



Figure 1 – Apollo Spacecraft

First Impressions:

Box Art:

The re-done box art with the likeness of Buzz Aldrin looks good on the hobby shop shelf. The dedication on the back of the box by Buzz Aldrin is a nice touch. Hopefully younger modelers will appreciate this little piece of first person history and find some inspiration to point themselves to bigger and better things.



Figure - Dedication

Packaging:

The box seemed sturdy enough, with an extra piece of cardboard to keep the top of the box from collapsing. Revell used heavier plastic bags to separate the various parts trees and to prevent scratches on the clear and gold plated parts. This particular box must have had a rough time of it because in spite of the extra protection, there were some scratches on the gold plated Command Module body.



Figure 2 – Molded parts

The Kit:

The kit is molded in four colors: gray (silver), white, clear, and gold plated. There was some flash evident on some of the smaller parts, and virtually every part had visible mold seam lines. Other than replacing the peel and stick appliques with water-slide decals and the inclusion of the olive branch pin replica, this is the same kit as was originally released in the early '70's. The molds are beginning to show signs of wear. The gold plating had some imperfections (color smears, and a blister).

Construction:

There was some deviation from the assembly instructions in order to facilitate painting of the various sub-assemblies.

The instructions begin with the floor/heat shield assembly. After removing the mold seam lines from all the required parts prior to painting, I discovered the mounting pins for the helium tanks (parts 6 and 7), and the oxidizer tank (parts 8 and 9), would benefit from some rework. I removed the tiny little nubs, drilled holes, and replaced them with styrene rod to fit in the locating holes in the Heat Shield (part1).



Figure 3 – Tank rework detail

As I attached the support frames (parts 49) to the sidewall of the floor, I found that the reaction control engine (part 5) was aligned (spaced?) so that the nozzles ended up directly beneath the support frames.



Figure 4 - Reaction control engine repositioning

The instructions call for the crew compartment walls to be painted interior green. After checking my references, these were painted gloss gull gray. The portions exposed by the clear part of the capsule were painted interior green. The interior detail is represented by large decals that cover the walls and instrument panel. Once properly trimmed, they went on without a hitch. This would have been an easy place for Revell to improve this kit, but as with the original release, they look toy-like, and bear little resemblance to the actual instrument panel and interior of the real Apollo Command Module. The crew couches and supports were painted various shades of silver and tan according to my reference photos instead of all dark gray.



Figure 5 – Interior paint scheme

After removing all of the mold seam lines, the probe for connecting to the Lunar Module was assembled and painted.



Figure 6 Lunar module detail

The interior of the gold plated Command Module body was painted gloss gull gray to match the rest of the crew compartment. The shape of the tiny window for the right seat did not match the opening exactly, so I filled it with two applications of Micro Crystal Klear.



Figure 7 Window fabrication

Final assembly of the Command Module required gluing the gold plated body to the heat shield. The diameter of the capsule body was just a bit larger than the diameter of the heat shield, so it overhangs a fraction.



Figure 8 - Capsule to heat shield fit

With the Command Module complete, assembly began on the Service Module. Placement of the split between the two halves of the Service Module section must have been a manufacturing design choice. Rotating the split just one inch around the circumference would have avoided going through ridges of the exterior cooling radiators. In addition, the ridges were out of alignment slightly from one half to the next. It took a lot of hours to fill, file, and sand these seams to an acceptable finish. The only saving grace here is that the cooling radiators are painted flat white, which makes the flaws a little less conspicuous.

