Airbus Industrie A.330-200

History: Airbus Industrie was formed in 1970 as a European multinational project to create a high-capacity twin jet transport, the A.300. By 2003 Airbus had become the world's second largest manufacturer of civil airliners of over 100 passengers capacity. In its first 25 years Airbus sold over 2100 airliners worldwide. The Airbus consortium is led by German, French, Spanish and British manufacturers and uses components manufactured by sub-contractors almost globally. It's headquarters are in southwest France near the city of Toulouse.

The A.330 was designed as part of an overall project to create a range of airliners to challenge Boeing's domination of the large airliner market. It is almost identical to the four engined A.340 that competes in the long-range market but, with two engines, it was designed to serve the shorter range market where the efficiency of two powerful engines was more important than the need for four engines on longer haul routes. The fuselages are identical, as are the flight systems, the wings are almost identical but the tail is a little larger to compensate for the loss of directional stability offered by four engines rather than two.

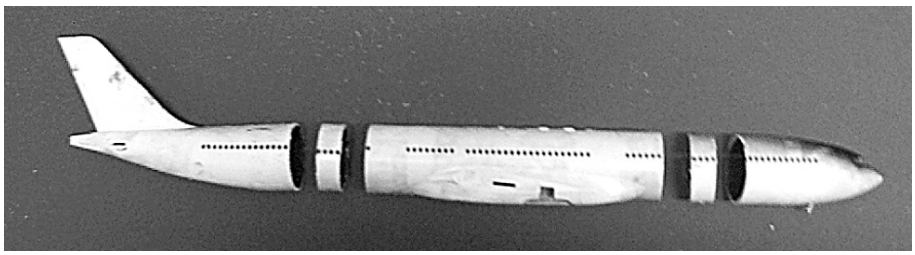
The A.330 was launched in June 1987 at the same time as the A.340. The first A.330, a -300 version with a fuselage identical to the A.340-300, flew for the first time in November 1992 and entered service a couple of months later. The A.330-200 version made its first flight in August 1997 and entered service in April 1998. It is 4.59 metres shorter than the -300 version but has additional fuel capacity so it's range is over 3000 kilometres greater than the longer version. It competes directly with Boeing's 767-300ER, offering greater range, more under floor freight capacity, wider cabin and slightly higher speed. Airbus offers the A.330 series with options of three different engine types to suit the requirements of different airlines; the CFM CF-6, the Pratt & Whitney PW4168 and the Rolls-Royce Trent. It has begun to make inroads into what was once Boeing's prime market and 79 had entered operation by 2001. Qantas switched its allegiance from Boeing in it's large fleet re-equipment plans announced in 2001 and has ordered both -200 and -300 versions of the A.330. It was able to order the two version because there is so much commonality between them that flight, cabin, ground and engineering crews can treat them as virtually the same type, even though they can serve quite distinct markets.

One of the first airlines to take delivery of the A.330-200 was Transportes Aéreos Meridionais (TAM), a major Brazilian airline that was founded in 1961 and became a scheduled carrier in 1976, flying initially with Fokker F-27s and Embraer Bandeirantes. Around 1990 the airline began using Fokker 50s and Fokker 100s. It currently serves 50 Brazilian centres and six other South American destinations. The A.330-200s allowed TAM to expand services to tourist destinations, largely in South America but also to Europe and the United States.

Data: long range high capacity airliner. *Engines* two Pratt & Whitney PW4168 turbofan engines or two Rolls-Royce Trent 700 turbofan engines or two CFM International CFM6-80 turbofan engines of 600.6kN (102 960 lb) thrust. *Wing span* 59.06m (197.83ft). *Length* 59.06m (193.58ft). *Maximum take-off weight* 229 970kg (507 000lb). *Cruising speed* 850km/h (530mph). *Range* 11 850km (6400nm). *Maximum payload* 46 715kg (102 960lb), between 253 and 380 passengers depending on seating layout. *Flight crew* 2.

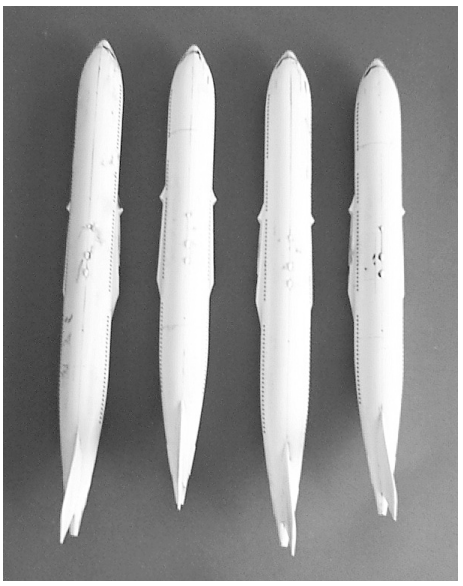
The kit: Revell 1:144

The Revell A.330 kit is, like the airliner it represents, almost identical to the Revell A.340 kit. The main difference is in the sprue that has the part for four engines for the A.340 and two engines for the A.330 kit. Due to no fault of my own I had ended up with three A.340 kits and one A.330 kit but, since A.330s and A.340s are so similar the engines were only the real difference - you have to poke holes through the plastic in the lower wing halves to convert them from A.330 to A.340 wings. The A.330 kit came with two sets of engines, Pratt & Whitney and CFM International so that allowed me to use the spare set to convert an A.340 into an A.330. To make matters even more interesting, the only significant difference between A.330-200s and A.340-200s and A.330-300s and A.340-300s is their length so a little bit radical surgery promised to make it possible to make all four separate versions from the kits I had.



A -300 fuselage cut up to create a -200 fuselage

The first stage was to assemble all four fuselages and then, when they were solid, cut plugs out of the fuselages before and after the wings of two of them. This was not a very difficult task, the most difficult part being to make sure that everything was square when the fuselages sections of the two shortened versions were glued back together again. There was also the possibility that I would forget myself and accidentally glue both sets of A.340 wings to both the -200 fuselages, somewhat cramping later options. Another challenge was to match the fuselages and engines of the two A.330s so that they made combinations that were actually in airline service. I didn't get it right and then spent a lot of time scouring the internet. looking at all the options for what I had made and then having to search out appropriate decal sheets to match. The end result of this was that although I had two sheets of decals for the Air Canada version I was not able to use either of them and the A.330-200 ended up in TAM colours because that was all that was available. They came from a sheet printed in Brasil and sold from Britain. But the end result looks good so I'm not complaining.



The four fuselages, two shorter than the others

There's nothing terribly complicated about this kit. As with most airliner models in 1/144 scale the main thing is the finish, although the crispness and detail of these kits makes them a pleasure to construct which is probably one of the reasons why I planned to make all four possible versions after I had started work on one. As usual the most difficult and tedious part of the whole process was the masking, but the end result was very pleasing, to me at least.