

Airbus A.340-300

History: The origins of the Airbus A.340 lie in the decision made in 1970 to form Airbus Industrie, a multinational European effort to design and construct a high capacity twin-jet transport in competition to United States manufacturers and to serve the route characteristics of many European airlines. The original A.300 laid the foundation that has seen Airbus Industrie become the world's second largest manufacturer of mainline airliners. In its first 25 years Airbus has sold over two thousand airliners. The consortium has its headquarters in south west France near Toulouse and is owned by Europe's four leading aerospace companies, Aerospatiale, Daimler-Benz, British Aerospace and CASA.

The first Airbus airliner was the A.300 that became popular around the world. Part of the reason for that success lay in its cabin size that had been carefully selected to be wider than standard Boeing 707 class airliners but narrower than the wide-body Lockheed Tristars, Douglas DC-10 and Boeing 747. It was roomy and comfortable without being too wide for its projected role as a medium capacity airliner. The same fuselage was used on the next Airbus airliner, the shorter A.310 and for the longer range A.300B9 and B10 that had a new wing optimised for longer ranges than the A.300s. In 1980, after the A.310 was launched, Airbus redesigned the B9 and B10 projects to carry around 200 passengers with a range of up to 10 000 kilometres, intended to replace the Boeing 707s and DC-8s that were beginning to be forced from service because of new noise regulations. These two new versions were soon redesignated as the A.330 and the A.340, the A.330 twin jet and the A.340 as a four engine version. Incorporated into these new designs was the advanced technology developed for the smaller Airbus A.320s including a glass cockpit and side stick controller. In October 1986 Airbus signed a six year contract with CFMI to use the CFM56-5 engine as standard for the A.340. It was not the most powerful civil jet engine available but generally suited the requirement for an efficient fuel burn, giving the airliner long range and also freeing it from the restrictions imposed on twin engined airliners making long range over-water flights. The A.340 was designed in two initial versions, the -200 with longer range and the -300 with a fuselage 4.27 metres longer to give it greater capacity but shorter range.



The first A.340 (a -200 version) 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 2001 309 A.340s of all classes had been ordered and 205 were in operation.

Data: long range high capacity airliner. *Engines* four CFM International CFM56-5C turbofan engines of 616.0kN (138 480) thrust. *Wing span* 59.06m (197.83ft). *Length* 63.65m (208.83ft). *Maximum take-off weight* 271 020kg (597 500lb). *Cruising speed* 850km/h

(530mph). *Range* 13 250km (7150nm). *Maximum payload* 43 500kg (43 500lb), between 295 and 335 depending on seating layout. *Flight crew* 2.

The kit: Revell 1:144

As with many airliner kits, this A.340 kit is as old as the airliner it represents and carries the date stamp of 1992. These days it seems that this kit is available in at least two versions, a generic A.340 with Air Canada markings and an A.340-300 kit in Lufthansa markings. Both use exactly the same moulds but, when you delve into the history of these airliners, you find that Lufthansa decal sheet gives you markings for an A.340-200 which is not quite the same thing. In any event the range of decal sheets available for airliners these days means that it is possible to make the A.340 in almost any colour scheme you like.

I bought an Air Canada A.340 from one of the club members and then picked up two more A.340 kits and an A.330 kit at a swap-meet (of which more in coming months). The person I bought them for had already acquired additional decal sheets and so, for an A.340-300 I had the choice of making this kit in Air Canada, Cathay Pacific or Singapore Airlines markings. Of the lot Singapore Airlines are the most striking and so I went in that direction.

There is nothing serious to complain about in this kit. Overall it is very well designed so that, with a little care and patience, it goes together easily and well. The engine pods and pylons are delightful little sub structures that give a full sense of the real airliner. The undercarriage is delicate, nicely detailed but also fairly sturdy. About the only serious complaint I have is the cockpit windows in which the framing is too thick so that if you use them as they come with the kit the end result looks far too small. I only found this out after the event but there are two solutions. One would be to carefully sand and polish the transparency and then mask the windows to something approaching their proper shape, the easier solution would be to use the decal provided (which is commonplace for 1/144 airliners) and that is what I did. Remember not to glue the tail fins into place until all the painting and decaling is done as it makes those jobs a whole lot easier.



After the major components of the kit are assembled and everything is ready for painting the really hard work on this model begins - the masking. The wings, for example involved six or so different colours, most of them versions of grey that have to be mixed to achieve something approximating the correct shades. The most difficult sections to mask are around the engines and pylons, all up I reckon I must have spend four or so evenings cutting up and sticking on tiny bits of masking tape at various stages of painting the wings. But once they are done the fuselage is easy, all white.

The Liveries Unlimited decal sheet is excellent but, as with other Airbus airliners in this class, the windows at the rear of the fuselage are not in line with the rest of the windows but slant up a little (apparently to give more room in the under-floor cargo hold). The decal sheet fails to recognise this so the usual nipping and tucking is necessary. I also used some of the decals from the Air Canada sheet for some of the larger stencilling but close inspection of photos of Singapore Airlines A.340s shows many less stencils and stuff than are on the sheet. Apart from the hours of tedious masking this is one of the best kits I've made in a long time and it looks very nice in Singapore Airlines colours.

The Liveries Unlimited decal sheet is excellent but, as with other Airbus airliners in this class, the windows at the rear of the fuselage are not in line with the rest of the windows but slant up a little (apparently to give more room in the under-floor cargo hold). The decal sheet fails to recognise this so the usual nipping and tucking is necessary. I also used some of the decals from the Air Canada sheet for some of the larger stencilling but close inspection of photos of Singapore Airlines A.340s shows many less stencils and stuff than are on the sheet. Apart from the hours of tedious masking this is one of the best kits I've made in a long time and it looks very nice in Singapore Airlines colours.