

U.S.Navy PBR 31 Mk.II Patrol Boat River "Pibber"

By Joe Caputo, IPMS Ocala

Quoting the Tamiya instruction sheet:

Knowing that patrolling coastal and river waterways during a conflict in Viet Nam was going to be extremely hazardous, The U.S.Navy searched for a boat design that could be quickly produced and employed. One chosen was a fiberglass-hulled pleasure craft built by Modutec Marine in Seattle Washington. The Patrol Boat, River or PBR as it is known militarily, became one of the most successful weapons systems used in Southeast Asia.

It was 31' 11" long; 11'7" wide; and 9'9" high above the waterline. It displaced 8 3/4 tons loaded drawing two feet of water. It's crew of four was armed with a pair of .50 caliber machine guns in a turret at the bow, a single .50 cal gun or grenade launcher mounted on a tripod in the fantail,, plus a single M-60 on a pipe mount bolted to one of the amidships splinter shields. It was powered by two turbocharged Detroit Diesel 205 HP, V-6 marine engines, driving a pair of Jacuzzi 14JY waterjet drives. The engines were located underneath the aft decking, and the boat was steered by two moveable nozzles below the waterline, mounted on the rear transom. The water intakes were located on the hull bottom. It had a top speed in excess of 25 knots. Surface radar and two-way radio equipment provided communication and maneuvering safety.

Most of us know it as Captain Willard's (Martin Sheen) transportation in the 1979 blockbuster movie, "*Apocalypse Now*".

The kit:

Tamiya did a fine job. A 10 page instruction sheet, with paint callouts (but, check your references) and a small decal sheet, including optional hull numbers, a star (for the "roof") A separate sheet of paper gives you a couple American flags to cut out and play with. A crew of four and all the extra goodies you could ask for, although there is a resin aftermarket set available (Verlinden?).

The kit, which has been around since 1991, and is still available, is very well engineered, and goes together with no problems, in fact, easily. There are quite a bit of reference available on line, and quite a few kit reviews. Pre-planning, and pre-painting, is the name of the game, and the most fun.

With all the wonderful "Pibber" models, on line and at various contests, the challenge was to make mine look as good as most, and better than some. When everyone starts with the same

solid kit, the difference will be in how you paint it, and what detail you may add. Try to decide early how far you want to go, and then take it in that direction.

I bought my PBR at a club Swap N Sell, without a crew, for about \$5.00. At that price, what did I have to lose? It was time to play (experiment). I started with pre-shading. About 5 shades later, my "canvas" was ready to begin being turned into "art". As I progressed, things just seemed to work, and I was encouraged to keep going by it looking better with each step.

Basically I was trying to duplicate what I saw in photos of the real thing. It was taking such good shape; I hunted up the crew, adding one from my M-113 kit. With the addition of the crew, I was presented with a whole new set of options, and so it went. I finally capped it off by spraying a couple colors of enamel paint on to a couple of inches of water, in a plastic shoe box, then dipping the hull, at an angle, to give it a "scum line". Bits of crud and straw were added to give it the "in the water" look. Again, it was a matter of seeing something I wanted to use, then figuring out how to accomplish it.

I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent on this kit. It was a great change of pace, but more importantly, a change in the style I "attack" a model. I hope the lessons I learned, and there were many, are all remembered in future exploits.

Small discrepancy: There are clear plastic "bottles" and decals for "Lite" beer, in the kit. An added detail, but one that is incorrect. The PBR's were already decommissioned before light beer went on the market.









