Hello, fellow pilots! My name is Mike, and I am an aerobatic fanatic. (This should come as no surprise to some.) However, today I am trying something different, something “strange” if you will. The FMS A6M3 Zero 1400mm series WW II warbird is a foam model airplane with some really cool features, and I have to admit that I like the way the Zero flies. I especially enjoy the story of the stolen ideas from Hughes’ ‘H’-1 racer and note that the Zero was a pain in the allies’ rear for a reason! Flush rivets aside, the Japanese had a fast moving, agile airplane responsible for stories galore. Long range and performance did outweigh the protection and durability factors, but Zeros are still considered one of the best flying warbirds of their time.

FMS
A6M Zero
An aerobatic fanatic looks to a warbird for a change of pace

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Specifications
Model: A6M Zero
Manufacturer: FMS Models
Distributor: Diamond Hobby (diamondhobby.com)

Type: WW II warbird
Length: 42.7 in.
Wingspan: 55.2 in.
Wing area: 467 sq. in.
Weight: 46 oz.
Wing loading: 20.4 oz. sq./ft.
Motor req’d: 4250-sized outrunner
Radio req’d: 6+ channels
Price: $270

Highlights
- From box to flightline in minimal time
- Flaps and electric retracts are pre-installed
- Great outline and detailing
- Excellent bang for the buck

Gear Used
Radio/receiver/servos: JR 9303 DSM2 (jrradios.com), Spektrum AR7000 (spektrumrc.com), six included servos: (5) 9g, (1) 17g
Motor: 4250 580Kv outrunner (included)
Battery: E-flite 4S 2800 30C (e-fliterc.com)
Prop/spinner: Included 13x9 3-blade and plastic spinner
The FMS version uses EPO foam construction throughout, which is quite a durable material from my experiences. A 3-blade prop and fairly accurate spinner adorn the nose while the typical green paint and red detail markings finish the fuselage and empennage. Now try this on for size: pretty much everything you would want is included in this ARF kit (more on this later). In addition to a little workspace and an evening or two, all you will need is your radio gear and a 4-cell 2600 to 3000mAh LiPo pack to get flying. Guys like me who have to work everyday appreciate that fact and that this plane has a level of detail not normally seen in foam model airplanes.

**UNIQUE FEATURES**

For starters, let’s just say that this model is no “zero” when it comes to included amenities; the following are a few of the niceties you will enjoy: wingtip lighting is pre-installed, pre-wired, and plugs right into your receiver via a Y-harness. Next up to bat are the pre-installed split-flaps, which are run on pre-installed servos and merely require linkage connection for operation. The actuators are also sequenced to move slowly and demonstrate a scale-type of deployment rather than just slamming into position.

One of my favorites has to be the pre-mounted and wired-up electrical retract system. These are worm drive units and also feature sequencing gear doors. I plugged them into my receiver’s channel 5 and flipped the switch. To my amazement, they fully extended and locked, then retracted flawlessly with no adjustments at all.

**In the Air**

Flying from a paved or hard-packed runway has its advantages but the FMS Zero will fly from decently shortened grass. Right rudder is used a bit to counter the P-factor or motor torque. Not many linear feet are required for take offs with a good battery and this power system. Landings are for real and not like the almost “harrier” aerobatic plane types I’m used to. I keep my throttle trim up a bit and this allows the prop to keep spinning while the plane arrives back home. Once the wheels are rolling, a second or two passes before I can add some elevator in order to keep the tail down. Can you say greasy! Don’t forget that you can also hit the flaps, slow the plane down, and descend at a different angle.

**GENERAL FLIGHT PERFORMANCE**

**Stability:** Most warbirds and the words “slow flight” are an oxymoron fest. That is not the case here because this Zero flies with inherent stability at way less than half-throttle. The design of this model must have been to not only look cool, but to fly well too!

**Tracking:** The Zero is a shining star in this department. I mean, it really does a great job at all speeds. Only during the slowest of turns does the plane lose its perfect line in the form of a mild wiggle.

**Aerobatics:** All evasive-type maneuvers are easily accomplished. Loops are easy and rolls may benefit from a connection separation (Y–harness) and some differential; that said, you will have fun flying this plane in any manner you see fit. I have to admit that I was more into seeing the model strafe by than trying to make it do a snap roll.

**Glide and stall performance:** The glide is very smooth and shallow as it should be. Flaps really do allow a steeper descent rate and you can easily stall at touchdown or grease during landings. When I cut power and feed in elevator, I make sure I’m high enough up to recover.

**PILOT DEBRIEFING**

In one box, you get a highly detailed, full-featured model airplane. The list of cool items goes on and on, and this A6M3 Zero is highly prefabricated, which saves time for those of us with day jobs. If you want a WW II warbird for a change of pace from your normal aerobatic affinity, you’ll want this one. For what you get, it flies well and looks very cool in the air without being a budget breaker.
all on my end. They, like the flaps, move slowly and realistically, which is a cool deal if you did not purchase a transmitter with servo-slowing capabilities. I did note that the wheels (when retracts are extended) end up a little farther aft of the wing’s leading edge than I would like; the front of the main wheels are about even there. I would like to see the wheels farther forward, with maybe the axle line even to the leading edge. My flight test will definitely prove things one way or another.

A canvas-ribbed effect has been molded into the ailerons and elevator; panel lines, a well-detailed plastic cowl, and decal markings are also pre-installed eye candy. Wing guns, a Pitot tube, and an antenna are included as well and glue right into perfectly molded pockets. All the aforementioned is in addition to the pre-installed power system. A 4250 580Kv motor is already mounted and a 65A switch-mode BEC speed control is used to command the outrunner. The five actuators are 9 grams and pre-mounted. They only need to be plugged into your 6+-channel receiver. The elevator servo is a bit larger (17 grams) as it operates the largest control surface alone. All extensions and harnesses required were in an included zip-top bag and kept me away from my local hobby shop. What I’m hinting at here is that when you order this model, have the receiver and a 4S 2600-3000mAh LiPo ready and you’ll be good to go with this highly prefabricated and detailed warbird.

**CONCLUSION**

The claim is that this model airplane can be flight-ready within four hours or less. When I opened the box, it took me about an hour to install the control horns and linkages along with the prop and decor pieces. I spent about an additional 30 minutes for radio programming and final adjustments. The instructions are vague, but I’m sure you’ll have no problems assembling and flying this plane. Get help from a flying buddy if you have any concerns! ✩