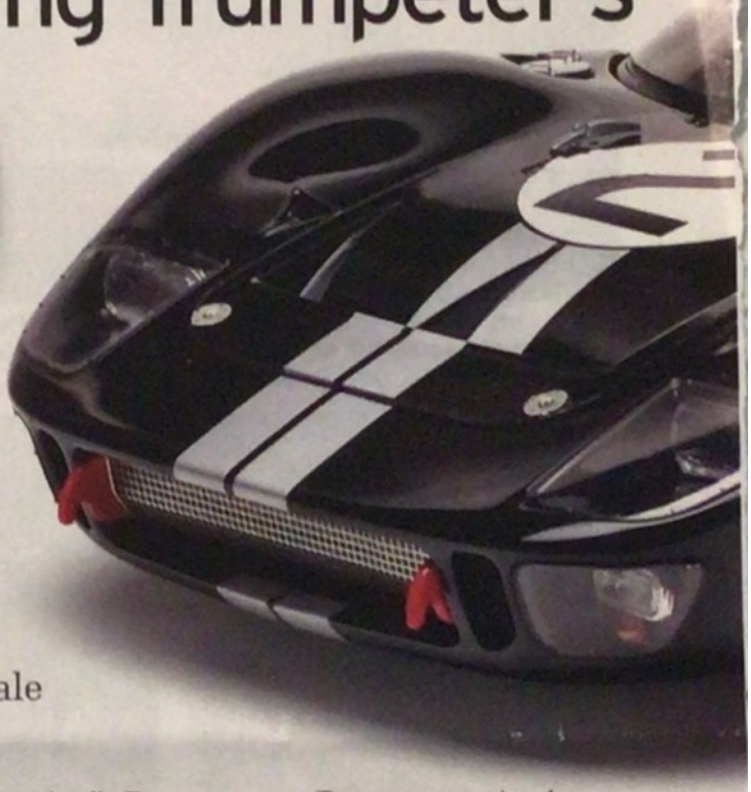
# Building and painting Trumpeter's GT40 Mk. II



We check out the much-anticipated large-scale kit of a racing icon • by MARK MELCHIORI

THE 1966 FORD GT40 Mk.II is an icon in the history of American motorsport. That year it became the first "American" car to win overall at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. (I put "American" in quotes because the GT40 was originally based on the British Lola GT.) In the capable hands of the Shelby-American and Holman-Moody racing teams, the GT40 Mk.II scored a 1-2-3 finish.

Being such an iconic vehicle, it should be no surprise that there have been more than a few models made of the Mk.II. IMC was the first to produce a plastic kit, with its 1/25 scale version in the 1960s, followed by Fujimi's excellent curbside kit in 1989.

When it was announced that Trumpeter was going to produce a 1/12-scale full-detail kit of the Mk.II, it was big news. Months of anticipation and Internet rumors about the kit and its contents were fueled by photos of a test shot of the kit at the 2008 iHobby Expo in Chicago.

Well, the wait is finally over, and the kit is here – and what a mixed bag it is.

With a retail price in the $250 range, I had very high expectations.

There are almost 400 pieces in this multimedia kit. Most of the kit is plastic, but there are rubber, vinyl, metal, and foam parts in the box.

The plastic parts are molded in clear, translucent red, and very opaque white plastic.

What is unusual, though, is that of the 14 parts trees in the kit, five of them are chromed! This is actually not at all accurate; there is very little chrome on the actual car. I will say that the molding quality of the parts is top-notch.

In the accompanying photos, you can tell that the kit is packaged well. For some reason, Trumpeter prepainted parts of the kit, such as the wheels and engine block; unfortunately, the colors are inaccurate.

Assembly went smoothly, and the instruction booklet was a good guide.

The only bad part of the instructions was the incomplete painting guide. For instance, the builder is instructed to paint the exhaust system "Blazing." I used Rust-Oleum's Antique Brass Metallic for this.

For the most part, Trumpeter got the shapes of the parts right. The engine block captures the feel of a 427 Ford, but not exactly.

The seats are a whole other story. They have the wrong

The major body and chassis parts are packaged very well inside a sturdy, nicely printed box. The plastic on these parts was blemish-free and featured minuscule mold lines. I did not notice any warpage on these parts.





Mark Melchiori built this GT40 box-stock.

contours, and they just look clunky to me.

Trumpeter really did a nice job on the body; I think that they nailed it. From every angle, it just looks right to me. The kit is based on the restored car that now "lives" in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin. This was confirmed to me at Road America during the 2009 GT40 reunion, when I learned that the car has an Optima battery – just as the kit does.

The extra detail parts that Trumpeter includes in the kit range from well-done to useless. As the photos show, the photoetched parts are very well done, but the oil and fuel line materials were not.

