with a sharpened toothpick to represent a canvas cover.

The trunion is chunky and has poor accompanying details. I made a new hand crank from a spare On the Mark etch set and styrene rod. I made a support for this from wine foil (wrapped around a drill bit to create a small tube) and styrene rod. I then slid the hand crank rod through the wine foil support. I also added .005 punches to the elevating and traversing mechanisms. I drilled through the trunion where the gun mounts and made a rod from .015 rod to hold it in place. This would allow me to paint and weather everything then assemble them so there were no missed spots. I detailed the trunion with a Grandt Line bolt where the other side of the holding pin would be.

The front of the shield was sanded smooth to accept the bolts and attaching rivets for the tool box. These were made with the punch set from Historex. I kept the rivet and bolt lines straight by using tape as a 'flexible ruler'. I used the kit tool box.

Painting

I prefer to use enamels and lacquers when I paint. They go on very 'wet' and are easy to work with. I've had good luck with Testors, Floquil, Model Master, and Humbrol, though I am not brand-particular.

I chose to paint the M6 Model Master Faded Olive Drab. It has an attractive grayish hue which I thought would be lighter in appearance than traditional olive drab.

After priming, I gave all appropriate parts two to three fine coats of thinned Faded OD. I used the ratio 1.5 parts thinner to 1 part paint. This can be viewed as tinted thinner rather that thinned paint. This allowed me to build the color concentration slowly and preserve detail.

Once I had everything painted, I clear-coated the model with Duracryl brand clear coat. It comes as a resin (No. 468) and it takes a very specific thinner (No. 16). I mix this ratio of 2 parts thinner to 1 part resin. Once this dries, it acts as a very durable barrier between your weathering medium and the paint. I have never had a 'rub-through' in 16 years of using this product.

View of the rear of the gun shield. Note the large ejector-pin marks and large pits for the kit shield supports.

The shield's shape is good. However, the shield has two large ejector pin marks and two overscale pits, which are to accept the trunion support rods. I filled the shallow ejector pin marks with thick black paint. Once dried, I wet-sanded smooth. I use paint for shallow pin marks because paint is a true material. It is what it is; it does not shrink like putty and it sands glass-smooth. You will notice the black paint marks in the photo. I filled the larger holes with styrene and super glue.

The support rods were fashioned from .015 Plastruct rod. I flattened each end and attached a .005 rivet to the flattened ends. I glued these to the shield and made them angle inwards. I did this to ensure a tight fit on the completed model once the trunion was attached to the shield.

This can be found at most auto-body supply shops.

Another benefit to Duracryl is that once you have weathered an area (a fuel stain for example) you can 'save' it by spraying Duracryl over the top of it so succeeding layers of washes will not affect your work. I often do this with tools, tires, and figures.

I use Winsor & Newton oils thinned with odorless mineral spirits to weather. The mineral spirits will not attack the Duracryl. Lacquer thinner will, so be careful not to mix them up! I used the kit decals which went down beautifully. I 'buried' them under two to three coats of clear and wet-sanded the edges smooth.

Once weathered, I flat coated everything with Testors Dullcote and I added a small amount of House of Kolor flattening additive as 'insurance'.

To finish off the model, I put it on a base painted with about 20 coats of Krylon Gloss Black and a figure from Helo. A fun and challenging project!

A lot of detail can be seen here. The wine foil scabbard, seats, water can, bucket holder, tie-down hooks and mor e!