



THE VIEW FROM MOUNT OLYMPUS

ACHTUNG PANZER!

Our historical wargaming correspondent **Zeus** reports from the home of the Gods with a dose of heavy metal for tread-heads

The problem dealing with mortals is that they do such confusing things.

Publishers, for instance. They put January on the cover when the magazine is actually in the shops in December. This means that, technically, I should be wishing you a very happy new year, but I bet you've got mince pie crumbs on your bib as you read this.

Being immortal, of course, I don't have to worry about such trivia. Time is all the same to me. I float above and beyond mere chronology, seeing all that is past, present and future as if it were frozen in ice. Our editor, however, is not impressed. "A deadline," quoth he, "is still a bl**dy deadline!" I try to convince him that an article delivered in the ides of March is the same as one delivered in November, but he won't have it. Ah, well. Deadlines for deities. Whatever next? And I thought Hera was a hard sell.

Minairons 1/72 Panzer I Ausf. A ▼

New company, new kit – and, this time, a welcome arrival from Spain in the form of the vehicle that equipped many of German units during the early

Blitzkrieg as they dashed into Poland and then France, Belgium and Holland. One of the other draws of this little vehicle – it's barely bigger than a tankette, in reality – is that it saw considerable service in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939, having rolled off the production lines as early as 1934. The Spanish conflict is not everyone's cup of tea, but these days there are good figure ranges and rulesets to support interest in that bitter civil war, and the attractive box shows vehicles decked out very much with this period in mind.

Let me say that, when Minairons describe their kit as 'fast assembly', they aren't kidding. It took me longer to examine the sprue, cut out the parts and do a dry run than it did to actually make the thing. I reckon ten minutes per tank tops, probably less if you have a production line going. The assembly instructions are given on

the rear of the box, together with Vallejo paint



suggestions – the photo of completed models on the front serves as the painting guide. There are, to begin with, very few parts: nine per tank, in fact; ten if you count the optional turret, and there are three identical sprues in the box. Unlike The Plastic Soldier Company (PSC), who supplies the tracks separately on their kits, here they are moulded as one assembly with the wheels and return rollers. The only fiddly bit, in fact, is the external beam that attaches outside the bogie wheels on each side but, as long as you check which way round they should attach, with the curlier end at the back, then all is well. I found my Osprey New Vanguard *German Light Panzers 1932-1942* invaluable. With this Ausf. A, you are even provided with two separate turrets, rather than just different guns and mantlets, with the first option being twin 7.92mm MG13 machine guns, the second the slightly later 20mm cannon.

The detail is not quite as crisp as a PSC offering – the vision ports are somewhat vague, the track links are rather approximate and you certainly won't be counting rivets – but, as a wargame piece, it's fine, and a good paint job will make up for most things. My only complaint is the lack of a commander figure, with the option of an open turret hatch. I've seen so many photos of the tank going into action with the

commander exposed to the waist that it seems almost odd to model the tank completely buttoned down – though perfectly legitimate, of course. A nice touch is the inclusion of a sheet of decals – something I wish PSC would get around to doing – with options not only for Germany and Spain, but also China: it appears that perhaps ten were exported by Hitler's Germany and saw combat in the Sino-Japanese War, though not, it must be said, with any success.

Caliver Books is selling these baby Panzers for £15.99 a box, making them just over a fiver a sprue. That seems just a tad steep to me, but of course there's an exchange rate risk being taken as well between the Pound and the Euro, so I'll let you make up your own mind. Personally, I would have been happier with four in a box for that money, or around 12 quid for the three, since a keen SCW or early WWII gamer will be looking to get hold of quite a few of these.

Overall, however, a pleasing introduction to this new company who have an interesting array of vehicles in the pipeline, not just in 1/72, but also in 1/100 (15mm) and 1/56 (28mm) too. See <http://minairons-news.blogspot.co.uk/p/catalogue.html>.

Plastic Soldier Company 15mm Tiger I ▼

There's something simply majestic about the Tiger: an imposing piece of

machinery in all respects, it earned a phenomenal reputation in the hands of Michael Wittman and others, despite its technical difficulties. This slab-fronted monster with its merciless '88' simply shrugged off almost everything the Allies could throw at it until the very last stages of the war. No wonder I can't think of a single WWII wargamer of my acquaintance who doesn't have at least one in their collection.

To be fair, with no less than four of these growling beasts in a box, you probably won't need to buy any more for some time – assuming you play sensibly balanced WWII games, that is, rather than some of the wheel-to-wheel traffic jam slugfests I've seen in recent years. Bear in mind that Wittmann, with just a single Tiger I, destroyed as many as 14 tanks, 15 personnel carriers and two anti-tank guns in just 15 minutes during the Battle of Villers-Bocage on 13th June 1944. Put a full boxload of these on the table at the same time, and your opponent is going to need the best part of a battalion to shift them or some very clever tactics. The kit comes in an attractive box with front artwork by David Pentland, who does many of the PSC packaging illustrations, showing a pair of Tigers on the Ostfront rumbling past a knocked-out JSI. The rear of the box has a plan view and side profile showing a typical camouflage pattern on a mid-