The metal cable that is supplied to hold the hood pin clips is too stiff, so I did not use it. On the plus side, the turned-aluminum valve stems and hood pins are amazingly well done.

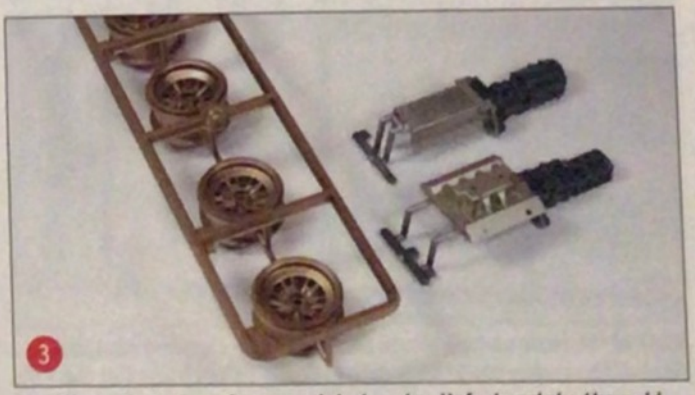
I built this kit 100 percent out-of-the-box, and did not "fix" any of the problems – to show what the modeler can expect for his/her money. What you see in the following photos is what I could do with the parts in the box.

I think that this is easily the best car kit that Trumpeter has done to date. I do not think that the kit lives up to its prerelease hype, though.

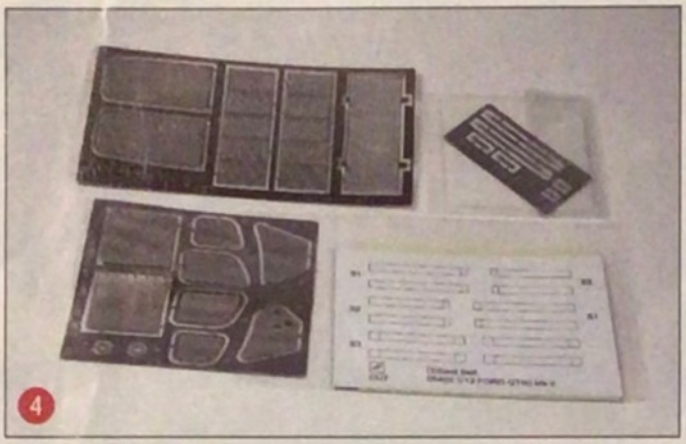
I know that I was hoping for a Tamiya-quality kit, and am a little disappointed that it is not.

Thanks to Matt Melchiori, Mike Klessig, and Don Molitor for their help with this review. *Editor's note: And thanks to Mark for a quick turnaround on this project.*


This nicely done box contained the four exquisitely molded tires, foam inserts, and the clear "glass" parts. These boxes are well done, but I wonder how much they add to the price of the kit. Maybe plain cardboard would have been a better choice.

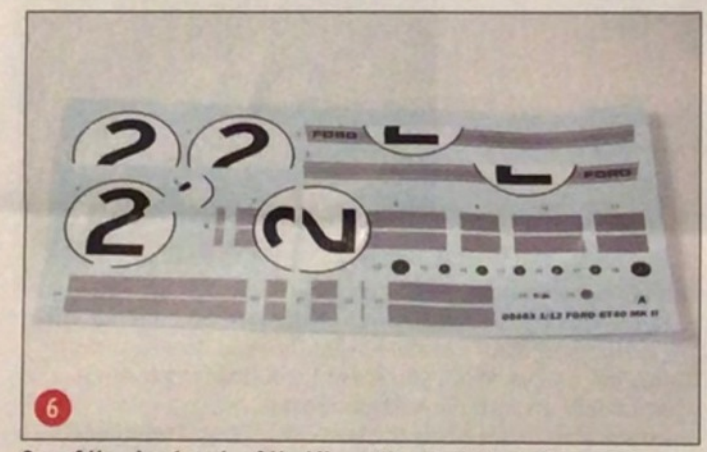



The kit also includes a few prepainted parts. Unfortunately, the gold on the wheels and the engine parts does not match any of my references. I ended up stripping and repainting these parts.

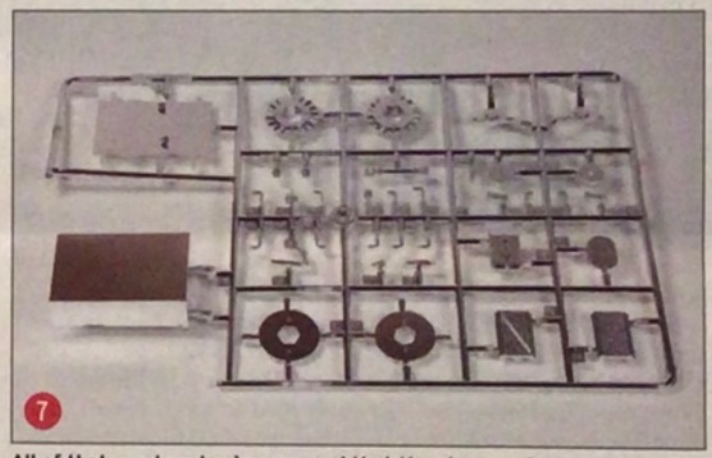


The photoetched pieces come on these well-done frets. The fret at lower left seemed to be made of a softer material than the others, making it difficult to keep the parts flat. The self-adhesive seat belt material is templated, so all the builder needs to do is cut the parts out, using a sharp knife or scissors.

