



Keith Pruitt

Model Kit Report

Polar Lights Star Trek U.S.S. Reliant NCC 1864

At the end of the universe lies the beginning of vengeance.

Space, the final frontier. With those immortal words began the prologue of the opening credits of a television series that, in some ways, changed the world. Star Trek was created by Gene Roddenberry and depicted the human race in the 22nd century when we had reached the stars. The series only lasted for three seasons, but it was the beginning of a media empire, with a dozen movies, five more television series, books and comic books and yes, even though it's all science fiction, scale model kits. In the second movie, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, an old nemesis from the past challenged the U.S.S. *Enterprise* in a fight to the death. Capturing the Starship U.S.S. *Reliant*, Khan Noonian Singh sought to wreak vengeance on Captain Kirk for marooning him and his followers on a dying planet.

In the movie, the U.S.S. *Reliant*, a beautiful Star Fleet Miranda-class Starship, stood toe-to-toe with the Starship *Enterprise* and was only defeated by the superior tactical leadership skills of Captain Kirk. *The Wrath of Khan* is considered by many to be the best of all the Star Trek films, most closely following the concept of the original series, and it is generally credited with reviving interest in the Star Trek culture. Now, Polar Lights has released its 1/1000 Star Trek U.S.S. *Reliant* NCC 1864 (POL906/12), and we have the opportunity to build a replica of this spectacular Starship.

The kit contains 34 parts, with eight of those molded in clear plastic and the rest in white plastic. Also included



Out of the box the U.S.S. *Reliant* NCC 1864 is a simple snap-together kit containing a mere 34 parts, including the base.

are a black plastic dome base and two different types of connectors, as well as a metal support rod for attaching the model to the base. Polar Lights also offers a Star Trek U.S.S. *Reliant* NCC-1864 Aztec Decal Set (MKA0125/12) that is offered separately, and it is well worth considering as an add-on sale item. The decals, which duplicate the multi-hued surface panel color pattern of the Starship seen in the movie, will be used in this build for increased authenticity.



In addition to the basic kit, Polar Lights also offers an Aztec Decal Set, which will transform the U.S.S. *Reliant* from a toy-like model into a finished product fit for the contest table.

In addition to the U.S.S. *Reliant*, the decal set also includes alternate registry markings for six other Miranda-Class Federation Starships: U.S.S. *Lantree*, *Saratoga*, *Brattain*, *Tian An Men*, *Majestic* and *Nautilus*.

The plastic parts are well-molded with additional details molded on the surfaces. This is a snap-together kit and one downside to most snap-together kits is the fit of the parts that tends to leave unrealistic gaps and seams. As with most snap-together kits, the pins and holes of this kit fit very tightly. This

works fine if the model is being assembled for play or for the entertainment of a younger or novice modeler. However, most serious modelers will fill and sand seams smooth for the best appearance. For the purpose of this build, test-fitting parts was necessary, so the holes where



Construction is simple resulting in four major components, which include the engine pods, center saucer and rollbar.

the alignment pins fit were enlarged with a hobby knife to allow the parts fit to be checked. Once satisfied with the fit, it allowed the parts to be separated again before permanently gluing.

The construction is simple and results in four major components, which include the two engines/pylon assemblies, the saucer section and the roll bar. The halves of the warp-drive nacelles capture the pylon between them, so they were fitted and glued. All of the seams were filled on these structures and then sanded smooth. The upper and lower saucer sections were similarly assembled, and again the seams were filled and sanded. The roll bar section, which is situated over the saucer and fits between the pylon tops, was assembled, and these seams were also filled and sanded. At this point, the four main components can be painted with the base color enamels.

For most of the Star Trek ships, white is considered to be the standard color. Because white can have a stark appearance, Federal Standard Light Gray (FS 36495) was used for the base color. It is an extremely light gray color, but has enough tonal quality to avoid the brightness of pure white. Besides, from a visual perspective, even though the studio models are painted white, they tend to appear gray on the movie screen.

