



Introduction

The Archer 1/72 U-boat Super Detail Set (AR88023) (referred to as the “Archer set” in this review) was designed for use with Revell of Germany’s popular 1/72 scale VIIC and VIIC/41 U-boat models (kits 05015 and 05045, respectively). The 3-sheet set contains 3-dimensional resin rivets and weld beads on clear decal film to replace details lost to sanding or to correct the kit details.

While building my model of U-673 Type VIIC “Flak-trap” U-boat (www.travel-net.com/~gcauley/Uboats), I used the WEM 1/72 Type VII U-boat Flood, Drain and Vent Hole Set (PE7232) to correct kit mistakes. In using this set I had to graft some very large PE pieces to the kit hull, and so I ended up wiping out a large amount of rivets due to cutting, scraping, puttying, and sanding (especially at the bow). With that large amount of rivets gone, I needed an easy way to replace them.

As such, my review focuses on the application of resin rivet rows on my U-673 model. Other aspects of the Archer set include the replacement/addition of realistic weld beads, as the weld beads on the kit hull more resemble overscale raised panel lines than actual weld beads.

While some may read this review and say that my opinion is more than a little biased — considering that I collaborated with Archer Fine Transfers to create the Archer set — modelers have only to use the Archer set to see how it provides an elegant & intelligent solution for enhancing their 1/72 U-boat models.

Description

The Archer set is comprised of three decal sheets and an instruction sheet. Decal Sheet 1 contains various amounts of straight rivet rows for each of the 10 rivet groups; Sheet 2 contains special bow rivet patterns and special curved weld bead patterns; and Sheet 3 contains straight weld beads.

(A “rivet group” is a group of rivets that have a unique size and spacing. There are 10 rivet groups on the model kit and a matching 10 rivet groups in the Archer set.)

All items are clearly identified on the decal sheets. While there are not enough rivets to completely replace ALL rivets on the U-boat model, there is certainly a goodly amount of each rivet group to replace many rivets in areas where large modifications may be done.

The full-colour, highly-detailed placement instructions contain three detailed side profiles of the U-boat as well as information for applying the decals. The first two profile images show where to apply standard & additional weld beads on the hull. The third final profile image shows how the different rivet groups are distributed throughout the hull and conning tower.

Using the Set

After priming the hull, I used a new U-boat hull as reference to lay out the locations of the rivet rows on the bow. I used thin pencil lines for the layout lines, which will be covered when I paint the hull. Departing from the Archer instructions slightly, I airbrushed on a thin layer of Future Floor Wax to the area I would be applying the rivets to... which was pretty much the entire bow and other isolated areas.

For my first rivet application, I chose to add a short 10mm-long row of “group C” rivets — small, closely-spaced rivets ahead of the bow torpedo doors.

After finding “group C” rivet group on the appropriate decal sheet, I cut out a 10mm-long rivet row — cutting close to the rivets to minimize the amount of decal film. The Archer set uses thin, high-quality Microscale decal film which is very easy to cut through with a sharp hobby knife. Carefully handling the decal with tweezers, I dipped it into warm water for 5-10 seconds, and then set it onto tissue to absorb the excess water. After another 10 seconds the adhesive had softened enough to release the decal from the backing paper. I carefully slid the decal off the backing paper a bit to ensure it wasn't sticking too much. Since the decal film is so thin and the section I cut was so narrow, I had to be careful that the decal did not fold over onto itself when it was hanging off the edge of the backing paper. When that did happen, I just had to dip the decal back into water to allow it to unfold... then I repositioned the decal on the backing paper again.

As per my usual decaling process, I brushed a heavy amount of Micro Set (not Micro Sol) decal solution onto the hull where the decal would go; Micro Set acts as a wetting agent to prevent the decal from sticking to the model too quickly. If the decal stuck in the wrong position, I simply applied more Micro Set and the decal became unstuck so I could move it into the proper position on the model. A few prods with my brush (used to apply the Micro Set) and tweezers and voila! the new rivet row was in place. I used tissue to wick away the excess Micro Set, and then I applied Micro Sol to the entire rivet row to soften the decal film completely. (Considering that the surface of the model was smooth with no crevasses or uneven surfaces, I could have probably gotten away with using only Micro Set to apply the rivet decals. However, it was a personal choice to use Micro Sol as the final step.)

Lo and behold, I had just added my first replacement rivet row in a very quick and easy manner! The process was pretty much the same for the rest of the rivet rows I applied: identify the proper rivets, measure, cut, apply... next.

Applying longer rivet rows has its own unique issues I had to watch out for: more chance of tearing the decal film, bunching during application, folding over onto itself. (Not to mention it is more difficult to make long rivet rows perfectly straight!) Though these issues are not insurmountable, it takes time and patience like any delicate decaling operation. When one of the decals (inevitably) tore along its length, I simply had to apply the decal sections one at a time and ensure they were aligned properly. Micro Set became my close ally by allowing me to loosen partially-adhered, improperly-placed decals and try again. In the case where long rivet rows had a curve to them — such as rivet group “K” along the upper side edges of the hull at the stern — the thin decal film and narrowly-cut decals make it fairly easy to make gentle curves of straight rivet row decals.

I did not need to use the weld beads on this particular model, but it is nice to have them for later models. In fact, they are so nice it is very tempting to sand off my own weld beads and use the Archer ones!

Conclusion

Overall I am very impressed and happy with the Archer 1/72 U-boat Super Detail Set as it allows me to quickly and easily (remember: everything is relative) replace the lost rivets on my U-boat model. Due to the nature of what you are trying to accomplish with this “decal set” a bit more effort is required to lay out where you want the rivet row decals to go.

The quality of the Archer set is superb, the instructions are informative and intuitive to use, and applying the rivet “decals” is no more difficult than applying any other waterslide decals.

In my opinion, this set is well worth the cost. While some may say it's overpriced, I would rather pay a bit more for a high-quality product that does exactly what I want. It saves me time and frustration in the otherwise tedious task of rivet replacement by other means.

For additional pictures and more details, see the following sites:

- Glenn Cauley's U-673 model build site : [Modelling U-673 “Flak trap”](#)
- Product review : [Modelshipwrights](#)
- Product review : [Accurate Model Parts](#)