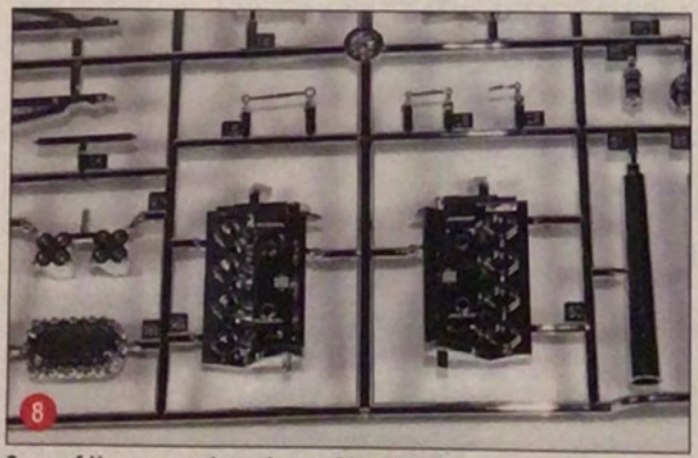
There are several bags of small detail parts, screws, and wire. They are all labeled well and match the instructions. Some of these items ended up not working as well as I had planned, as you will see later.



One of the nicest parts of the kit was the decal sheet. It was well-printed and applied beautifully. I thought at first that they were printed by Cartograf, but I could find no evidence of that.



All of that good packaging ensured that the chrome pieces were perfectly shiny. The problem is that there are way too many of them. There were actually very few chrome pieces on a 1:1 GT40 Mk. II.



Some of the more curious pieces of the kit to be chromed were the sides of the engine block! They definitely had to be stripped of the shiny stuff.

A trip to the local dollar store provided the aluminum pans that the parts were stripped in. I use Easy-Off oven cleaner in the yellow can. Spray it on, wait an hour or so, and then scrub the parts with an old toothbrush. Be sure to use hand and eye protection, because the oven cleaner is nasty stuff.

This was the handful of parts that weren't stripped of chrome. Trumpeter could have saved some money on the plating bill by just doing these parts.

This is what the engine block and transaxle looked like before its first coat of primer. The gold paint that it came with did not come off very well for me.

For some strange reason, Trumpeter pre-painted this silver area on the chassis plate, and on the structure for the inside of the engine cover. It is a nice touch, but seems a bit out of place.

Trumpeter did go the extra mile by engineering the wheels to be attached to the sprue in the middle. This eliminates any chance of the wheel lip being damaged during removal from the sprue.

There are some pretty heavy mold lines on some of the smaller parts, such as this exhaust pipe. I primed each piece to make the lines easier to see, and easier to remove, so as not to ruin the look of the finished model.

Each photoetched fret is shrinkwrapped tightly. The thin plastic film was difficult to remove, and I actually bent some of the frets while doing so. I assume the plastic was to protect the parts, but I do not think it was necessary.

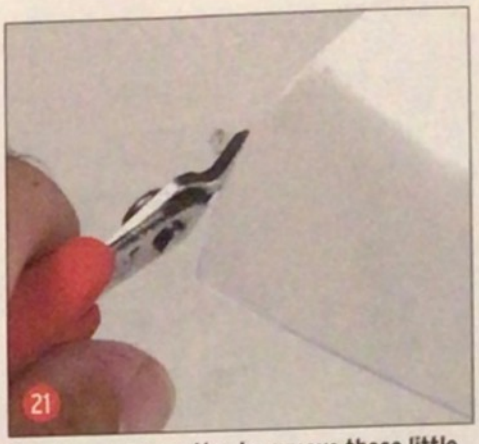
Each tire has a foam insert that needs to be installed. This was easy, and should keep the tires from collapsing over time.

Instead of painting the instrument bezels, I decided to foil them. On a kit of this scale, I would have preferred separate, plated bezels. I use a cotton swab to ease the foil where I want it to go. After trimming the foil with a sharp knife, I was pretty happy with the results.

Some careful masking was needed when it came time to paint the front towhooks. I really think that these two parts should have been separate, just to make it a bit easier on the builder.

