

MODEL TECH ME109.

By Klaus Weiss

In 1934, a young German designer, Willie Messerschmitt, manufactured a state of the art, all metal, streamlined, single seat fighter which was to set the standard of production for much of the next decade.

The Messerschmitt BF109 entered production in 1936 and was turned out in large numbers over the following years. Production was running to more than 1,000 aircraft per month as late as December 1944, and by the end of the 2nd World War, nearly 33,000 had been delivered to the Luftwaffe and its allies.

The BF109 flew in every major Luftwaffe campaign, and in all weather conditions, figuring heavily in the battle of Britain. At the time, the BF109 was superior in speed to the Spitfire when flying above 15,000ft, and faster than the Hurricane at any altitude. The two British fighters could outturn the BF109 but couldn't match it in negative 'G' manoeuvres, thanks to the Messerschmitt's fuel injected engine.

Prior to 1944, the Messerschmitt enjoyed an overall supremacy over many of the fighter aircraft it engaged, except for the P51 Mustang and the P-47's which were superior, and these two fighters rang the death knell of the BF109 when they began to regularly escort allied bombers into virtually all parts of Germany, around the end of World War II.

The Messerschmitt BF109, or as it is sometimes known the Me109, has been the subject of modellers for a long time and many excellent kits can be found representing this aircraft. In this review, I will refer to the model as the Me109, as that is what it has been designated by the manufacturers.

Arriving on the tail of the successful P51 Mustang Power Slope Scale glider, Model Tech have released a version of the Me109 which has also been manufactured for use as a slope soarer.

The Messerschmitt Me109 has just recently arrived on our shores so I was pleased to have the opportunity to carry out the review, as well as to have something a little different to fly on the slopes. Funny, how when you put some crosses or a swastika on a model, everyone wants to engage you in aerial combat.

The Model Tech, Messerschmitt Me109, Built Up Hand-crafted, Power Scale Sloper, has a wing span of 1.15m (45.5 inches) and an all up weight of 850gm (30 oz). With a fuselage length of 92.7cm (36.5inches) the Me109 can fit into small car boots or back seats, fully assembled for those spur of the moment trips to the slope. The semi-symmetrical airfoil should tell us that this is not going to be a floater, but it will still fly in light winds when many other slope soarers have been grounded. The model is quite aerobatic and some realistic dog-fights can be enacted. Flight control is aileron/elevator, which allows rolls, loops, tight turns and inverted flight to be included in the normal routine.

THE KIT:

The Model Tech Messerschmitt Me109 requires very little assembly time with almost all of the work carried out in the factory. The fuselage, wings and tailplane are virtually complete, so the model can be ready to cover in a very short time. The kit contains all the hardware required to assemble the model and also has a decal sheet, and surprise, a couple of tubes of epoxy as well.

There is a construction/instruction booklet to assist in the assembly steps of the Me109, and I found a few variations in the photos in the booklet and the construction of the actual kit. There is nothing incorrect, but some of the steps outlined in the booklet have already been completed at the factory, saving the builder more time. There is also a variance in the location of the wing servo opening in the booklet to the actual kit, and the wing tips have been improved when comparing them to the photos of the model in the booklet.

CONSTRUCTION:

This is outlined fairly well in the booklet so I will briefly gloss over some of the steps. Commence with the wing as suggested, making sure that when you join the halves, you get a good joint and the correct dihedral. I didn't use the plywood plate as a brace as outlined in step 7 of the torque rod installation section, and glassed the entire wing joint with a strip of fibreglass cloth and resin.

When you get to step 2 in the 'Wing Mounting' section, you will find that the 'hardwood' block is really plywood, so don't become confused. I ended up tapping this block for a nylon wing mounting bolt, as the blind nut and bolt supplied were of very poor quality and stripped, even under very modest pressure.

In step 3, I find it best to measure the distance from the trailing edge of the wing spar just inside the tips, back to the centre of the rear of the fuselage, to get the correct alignment to centre the wing, then mark the location prior to drilling the wing mounting hole.