When the basecoat had dried completely, designated areas were masked and painted with the secondary colors, Duck Egg Blue (FS 35622) and Intermediate Blue (FS 35164). In preparation for decaling, the model was sprayed overall with a clear gloss. Should dealers be walking a



The starships may appear to be white, but it is too stark of a color, so the model was sprayed with a coat of very light gray. novice through the process, let him or her know that decals should always be applied over a gloss finish because a flat surface can allow air to be trapped under the decal. Trapped air will cause “silvering” and will ruin the decal, which we want to have an appearance of being painted on the surface.

The kit decals are perfectly adequate and could easily contribute to a beautiful model on their own. Since Polar Lights recently changed decal suppliers, some of the kit supplied decals will be used for this build in order to evaluate their performance, but the majority came from the additional Polar Lights Aztec Decal Set. This set includes a host of decals with many having the appearance of stenciling that is seen on all military vessels and others adding greatly to the illusion of a functioning starship. These decals are beautifully printed and in perfect register, and the carrier film is very thin.

Starting with the main saucer section, the wedge-shaped panels are applied, beginning at the sides and moving toward the front of the model. Decal solvent was applied over the decals as they dried, allowing them to settle onto the surface, into engraved panel lines and over raised detail. The decals overlap at the panel lines, which caused some concern about the added thickness. Once they had dried, a hobby knife was used to slit the decals at the panel lines and more solvent was applied to these areas. This seemed to work



The Aztec Decal Set includes a host of decals and military stencils that will give the model the illusion of a fully functioning starship.

fairly well, but in hindsight, it might be best if the modeler used a straightedge and hobby knife to trim the decal edge to end exactly at the panel lines prior to the application.

There was only one group of the decals that caused problems: the rectangular yellow phaser bank decals on the top and bottom of the saucer. These structures are molded as prominently raised surface features. It was ask-

ing quite a lot of a two-dimensional decals to conform to these strong three-dimensional shapes, and the decals tented and wrinkled somewhat, even with several applications of decal solvent. From an experienced modeler's perspective, it would have been better to paint the phasers in a yellow color that matches the decal, and then cut the red outline from the decal to fit around the phaser bank, but that exceeds the concept of an evaluation.

After all the decals had been applied and allowed to dry thoroughly, another coat of clear gloss was sprayed over the model to seal the decals in place. A dark acrylic wash was prepared, combining approximately 2/3 of the appropriate base colors with 1/3 flat black. This was applied around raised details and into the panel lines to deepen the shadows. Any excess wash was removed with a dampened cotton swab after it had dried. Finally, a coat of clear flat was sprayed over the entire model for the appropriate finish and to bring everything together.

The clear parts were painted as indicated in the instructions, and then glued in place on the model. Some of the smaller details, like the formation lights, were painted with



With a lot of talent, a little imagination, paint and a decal set, the U.S.S. Reliant has morphed into a science fiction masterpiece.

enamels and a fine brush.

Final assembly consisted of gluing the roll bar into position and attaching the model to the base. While the metal rod that holds the model to the base was simply painted flat black, the dome base had previously been painted to resemble a planet, which gives the model the appearance of orbiting high above the surface.

Whether the Polar Lights 1/1000 Star Trek U.S.S.

Reliant NCC 1864 kit is built solely as a snap-together toy for a youngster or treated to the full effect of building a realistic replica of the Federation Starship, the kit is an outstanding example of the Star Trek genre. While the assembly process is simple enough for anyone and the kit decals are perfectly suitable for novice or young modelers, the Polar Lights Aztec Decal Set is definitely something that experienced modelers would prefer. Either way, the U.S.S. *Reliant* can be loads of fun to build and could easily produce an exceptional model for the display shelf or the contest table.

The Star Trek U.S.S. *Reliant* along with the companion Aztec decal set and all other Polar Lights products are available directly from Round 2. **HM**

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