



## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Macchi C.202 By Tim Wood

In a time where all costs are rising, including models, it was refreshing to find a \$10.00 kit at my local Wal-Mart. When I first purchased it, I didn't know who *21<sup>st</sup> Century* was but after some research found that this was the company that produces pre-built model airplanes and tanks. Upon opening the box I was surprised to see plastic that looked more like resin castings than styrene, which is normally associated with models. The model details were good but not up to mainstream model manufacturers. However, the decal sheet was phenomenal. In all honesty, I admittedly did not know much about Italian WWII aircraft and was never that interested prior to this build, but the color schemes and seemingly easy build intrigued me. So, let's begin.

Step 1 would have the builder put the cockpit together but upon initial trial fitting of the fuselage and wings I found that the lugs to hold the parts together prevented them from fitting tightly so I ground them off with my Dremel tool. After I completed that step I had to fill the large holes where the screws fit together. I melted some sprue and filled the holes then sanded smooth and finished it off with a layer of superglue, sanding smooth once again. The builder has to decide if he or she wants to include the working features of the model such as landing gear, propeller and canopy because they will have to complete some scratch building if they don't. Once the initial prep work was complete the rest of the model went together like any other.

The wheels of the kit were woefully undersized so I pirated some from my parts box. I was able to compare wheels from the Pacific Coast Models 1/32 Macchi 202 thanks to fellow ASM'er Kyle Garber, but found that those wheels were WAY too big to fit in the stock landing gear without significant modification or using the PCM landing gear. The wheels that I was able to source from my spare parts box were also too large. I also had to grind the plastic from the landing gear as well as cut down the actual wheels in order to ensure a good fit.

After the basic airframe was complete I checked for seams and other flaws and primed the model. This is where the model really became interesting as there are three different schemes to choose from. One with tan base and green smoke rings, the other with tan base and green patches and the last scheme of overall olive green. I chose the tan base with green patches in an effort to further develop my airbrushing skills. I used my Iwata airbrush and experimented with different mixes of paint to improve my modeling skills. I was able to airbrush the camouflage freehand after much trial and error, but I was satisfied with the results. The decals were placed using Micro Set/Sol and left to dry. After a few days I sealed the finish and weathered the airframe. The last bits were added and the model was complete.

The *21<sup>st</sup> Century* lines of kits are basic, yet satisfying model kits. I was able to practice some modeling skills and try new techniques but not feel bad about screwing up an expensive kit. Are these kits Nationals quality? My answer would be no, but if you are looking for a kit that you can practice some new techniques on without feeling guilty or if a modeler wants to go all out and add aftermarket and scratch building to a kit then pick up one of these and have fun!