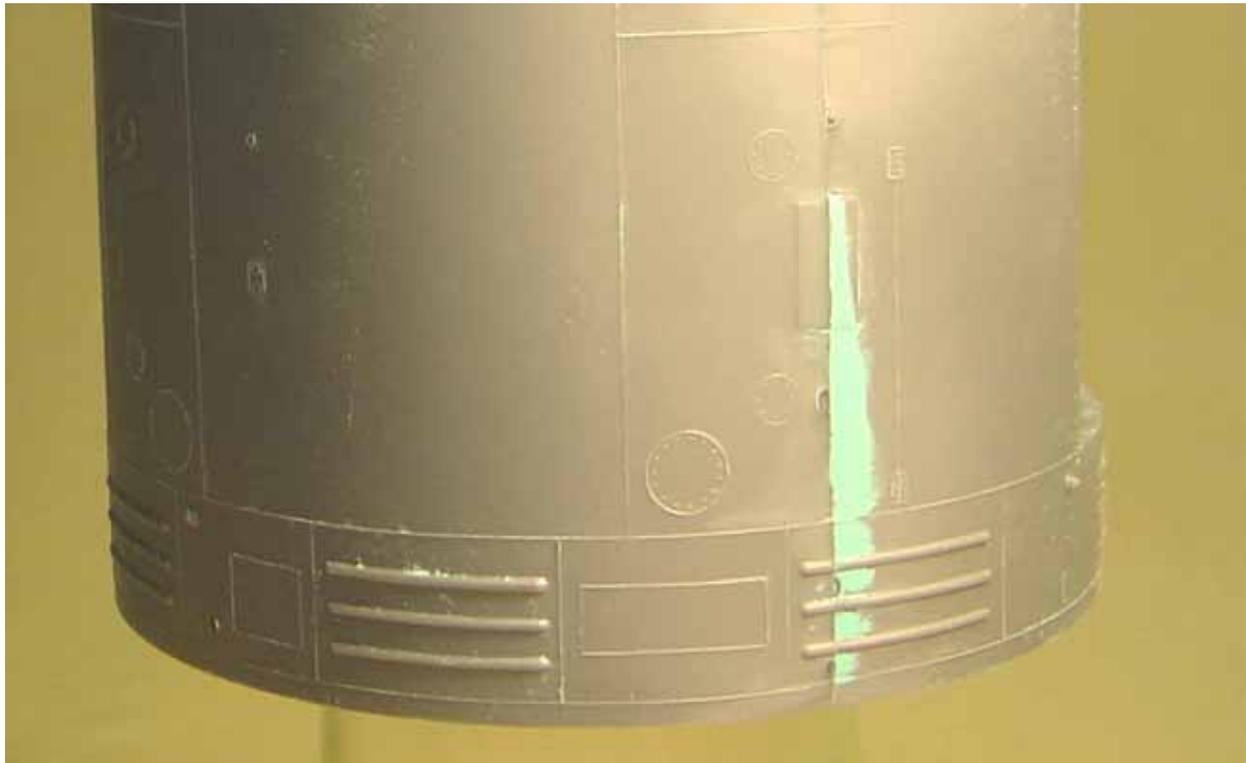


Figure 9 – Filing the seams

Test fitting the Command Module to the Service module revealed some difficulty in getting it to sit just right. Further investigation revealed a flaw in the Service Module Top (part 65). There are six raised, angled pads for supporting the Command Module, three of which have holes in them for the locating pins on the bottom of the Heat Shield. The problem is that three of the six pads are angled in the opposite direction, causing them to dig into the Heat Shield, rather than supporting it (see photos). Correct this by cutting wedges from sprue the same diameter as the support pads, and sanding them down to the proper height and angle.