In step 13, the W12 block has been fitted and shaped at the factory so don't go crazy looking for it in the parts bag.

When fitting the stabilizer, make sure it is properly centred by measuring from a central point on the nose of the fuselage, to the trailing edge tips of the stab. Trial fit the fin and mark the alignment on the stabilizer so that the tailplane will be centred when it comes time to attach it to the fuselage. For convenience, I would also drill the elevator horn mount prior to mounting the stab onto the fuselage.

In the radio assembly stage, I used a mini servo in the wing, but a standard one will fit comfortably into the opening.

When cutting the elevator pushrod exit slot in the fuselage, it might pay to angle it slightly upwards towards the elevator horn, so that you don't have to bend the metal rod or have it rubbing against the fuselage side.

There is not much 'meat' left on the inside top of the hatch when the rear dowel mount holes are drilled into it, so I reinforced the part by gluing on a piece of ply. I was not

entirely happy with the way the hatch was secured and felt that the weight of the receiver battery could loosen it at the front, where it is not secured at all. I cyanoed a brace across the inside of the fuselage to hold the receiver and battery in place, to prevent the weight bearing down directly on the hatch cover, particularly during aerobatic manoeuvres.

Where the hatch is held in place with a bolt at the centre location, I also cut out the triangular piece of balsa bracing and fitted a piece of hardwood with a blind nut to ensure a solid fastener. Finally, I omitted the metal landing skids, as in my view they looked just plain awful.

When balancing the Me109, do so with the model inverted as it is more stable and a correct balance will be easier to determine. I added 57gm (2oz.) to the nose to balance at the recommended point. Control throws were also adjusted as recommended for initial flights.

The Model Tech Messerschmitt Me109 finished up weighing 830gm (29oz.) ready to fly, which is 70gm lighter than the Mustang slope soarer, so I was interested to see how it would fly.

There are any number of colour schemes available for the Me109, the only problem being that they all look alike. I chose a scheme similar to the III/JG26 Schlager which was based at Caffiers, France during WW2. (Any WW2 air buffs out there, take note I said my colour scheme was "similar to.")



I chose to cover the model in silver Solartex and olive drab and yellow Monokote, but it could just as easily be painted. Just remember that most of the camouflage schemes

depicted in books on the BF109, could make it hard to see the model when flying low on the slope in afternoon light. If fitting exhaust stacks, (the model looks much better when they are fitted) paint them from the inside prior to attaching them to the fuselage. Same applies to the canopy frame lines. The stab struts can fitted or left off. I left mine off, as they can be knocked off if landing in rough areas. There were relatively few full size models of the BF109 fitted with struts anyway. Do fit a pilot, it makes the model look so much better. I found a very suitable character made in polystyrene and looking ready for a fight.

FLYING:

The Me109 flies much like its predecessor, the Model Tech P51 Mustang, but to my eye looks a little more appealing. (Could be due to my heritage.) Only a couple of initial flights were undertaken on the day, due to deadlines and other commitments, but the signs are all there for a no nonsense PSS model. The flight performance is rock steady with no vices at all. The Me109 would pose no difficulties to anyone who has flown aileron models and it flew hands off into the lift for half a minute or so. Diving passes along the face of the slope are of great spectator value and a slow roll at the end looks terrific. The Me109 performed all the basic manoeuvres I put it through with ease. It is quite light at 830gm and would benefit from some ballast on windier days. On the day of the test flight it was only blowing around 8-10 knots (18kph) and the conditions were ideal for the Messerschmitt. This model is easy to fly and land and will provide many hours of fun. A little care should be taken when landing as this is a low wing model and the built up balsa wing will not take the knocks that a foam core wing would absorb.

I am very pleased with the appearance and performance of the Me109. It does what it has been designed for and it wouldn't surprise me to see Model Tech produce a version for power, just as they did with their Mustang.

Now if only I can get rid of all those models diving at me, I could have a peaceful session.

Model available from Kelletts Hobbies, 17-19 Memorial Drive, Liverpool N.S.W.