

Kobayashi's "Tony"
Hasegawa's 1/48th Ki 61
by Armand S. Miale

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I have always wanted to make a KI 61 *Tony* in the markings of Capt. Teruhiko Kobayashi of the 244th Sentai....colorful and a big challenge because of the camouflage pattern. A number of years back, I bought the Hasegawa kit. As is typical with Hasegawa, the same kit is available in different boxes with different decal options. The particular kit offers the markings for one of Kobayashi's Ki 61s.



By the time I got around to buying a digital camera, the cockpit was already completed and the fuselage halves were glued together. The cockpit parts from the kit were quite good.



I had an old Medallion Models resin cockpit set for the Ki 61...but the kit parts were actually better. All I did was add photo etch seatbelts.



Once the major components were put together and the filling, sanding and polishing was completed, it was time for some paint. Different folks approach it different ways, but I'm so worried about pulling off the silver paint...I prefer to paint all the colors/markings etc. first...mask them...and then do the natural metal finish last. So, the tail, ailerons, the wing leading edge ID stripes and the anti glare panel were all painted and then masked. The wheel wells and cockpit were masked as well. A craft stick was slid through the exhaust slots so that I could handle the model when I applied the silver.



For the natural metal, I used SNJ. I've had good luck with SNJ in the past. When dry, you can mask over it plus you get a polishing powder that allows for variations on different panels. I think my particular bottle of SNJ was too old. After I stirred and gave the bottle a good shake...several times, it just didn't come out of the airbrush like it has in the past. Maybe I could have added some thinner to see if that helped...but I didn't. It still worked, but I think in the case of this product...fresher is better. Now, it also comes in an acrylic version. I masked off certain panels for variation on both the top and the bottom...realizing that it probably would not be visible on the top because of the camouflage.



Once the silver was done, I hit the model with a coat of Future. I then added tape to cover the areas on top where the decals would go. I thought that would be a way to spray the camo and not take a chance on getting any over spray on the decals.



The big experiment with the finish on this model was using for the first time the “pre-set” handle for my Iwata HP B airbrush. It’s a unit that you attach to the brush instead of the regular back...and when you pull back on the trigger, it always stops at the same spot. Of course, you can adjust it. I thought that this might just help keep the camo spots a bit more uniform.



I used Tamiya acrylic paint for the green splotching...first with the Tamiya thinner...about 15% paint and 85% thinner. It sprayed pretty well, but over time, it started to clog the tip and spray less effectively with more over spray. Second time, same ratio, but with Isopropyl alcohol as the thinner and a bit of retarder added. It sprayed much better and there was no clogging. Once all those little green splotches were finally done, all the masking came off, except the cockpit, and a couple of coats of Future went on before decaling.



Rather than use the the kit decals, I used a sheet from Life Like (sheet 48-003, 244th Sentai Part 1)...and they were fantastic!...very opaque, easy to handle and conformed well with Micro Sol. Because the decals had such a gloss finish on the sheet, I sprayed them with some Floquil flat finish before they were applied.



After all the decals were on, I hit the panel lines with a very thin burnt umber oil wash. All the smaller parts were then added and a final coat was sprayed. Because the kit comes with a one piece canopy, I got a vac-form Ki 61 canopy from Squadron to use for the sliding portion of the canopy...the windscreen and back parts were from the kit canopy.



So...finally done. It took a long time to get around to it...but I'm happy with the way *Tony* turned out.



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