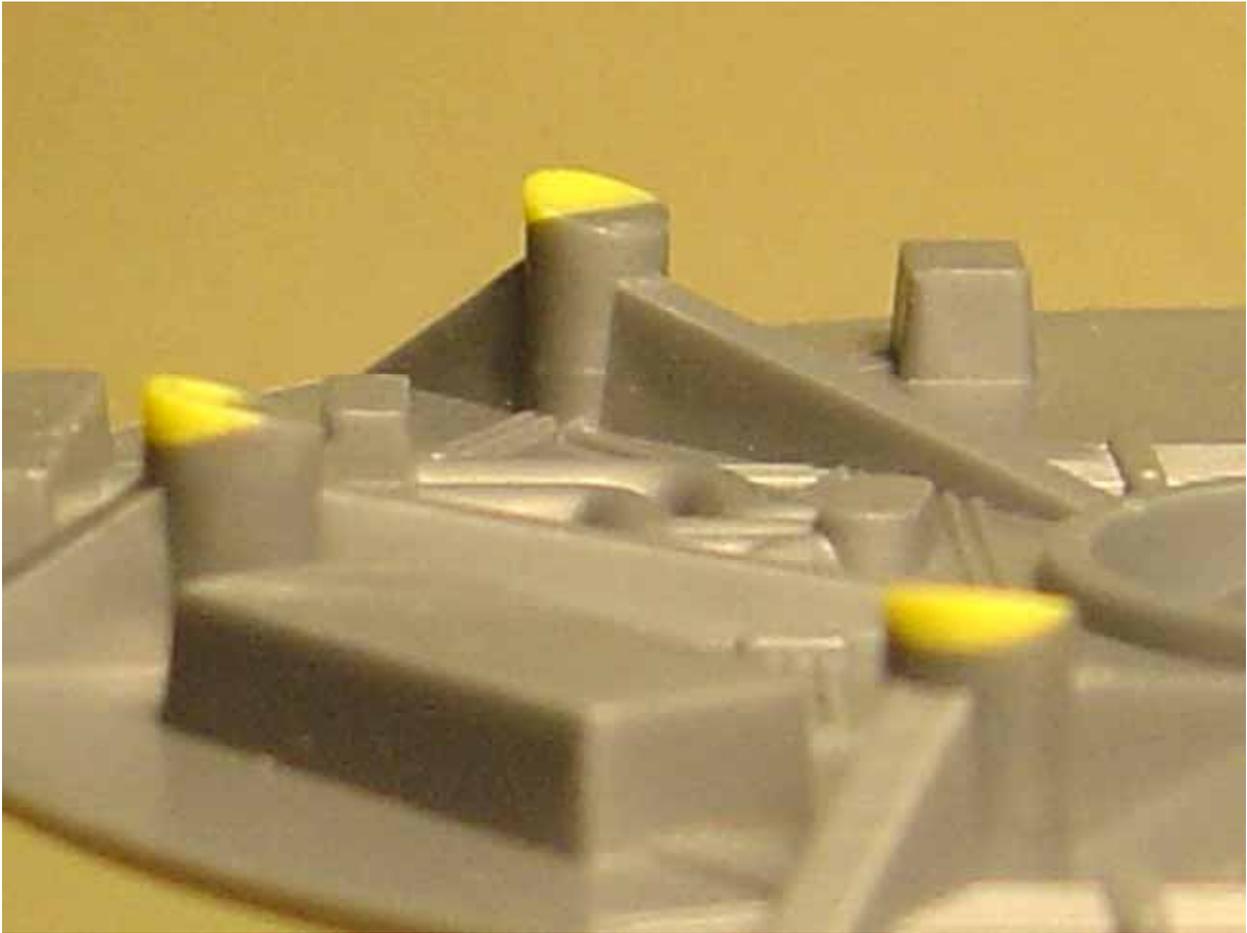


Figure 10 – Support pad rework

Final assembly began once all of the interior and exterior components were cleaned of mold seams, assembled and painted. I found that the locating pins and holes on many of the small parts were misaligned. They fit properly after sanding the mating surfaces flat. The last glitch was where the Fuel Sump Tank (parts 46 and 47) rests on the “floor” of the Service module. Because of the draft angle required for molding the Service Module Body half (part 55), the “floor” is not perfectly flat, and a small gap appears at the bottom of the fuel tank. I filled the gap with clear Elmer’s Glue and touched it up with a fine point brush.

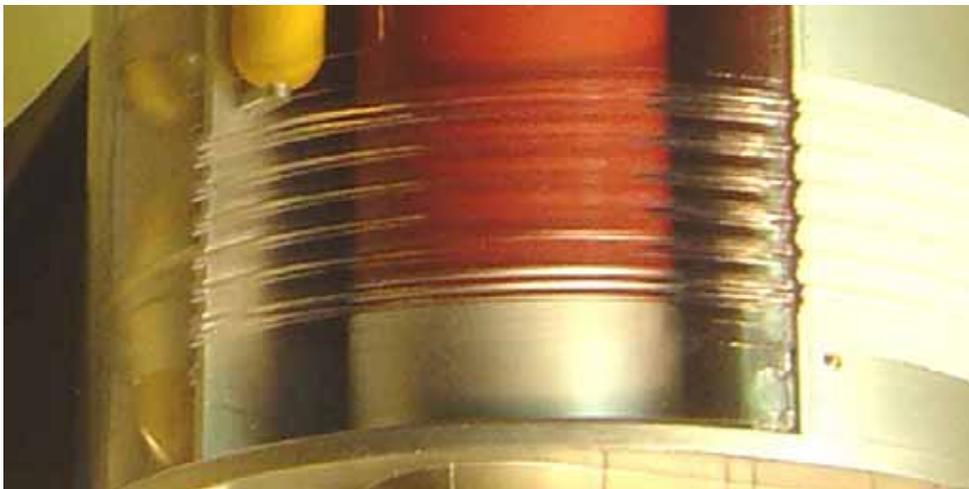


Figure 11 – Fuel tank to floor fit

At last, the remaining decals were applied to the appropriate places, and Future Floor Wax was sprayed over the exterior of the Service Module.



Figure 12 - The Service Module

Clear flat was sprayed onto the Main Engine Nozzle, completing the project.



Figure 13 - Main Engine Nozzle

Summary:

This is the same kit that was first released in the early '70's, and the manufacturing process used is outdated. I spent nearly 30 hours building this kit, the vast majority of the time dealing with seams and mold lines. The gold plating is stunning, but correcting the flaws, the fit, and the sprue attachment points is impossible. Super detailers might want to spend some time correcting the instrument panel and other interior details. However, younger modelers may not be so fussy about finish and alignment and will have no trouble building an inspiring and educational replica of the vehicle that took man on his greatest adventure.

Bottom line: I recommend this kit for modelers of all levels. Model Master enamel paints were used throughout.