

Airbus A.340-200

History: The decision made in 1970 to create Airbus Industrie came from the desire of Europeans to design and construct airliners that could compete with the United States products of companies such as Boeing and McDonnell Douglas. Airbus Industrie would construct airliners designed specifically for European conditions that would also be capable of beating United States manufacturers on the world market. The first Airbus product, the medium capacity A.300 widebody, was very successful and so Airbus branched out into other classes of airliners, each taking something from previous Airbus design but also incorporating new features to expand the Airbus range of products. Consequently the A.310 series was a shorter version of the basic A.300 and the A.320 series was a narrow-body airliner incorporating some old and many new Airbus features. When Airbus Industrie decided to take on Boeing on the lucrative intercontinental airliner market it retained the basic fuselage of the A.300, gave it the avionics of the A.320 and designed a new high performance wing that also allowed the new range of airliners to fly with two or four engines. This gave it a two engine airliner to compete with the Boeing 767 range of airliners and a four engine airliner to compete on some of the routes operated by Boeing 747s. Although the A.330-series of twin-engine airliners could be fitted with any of three different engines the A.340 series were all fitted with CFM56-5 engines that were not as powerful as the engines fitted to the A.330 series but were very fuel efficient and overcame restrictions placed on twin-engine airliners on some over-water routes.



The A.340 series was offered to airlines in two versions, the shorter -200 series which carried less passengers but over a longer distance and the -300 series with a fuselage that was 4.27 metres long to give greater capacity but at the cost of reduced range. The first A.340, a -200 made its first flight on 1 April 1992 and received its certification towards the end of December that year. A.340 deliveries commenced in early 1993 and by late 2002 a total of 233 A.340s were in service, 207 of them were -300s and only 26 were -200s.

Lufthansa became a major operator of both versions of A.340, the first six being -200s and the remainder -300s. This airline can trace its roots back to 1926 and during the interwar period it became a major international airline as well as training pilots for the Luftwaffe. It was revived in 1953 and adopted its present name in 1954, again growing to be one of the world's most important airlines.

Data: long range high capacity airliner. *Engines* four General Electric/SNECMA CFM56-5C2 turbofans of 138,480 lb (616.0 kN) thrust. *Wing span* 59.06m (197.83ft). *Length* 59.39 m (194.83 ft). *Maximum take-off weight* 275,015 kg (606,300 lb). *Cruising speed*

850km/h (530mph). *Range* 14,800 km (8,000 nm). *Maximum payload* 45,915 kg (101,915 lb), between 263 and 303 passengers. *Flight crew* 2.

The kit: Revell 1:144

Although this model is the last of my set of four A.330/340s to be completed it was the beginning of the whole sorry saga. I mean, I have been known to cast aspersions on modellers who make endless versions of Bf109s and here I've spent a good part of 2003 making variations on the same airliner. No wonder I leave the year in a slight state of mental befuddlement.. It all began with a tiny bit of research on the internet and the discovery of a site that listed the registrations of all the world's airliners. To my consternation I discovered that although Revell offered a kit for the A340-300 the registration was for Lufthansa's first A340 which was a -200. Well, a sensible person would have decided to print up a new registration number for the model to match a later -300 but instead I had a brain storm and ... there went the best part of the modelling year. The only real difference between the two versions is two plugs in the fuselage on either side of the wing that are indicated on the kit by engraved lines. True, the forward plug is back with the wing fairing which made life a little complex, but it promised to be really little more work than a new registration and a lot more interesting. But having decided to make that changes other variations occurred to me, and I was doomed.

Most of the other versions of the A.330 and A.340 did not present too many problems, except for the interminable masking because, even though most airliners in the past decade or so have been painted white, there are wing and tail



leading edges, engine intakes and exhausts, undercarriage bays and a bewildering range of bare metal panels on the engine pylons that have to be done. (To preserve my sanity I made a smaller, simpler kit at one stage in less time than it would have taken to mask one of these airliners). On close examination there are perhaps a couple of little points on the kit that could be improved but it is hardly worth the effort. The only serious problem is the cockpit windows that are just too small, there's nothing to be done about it except use a decal for them.

For me the major problem with this model came in the painting. Having discovered that the secret to getting a high quality white finish on airliners is - censored (otherwise it wouldn't be a secret) -, I went ahead and did that but, when it came time to take off all the masking I'd used to paint the underside the appropriate shade of gray (and that wasn't a bed of roses either) great sheets of top side white paint came away as well. I tried a few quick-fixes that really didn't work and put the whole lot away for a few months to get over it all.

Decaling is also a bit of a trial, mainly because there are so many tiny little decals according to the instruction sheet and because, since I wanted all four versions to look similar, things like the walk-lines on the wings had to be made up on the computer (all four decal sheets used in making the four models were different widths). A lot of effort can be saved by looking at as many photos as possible where it quickly becomes clear that many tiny decals don't seem to appear on the real thing. Again, the end result is a delightful looking not-so-little airliner.

Now, I've been noticing that more -500 and -600 series airliners are appearing in our skies these days. I wonder if Revell are thinking about releasing a kit from which they could all be made or whether it would be possible to do it with the existing kits. Argh!! No!!, Quick nurse, hand me a Spitfire.