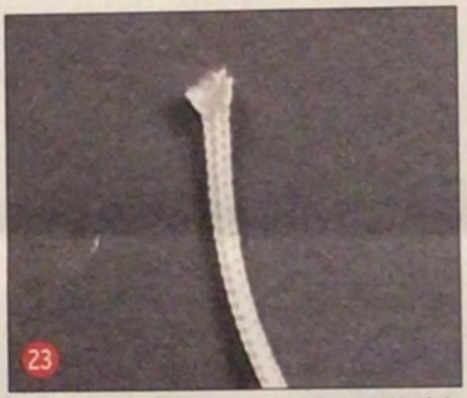
While removing the masking tape, I broke two of the radiator-support pieces. I did not think they were that fragile, but found out that they were! Be careful with them.

This is what the interior looked like before final assembly. The oddly-shaped seats are not quite as noticeable with the safety belts installed. I used a silver Sharpie to paint all of those rivets on the seats, followed by a little touch-up with some flat black paint.



I used my sprue cutter to remove those little plastic nubs from the clear parts. I was once taught to do this as quickly as possible, parallel to the part, to help prevent the brittle plastic from splintering and ruining the part.

I used a black marker to darken the edges of the clear parts, which eliminated the thick, shiny edge that results by not doing this. This works on most dark-colored models, and can be used on lighter-colored cars to represent rubber molding or weatherstripping.



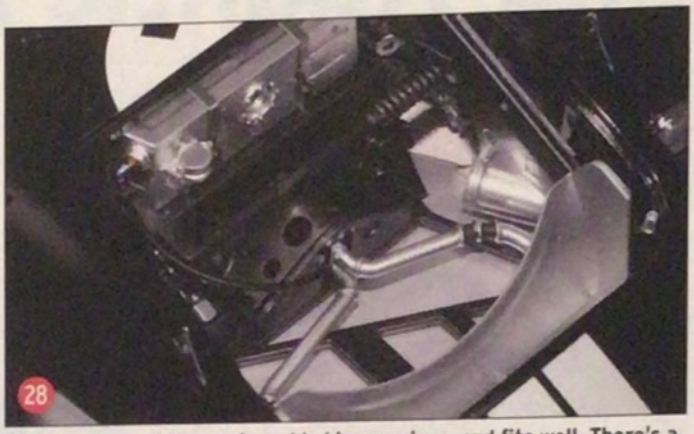
Unfortunately, the woven mesh hose material included in the kit is useless. After cutting the material to length, it frayed instantly. I could not come up with a method that would stop this from happening, yet leave the material in a usable condition.

Trumpeter includes two pieces of corrugated brake-duct tubing for the front brakes. The bad part is that when they are bent to the correct angle for installation, they kink like this. A softer, more rubberlike material would have been better for these parts.


The sidewall engraving is nice. The Goodyear lettering is done with dry transfers, but the carrier for them leaves a glossy finish, and unrealistic appearance. The sidewalls of all four tires seem a bit tall.

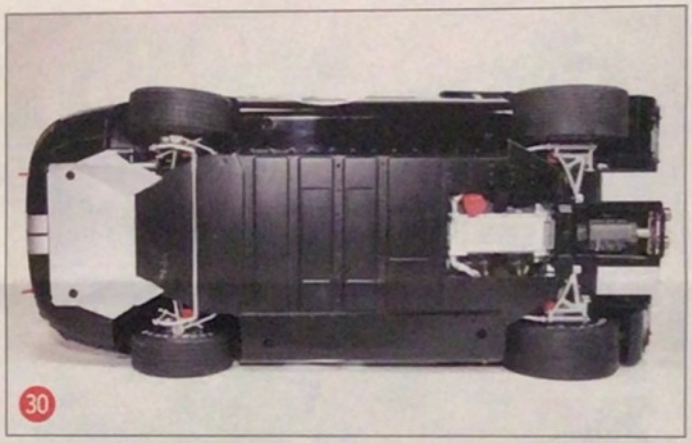
The completed engine bay looks pretty good. The absence of a distributor and ignition wires is barely noticeable; the lack of the fuel and oil lines (because of the faulty kit materials) is.

The front end of the chassis is well done. The photoetched straps for the oil tank and the radiator faces add to the detail. There is a missing oil line here, but that was my fault: I cut it too short!



The nosepiece of the car is molded in one piece, and fits well. There's a little interference with the gas cap when installing it, though. The only thing missing is the Le Mans-mandated spare tire. The space looks empty without it.

The little clip at the center of this photo is what holds the engine cover to the chassis. I had to open it ever so slightly, so it would snap onto the pins without breaking them off.



The underside of the finished model is the most disappointing part. The screw holes ruin the look of an otherwise nicely done part of the model, making it look toylike.


Mark's big GT40 is ready to go. The kit is based on a restored 1:1 car that now resides in Wisconsin.