

## Kit Review

(November, 2004)

### Airfix Westland Aerospatiale SA.341 kit number 01059-5, 1/72 scale

#### References:

A web photo of a sister ship taken at Bassingbourn, UK, May 28, 1978 and found at [www.airliners.net](http://www.airliners.net):

([http://www.airliners.net/open.file?id=647461&WxsIERv=U3VkiFNBLTM0MCBHYXplbGxl&WdsYXMg=VUsgLSBBcm15&QtODMg=QmFzc2luZ2JvdXJlChjbG9zZWQp&ERDLTkt=VUsgLSBFbmdsYW5k&ktODMp=TWF5IDI4LCAxOTc4&BP=1&WNEb25u=TWljayBCYWpjYXl%3D&xsiERvdWdsY=WFc4NDc%3D&MgTUQtODMgKE=VGhpcyBhaXJcmFmdCwgYSBmaXJzdCBmb3JgdGhlIGRhdGFjYXNlCB3YXMgc2VlbiBhdCBhIG9uZS1vZmYgYWlyc2hvdvBoZWxkiGF0IHRoZSBbcm15IGJhcnJhY2tz&YXMgTUQtODMgKERD=MjA3&NEb25uZWxs=MjAwNC0wOC0yNg%3D%3D&ODJ9dvCE=&O89Dcjdg=&static=yes\)](http://www.airliners.net/open.file?id=647461&WxsIERv=U3VkiFNBLTM0MCBHYXplbGxl&WdsYXMg=VUsgLSBBcm15&QtODMg=QmFzc2luZ2JvdXJlChjbG9zZWQp&ERDLTkt=VUsgLSBFbmdsYW5k&ktODMp=TWF5IDI4LCAxOTc4&BP=1&WNEb25u=TWljayBCYWpjYXl%3D&xsiERvdWdsY=WFc4NDc%3D&MgTUQtODMgKE=VGhpcyBhaXJcmFmdCwgYSBmaXJzdCBmb3JgdGhlIGRhdGFjYXNlCB3YXMgc2VlbiBhdCBhIG9uZS1vZmYgYWlyc2hvdvBoZWxkiGF0IHRoZSBbcm15IGJhcnJhY2tz&YXMgTUQtODMgKERD=MjA3&NEb25uZWxs=MjAwNC0wOC0yNg%3D%3D&ODJ9dvCE=&O89Dcjdg=&static=yes))

#### The Kit:

This is an old kit, covered with raised detail for the panel lines and a rash of rivets. It came in a blister pack with the instructions printed on the back of the packaging. The kit is molded in dark green plastic, which I just hate. As a matter of fact, I hate all non-grey/silver coloured plastic, especially black and dark green, blue or brown.

Overall the fit is reasonably good. The only dodgy area is along the seam across the bottom of the fuselage under the cockpit. Flash is almost non-existent, but the majority of the parts do need some scraping and sanding to remove seams. The parts are well shaped and the only part that could have been better represented was the conical screen that mounts to the front of the engine pod. There is some scribing and detail for the screen and its braces, but they are not very pronounced and disappeared under a coat of paint.

The rotors need to have a small amount of droop added to them. One of the rotors in my sample had a kink in the blade reminiscent of a gull wing, which forced me to bend the blade to remove the kink, and then bend the blade again to apply the droop.

To prevent the model from sitting on its tail I added as much weight to the nose as I could, placing lead under the floor pan and inside the instrument console.

The rear glass panels were trial fit and their openings adjusted so they would easily snap into place following construction. This obviated the need to mask the rear windows.

A few of the raised panel lines and quite a few of the plethora of bumps were removed during assembly. It is next to impossible not to do this, especially along the underside of the fuselage under the cabin where the fit is not good and largish seams are created when the fuselage halves are joined. Scraping, filling and sanding of these seams, no matter how careful, will inevitably remove some of the panel lines and rivet detail.

The cabin interior was painted grey, with the rear seats painted a light grey. The cabin was masked and the light grey primer coat applied. The primer revealed that the tail boom had a couple of flat spots running the length of the boom. This posed a quandary - to keep the raised detail and live with the flat spots, or sand the raised detail from the boom and work on the flat spots to contour them to the round boom. I chose option two, so off came the raised lines and rivets. A few applications sanding followed by primer to reveal any further flat spots soon resulted in a boom with a nice round contour.

The kit was built and painted in sub-assemblies - the fuselage, the landing skids, the engine pod, the engine screen, the glass parts and the rotor assembly.

The fuselage, skids and engine pod were painted drab green and black, from Aeromaster and Testors respectively. The rotor blades were given yellow tips and drab green blades. The hub is grey. The rotor head, shaft and drive shaft for the fenestron were given dark washes to highlight the detail.

A Testors gloss coat was sprayed and then the decals were applied. There are markings for one craft, that being XW844 of the Royal Army Air Corps, in black and olive camouflage. The decals had yellowed over the years, but after a couple of weeks taped to a window facing the sun, the yellow was bleached from the decal film.

There are some errors on the decal sheet when they were compared with the web photo.

First of all, the warning decal for the fenestron is reversed. The decal sheet has a white rectangle with red lettering, while the photo shows that it should be a red rectangle with white lettering. Next, the roundels in the photo are a light blue, not a dark blue as on the decal sheet. And finally, the yellow warning stripe that goes on the fuselage just below the engine pod should be a dashed line and not solid.

The decals proved troublesome. Before applying them I tested one of the unneeded decal images on a scrap piece of plastic. The test was successful, in that the decal did not shatter and it sat down well. Unfortunately, when it came time to apply the other decals, they did not react the same. Though they didn't shatter, they did have a penchant toward curling up on themselves, causing the edges to lift from the model's surface. This forced me to soak each image in Microsol to soften them as much as possible, and then attach them to the kit using Future acrylic floor finish. In essence I glued down the images with Future.

Seat belts were added to the front seats, but not to the rear seats. The web photo showed no belts installed on the rear seats. The front seats were mounted in the cabin after all the painting and decaling was complete. Spare decals were used for the instrument panel. The landing skids were super glued to the fuselage and before the kit was given a coat of Aeromaster acrylic flat, I had to touch up many of the raised rivets around the cabin windows because the paint had rubbed off during handling during the decal application. If I were to make this kit again I would remove the rivet detail around the doors and windows before painting.

The final steps in the construction consisted of the adding the glass pieces, the engine pod and screen, the blade antennae, and the fenestron fan, which had been sprayed with Alclad chrome beforehand. Here I found that the fit was not a good as it first appeared, especially with the clear parts, because the dark green plastic fooled me into thinking that these parts fit much more flush than they actually did.

**Conclusion:**

It took me a bit longer than I expected to build considering the small number of parts, but all in all, it is not a bad kit even though the molds were designed about 30 years ago in the hey day of raised panel lines and rivets. Fit is good, but not exceptional, and avoiding removal of the raised detail is problematic. An acceptable result can be obtained if you take your time, though it would be nice to see someone like Hasegawa or Italeri release this kit from more up to date molds.