

## **Kit Review**

(May, 2005)

### **Hasegawa AH-1S Kit number 00535 E5, 1/72 scale**

#### **The Kit:**

When the kit arrived, I thought at first that I had mistakenly been sent a 1/48 scale kit. But upon opening the box it became apparent that the box is about twice as large as the sprues contained therein.

There are a total of 9 sprues containing 83 pieces. The parts are molded in an ugly dark olive green plastic that is quite hard and a bit brittle. One sprue contains the cockpit glass and HUD. Four of the parts are not used for this version and I removed them from their sprues before starting. Panel detail is represented by both recessed lines and very fine raised rivets.

The decal sheet contains one option only - for a machine from the 7th Cavalry US Army, date and location not specified. The decals are typical Hasegawa and include images for the instruments. The images are glossy, with dense ink. Registration is not a problem since almost every image is monochrome - either black or yellow. The carrier film is nice and thin.

As for the instruction sheet, it is well printed and laid out. I particularly like the fact that Hasegawa includes a name or description and not just a number for the parts.

#### **Construction:**

Before I start describing the build, I'd like to make a complaint - what's with the green plastic? It makes building the kit so much more difficult to build. The dark colour hides flaws and sink marks, it makes lining up parts difficult, and when you sand, the drastic colour change caused by the abrasion of the plastic makes imperfections hard to see. If the reasoning behind the green plastic is to entice younger modellers to buy the kit because they will not need to paint, then that reason is flawed. This kit is way too expensive for most young budgets, and young modellers will probably go for one of the cheaper kits from Airfix instead.

So on to the build. The kit was built basically straight out of the box.

Before the fuselage halves can be joined, a few steps must be done first.

First is the construction of the cockpit. This went together without a hitch. Hasegawa provided no seat belts in any form, so I added some using some paper thin plastic strip.

I blanked off the two small inlets located near the rear of each side the engine housing and the one inlet located at the front of the engine housing. I also had to do a small repair on part number B7 which had its shaft broken off in transit. Once fixed it was painted silver and attached to the inside of the fuselage as shown in the instructions. The interior of the engine housing was painted black, the cockpit inserted, and then the fuselage halves were joined. The excellent fit of the cockpit resulted in no problems when it was placed between the fuselage halves.

Joining the fuselage halves resulted in a bit of a step along the length of the fuselage and I had to do a bit more sanding and scraping of the seam than I expected. I think that the step may have been avoided if the kit had been molded in grey. I find it very difficult

working with the dark green plastic and have trouble identifying whether or not the parts have been aligned correctly. I rescribed the lines that were damaged during the seam work with an Xacto knife using Dymo tape as a guide.

For the most part, the remainder of the kit went together without too much fuss. Outside of the difficulties with the fuselage, the remainder of the parts fit is above average to excellent - though most of the parts did possess minor mold lines. Fortunately most parts required only a small amount of sanding or scraping to remove the lines.

After I added the landing skids it became apparent that I had erred in my assumption that the kit would not need weight in the nose to prevent it from tail sitting. Since the fuselage halves were now joined, my only solution was to add some weight between the forward point of the cockpit floor and the nose. As an extra measure I also added some lead weight to the inside of the pilot's instrument console (parts C20 & C21). Fortunately, the weights were enough to make the 'copter sit properly on its skids as it should. With a coat of paint and the addition of the instrument console the lead was hidden from view.

The quality of the ordinance was indifferent. The construction method for the TOW missiles was novel, but I was disappointed that the rear of the tubes were not hollow. To improve the look of this, I drilled out the ends and widened them a bit with the tip of an Xacto knife. As far as the rocket tubes were concerned, Hasegawa, like all other manufacturers I have encountered, has issues with the tubes where the tube is of a smaller diameter than its faces and produces a small step.

The IR Jammer (part A9) was discarded as it was more oval than round. It was replaced with some round plastic tube and covered with a scored gold sequin.

The main rotor blades and hub are a gem, being molded as one complete part. The tail rotor is also very nicely done.

Some of the small fiddly parts were left off the kit until just before the end to ease painting, while others, such as the antennae and the wire cutters were added at this point because I didn't relish adding them after painting. I also added braces to the wire cutters at this point.

The canopy was masked, the cockpit filled with tissue paper and masked over with tape, and the kit was primed with Testors Light Grey. The grey definitely showed some sink marks that were undetectable in the green plastic, the most notable being on the inside faces of the landing skids. After fixing the flaws it was then painted overall with Testors US Army Helo Drab 2024 (not the Olive Drab specified in the instructions). The main rotors were painted black.

Prior to applying the decals, a coat of Testors Glosscoat was applied.

The majority of the decals went on with minimal fuss. I applied my usual multiple coats of Microsol to get them set down. As with other Hasegawa decals I have used, the Microsol will virtually melt them, but if left untouched until dry, they will snug down tight and not silver. Just don't touch them while they are wet or you'll ruin them.

After decaling, most of the remaining parts were added - the TOW rails and rocket pods, the pitot, and the seats. The kit was then sprayed with Aeromaster acrylic flat.

Then came the sprint to the end.

First was the canopy. It is an excellent molding, being thin and very clear. My dry fitting showed that it was going to be a tight fit. In fact, it was so snug that it got slightly scuffed on the inside as it passed over some of the cockpit parts. I wanted to take it off again and re-polish the inside, but I knew it was best left alone. I didn't want to risk damaging it attempting to get it off, and then on again afterward. Needless to say, with such a tight fit I didn't need any glue to hold it in place either. The final steps consisted of painting the red, white and green navigation lights with some high gloss paint, and the attaching of the main and tail rotors.

**Conclusion:**

An excellent kit. It was for the most part an easy build and I recommend it highly. I just wish that Hasegawa, Italeri and the other kit manufacturers would get their act together and mold their kits in grey. Life would be so much simpler if they did.