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# Collecting Vintage Plastic Model Airplane Kits



## Synopsis

Life-long model builder, collector, and connoisseur, Craig Kodera, examines the hobby of plastic model building to formulate a book on today's art of collecting vintage model airplane kits. The book features more than 300 detailed, high-quality digital photos of vintage aircraft model kits and their components, and is written in the context of what specifically gives models their collectible value today. Box wraps, direction sheets, and decals are also covered in detail. This book also highlights exactly what collectors should look for (and be aware of) in building their collections. For proper historical perspective, the author covers model kit development in the heyday of the 1950s and 1960s. Comprehensive value and pricing information for vintage kits is shown as well.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"For those interested in classic kits and the kit collector world, this is a great title to pick up." (Chris Banyai-Riepl Internet Modeler 2015-02-20)"What a cool, colorful compendium. Hundreds of photos flavor this fun-fest. Let's hope Kodera produces a sequel -- or two!" (David Veres Cyber Modeler 2014-11-11)If you are a modeler you will want this book for the early history of our hobby and the numerous pictures. The kit collector will want it for all of the information regarding condition, rarity and pricing as well as inspiration for starting a new quest for a previously unknown kit. All will want for the photos. (Hub Plott IPMS USA 2014-12-23)"If you are a model collector, don't pass up this book, especially if you are thinking about finding an older kit to start or add to a collection." (CDR Peter Mersky, USNR(Ret) The Hook 2015-01-28)Interview with author Craig Kodera in May 2015

Life-long model builder, collector, and connoisseur, Craig Kodera, examines the hobby of plastic model building to formulate a book on today's art of collecting vintage model airplane kits. The book features more than 300 detailed, high-quality digital photos of vintage aircraft model kits and their components, and is written in the context of what specifically gives models their collectible value today. Box wraps, direction sheets, and decals are also covered in detail. This book also highlights exactly what collectors should look for (and be aware of) in building their collections. For proper historical perspective, the author covers model kit development in the heyday of the 1950s and 1960s. Comprehensive value and pricing information for vintage kits is shown as well.

This book addresses the somewhat quirky hobby of collecting plastic aircraft model kits and not building them. As the title states, the focus is on model aircraft; although, missiles and some space items are also included. The period covered coincides with the glory days of plastic model kit construction, i. e., the late 1940s, the 1950s, and the early 1960s, when the kits were affordable and the domain of children, not adults. The transition from solid wood to plastic is touched upon, and built-up display models, such as those from Allyn are briefly mentioned. The real strength of the book is in its excellent photographs of old kit boxes and a few completed models. Some photographs of kit catalogs are also sprinkled throughout the book. It is filled with nostalgia for those of us who built many of these during our youth. Included are models by the greats (Revell, Monogram, and Aurora) as well as those from many smaller companies. The number of kits is very representative of the era covered and included are a number of rare items, e. g., the ITC F-108 Rapier and boxed gift sets. Obviously, many kits had to be omitted, but those included will bring back many memories. The weakness of the book is its text. It is fairly shallow and vague and adds little value. There is very little substantive discussion about the kit collecting hobby itself beyond some generalities. The author does mention representative prices for some of the kits in today's market, but he really does not talk much about specific topics, such as condition issues (warpage, decals, instruction sheets, etc.) and how old kits are graded, nor does he provide useful guidance as to where they may be found. He does provide a few references, but it would have been very helpful to have included more. A more comprehensive and coherent discussion of the hobby would have added measurably to the book. Irrespective of its shortcomings, it is well worth buying for the illustrations alone. It is a good addition to other books on the overall topic of old plastic model kits, such as those written by Tom Graham. My greatest problem with the book is that it was not two or three times as long so that

the author could have presented more of these great kits.

Nostalgia is a very powerful force for some of us. It's often said that at the root of the desire to collect is a desire to finally own the things we never had or could never find as a kid. Craig Kodera's *Collecting Vintage Plastic Model Airplane Kits* would seem to support that argument. For those of us who built kits during the 1960's and 1970's, there were a wealth of projects available at the local hobby shop. But there were the occasional mystery items as well. Revell or Monogram kits that had packaging that didn't match the current offerings. Strange looking space craft that had no resemblance to what NASA was busily launching into space. Strange manufacturers like Strombecker and "Helicopters for Industry, Inc." Who the heck were these people? And even odder, ... wooden kits, with a handful of plastic parts? What were you supposed to do with these? *Collecting Vintage Plastic Model Airplane Kits* solves many of these mysteries. It is a colorful, general overview of the model kits produced in the United States from the 1940's onward. Primarily relying on box top art, it tells the story of model kits from the early post war wooden sets up to the fully injected molded kits of the early 1970's. It gives a rough outline of how the industry grew and developed, and in particular how packaging and artwork went from basic line drawings to full blown artwork. A lot of this information is contained in the photo captions. The author also digresses into "Why We Collect", what it was like to visit real hobby shops before mail order and internet shopping took over. At one point he discusses the ups and downs of "old school collecting" that was done by mail order lists and the occasional collectors meet. The illustrations are bright and detailed. It is very much like looking at a catalog of rare kits, some of whom I have not seen for years. One drawback is that, as the title clearly states, the selections are limited to model airplane kits. I am sure many of us would like to see a similar volume on armor or automobiles. Those will have to be taken up by another author. This book does suffer a bit from insider knowledge. The author refers to such things as Revell "S kits" and "Pre-S" kits without ever explaining exactly what those are. This is also not an exhaustive reference on every single kit ever made during this time period. For that, the author dutifully refers us to *The Collectors Value Guide for Scale Model Plastic Kits* by John W. Burns. The author also refers to other works that are focused on specific model manufacturers, such as *Remembering Revell Model Kits* by Tom Graham (which I also have on order and hope to review shortly). As mentioned, the book is primarily on US manufacturers, but there is a chapter on foreign kits from the period from the likes of Airfix and Frog and a host of Japanese manufacturers. He even has some kits from Russia and what was then the East Bloc. This is a fun book, colorful, reasonably priced and I keep going through it like a kid a Christmas. If you have ever wondered about the story

about these old kits, this is a good place to start.

Despite some glorious cover art, this is more a nostalgia trip than an in-depth look at the area and industry. Not only is so much left out--like Aurora's groundbreaking WWI airplane models or mention of Glencoe models--but there is very little detail on the origins of even the biggest players like Revell and far too little on makers like Comet and Lindbergh. Airfix is barely mentioned. And only three of four of the great box art artists are mentioned, with no bio material on them. Almost everything has been written about before in more detail (dates of kits and series runs are often omitted), and even the basic information about how early kits of WW2 planes were molded in garish colors never seen on the real aircraft. Still, my heart leapt at the illustrations of box art I haven't seen since I was 12 years old. So I had fun for an hour or so reading through the book.

..about collecting airplane kits from the 50s through the 70s. Covers US and foreign manufacturers, certain marketing strategies, anecdotes about kit collecting. Although it is profusely and comprehensively illustrated with photos, I had expected more in the way of the ins and outs of kit collecting rather than a history.

An excellent publication, researched very well and presented in an easy and well informed format. My only criticism would be, that as it appears to be aimed at the U.S. market, very little space is dedicated to the great British, European and Japanese brands that were also available at the time. Still a great buy and a great read.

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