

Keith Pruitt

Iwata HP-B Plus Airbrush

A high-quality airbrush for fine detailing.

Most scale modelers will eventually add a basic airbrush to the tools that they use. Once proficient with that airbrush, they typically will purchase more than one. In addition to a general purpose, high capacity “workhorse” airbrush, modelers will likely want to add a high-quality detail airbrush for additional control in finer work.

The Iwata HP-B Plus, from the High Performance Series of airbrushes, is one of those high-quality detail airbrushes. The airbrush features a tapered 1/16 ounce gravity-feed color cup as well as a cutaway, pre-set handle which allows for easy cleaning and precise control of fine lines. The PTFE needle bushing means that solvent-based paints, such as enamels, lacquers, and even automotive paints, can be used without concern. Additionally, the auxiliary lever and needle-chucking guide are one piece, for ease of disassembly and reassembly. The .20mm screw-in nozzle is made of steel alloy for added durability, and has large self-sealing threads for increased dependability.

Detail airbrushes are usually designed for small coverage areas, as the largest spray pattern is approximately one inch in diameter. Because of the size of the pattern, the HP-B Plus is an excellent choice for smaller scales, or it can be used for painting the fine details in larger models.

For most detail airbrushes, the air pressure can be set at 10PSI and the paint is thinned to a ratio of 60 percent thinner to 40 percent paint. On the first attempt with these settings, “spiders”

appeared in the paint. Spiders are a term used when the paint hits the surface and rivulets spray out around the sides of the painted area. This usually occurs when the paint is too thin, the air pressure is too high, or the airbrush is tip is too close to the surface being painted.

After dropping the ratio to 50:50 paint and thinner, another test run was performed at the same air pressure.



Again, there were spiders in the painted area. Rather than mixing more paint, the air pressure was dropped to 8PSI, and although the spiders were still there, they were lessened. When the pressure was then lowered to 6PSI, which is barely a whisper of air, the paint flow was perfect and controllable, and the spiders stopped. While the proper technique can be established with tests like these, and the airbrush performs flawlessly once the optimum ratios and air pressure have been determined, the fact that the HP-B Plus is capable of this level of performance is a testimony to its engineering.

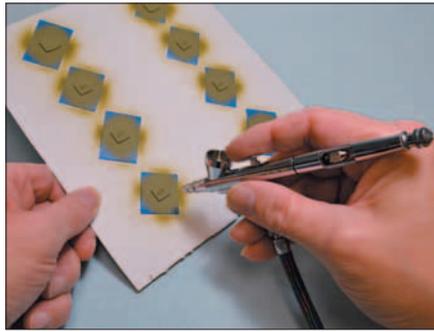
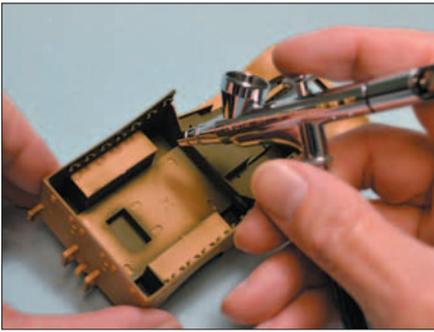
In the world of airbrushes, the proof of value and capability is always found in the actual paint application, not test patterns. For some real world experience, the HP-B Plus was used in a variety of painting projects. For the

first project, kit parts were taped to cardboard, and painted the base color for the model. This was easily done, coverage was excellent, and the airbrush did the job well. Another project was a 1/35 armored car, and the HP-B Plus was used to paint the interior spaces, where precise control of the paint is essential. Again, the ease of paint control made the job quick and easy, with excellent control in the tight areas, and the paint



Left: The Iwata Medea HP-B Plus is a high-quality detail airbrush aimed at the experienced modeler. Above: The unit breaks down easily for cleaning and the components are not affected by modern solvents.

coverage was even with no runs or drips. For the last test, a 1/72 F4F Wildcat was the subject. The panel lines were pre-shaded with flat black paint, and the process was smoothly and easily performed. Once the base coats of paint had been applied, the HP-B Plus was used for post-shading, spraying the lightened base color in the center of individual panels. This does require a bit more control of



Left: As a test of precise control, the HP-B Plus was used to add detail to a armored vehicle. Right: Small parts were given a coat of overall base color and the HP-B Plus performed this task without any difficulty.

the paint flow and air pressure to be certain the color is only applied to the proper areas. It was no surprise that the HP-B Plus worked very well for this process.

Cleaning the airbrush is essential after each use, and the typical methods of cleaning a double-action gravity feed airbrush are easily and quickly completed with the HP-B Plus. A complete cleaning includes wiping paint from the color cup and flushing the airbrush with clean thinner once or twice. Removing the handle and loosening the needle chuck allows the needle to be removed, and the tip is then removed with the included wrench. All of the parts are cleaned with fresh thinner, and the airbrush is reassembled to be ready for the next use.

Airbrushes can increase the fun and enjoyment of scale modeling, while providing modelers with increased capabilities and opportunities to improve the beauty and quality of their projects. Experienced and professional modelers tend to demand more from their airbrushes, and most will not hesitate to purchase the highest quality airbrush they can find. The Iwata HP-B Plus, with its outstanding performance, dependable and reliable operation, and exceptional value, can easily be that airbrush. **HM**

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