

Branching Out in the World of Anime: Building Models

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Well, anime fans, my supply has been running a little on the slow side of late. I'm not really sure whether or not anyone has chosen the reviews that I wanted to write, so instead I'll step to an anime-related activity. Lately I've been building models of anime rather than watching it and it has been almost as exciting watching the forms come into being in my hands as watching them unfold on the screen. Well, I haven't been building anime per say, but rather specific characters. It started about three weeks ago when I decided that I needed a hobby that would keep me occupied both mentally and physically and keep me entertained as well. So off I went to a local hobby shop to see what they had... when I saw a couple of boxes that I instantly recognized as potentially interesting and challenging- Mecha. Needless to say I bought the model and the stuff to put it together on the spot. I am guessing that it would probably be wise to tell you about it at this point.

If you want to build models of your own, it's actually a fairly easy process- all you need are a few basic things with which to start. For supplies you'll need:

- Some glue- any model glue will do. I personally use a brand called hollytrim because it has a consistency similar to that of elmer's school glue and has no fumes.
- A knife- anything that can cut plastic will do, but generally the sharper the better. I am using X-acto brand razors, but if you buy this brand you will have to beware because they are essentially the same as scalpels but with straight edges instead of curved ones. A model kit- I'll tell you about these in just a moment.
- Some newspaper- to prevent excess glue from getting all over the place.

For more advanced model builders, some fine-bristled paint brushes, paint & extra decals will help to spruce the model a bit after it's finished.

The models themselves cost anywhere between \$6.00 and \$30.00, while George2x-acto knives are only about \$5.00 or so (\$2.80 for the knife and \$2.20 for the blade refills). I would recommend getting at least two sizes for cutting the pieces from their racks. The glue is about \$2.00-\$3.00 or so, and the newspaper is dirt cheap. After you've made the initial investment of between \$20.00 & \$30.00 or so any other models you

choose to build will be comparatively cheaper because you will already have the initial supplies.

The first of two models I bought and built was the Gundam L.O. Booster. It only cost me about \$8.00 or so and looked like it was directly from the anime on the cover of the box. Needless to say I was very pleased when I opened the box and found all the parts fit together very well. There are 12 steps in the assembly of the L.O. Booster, most of which were very self-explanatory. The legs, arms, head, torso and booster rockets were easy to put together and were very well explained in the pictures (though the assembly instructions were in Japanese). It also took me a little while to figure out which decals to stick where and how to put them there. For instance, the decals for the eyes took me twenty minutes or so to put on the headpiece, and I had to use a needle to press down the edges because it was the only tool small enough to fit in the space for the eye sockets.

It wasn't until step 9 that I had had any difficulties- that is the step where all of the joints are assembled onto the body structure. The legs, back and torso went together well and felt like a ball and socket joint. The shoulders, however, didn't quite fit onto the torso. Instead the joint stuck out a bit and has confused me. I will eventually try to sand the joint with sandpaper so that it will fit properly. If that works, then I will be very pleased with the model overall. The model itself is very colorful and the decals go with the red, white and blue arms legs and torso very well. My overall rating of the model is as such:

On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is good, easy, fits well or is very colorful and 10 is bad, difficult, does not fit well or is gaudy.

Ease of assembly: 3.5-4

Colors: 2-3

Color of decals: 3

Ease of putting decals on: 7-8

Range of accessories: 1 (it has 2 swords, 1 gun and a shield).

Overall ranking: 2-3

This is a good model- it is fun to build and is a pleasure to look at once it's finished. I wouldn't recommend it for the beginning model hobbyist, however, due to the small size of its parts and its decals.

The second model that I bought was the Dovenwolf from the Gundam "ZZ" series. This one set me back about \$15.00 or so and was something of a nightmare to put together. There are only 7 steps in assembling the Dovenwolf ("DV" for short), though steps 1-6 each had a step A and B as well.

George3 I was encountering problems with the DV as early as step 1. It turns out that the upper arm joints (above the elbow, but below the shoulder) were too small for their connections and as a result would pop apart whenever I tried to make them pivot. It is often a good idea to test each individual piece before putting it on the whole chassis- in this case, the upper arms failed miserably. In addition, most of the decoration on this model comes from the attached "boosters" which have no true method of connecting to their respective parts other than with small bumps that barely manage to fit into the holes. Glue alone usually helps, but in this case I was often required to hold the individual pieces in place for 20 minutes or more so that the glue could set. Needless to say, it was a massive headache.

The biggest headache of all came when I was attempting to glue the antennas to the head. The one in the center of the two head pieces fit like a glove, but the two on the side required a lot of time and patience to glue to the head because I was given a total area of about 1/8 x 1/8 cm with which to stick them. Glue doesn't generally tend to hold things together very well at that size. The size of the antennas versus the size of the area that they were intended to stay on left me gritting my teeth since they (the antennas) constantly fell over under their own weight. Needless to say, I wasn't overly impressed with the DV model- the parts were too flimsy, the colors were drab (with green and black only) and there are no decals. Here are my ratings for it:

Ease of assembly: 10

Colors: 5-6

Color of decals: N/A (there are no decals)

Range of Accessories: 3-4 (it includes a sword and a gun that can be held either one or two handed)

Overall rating: 7.5

I would definitely not recommend this model for anyone except the true fanatic because the results were somewhat dissappointing compared to my previous model (the L.O. Booster). A little paint can certainly help the overall effect, but I am afraid to move the model itself because something might fall off or break.

Next month I will either get back into my old anime habit, or I will review a couple more models. I dunno... for now, though, I am happy doing things as I am... slowly and with much patience.